Sirkka Knuuttila

Fictionalising Trauma
The Aesthetics of Marguerite Duras’s India Cycle

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed,
by due permission of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki
in auditorium XII, on the 12th of December, 2009 at 10 o’clock.
Il fallait receler un pouvoir secret pour avoir cette force, dans la vie.

Marguerite Duras
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It was more than natural that Marguerite Duras’s intergeneric art proved to be for me the most appealing corpus for a closer examination of the aesthetics of trauma. Since the late seventies, I had pondered on how much of the unsayable is mediated visually through the expressive powers of the body in human interaction. This problem compelled me to adapt my expertise as a literary researcher to my knowledge as a medical practitioner, as non-verbal language seemed to me to play a central role in all interpersonal communication. With feelings of gratitude, I now realise that two indispensable personal contacts were decisive for the outlining of this study. The first was my supervisor during my graduate studies, Dr Franciska Skutta, who in 1993 in Kossuth Lajos University, Hungary, revealed to me Duras’s cyclic, repetitive style. The second, and longer, connection was Riitta Hari with whom I once as a young medical student shared the wonders of the human body. In 1995 Professor Hari gave me her colleague Antonio Damasio’s then recent *Descartes’ Error* – in French – thus introducing me to the relational concept of an embodied mind from a renewed viewpoint. I should like to express my thanks to both these persons for opening me the pathway towards this study on Duras’s fictionalising of trauma.

For the practical impetus to write the dissertation I would like to thank my supervisors, Professors Hannu Riikonen and Heta Pyrhönen from the University of Helsinki, the Department of Comparative Literature, Faculty of Arts. Professor Riikonen’s farsighted counsel encouraged me to use English as the language of choice instead of my beautiful, nuanced mother tongue, Finnish. He sensibly helped me to seek guidance from the then visiting Professor Christopher Prendergast, whose comment on my initial view of the India Cycle as a postmodernist tragedy turned my attention to Duras’s style as a criticism of modern society. Under Professor Pyrhönen’s theoretical guidance, I found the concept of trauma to be a most effective tool when analysing the signifiance of non-verbal expression and repetition so prominent in Duras’s aesthetics. Professor Pyrhönen valuably indicated to me the seminal interdisciplinary sources, through which I plunged into the problematics of historical trauma. At some intriguing points of writing this work, she appositely commented on its semantic content. I would like to express my gratitude for her formal suggestions near the completion of the work, and for her practical help when going through the process of pre-examination. I am grateful to Professor Mervi Helkkula from the University of Helsinki for the supervision of this process, and to Docent Päivi Kosonen from the University of Tampere for her remarks on some general research aspects as I concluded my
work. Finally, my special thanks go to Professor Leslie Hill from the University of Warwick for his careful evaluation of the completed study.

Having presented several parts of the work at the literary research seminars of the Department of Comparative Literature, I should like to extend my thanks to all those participants whose comments helped to sharpen my pencil. In particular Martti-Tapio Kuuskoski’s enthusiasm for Duras opened my eyes to the original sources of her autofiction. Sporadically, an emotional sharing of the vicissitudes of scientific writing with Marit Finne, Tiina-Käkelä Puumala and Susanna Suomela gave me necessary gusts of energy and times of joy during the past seven years of writing. I was also warmly received in Professor Eero Tarasti’s seminar on existential semiotics, where I could present a few early drafts of the work. His friendly support led me to share my ideas on trauma in the Finnish seminars and world congresses of the International Association for Semiotic Studies. There I was drawn by Professor Harri Veivo to the literary semiotics international group, which gave me a rewarding opportunity to elaborate on the semiotics of emotion in literary research. It was an inspiring environment in which to develop disciplined creative thinking, and for which I would likewise thank Professors Christina Ljungberg and Jørgen Dines Johansen as well as all the group members, including Merja Bauters. I also owe a big debt of gratitude to Professor Henry Bacon’s remarks on my elementary analysis of Durasian film, and his assistance in finding the most topical sources of cognitive film theory.

My most respectful appreciation goes to a number of specialists who have read and commented on several parts of my thesis presented in international seminars and conferences, which profoundly affected and promoted my work. These occasions were mostly arranged by the graduate school of Comparative Literature and the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies. Professor Marie-Laure Ryan expertly gave me feedback on possible world theory adapted to Durasian cinema. Professor Patricia Waugh emphatically encouraged me to continue with interpreting the Durasian oeuvre as trauma fiction, which helped me to see it as part of the postmodernist reaction to modernism. Fortunately enough, a growing interest in cognitive poetics brought several prominent scholars to Helsinki, such as Professors Peter Stockwell and David Herman. Among them, Professors Suzanne Keen and David S. Miall turned out to be acquainted with Damasio’s importance to literary research, just as I was working on the problematic relation between cognition and emotion at the advanced level of my cognitive therapy education. During the final phase, Professor Keen provided me with good feedback on my analysis of Duras’s anti-racism and the developing notion of post-rational subjectivity in connection with psychic trauma. Moreover, at the interdisciplinary research seminar of the University of Art and Design Helsinki, Professor Mieke Bal presented a welcome critical remark which smoothed my exaggerated interpretation of Duras’s cinematic anti-colonialism.
Just at the right time, I was invited by Professor David S. Miall to the University of Alberta, department of English and Film Studies. There I could familiarise myself as a visiting scholar with the problems of empirical reading in the REDES group, and improve my language in a relaxed, warm atmosphere. I want to send my full-hearted thanks to David and his co-chief, Professor Don Kuiken, for their intellectual and social generosity when arranging for me a presentation on Duras’s aesthetics of trauma at the Department of Comparative Literature. Further fruitful contacts were created at the International Literature and Psychology Conference, from which Professor Suzette Henke’s expertise on trauma narratives helped me to go on refining my tenebrous yet riveting theme. My best thanks go also to Professor Ivo Cermak and Dr Ida Kodrlova for inviting me to the European Psychology Congress in Prague, where I could condense my central thoughts about symbolising trauma, in the workshop dealing with Psychology and Art. In Finland, on behalf of Professors Juhani Niemi and Amos Pasternack, Laura S. Karttunen kindly arranged my lecture on trauma fiction at the University of Tampere for students of medicine and literature. This occasion improved my understanding of trauma as a case in point when reformulating the concept of subjectivity in the guise of a relational embodied self. Finally, an important clinical addition to my understanding of traumatic memory was brought by advanced specialists at the European and world congresses on cognitive therapy.

My thesis would never have seen the light of the day without the financial support of several foundations. The Vetenskapstiftelsen för Kvinnor / Naisten Tiedesäätiö scholarship allowed me to complete my graduate studies in Comparative Literature. The grant from the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Helsinki pushed the writing of the dissertation into motion, whereupon the University’s finishing grant enabled the continuation of the work. Facilitating the fact that I kept on practising as a medical and cognitive therapist, was the grant from the Niilo Helander Foundation, which also made possible the improvement of my written English through the revisions of several chapters. The financial support from the Otto A. Malmi Foundation allowed me to study at the University of Alberta, after which the scholarship granted by the Jenny and Antti Wihuri Foundation permitted me to finally complete this thesis. In applying for most of these grants, my both supervisors, Hannu Riikonen and Heta Pyrhonen lent a helping hand.

An invaluable “psychic” fund was provided by my cognitive therapist, Meri Vartiainen, who made the conclusive phase of the study spiritually possible. Among a number of native English teachers at the Language Center who initiated me into scientific writing in the humanities, Professor Henry Fullenwider and Dr Kathleen Moore deserve special regard. I would also like to express my appreciation for Dr Anne Epstein’s views during our informal discussions about my topic. For help in translating Duras’s ambiguous text from French into Finnish, and in transferring my own ideas into French, I cordially thank Paul Parant, whose philosophical
musings in Helsinki cafés made us close friends. This research would neither have been possible without the assistance of the staff of three libraries. From the University of Helsinki Libraries, Liisa Koski always offered me a helping hand in finding Duras research from all around the world. Along with the willing library staff at the Finnish Film Archive, Dr Eeva Kurki’s early aid was decisive. She provided me with the selection of Duras’s films on video as they were not yet available to the public. Moreover, the University of Alberta Libraries offered me important works on Duras, trauma and cognitive theories.

For the revision of the written study I am extremely grateful to Lisa Muszynski from the University of Helsinki’s Language Services, whose tireless and careful proofreading over the course of the writing was indispensable, including the final revision. Our intellectual conversations on cognition, emotion, and theories on historiography in Café Engel made us even better friends, based on a mutual recognition of similar “spatial thinking” long before this linguistic cooperation. For the revision of the parts dealing with the traumatic index, Duras’s film and the conclusion of the study I should like to thank John Gage for his sensitive taste in language. I also send my warmest thanks to Annikki Harris, department coordinator at Language Services, for her diplomacy in sorting my revised chapters. For the layout of the text, I am grateful to graphic designers Mari Soini and Jere Kasanen from Yliopistopaino. The impressive cover photo is taken by my cousin, garden architect Raisa Luomi, with whom I as a child learned to enjoy bursting beauty of Nature. For the skilful design of the cover I thank my son, graphic artist Wisa Knuuttila.

From among a number of friends, I would like first of all to thank Raija Pesonen, my performance collaborator, whose humorous and intellectual creativity in questions of trauma is without comparison. Her and Jaakko Onkamo’s hospitality offered me some weeks of rescue in Pukinlahti, Liperi, during the last phase of the writing, and after submitting the completed work. Yost Wächter, my dearest soulmate from Zürich, I thank for his sensitivity in questions concerning art in relation to my medical practice. I also have often enjoyed novelist Rauni Paalanen’s culinary skills and generosity of spirit when sharing with her the joys and sorrows of poetry and translation. For apt remarks concerning emotion-focused cognitive therapy I am grateful to my medical colleague, Dr Beatrix Redemann. My loving thanks also go to Marja-Leena Soininen and Raisa Luomi for giving me a peaceful summer in Nallenkallio, Perniö, during one particularly stressful period of writing. Likewise I thank my old school friend Marketta Mäkinen for offering me a natural paradise in Siuro for writing, and a place of rest in Nerja, Spain, after the exhausting period of the work’s final stylising. For technical help I should like to thank Kaija Helle, Ulla Vuorinen and Arto Reunanen.

Ultimately, I would like to express my most loving thanks to my children Wisa, Raila and Varpu Knuuttila, who patiently have supported me with their innate
energy. Our conversations on creative life all over the world are for me an endless source of enjoyment. I feel a humble respect for Wisa's uncompromising devotion to art in life, while one of my greatest pleasures is to learn from Raila's talent for intuitively finding profound wisdom in human nature. And what continually fills me with admiration is Varpu's insistent and graceful striving towards her own, sovereign, experiential truth. From among my childrens' many friends who have inspired me with their ecological art, I want particularly to thank travel artist Teemu Takatalo and butoh dancer Thomai Maganari with her little son, Triandafilos.
Abbreviations

The references to Maguerite Duras’s works and Sigmund Freud’s *Mourning and Melancholy* will be given in the text using the abbreviations listed below. When citing the novels of the India Cycle such as *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein* (*The Ravishing of Lol Stein*, trans. Richard Seaver), and *Le Vice-consul* (*The Vice-Consul*, trans. Eileen Bellenbogen), the English translation regularly follows the original text, each provided with corresponding abbreviations and page references. When some of the English translations are amended so as to draw attention to Duras’s style, this is indicated in the footnotes. Similarly, when quoting Duras’s interviews such as *La Vie matérielle* (*Practicalities*, trans. Barbara Bray) and *Les Parleuses* (*Woman to Woman*, trans. Katharine A. Jensen), both original and English versions are used with abbreviations and page references. As for the excerpts of the novel *L’Amour* as well as the quotations of Écrire and some interviews including *Les Lieux de Marguerite Duras*, I provide my own English translations. The excerpts from the film *India Song* are translated either by Elisabeth Lyon or myself, as specified in the footnotes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td><em>L’Amour</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>AM</td>
<td><em>L’Amant</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td><em>Cahiers de la guerre et autres textes</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td><em>Écrire</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>FG</td>
<td><em>La Femme du Gange</em> (film script)</td>
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<td>H</td>
<td><em>Hiroshima mon amour</em> (film script)</td>
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<td>IS</td>
<td><em>India Song</em> (film script)</td>
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<td>L</td>
<td><em>Les Lieux de Marguerite Duras</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>LVS</td>
<td><em>The Ravishing of Lol Stein</em></td>
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<td>MM</td>
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<td>O</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td><em>Les Parleuses</em></td>
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<td>PR</td>
<td><em>Practicalités</em></td>
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<td>R</td>
<td><em>Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>SNV</td>
<td><em>Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert</em> (film script)</td>
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<td>V</td>
<td><em>The Vice-Consul</em></td>
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<td>VM</td>
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Introduction

Écrire ce n’est pas raconter des histoires. C’est le contraire de raconter des histoires. C’est raconter tout à la fois. C’est raconter une histoire et l’absence de cette histoire. C’est raconter une histoire qui en passe par son absence.¹

In her script for Alain Resnais’s film Hiroshima mon amour (1960), Marguerite Duras (1914–1996) famously writes: ‘Impossible de parler de HIROSHIMA. Tout ce qu’on peut faire c’est de parler de l’impossibilité de parler de HIROSHIMA.’ (H, 10; It is impossible to speak about Hiroshima. All one can do is to speak of the impossibility of speaking of Hiroshima). This catch-phrase hits squarely upon the sore point of a major traumatic experience. With this statement Duras pioneers the future debate on the narrativisation of historical catastrophes and overwhelming experiences, which will reach its peak only after the Vietnam War in the nineties. Arising from amidst its post-war legacy regarding the dilemma of Holocaust testimonies, current trauma theories define psychic trauma as a temporally unlocatable phenomenon which often lacks symbolisation. Narrativising trauma seems to create a paradoxical situation in which the ‘text is the consequence of the event it cannot represent’ (van Boheemen-Saaf 1999, 71–72). This idea implies that, by its reiterative form, an embodiment of trauma produces the object which causes it, thus merging content and form as a persistent optical illusion of a reverse figure. Such a causal, seemingly objective model disregards liberating forms of trauma’s narration by doomed the writer/reader to repeat textual symptoms in a vicious circle.

The main incentive of my study is to overcome this causal circularity by illuminating the imaginative and embodied aspects of trauma’s subjective experience in Duras’s works. I will explore how creative narratives can be unleashed from the emotional, implicit memory of the survivor for collective sharing in order to mitigate noxious individual and transgenerational consequences. Hence the epigraph where Duras characterises writing as an interplay of two contradictory issues – ‘telling of a story, and telling a story through its absence.’ Duras’s thesis speaks of her insistent intention to render unaccountable phenomena in a symbolic form for listening-witnessing others despite inner obstacles. But to transform a self-shattering experience into aesthetically enlightening works requires two kinds of audacious experimentation: to express the symptoms of trauma, and to refrain from a mimetic repetition so as to transcend conventionalised, tautological representations. With these two demands in mind, the ultimate subject of this study

¹ VM 35. ‘Writing isn’t just telling stories. It’s exactly the opposite. It’s telling everything at once. It’s telling of a story, and the absence of the story. It’s telling a story through its absence.’ (PR, 27)
is crystallised in the question: how does Duras critically mediate trauma by fiction? Duras belongs to the most famous writers of individual suffering and collective mourning. Her oeuvre evokes important questions on the nature of traumatic (‘split’) memory and the modern concept of melancholy in narrativising trauma. Born in Cochin China, she lived in several other regions that belonged to the colonised territories of ‘French Indochina’, where her first eighteen years engraven on her memory an exceptional spectrum of emotion-arousing events of the colonial condition. The topic of this study is one of her central works, the India Cycle (1964–1976), which epitomises a fictional attempt to express these personally touching, conflicting experiences. Being the most illustrative fictional exemplar of Duras’s cyclic aesthetic, the India Cycle launches and establishes her artistic method of modifying the same theme in different genres and media. It consists of nine works released between 1964 and 1976: three novels, Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein (1964), Le Vice-consul (1966), and L’amour (1971); the film and its published script, La Femme du Gange (1972); the stage play – also with the script – India Song (1973); and the film pair and their common script, India Song / Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert (1974/76). This study focuses principally on the progressive aesthetics of the three novels and the film/script India Song, and leaves Son nom de Venise for future cinematic analyses.

With the help of various recurring figures and metafictional techniques, the India Cycle points indirectly at the collision of irreconcilable differences arising out of the economic abyss between the indigenous and colonising parties. Penetrating into the core of racism and sexism, it typifies the decaying colonial system by portraying the opulent life style of white Europeans in contrast to the Asiatic indigenous life in the inter-war historical context of French Indochina, British India, and Europe. This is made by following the principle of the repetition and variation of certain motifs, which encompasses Western colonialism as seen through the prism of imagined individual traumas. Gradually, the interfigural repetition begins to reflect larger social and political structures of the thirties,

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2 In the course of the nineties, the nature of the ‘split psyche’ in trauma was repeatedly discussed. As Geoffrey Hartman (1995, 537) states, the knowledge of trauma narrative is composed of two contradictory elements: the traumatic event, registered rather than experienced, and the memory of the event, in the form of perpetual troping of it by the bypassed or severely split psyche. The disjunction and integration of these two elements forms the major problem for literary scholars and clinical therapists, while the Freudian concept of melancholy interpreted as mere clinical depression is currently debated in cultural studies.

3 I will henceforth utilise the term ‘Indochina’ being aware of the fact that the name of L’Indochine française was given to the conquered countries of Annam, Tonkin, Cambodia and Laos by the French Empire. As Nicola Cooper notes, the name belongs to colonial discourse, and is a ‘Gallic Affix marking the hybrid Franco-Asian identity of regrouped areas’. These countries were under the protectorate of France, whereas only Cochinchina was accorded the full status of a colony. Indochina is thus a geographical, cultural and political construction (on the history of the name, see Cooper 2001, 1–6; on the efforts of economic amalgamation in the inter-war period, see Brocheux & Hémery 2001, 100–116).
thus unveiling the public values of the European invaders. As thus the traces of absent trauma stories can become conscious only as they are embedded in the structure of consequences which they engender, the India Cycle manages to create an idiolectic vocabulary for some traumatic phenomena which previously had no pathway of expression.

My purpose is to explore the India Cycle as trauma fiction by reading it in a postcolonialist perspective as a presentation of individual traumas giving form to the collective trauma of colonialism. This is to offer an alternative for previous psychoanalytical interpretations, which tend to reduce the India Cycle as signifying a vicious circle of incessant suffering and melancholic absence, and displaying mere competitive substitutions in Oedipal triangles. From the perspective of my emotion-focused cognitive study, the formal and thematic structure of the India Cycle appears to be an exploration of the political failure of the colonial system. It makes explicit the mental impasse of the white invaders by presenting the experience of loss as a consequence of their exclusive politics, and contrasting it by their own narratives of the surrounding catastrophe and one suffering indigenous woman. As an echo from the divided world of colonialism, the India Cycle lays the foundation for a split fictional universe with clearly demarcated lines between economic and geographic power relations. It juxtaposes three fictional spheres in the colonialist era: the enclave of Western colonial administration in India, the realm of the indigenous people in Indochina, and the half-Victorian bourgeois milieu in a West-European coastal town. Moving in the blurred borderland of post-traumatic reactions, the narrative logic meanders by means of four individual stories, all being reactions to events that interrupt the flow of everyday life. While these four narratives tend to mirror, parallel, and resist each other, the persistent repetition variation expands the theme of historical trauma over sexual, ethnic, and social boundaries. This method provides meanings not available in separate works but emerging in the course of cyclic progression.

The most obvious result of this complexity is that, shedding light on the colonial practices and their consequences, the India Cycle demonstrates how European

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4 Robert J. C. Young (2001, 58) defines the term ‘postcolonialism’ as a designation of the perspective of ‘tricontinental theories which analyse the material and epistemological conditions of “postcoloniality”’, the latter being the global economic system dominated by the West and driven by the interests of international capital’. Nicholas Harrison (2003, 9) observes that while not identifiable as a certain type of theory, and originating from outside academic research, ‘postcolonial studies’ have developed ‘in response to political and historical issues of vast importance and scope’ in the English-speaking academic world, especially in literature departments.

5 As one of the most authoritative views, Julia Kristeva’s psychoanalytical interpretation claims that Duras seeks crisis by skirting the edge of pathological depression, even of suicide, which makes her novels even dangerous for sensitive readers (Kristeva 1987; cf. Hulley 1992/93, 32). Since Kristeva does not analyse Duras’s cyclic rhetoric, especially those techniques with which she explores trauma, her interpretation does not realise how Duras’s cycle in fact functions in avoiding the contamination of textualised trauma.
identities and norms are (re)constructed in the presence of the ethnic, cultural, social and sexual “other”. Employing a palimpsestic rhetoric, the cyclic whole draws attention to the Western concept of racial and sexual normality that justifies the domination of the whites in Asia. Hence the India Cycle encompasses those Western norms and values that produce racism and sexism and take the form of the colonial subordination of indigenous people – especially women and children – as well as the inner colonialising of bourgeois women in Europe. Ultimately, when navigating the emotional space between memory image, language, drama and cinema, the India Cycle lends itself to a profound analysis of Cartesian rational subjectivity, especially those exclusive racial and sexual binarities which, originating from automated emotional and cognitive schemes, maintain all colonialising practices.

To specify these questions arising from Duras’s aesthetics, I reorganise the narrative material of the cycle by adapting the concept of historical trauma, which refers to an overwhelming event occurring in a definable place and time (LaCapra 2000, 186). Such a historical loss in the India Cycle is individual rejection, either experienced or witnessed, and always referring to violent collective practices. *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein* performs the first traumatic scene: the rejection of a young European woman, Lol V. Stein. Modifying a classical melodramatic formula, Lol is abandoned in public by her fiancé Michael Richardson at a summer ball for an unknown *femme fatale*, Anne-Marie Stretter, who returns with him as a colonial to India. Through this wife of the French Ambassador, *Le Vice-consul* brings together three other traumatic incidents in Calcutta, where Anne-Marie is shown as the instrumental leader of the white society of British India. Relating the encounter of Anne-Marie and the French Vice-consul, the frame story introduces these male and female accomplices of Western invasion in a luxurious European enclave. The second traumatic nodus is the Vice-consul’s crime against colonial law, as he has fired a gun toward poor and ill locals in the park outside his palace in Lahore. Third, Anne-Marie is haunted by a memory of a young beggar woman’s attempt to sell her starving baby to the whites near the Laotian border in Cambodia. For Anne-Marie, the experience points to the economic and cultural effects of colonialism, and makes palpable her pent-up, masked depression in her prison-like position at the height of colonial power. She is also haunted, yet more vaguely, by an initial trauma: her seduction of Lol’s fiancé called the ‘crime of love’. Finally, representing the colonial trauma of the indigenous people, the fourth trauma is recounted as the embedded story of a Cambodian beggar woman, her rejection and desperate wandering from Indochina to Calcutta, construed according to her ‘real’ double who survives on the Ganges by fishing and begging.

To these complementary positions of victim/perpetrator, the important role of witness – the novelistic narrators and cinematic voice-over – adds a self-reflexive, distancing level. Giving form to the evolving stories, these commentators evoke the
Idea of bearing testimony to the colonial trauma. The explicit witnesses in the first two novels are two Western male narrators reconstructing the female survivors’ stories. In *Le ravissement*, Lo’s secret lover and bystander, Doctor Jacques Hold, reconstructs her history according to his inquiries and imaginations. Parallel to this construction, *Le Vice-consul* shows how a young writer, Peter Morgan, plans a tentative novel of a fictional Cambodian girl’s rejection and exile from French Indochina to India. He is prompted by Anne-Marie’s narratives of the starving Cambodian mother and her dying child, intermittently triggered by the local mendicant’s Laotian singing. Without being eyewitnesses, each of the male narrators tries to reconstruct a narrative of his heroine’s reactions to trauma in the economic and social contexts of her own respective culture. The resulting discourses are highly tentative testimonies of the survivor’s rejection and its consequences, thus evoking the problem of the narrator’s own subjectivity in relation to the other person, including the questions of narrative ethics and empathy. What is more, giving testimony to the survivor’s destruction exposes the narrator to a secondary trauma, shown explicitly in *L’amour* where Hold is transmuted into a madman (on secondary trauma, see Whitehead 2004, 8–9; Rothberg 2000, 213).

An important judging role is reserved also for the white society, whose controlling gaze follows explicitly along each of the three heroines and the hero, thus mirroring the prejudices based on Western sexual and social values, norms and habits. Parallel to novelistic metanarration, the play and all the films of the cycle introduce several timeless voices as invisible witnesses, which comment upon the ongoing drama on stage or screen. In the course of the progressing series of *théâtre-texte-film*, the number of these narrative voices increases and their quality changes. While *La Femme du Gange* makes use of the dialogue of two female voices, the stage play *India Song* adds two male voices to the female ones. In the films *India Song* and *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert*, a dialogical heteroglossia of several male and female voices trail the evolving cinematic spectacle, entangling from time to time with the lines of the protagonists and the murmur of the surrounding society. The development of this peculiar voice-over method indicates how the activation of the audience is increasing within the scope of the cycle, since the audible commentary compels the audience itself to adopt the position of a witness, thus making its orientation extremely demanding. All these operations are articulate examples of Duras’s sense for the efficacy of point of view techniques that vary from piece to piece in her fictional witnessing of the decaying state of colonialism.

From the perspective of historical trauma, the structure of the cycle is suspended between three dialogical roles of the protagonists as survivors, perpetrators, and

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6 From this point onwards, I will rather use the word ‘survivor’ instead of ‘victim’, since the victimisation of Duras’s rejected heroines is problematised in several ways by their stories.
witnesses of traumatic experiences. The two opposite types of exiled persons clearly arrange the stories as two poles: that of two ethnically different, rejected female heroines, Lol V. Stein and the Cambodian beggar, and that of two sexually different colonial perpetrators, Anne-Marie Stretter and the French Vice-consul. In this constellation, the survivors’ plausible madness precipitated by rejection amounts to one major problem presented via their stories. Furthermore, as the perpetrators have both committed a crime, though of a very different quality and scale, the motif of guilt is elaborated as a mixture of eroticism, aggression and mourning. The culmination is their mutual recognition which reveals their suicidal impasse, ending with the white man’s exclusion from the society and the white woman’s drowning. In this manner, both the survivors and perpetrators display their personal ways of suffering as being withdrawn into physical and/or mental exile, until their lives are conducted to different kinds of tragic denouements. Lol’s storyline ends in L’amour and La Femme du Gange, each presenting her later fate as an anonymous madwoman wandering on a deserted shore, to which her fiancé Michael returns to commit suicide. Likewise, the perpetrator story is elaborated in the drama India Song so as to be harmoniously integrated into the images and sounds of the film India Song, which reproduces Anne-Marie’s life after her drowning in the Indian Ocean. As the last modification, Son nom de Venise in Calcutta désert displays the milieu of empty palaces with the same soundtrack, thus echoing all these legends as remote memories of the colonial era. Thus, while the survivors’ fate is to progress silently towards forgetting – a state saliently called ‘madness’ – the perpetrators, who live under the sign of colonial crime in the countries they have violently invaded, are erased from the stage of History in an elegiac rite of mourning.

Starting from this initial reconfiguration, I will analyse the central devices of Duras’s cyclic aesthetics by following the gradual shifts of meaning between diverse novelistic discourses and their final conversion to cinematic image and sound. Since most of the titles of the works of the India Cycle carry a generic label, I will use the generic names of ‘novel’, ‘theatre play’ and ‘film’, and hold the film scripts as decisive developmental stages in the non-chronologically pulsating progression of the serial whole. I pay specific attention to the discourses with which Duras gives

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7 As LaCapra (2000, 198) notes, ‘with respect to historical trauma and its “representation”, the distinction among victims, perpetrators, and bystanders is crucial’. Accordingly, while the victims of certain events can be traumatised by them, not everyone traumatised by events is a victim. There is also a possibility of perpetrator trauma, which must itself be acknowledged and worked through (ibid.). What is more, the perpetrator is also one of the witnesses of the victim’s trauma, as exemplified in Freud’s Moses and Monotheism (1984, 24) (Caruth 1996, 1–2).

8 As Aline Mura (1999, 126) explains, in the extensive diversity of literary texts, the notion of genre has a double function: referential and pragmatic. In the way Mura notes, referring to Julien Gracq, Duras’s works can be understood as ‘œuvres migrantes’ in much the same manner as Honoré de Balzac’s small novels. Accordingly, by taking the conventional generic typology as my starting point, these kinds of indefinable works represent innovative exemplars that show
her trauma stories a symbolic form through an imaginative translation process, so as to emphasise her own background as an eyewitness, in contradistinction to those authors without any personal experience of historical traumas. In this process, the polarity of her figural and distancing strategies amounts to an intriguing combination of testimony and criticism. Deeply implicated in issues related to colonialism and European racism in Indochina and Europe, Duras puts the mimetic testimonies of her narrators under a metatextual magnifying glass, thus raising the question of a bystander’s ability to empathise with and give symbolic form to a traumatised person’s ‘mad’ presence without identification and retraumatisation (cf. Jenson, 2001, 16). My hypothesis is that, with the serial modification of the India Cycle, Duras explores self-critically the invisible everyday practices of the ‘white race’ and the biased presuppositions underpinning these practices. Ultimately, her slow memory-work strives for dismantling the racial and sexual values based on an unfounded and unscientific illusion of the biological and cultural supremacy of white people.

Reading Colonial Trauma: A Cognitive Approach

In the tradition of postcolonial literary studies, colonialism has not generally been discussed in terms of trauma, even though colonial wars, genocides, famines and other accessory atrocities are a widely acknowledged origin of man-made suffering. Indeed, as Irene Kacandes observes, ‘novels from a wide array of societies over the course of the [twentieth] century have tried to respond to trauma inflicted through war, brutal regimes, and interpersonal violence by witnessing to these rampant acts of aggression’ (2001, xv-xvi). Since 1995, prompted by postcolonial studies and an increasing amount of multidisciplinary research on trauma, many classical Western novels have been reinterpreted in terms of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and other prominent thinkers. It is as if a

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9 The multidisciplinary debate on the phenomenon of trauma was revived at Yale University from the eighties onwards. This tradition renewed the problematics of the Holocaust in light of the Vietnam War, whereby the seminal anthology on the topic was edited by Cathy Caruth, 1995. Henceforth, trauma studies have produced a wide spectrum of research in several scientific realms, all nurturing the literary research of trauma (see Knuuttila, 2006).

10 An applicable reinterpretation of Western classical novels depicting colonialism is Harrison’s (2003) reading of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899) as prompted by Chinua Achebe’s critique. But whereas Harrison does not discuss colonialism in terms of historical trauma, Julian Wolfreys proposes that *Heart of Darkness* strives to bear witness to the trauma of the colonial enterprise (Wolfreys 2002, 142–143). Moreover, Christina van Boheemen-Saal’s psychoanalytical study (1999) explores the Irish colonial history in terms of trauma in James Joyce’s works. And as will be shown later in this study, Jean Rhys’s novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* provokes a series of
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traumatic delay, Freudian Nachträglichkeit, had prevented literary research from connecting the colonial destruction of indigenous cultures with traumatisation as presented in many postcolonial works. In Duras exegesis, one can discern a similar development. One relevant aspect is that, whereas French novels dealing with the colonial past of Algeria roused lively debate in their time, the artworks portraying France’s imperial venture in Indochina have long been ignored, while the stereotypical image of Indochina has been nostalgised for the purpose of commercial gain (see Cooper 2001, 203–216). Parallel to this political amnesia, while Duras was – and still is – traditionally held as a writer of l’écriture féminine, her principal realm being white female sexuality, passion and suffering, she was not analysed as a writer of colonial trauma before the present decade. However, in the beginning of the nineties, Marilyn Schuster (1993, xii) suggests that by representing woman as ‘other’ in the patriarchal ideology of genderisation, Duras’s writing contributes to what is known as ‘Orientalism’ formulated by Edward Said. Characterising Duras as a person who was ‘formed and repulsed by the colonial system she was born into’, Schuster deals with Duras’s postcolonial themes in terms of loss and absence. This perspective is deepened only in 2000 through Martin Crowley’s detailed reading of Duras’s ethical view, which shows her to expand the theme of historical trauma from the personal and local scale to world-historical dimensions between 1958 and 1971. Moreover, taking a more acute cultural political stand, Jane Bradley Winston specifies Duras’s postcolonial attitude in the fifties from a refreshing viewpoint in her ground-breaking study, Postcolonial Duras (2001). And finally, Laurie Vickroy (2002) analyses the stories of the Cambodian beggar woman and Lol V. Stein in comparison with Toni Morrison’s postcolonial portrayal of black slavery in the frame of trauma theory.

Besides its colonial content, also the current discussion of the concept of trauma suggests a rereading of the India Cycle, yet, with a revised view of trauma and postcolonial rereadings of the Creole madwoman in Charlotte Brontë’s Jane Eyre. What is more, recently, a number of researchers of formerly colonised countries challenge the Euro-American concept of memory in terms of colonial trauma by studying topics such as the embodied memory of colonialism, and melancholy produced by racial stereotypification (see Bennett & Kennedy 2003; Eng & Kazanjian 2003).

Still today, the encyclopedias of French literature categorise Duras as a writer of l’écriture féminine. However, Duras identifies herself iteratively as a revolutionary political writer (Winston 1997, 231–232; 2001, 75).

Crowley does not analyse Duras in terms of trauma, but he insightfully locates the start with the appearance of the film Hiroshima mon amour (1959), and mentions especially the novels Détruire dit-elle (1969), Abahn, Sabana, David (1970) and L’amour (1971) as examples of Duras’s ‘nascent concern for the Holocaust, Jewish identity, and Soviet labour camps’ leading to her ‘sustained period of concentration on mass suffering’ (Crowley 2000, 148–149).

Winston’s study sounds out the political vicissitudes of Duras’s literary career from the fifties onwards, and parallels her works with the postcolonial novels of George Sand and Richard Wright. She also compares Duras’s Un barrage (1950) and L’amant (1984) with the nostalgic and exoticising films of colonial Indochina, made in the beginning of the nineties.
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its narrativisation. Habitually, the art of trauma is identified with the mimetic structure of its experience according to the lines sketched out in Cathy Caruth’s seminal anthology (1995). Despite Caruth’s reference to Pierre Janet, for more than a decade literary trauma studies have focused on the problem of memory presented in Freudian psychoanalytical theory. It relies on the idea that traumatic memory cannot give direct access to the preserved past since the experience resides behind repression or denial in the Freudian dynamic unconscious. This is why a traumatising experience could be retrieved only via complex unconscious processes, and symbolised merely as intertwined with forms of forgetting through indirect ways of knowing – similar to numerous Lacanian readings of Lol V. Stein’s ‘hysteria’. To this view, recent neuropsychological studies bring new light in the spirit of Janet’s classical experiments concerning ordinary ‘narrative memory’ and ‘traumatic memory’. Mapping the trauma memory system, these studies show that traumatic images return involuntarily and frequently, and that they are easily triggered in most of the cases. The reason for this is that the experience of trauma is separately preserved as a multisensory emotional image in the implicit memory, along which the narrative memory system still is operative and can mostly be activated during later working through (Brewin 2005, 135, 139). This discovery is suggestive of understanding more profoundly the parallel processing of our nonverbal and verbal knowledge, and their integration in an emotional memory-work. Such a perspective urgently calls for a capacity of metaphoric thought and emotional literacy, which enables one to become aware of those culturally constituted schemas that regulate one’s embodied exchange with self and others.

Starting from these premises, my cognitive study of Durasian narrativisation of trauma leans on the concept of the embodied mind presented in the emotion-focused cognitive theory as an alternative for the Cartesian approach (Damasio 1996, 2000; Varela et al. 1993; Guidano 1991). This is to boost the most convincing parts of cognitive literary research debated in Poetics Today in 2002 and 2003, and elaborated in several other studies and anthologies (Stockwell 2000; Herman 2003; Veivo et al. 2005). In the spirit of these Lakoff-Johnsonian-based studies, I treat

14 Freud formulated the idea of repression in The Interpretation of Dreams (1900), identified the compulsive return of the repressed (uncanny) material in Das Unheimliche (1919), and specified the repetition compulsion of trauma in Inhibition, Symptoms, and Anxiety (1926) (van der Kolk & van der Hart 1995, 166–167; Kristeva 1991, 182–185).

15 For more of Janet’s discoveries, see van der Kolk & van der Hart 1995, 160–163.

16 Frank Putnam (1999, 117–118) rightly characterises this traumatic ‘dissociation’ as a process that exists on a continuum from normal everyday experience to a global psychogenic amnesia and other psychic disorders. While the images of a sudden trauma may be elicited either spontaneously or triggered, in the most severe cases of extreme violence they can be encapsulated in the Freudian unconscious, beyond conscious reach.

17 On the capacity for metaphoric thought, see Modell 2003, 175; On emotions in literary semiotics, in particular as cultural constructions, see Knuuttila 2009a, 138, 140, 150; on embodied simulation in reading, Knuuttila 2008b, 131–133.
narrative as a cognitive artefact representing a fundamental mode of problem-solving, which can be studied by artistic examples of narratives (Herman 2003, 170−172). I accomplish this approach with literary semiotics (Johansen 2002) and cognitive film study (Grodal 2002, 2009), and combine them with the psychological theory of the embodied mind, which has developed in tandem with functional neuroimaging studies of emotion carried out by Antonio Damasio and Joseph LeDoux. In contrast to the linguistically oriented thinking of postmodernism, this nonreductionist theory assumes that, being primary, wordless knowing refers to a multisensory, emotional mode of processing knowledge side by side with the linguistic one (Damasio 2000, 169, 318; Stern 2004, 112–116). Speaking for an epistemic pluralism, it regards an embodied way of processing visual knowledge as primary in relation to language in the functional structure of human consciousness (Damasio 2000, 108; Modell 2006, 6; Guidano 1991, 1995). This idea accords with the concept of empathic reading, which refers to an active mode of understanding the other person through nonverbal resonance, and to a negotiation with specific artistic devices as well (Keen 2006, 2007; cf. Brooks Bouson 1989, 22, 169). Working seamlessly with the body, the mirroring faculty lays the basis for our social agency, to which emotions belong as an intentional mode of information processing (Hari and Kujala 2009; Iacoboni, 2005; Gallese 2005; Greenberg 2002; Nussbaum 2001, 115–119). From this basis, bearing in mind that psychoanalytic theory is integral to all trauma research, I understand narrativising trauma as a gradual grief work which integrates painful emotions with the somatosensory ‘raw’ material that is directly inscribed in the bodily memory. According to this model, affective sensorimotor images are converted into language by recurrent verbalisations where mindful awareness of bodily sensations, imagination, and linguistic creativity flexibly cooperate (Ogden et al. 2006; Brewin 2005; Smucker et al. 2003; Holmes 2001, 100).

Furthermore, reading the India Cycle as a working-through of historical trauma

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18 The theory of the embodied mind is the most inspiring reformulation of the concept of a ‘postrational’ subjectivity. It was elaborated by the radical constructivists of cognitive psychology such as Vittorio Guidano and Gianni Liotti on Francisco Varela’s and Humberto Maturana’s ideas originating from the seventies (Guidano, 1991; Varela et al., 1993). The concept of the embodied mind presupposes that emotion and cognition seamlessly interact in constituting the knowledge of the individual self and actual world. During the past decade, numerous neuropsychological studies of the human brain support this nonreductionist idea, carried out by Damasio (1996, 2000) and Joseph LeDoux (1996). For more of their intentionalist account, see Nussbaum 2001, 114–119, on the ‘embodied self’, see Knuuttila [in press].

19 When defining neural descriptions as correlates of mental processes, Damasio emphasises that indirect neurobiological methods approaching the mind such as EEG and functional MRI capture ‘correlates of the mind but those correlates are not the mind’(Damasio 2000, 82–83). That is, we must never equate neurobiological functioning with that of psychology since these two disparate representative systems are and will eternally remain incompatible and incommensurable. And while the study of human consciousness requires both internal and external views, both consciousness and all other cognitive phenomena are always limited to some indirectness.
is to define the concept of historical trauma as an outcome of a particular event producing traumatic loss in contrast to ‘transhistorical trauma’ where concrete loss cannot be indicated (LaCapra 2000, 186). For Dominick LaCapra, transhistorical trauma is evoked by separation

from the m/other, the passage from nature to culture, the eruption of the pre-oedipal or pre-symbolic in the symbolic, the entry into language, the encounter with the ‘real’, alienation from species-being, the anxiety ridden thrownness from Dasein, the inevitable generation of aporia, and the constitutive nature of original melancholic loss in relation to subjectivity (ibid. 195).

Typically, as transhistorical trauma occurs in many forms in individual lives in all cultures, it tends to produce incessant (Freudian) melancholia and the feeling of anxiety on the verge of the absence of fundamental origin (ibid., 178–183). While everyone suffers more or less from melancholic absence sometime in life, only some people experience historical trauma which, however, often actualises and reinforces the dilemmas arising from transhistorical trauma. The advantage of LaCapra’s analytic division is the supposition that all history and existence is not trauma (ibid., 186). This idea is reminiscent of the cognitive-based attachment theory which – in contrast to psychoanalysis – proposes that, aside from an innate need for security, an embodied mind includes an intentional, inquiring aspect of perceptual and epistemological curiosity about our *Umwelt*. Starting from this premise, I will revise the alleged Durasian melancholy as guided by the idea that transhistorical trauma cannot be located temporally and spatially in history.

It follows that working through historical trauma differs essentially from the state of melancholy, which is defined as a consciousness of transhistorical absence far from grieving for any historically definable lost object (LaCapra 2000, 181). On this basis, I understand historical loss in terms of temporally definable phenomena such as an event, experience, and narration. It allows me to interpret

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20 For LaCapra (2000, 189) employing the notion of historical trauma creates more opportunities for working through an overwhelming experience. It is understood as a counter-force to ‘transhistorical trauma’ which rather tends to arrest the process of mourning as that of melancholic rumination producing anxiety. Importantly, LaCapra’s division does not indicate a contradictory opposition, but rather suggests a continuum where the two modes intersect and interact in a complex manner (La Capra 2004, 116–117 n18).

21 Jacob von Uexküll’s (1934) semiotic concept of *Umwelt* (*Lebenswelt*) refers to our species-specific way of perceiving and conceiving of the world (Deely, 1990, 20).

22 LaCapra also calls transhistorical trauma ‘structural’ trauma, which tends to evoke misunderstandings. Therefore, I will utilise the term ‘transhistorical’ in this regard. LaCapra’s specification of ‘loss’ and ‘absence’ is not without problems. Cf. e.g. Wierzbicka’s (2009) reasoned critique of universalising English emotion words, which shows that sense of ‘loss’ is not homogenous in different cultures.

23 Notably, both these forms of trauma are presented as alternative processes by Freud in his *Trauer und Melancholie* (1917; *Mourning and Melancholy*, 1974), today a topical theme which many theoreticians try to dismantle. See Ch. I.
the discourses of the India Cycle as intentional modes of Duras's textual mourning of subjectively experienced historical traumas in relation to modern melancholy. It also helps me to envisage Duras's transformation of traumatic images into artistic figures as two complementary modes of writing trauma: as the author's own emotional process of symbolisation, and as a variety of attempts and methods with which her fictional characters are symbolising overwhelming experiences.24

Compared with previous research of the India Cycle, my study sets Duras's tropes such as the Freudian family romance in a postcolonial frame of reference.25 That is, taking Duras as a postcolonial creator of alternative fictional worlds, and holding psychoanalytical theory as one cultural discourse among others, I see Duras's narrative strategies and tropes both expressing and commenting on colonial trauma.26 A similar approach is advocated by Kathleen Hulley (1992/93, 31–32) who writes, in regard to Duras's L’aman: 'obsessive repetition can also be read as a rhetorical device, a self-conscious political strategy which embodies resistance to conventional representations of subjectivity at the level where meaning takes form.' I interpret such a repetitive imagery as an adaptive method which transmutes painful emotions into an object of awareness by creating narrative and figural variations.27

In my view, since individual emotions serve a crucial role in reprocessing personal imagery, such an integrative imagination can never be genuinely copied. This is typical of any literary memory-work, which also Duras observes in her essay 'Figon Georges' in La Vie matérielle (1987). As she states, to survive major trauma one has to convey the lived terror to other people by recasting one's experiences through the imagination into fiction so as not to succumb to despair when obsessively striving for a faithful reproduction of factual events (VM, 122; PR, 96).28 For me, this implies

24 LaCapra (2001, 186) discerns between 'writing trauma' as a metaphor for a process of 'giving voice' to a traumatic past and 'writing about trauma' as an effort of historiography to reconstruct the past as objectively as possible.

25 My study draws on some feminist and psychoanalytical explorations of the India Cycle, such as Marini (1977), Willis (1987), Glassman (1991) and McNece (1996). Aside from these detailed studies, including Jean Pierrot's monograph of the India Cycle (1986), I will make use of some qualified analyses considering Duras's narrative devices, such as Bal (1991), Hill (1993), Cohen (1993) and Schuster (1993); considering mourning, Beauclair (1998), memory techniques, Grobbel (2004) and anxiety, Willging (2007). Moreover, some postcolonial studies of colonial trauma are particularly useful such as Winston (2001) and Vickroy (2002).

26 As Hulley (1992/1993, 32) notes, 'Duras's obsessive drive to tell the same stories again and again seems to impel a psychoanalytic reading.' Instead, Hulley's polemical article avoids such an automatism by taking obsessive repetition as Duras's self-conscious rhetorical device and political strategy, thereby arguing against the pathologising of Duras's writing as reflecting her own depression (ibid., 47).

27 Pointing to Duras's insistent repetition, Schuster observes that Duras's audience is clearly divided into two groups: 'Durasophobes' who 'parody the incessant repetitions that mark her texts', and 'Durasophiles' who instead are 'caught up in the hypnotic spell of a repetition that is never quite the same', and even are 'bound to reproduce it in their own texts' (Schuster 1993, 151).

28 Duras's example is Georges Figon who, in Duras's word's, 'was afraid of forgetting' his long experience of suffering in prison, and 'got bogged down in verisimilitude' (VM, 122; PR, 96). And
a conversion from literal, metonymic signs into a more complex metaphorical form through emotional reprocessing. One fundamental feature can thus be ascribed to the Durasian habit of transforming collective catastrophes repetitively to individual phantasms: her insistent memory-work as an act of bearing witness to French colonialism in Asia through a critical fiction. Logically, my own act of criticism becomes a mode of testifying to the author’s trauma and its fictionalisation by working through.

Initially, this study benefits from Anne Whitehead’s observation in her *Trauma Fiction* (2004) that many literary narratives of trauma mimic the forms and symptoms of trauma by repetition, indirection and dispersed narrative voice, which produce some characteristic modes of figurative stylisation.29 Indeed, while the figures of rejection, exile, violence, and passion recur from one work to another at the levels of language, imagery, and plot, the India Cycle can be seen to use the key strategies of trauma fiction identified by Whitehead. The principal feature of its expressive power is a gradual, wave-like repetition which proceeds in variations of the same overlapping motifs in the diverse registers of generic modifications. Moreover, a network of figures and catch-words weaves the cycle into a matrix of analogical episodes, which connect the loosely interfigural works into a highly stylised metaphorical universe with a considerable excess of semantic meanings. As a testimony of colonial trauma, this discursive constellation justifies the status of the India Cycle, not as a mimetic copy of the world, but as a phantasmatic world by itself (Doležel 1998, 13–14). For, as Jennifer Willging (2007, 13) notes, while an oral narrative points directly to the historical experience of the speaker, any literary work is composed by an inner imaginative re-enactment of the lived which, despite any self-reflexive devices used, always evokes two referents: the fictional and the ‘real’ one.

My intention is also to view the cycle both in the historical context of its production and in the context of its reading, so as to question the historical referentiality of the text in terms of experiential, extratextual factors (Rothberg 2000, 9; Fludernik 1996, 30, 40, 50). To be able to parse the historical referentiality more specifically, I make use of Michael Rothberg’s profitable *Traumatic Realism* (2000), a profound study on the major problem of narrativising extreme historical events in the post-war era of modern violence. Rothberg (2000, 6–9) proposes a reading ‘under the sign of trauma’ (ibid., 108) in order to solve an epistemological problem: the abyss left between realist and anti-realist portrayals of extreme historical events. He characterises traumatic realism as a mode of representation as the numerous suicides of those among the writing survivors of the Holocaust indicate, writing and rewriting in itself does not save one from the destructive psychic impact of a major trauma.

29 Whitehead is the first to suggest the term ‘trauma fiction’ as the label for an emerging genre on the basis of a range of similar literary devices by which a number of novelists have sought to represent trauma.
and historical cognition, which attempts to produce historical catastrophes as an object of knowledge. As he states, the problems of history and representation are inseparable and, at the same time, irreducible to each other (ibid., 116). Therefore, traumatic realism seeks both to construct access to this previously unknowable object and to guide the audience to approach that object by using constellations of direct documentation and indirect, self-reflexive and ironic devices (ibid. 10). Thus Rothberg calls on us to find new pathways of knowledge between the realist and the anti-realist tendencies, which are contrasting attitudes to the representation of atrocities in cultural and historical disciplines.30 As his theoretical stand aims at preserving the conflicting simultaneity of two mutually exclusive but inextricably intertwined phenomena, the extreme and the everyday, the term ‘traumatic’ refers to combinations of ordinary and extreme elements in modern violence (ibid. 6). Alluding to Hannah Arendt’s notion of the ‘banality of evil’, Rothberg remarks that extremity ‘is not something that breaks with the ordinary dimensions of the modern world but exists on a continuum with it’ (ibid., 4). This statement provides LaCapra’s distinction between historical and transhistorical trauma with fruitful yet problematic precision. Thus my study concurs with Rothberg’s steadfast goal to ‘program and transform readers so that they are forced to acknowledge their relationship to post-traumatic culture’ (ibid., 103, 109, 140).

On Duras’s Cyclic Aesthetics

The cyclic form originates from Duras’s strong inclination to elaborate new artistic devices when rewriting and restaging her indelibly haunting scenes. Throughout her life she varied only very few themes that were filtered through her exceptional sensitivity for the nuances of natural signs and non-verbal languages, an individual talent which may be strengthened in the pressure of crossing cultures. Distinctive to her works is the portrayal of everyday encounters of individuals whose passionate love regularly intertwines with loss, violence and death: either suicide or murder. The loss of the loved object by betrayal or death often results in a memory-work which takes the form of recurring flashback-like phantasms of the protagonist’s experiences, which s/he enacts with another person(s) as an embodied, often violent drama. The variations of such encounters gradually grew as thematic series, identified as cycles by literary scholars since the eighties.31 The cycles usually

30 Rothberg develops this idea in accordance with Walter Benjamin’s theory of constellation or montage by utilising as an illustrative example Art Spiegelman’s comic strip *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* (1986−1991) as creating a traumatic reality effect at realistic, modernist, and postmodernist levels (Rothberg 2000, 1–2, 9–11).

31 Jean Pierrot is probably the first who thoroughly analysed the Indian series under the heading ‘Le cycle de Lol V. Stein’ in his monograph *Marguerite Duras* in 1986. Besides Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier who was an intimate friend of Duras, Dominique Noguez characterised this series as a ‘cycle’ (Pierrot 1986, 201).
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consist of novels, theatre plays, and films with their published scripts. They are typically created during a lengthy span of time as modifications of some earlier theme, where the same characters may appear as refigured in new situations and historical moments. The cyclic repetition thus reformulates the verbal, visual, and audio signs anew as to communicate the same thematic motifs in a form of slowly progressing continuums. Transgressing the boundaries of conventional artistic genres and media, these stylistic innovations arising from the recurrent material tend constantly to escape fixed assumptions and definitions. For this reason, Duras's aesthetics can be characterised as foretelling the postmodernist multi-media art of today.

This type of artistic production emerges out of Duras's multi-cultural experiences during several important historical periods of time. Her life in two opposite cultural milieus on two continents served as a rich source for emotionally and perceptually vivid ‘flashbulb’ memories, which made a decisive impact on the postcolonial quality and ethos of her works. After spending her childhood and adolescence in the French overseas colonies of Cochinina, Cambodia and Annam (1914–1932), Duras lived to a ripe old age in the wealthy mother country of France until her death in 1996. Her early cultural prefiguration, later to be configured into her postcolonial works, was formed in a bilingual environment amidst a spectrum of religious and ethnic groups in rural and urban areas (see C, 31–93). While still a child she suffered under her elder brother’s physical violence and the mother’s insanity, her most indelible traumatic memories adapted to the India Cycle originate from contacts with indigenous beggar women and their starving children. In 1974, Duras – defined by Winston (2001, 95) as an Asiatic colon – tells about her youth as follows:

J'avais dix-huit ans quand je suis partie pour passer ma philo ici, la deuxième partie, et faire l’université, et je n'ai plus pensé à l'enfance. Ça'avait être trop douloureux. J'ai complètement occulté. Et je me trimbalais dans la vie en disant:

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32 On Duras's cycles, see Pierrot 1986, 201; Willis 1987,1–2; Hill 1993, 86–87. As Ropars-Wuilleumier’s (1979, 4) early analysis of le cycle indien emphasises, Duras's practice of revolving around the same story in a group of texts links them together as an incoherent system of permanent transformation. But whereas the serial narratives of medieval cycles usually are intended to be performed or read one after the other (CCEDAL 2001, 375), Duras's works can be received as individual stories. However, my cyclic reading will show that the transformation of the India Cycle includes a logical progression leading to a tragical end in each trauma story. Cf. Glassman 1991, 15–16.

33 Concerning the terms ‘prefiguration’ and ‘configuration’ in the hermeneutic circle, see Ricoeur 1984, 52–70. As the daughter of a distressed white institutrice, widow and peasant, the archaic layers of Marguerite Donnadieu’s embodied and emotional memory – prefiguration – were moulded by Indochinese cultural factors to which French habits brought a conflicting vein (Winston 2001, 96; on Duras’s own memories, see also P, 136–138, 143–144, 234; L, 60–61).

Moi, je n’ai pas de pays natal; je reconnais rien ici autour de moi, mais le pays où j’ai vécu, c’est l’horreur. C’était le colonialisme et tout ça, hein? (P, 136).

I was eighteen when I left to take the second part of my philo here and go to the university, and I didn’t think about childhood any more. It had been too painful. I completely blocked it out. And I dragged along in life saying: I have no native country; I don’t recognize anything around me here, but the country where I lived is atrocious. It had colonialism and all that, right? (WW, 98)

To the experiences of poverty and death, the European hygienic life in the pre-war atmosphere of nationalism produced a striking contrast, lived through from the half-French perspective of a young female immigrant. Thus, for many reasons, Duras had to hide her memories of childhood to survive in Europe in the thirties (Guers-Villate (1985, 51–52).

When having a good knowledge of the economy of French ‘Indochina’, Duras worked as an assistant at the French Colonial Ministry for propagandist and commercial purposes of the Empire in 1940. From 1943 onwards, her career developed under the influence of intense cultural and political processes of global importance, such as world-wide decolonisation, international feminism, and the progress of postmodern commercialism. In the course of these world-changing phenomena, she assumed the public role of a fearless woman who habitually acted without time-wasting political calculations. During World War II, her activity in the French Resistance made her a stubborn leftist intellectual, who later overtly opposed the injustices arising from racism and real communism. During the fifties, she demonstrated against the colonial war in Algeria, and was among the subscribers of the ‘Manifeste des 121’ in 1961. She also criticised real socialism, for example, by opposing in public the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. All this made her into a well-known critic of racism and socio-political oppression (Hill 1993, 7). But she apparently kept silent about the Vietnam War, a striking fact that points to her controversial memories of the land of her origin (Adler

35 Duras was picked to write the propagandist book L’Empire Français (1940) with Philippe Roques under the supervision of the Colonial Minister Georges Mandel (Winston 2001, 15–18), a work labeled as being pro-colonialist by Julia Waters (2003). When characterising Duras’s novel Un barrage contre le Pacifique (1950) as seemingly anti-colonialist, Waters claims its descriptive elements to be borrowed from L’Empire Français in a manner that indicates the ‘partial nature of Duras’s ideological volte-face’.

36 This development has to be viewed against the backdrop of the position of French women from 1946 to 1967, as they were, in practice, far from social emancipation. During this period of fighting for their legal and civic liberation, married women were still generally expected to stay at home, devoting themselves to the husband, housework, and family (Hughes 2000, 156–158). Alex Hughes writes about women’s marginal position within the literary institution: ‘However, in the 1950s at least, even when they managed to overcome the material difficulties and cultural prejudices that impeded women from writing works of literature and getting them accepted for publication, French women authors regularly found that their creative productions were excluded from, or categorized as “lightweight” in, the literary histories and cultural annals of the day’ (ibid., 157).
Although her novels of the fifties portrayed bourgeois women as searching for carnal love to stave off the mental atrophy in their hygienic homes, they were primarily labeled being as either ‘Hemingwayan’ and ‘virile’, or ‘feminine romances’. Her function as an emancipated female writer was, however, admitted towards the end of the sixties. Since then, being one of the first female film directors in France, she implemented her literary counter-films with little equipment, a tiny budget, and a small crew, in the manner of *cinema vérité* (cf. Hill 1993, 93). Gradually, as one of the pioneering figures of the second wave of Western feminism, the public author ‘Duras’ changed in time to a caustic media star, who overtly admitted her private addictions of alcoholism and free sexual habits. These activities form in brief the background for the cultivation of Duras’s peculiar serial aesthetics which produced, among others, her widely known cycles, the fictional India Cycle and the more autobiographical Vietnam Cycle.

Emerging out of the experience of colonisation, Duras’s Asian cycles can best be posited in the frame of postcolonial studies by stating that the special quality of these works lies in their self-critical perspective to European colonial societies in Asia. As Laurie Vickroy observes, the recognition of the need for a more profound investigation of the dynamics of racial and economic oppression became visible already with the political liberation of various colonies in the fifties (Vickroy 1996, 1). In the early sixties, in the beginning of world-wide decolonisation, Duras’s inner propensity for depicting the tragic side of life outgrew her many-sided working with film scripts, theatre plays, and newspaper articles. Although she already had published a few successful comedies, she gradually realised her mission to be one to focus on highlighting an artistic portrayal of passion and suffering arising out of her own traumatised personal history (Adler 2000, 255–257). This conscious choice made a far-reaching impact on her future works, and expedited her career as an avant-gardist author of subjugating colonial practices and the bias of Western racism. Returning to her childhood memories of Cambodia and Annam with new literary experiments, she enriched and refined her approach to a number of social and political problems concerning sex, gender, social class, racialisation, and ethnicity. However, mostly known as a writer of passionate love whose works were seen as reflections of her private life, the critical ethos of Duras’s postcolonial aesthetics has so far remained insufficiently explored.

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37 Among a number of her contemporary colleagues, Duras is known as a literary film-maker, who was not only focused on cinematic image and sound but also with film script as a genre, as well as oral storytelling as an integral part of human narrative (Armes 1976, 110–118). Since her visual spectacles became possible only when produced with extremely simple techniques, they brilliantly accomplish her drawing on the power of human voice.

38 The autobiographical material is prominent in all Duras’s works to the extent that her reception often equates imagined material with the factual, a tendency which makes her as one of the creators of the French new autobiography.

The thematic roots of the India Cycle have deep ramifications for Duras’s works in her novels of the fifties, of which a significant number present individual relationships in violent situations. Gradually, the tragic themes such as passionate love, violence, murder, madness, the prison-house of women in Western marriage, the legacy of war, Nazism and racism – especially the question of Jewishness – and schooling of children, exceeded the confines of a single text, thus forming several transgeneric cycles connected as wholes by the same characters, events, and figures (Hill 1993, 85–113). The starting point for these bleak scenes is the impressive description of colonial disaster in Un barrage contre le Pacifique (1950). The motif of extreme physical violence recurs in Les petits chevaux de Tarquinia (1953), where an elderly European couple tries to piece together the scattered fragments of their son’s body after he has accidentally stepped on a landmine. The combination of passion and murder continues in the love affair in the novel Moderato Cantabile (1958), where Duras, according to Leslie Hill, combines and inverses the two modern myths that govern contemporary understanding of sexual desire: the myth of fusion and the myth of sexuality as an ‘inescapable curse of difference and mutual exclusion’; the themes of Proust’s Sodome et Gomorrhe and Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde (Hill 1993, 50–63). This theme of Liebestod combined with the murderer’s suicide recurred in Dix heures et demie du soir en été (1960). Furthermore, violent love takes on an extreme sadomasochistic form in L’homme assis dans le couloir, written soon after Moderato Cantabile, published in 1962, and rewritten and published in 1980. Finally, significantly foreshadowing the ethnic transgressions depicted in the India Cycle and the Vietnam Cycle, Duras’s script for Resnais’s film Hiroshima mon amour (1960) presents a couple’s passionate encounter in Hiroshima, the traumatic memorial of the end of World War II. Whereas the Japanese man’s personal catastrophe is the loss of his family in the bombing of Hiroshima, the French woman is haunted by the memory of her German lover’s death, followed by her public punishment and exile from her home town, Nevers. These relationships unifying individuals over national and ethnic boundaries anticipate Duras’s return to the thematics of Asian colonialism and exile, while the multiplication of texts and performances across genres became the dominating feature of her style.

The novel Un barrage contre le Pacifique (1950) serves as the subtext for the India Cycle as well as to the famous Vietnam Cycle. Despite their common theme, colonialism, the differences between these cycles are clear. The India Cycle portrays the fictional inter-war life of the French colonial administration in British India, and parallels it with the contemporaneous bourgeois life in European small

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40 On the influence of the negative critique of Un barrage for Duras as a postcolonial writer, see Winston 2001, 31–35.
towns. Exploring the common ideological roots of French and British racism in the form of Western everyday life, the India Cycle widens the scope from Asian colonialism to the level of international colonialisation. Instead, the Vietnam Cycle varies Duras’s autobiographic material in her poor white family in Indochina, and culminates in *L’amant* (1984) in the fictional portrayal of a young white woman’s ethnically transgressive sexual initiation in Saigon. Together, the Vietnam and India Cycles reveal Duras as a representative of two opposite cultures, who dedicated herself in Europe to the phenomena of colonialisation on all levels of the meaning of the word. For this reason, Duras can be seen as a critical postcolonial writer, whose oeuvre, originating from the bilingual and multicultural background in French Indochina, is preoccupied with the colonial dystopia, its disillusionment and remains (Cooper 2001, 117–124; Cooper 2005, 85–87).

The narrative devices of the India Cycle result in a heterogeneous semiosphere that differs remarkably from the compact spatio-temporal illusions of reality presented in nineteenth-century realism. As Hill incidently states, in Duras’s cycles, the ‘transposing of narrative material from one fictional context to another means transformation beside repetition, and displacement beside recurrence, which makes the unfolding fictional world unstable’ (Hill 1993, 64). While overtly revolting against the realism of Honoré de Balzac, Duras manages to create a satirical postmodern universe of a new type, which, however, can be compared with that of Balzac’s *La Comédie humaine* (1830–1847), especially in the sense created by the Vautrin cycle, where the recurring characters maintain the loose connection between separate works (Birkett & Kearns 1997, 120–122). Accordingly, the figures of the India Cycle become metaphors of their respective contemporary classes in pre-World War II Europe and Asia, in a manner reminiscent of Balzac (cf. Stam, 1992, 73–77). But the Durasian universe is, however, far from realist representation. It is rather a system of worlds and sub-worlds imagined partly by fictional characters, whereby the consistence of these worlds is loosely held together by a systematic, transformative doubling used at the formal as well as thematic level. This prolifereation of mutually mirroring analogies, which a remarkable number of circulating metonymies supports, leads to a permanent contamination between the roles of traumatised persons in the course of these slowly progressing histories.

Laying the basis for such an interplay in the India Cycle, the formal treatment of the psychological and historical material starts out by experimenting with novelistic metanarrative techniques in *Le ravissement* and *Le Vice-consul*. Then, precipitating cyclicity, the political disillusionment of the student-worker revolt

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41 Compared with the autobiographical details presented in the posthumous *Cahiers de la guerre* (2006, 41, 57, 61–63, 76–84), *L’amant* represents a remarkable imaginative reworking of the same material (for more on the topic, see Knuuttila 2009b; on Duras’s intertwining cycles from a general viewpoint of trauma, see Knuuttila 2008a).
of May 1968 signifies a clear aesthetic watershed for Duras. Calling the new form ‘théâtre-text-film’ so as to defy conventional generic classifications in the timely mood of l’écriture, she abandoned the metanarrative novelistic mode for laconicity and dramatic visuality, exemplified brilliantly in Lamour (1971). As a contrast to the first novels’ multiple focalisations, Lamour’s visual and audial focus paves the way for the reworking of the original stories into drama and films in the seventies. It is as if the political disappointment encouraged Duras to adopt a personal method of automatic writing as an access to the source of her embodied memories. As this turn effectively erased literary preconceptions of style and genres, it induced her to promulgate her non-generic cyclicity, and appropriate ‘ignorance’ as the catch-word for the ‘black chamber’ or the ‘black block’ of her creative source of preconscious memories (Cohen 1993, 15; detailed in Armel 1994; VM, 33; PR, 25). As an extreme textual experiment, Lamour’s simple visuality brings about a rich symbolism that leads Lol’s story to a subversive end. In the film La Femme du Gange, self-reflexivity returns as an innovative voice-off layer distancing all the now combined storylines on the screen. Next, the stage play India Song reiterates the dramas of La Femme du Gange, and increases the number of timeless commentators, thereby predicting the final, mature composition of the film India Song and its multi-layered soundtrack. The defamiliarising effect of the voice-over foregrounds the theme of the end of colonial power, which is accentuated by Anne-Marie’s suicide by drowning in the Indian Ocean. Finally, the film Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert is a historical innovation that functions as more than an epilogue-like commentary to India Song with the same soundtrack and the images of decayed, empty palaces.

As this review suggests, it is impossible to reduce the India cycle to a Freudian form of acting out transferential relations, or to a compulsive repetition of repressed symptoms. Rather, it is an active and willed working-through of the wounding experiences of the colonial situation: Duras’s l’affection intentionnelle (LaCapra 2004, 9–10; Woodward 1991/92). While it marks her aesthetic maturation in the sixties, Duras conquers new domains of knowledge in cyclic form in the realm of cinematic image and sound at the expense of linear narrative. Her iterative tendency closely parallels that of the Vietnamese researcher and film director Trinh T. Minh-ha, who accentuates the significance of systematic repetition as a form of cultural critique: ‘[R]ecirculating a limited number of propositions and rehashing stereotypes to criticize stereotyping can constitute a powerful practice’ (1991, 190). Her apposite remark on repetition’s ability to reflect itself critically reads:

42 During her discussion with Jean-Luc Godard in 1987, Duras stated that she was finally awarded the Goncourt prize in 1985 on the basis of her persistent harping on the same string: having sufficiently repeated the same themes, she finally came to the high artistic level of L’amant (Duras – Godard 1987).
Repetition as a practice and a strategy differs from incognizant repetition in that it bears within it the seeds of transformation. When repetition calls attention on itself as repetition, it can no longer be reduced to connote sameness and stagnancy as it usually does in the context of Western progress and accumulation, and its globally imposed emancipatory projects. When repetition reflects on itself as repetition, it constitutes this doubling back movement through which language (verbal, visual, musical) looks at itself exerting power and, therefore, creates for itself possibilities to repeatedly thwart its own power, inflating it only to deflate it better. Repetition outplays itself as repetition, and each repetition is never the same as the former. In it, there is circulation, there is intensity, and there is innovation. (ibid.)

Trinh T. Minh-ha’s ideas are more than suitable for describing Duras’s style of repetition that manipulates the reader’s interpretative abilities by playing with similarities and differences, doubling and redoubling. By varying the same metaphorical and metonymical elements from novels through drama into films, Duras builds a verbal and audio-visual chain of accumulative meanings that are gradually raised on an emblematic level. Her narrative style consists of covert narration and overt self-reflexive devices – novelistic metanarrative and cinematic auto-commentary – that alternate with the mimetic material of dramatic performance. Therefore, my cognitive interpretation is not based merely on causal inference of narrative micro-structures, but on the grounds of analogy and contiguity creating a cumulative continuity of permutative elements throughout the cycle.

Narrativising Trauma: The Duality of Traumatic Memory

The problem of how the intrusive and paralysing traces of a sudden trauma can be symbolised is the central question of any literary working-through (see esp. Hartman 1995). I will specify this problem with the current knowledge of traumatic memory so as to emphasise the centrality of body and emotion for the imaginative rescripting of trauma. Read as trauma fiction, the India Cycle mimics the experience of trauma, especially by its tendency of the marked repetition-variation of tropes, often called ‘obsessive’. As J. Hillis Miller (1982, 3) explains of the dynamics of repetition, any understanding in reading takes place partly on the basis of the chain-like recurrences of elements that are identified either deliberately or spontaneously, and self-consciously or unreflectively. In each case, recurring elements undertake a dual function: whereas some of them organise the work from inside, others determine diverse relations to extratextual phenomena.\textsuperscript{43} In regard

\textsuperscript{43} The extratextual factors are, for instance, ‘the author’s mind or his life; other works by the same author; psychological, social, or historical reality; other works by other authors; motifs
to intratextual features, the India Cycle is organised by a multilevel repetition of linguistic and figurative elements, which overdetermine the theme of trauma by loading the works with an excess of meaning. The elements arise from extratextual factors such as Duras’s personal experiences of poverty, violence, madness, and starving in Asia as well as some extremely painful experiences during and after World War II in Europe. These include giving birth to a dead child in 1941 (C, 243–246, 361–365; Adler 2000, 98–100) and her husband Robert Antelme’s return from the concentration camp of Dachau in 1945 (C, 271–276; O, 361–366; Adler 2000, 143–145).44 As a complementary source, some exceptionally vivid memories of other emotionally touching persons nurture her imaginative reproductions of rejection and pain. The problematic fusion of these intra- and extratextual factors in language can be illuminated by the current knowledge of traumatic memory and its embodied nature, as the following excursion will show.

Since reading and writing trauma is unavoidably indebted in particular ways to psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic literary criticism, the first task is to discern between the clinical diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)45 and trauma as a subjective, yet self-shattering experience arising from an adaptive response that aims at survival.46 Being a result of causal inference, PTSD refers to a psychic reaction to an overwhelming event, characterised by ‘high frequency, distressing, involuntary memories that individuals are unable to forget and make great efforts to prevent coming to mind’ (Brewin 2005, 135). PTSD often leads to a prolonged mental illness, which psychiatric discourses define and manage by way of medical terms. The foundation for this diagnosis was laid by the studies of Sigmund Freud and Pierre Janet, both of whom were originally neurologists.47 These two lines of

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44 Regarding both of these historical traumas, see also Winston 2001, 5, 64–66, 125–126.
45 Exploration of the posttraumatic symptoms of Vietnam War veterans led to the notion of posttraumatic stress disorder in 1980, formulated by the American Psychiatric Association. It substituted many other terms utilised for this derangement, including Freud’s ‘traumatic neurosis’ (Lindemann 1999, 136; Caruth 1995a, 3). Today, besides war or other collective catastrophes, the diagnosis of PTSD is also used for sudden individual acute stress reactions, such as those in the case of rape or violent attacks, or to the experience of another person’s violent or sudden death.
46 Originally, the Greek ‘trauma’ translates as ‘wound’, and refers to a bodily injury. In the psychiatric literature, the term trauma is understood as a wound inflicted upon the mind (Caruth 1996, 3). As Caruth states, the term exists in this form in various literary and psychoanalytical texts she refers to, for example, in English (trauma), in German (Trauma), and in French (trauma, traumatisme) (Caruth 1996, 112 n2).
47 Both Freud and Janet began with a theory of the experience of accidental traumas from the 1880s onwards. But whereas Janet continued his extensive studies incessantly until the twenties, and outlined the concept of traumatic memory in 1904, Freud considered the topic mainly in three central articles between 1917 and 1939. These articles are Trauer und Melancholie (1917, corrected in 1925), Jenseits des Lustprinzips (1920) and Der Mann Moses und die monoteistische Religion (1939). On Janet’s discovery, see Putnam 1999; Brewin 2005, 139.
study show much similarity at crucial points, which has currently become obvious.48 Seminal for such an integrative approach, Caruth’s multidisciplinary anthology *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) reformulates the concept of trauma on the critical basis of Freud’s theoretical term ‘traumatic neurosis’ presented in his *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920) with apt remarks on Janet’s experimentally reasoned view of traumatic memory. Significantly, Janet’s valuable studies influence the leading trauma researchers and therapists of today, while current cognitive neuroscience supports and specifies the central two points defined by both Freud and Janet (Brewin 2005, 139).

One remark in a broader cultural frame of reference is necessary at this point. Since psychiatric, psychoanalytic and neuropsychological discourses act as interpretative schemes in the social definition of modern reality, they are adequate and functional only in the context which produced them, while they themselves participate in the production of this context (Berger & Luckmann 1971, 196–198).49 Likewise, all forms of trauma fiction including the visual arts belong to the repertoire of contextually changing modes of symbolising trauma and its aftermath in public, which reorganise themselves as social categories in interaction with new historical atrocities and scientific theories formulating violent phenomena.50 Typical of the Western development of the concept of trauma is a traumatic delay in collective working through: while the basics of trauma theory developed vigorously after World War I, only the silent atrocity of the Holocaust gave the crucial impetus to study individual and collective traumas via the anti-Semitic barbarism of the mass society.51 Notably, it was not colonial genocides but the European massacre

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48 The separation from clinical use of the term of trauma seems promising in the light of current debate on historical trauma between psychoanalysis and organicist neurology. The classical opposition of cognitive knowledge and unconscious knowledge is put into question, and the theoretical boundary between the concepts of consciousness and the unconscious is relentlessly in motion. On cognitive issues as connected with socio-historical realities and attendant emotions in a reciprocal psychoanalytic transference, see Davoine & Gaudillière 2004, 23–29.

49 According to Berger’s and Luckmann’s (1971) constructionist theory of representation, for example, Freudian reality produces or determines neurotic people, whereas Haitian Voodoo produces possessed people. As tellingly, the diagnosis of schizophrenia in Western psychiatry is controversial: if the patient is cured from an alleged schizophrenia, it is said that this is because it was not this form of psychosis, but if s/he does not recover, the diagnosis is held as valid (Davoine & Gaudillière 2004, 23–24).

50 On the influence of social structures and institutions as trauma inducing mechanisms, see Ann Cvetkovich’s research on homosexuality, especially lesbianism, as trauma. Cvetkovich (2003, 19) criticises Caruth’s, Judith Herman’s and Ruth Leys’s theories from a socio-historical perspective, which takes trauma as a ‘part of the affective language that describes the life under capitalism’.

51 LaCapra notes that we should not put minor traumatic events in the same category with genocide, that is, the systematic massacre of people on the grounds of racist thinking (LaCapra 2000, 178–179, 194–195). The categories of individual trauma are defined on the grounds of several parameters such as frequency, the grade of severity, the time of exposure, but especially on the quality of emotions (Smucker et al. 2003, 179). The most severe trauma is either living in a death
Fictionalising Trauma

of the Jews that compelled Euro-American researchers to endorse the experience of a sudden catastrophe – collective and individual – as a collapse of (Western) knowledge, and any attempt of narrativising trauma involving a crisis of rational knowledge and truth. Similarly, the diagnosis of PTSD was defined in the US only after the Vietnam War in 1980. Restarting from the Holocaust, again, an interdisciplinary debate was begun considering the conceptualisation and effects of trauma, including the witnessing role of literature. And finally, due to increasing terrorist attacks and ecocatastrophes, especially since the disasters of 9/11, the past decade shows a quantitative and qualitative growth in popular fiction of trauma, especially sentimental bestsellers that rely on mimetic literality. This development unavoidably contributes to the redefinitions of trauma as a social and historical category (see e.g. Hyvärinen & Muszynski 2008).

Despite theoretical setbacks whose ideological background we cannot deny, both Freud and Janet had already identified the temporal delay of the experience of trauma – Freud’s Nachträglichkeit. It is characterised by a pattern of gradual suffering, which is not experienced at the moment of the initial shock, but in the relationship between the original event and the later moments of its here-and-now type remembering. This appears either spontaneously as flashbacks, hallucinations, and dreams, or as induced by triggering cues that in some respect resemble the original event. The second pivotal feature, extensively demonstrated by Janet, is the survivor’s tendency to enact repetitively the course of the event as an embodied drama while her/his faculty of verbalising the event is injured (van der Hart & van der Kolk 1995, 160–162). Most importantly, this split is currently verified to be a functional separation between nonverbal and verbal processing with the help of repeated psychological and narrative testing in relation to functional MRI-imaging discoveries (Vasterling & Brewin 2005). As they thus have reached some consensus on traumatic response as an adaptive reaction, the trauma experts reformulate the Janetian concept of traumatic memory as a fruitful source for a new understanding, which is not necessarily in conflict with Freud’s theory of the repressed uncanny. Rather, neuroscientific research can clarify the idea of the ‘literalisation’ of symbolic signs of trauma, if we substitute ‘repression’ for a parallel processing of traumatic image and affect (cf. Kristeva 1991, 186; van Boheemen-Saaf 1999, 2).53

52 The most radical criticism of the the legacy of the Enlightenment for modernity is presented in Theodor Adorno’s and Max Horkheimer’s Dialektik der Aufklärung (1947) which saw the Western concept of rationalism include within it the seeds of its own totalitarian destruction. Moreover, their Negative Dialektik (1973) considers the limit of the representation of suffering and the silenced history of the exterminated victims (on the theoretical development of this line of study, see Rothberg 2000).

53 On Freud’s notes on the fragility of repression and the weakness of language as a symbolic barrier, see Kristeva 1991, 186–187. If Kristeva speaks of a reification of symbolic signs, Christine van Boheemen-Saaf (1999, 2) calls the literalisation of these signs ‘somatisation’.
The experience of trauma is traditionally launched as a phenomenon that ‘cannot be fully known’, an unheimlich ‘non-experience’ (Caruth 1995, 4−5; 1996, 3). In the light of the idea of an embodied mind, this logocentric characterisation is not necessarily self-evident. Most challenging for a narrativisation is the acute psychogenic shock which alters radically the individual's consciousness. In Geoffrey Hartman’s (1995, 537) words, the shocking event ‘falls’ into the psyche as ‘cold’ images, and causes the psyche to ‘split’. But taking this traumatic memory as an adaptive response, the focus is shifted today onto the body’s non-linguistic cognitive intelligence which works hand in hand with language, and is motivated by emotion (Ogden et al. 2006, 140). For, at the moment of shock, the traumatic event is registered in the psyche as clear, selective, timeless, multisensory images, which are stored in the embodied, emotional unconscious – ‘adaptive nonconscious’ – where they are mostly within the reach of conscious sensorimotor retrieval (Brewin 2005, 134, 139; Modell 2003, 47). Such a multisensory flashback is in most cases accountable via an embodied route, and can be elicited spontaneously or as triggered by some perceptual, emotion-laden cue. Therefore, a traumatic image cannot be simply reduced to the material lying in the Freudian dynamic unconscious behind repression but is, rather, suggestive of the early Freudian ‘preconscious’ and thus within the reach of metaphorical expression (Silverman 1983, 86).

When dismantling the idea of a total ‘unaccountability’ of trauma, most informative is the dual-representation theory of traumatic memory, presented by Chris R. Brewin (2005, 139−143). It predicts that the outrage of an extremely distressing experience sets in motion a physiological defence mechanism, where the two types of memory begin to act in parallel but detached from each other: the

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54 As Laura Brown notes when discussing prolonged interpersonal traumas in everyday life, trauma cannot be reduced merely to ‘an event outside the range of human experience’. Rather, in the everyday of women, lesbians, and gays, or other marginalised groups, trauma can be present as the continual threat of being assaulted, but also pathologised for the adaptive response that produces traumatic flashbacks, avoidance, and fear (Brown 1995, 100, 105).
55 Regarding the neuropsychology of this ‘split’ see van der Kolk 1999, 318; on ‘internal psychic splitting’ and literature, see Abraham and Torok 1994, 100; on splitting and duplication, see Wolfeys 2002, 144.
56 This idea is based on the generally accepted conception of dual memory: the implicit bodily (non-declarative) memory and the explicit (declarative) memory, which together are responsible for human long-term memory as a fluently cooperating system. While the implicit memory stores automatic, emotional, and sensory-motor materials, the explicit memory stores easily verbalisable facts and events (LeDoux 2002, 102; van der Kolk 1999, 311).
57 Only in a minority of the most extreme cases is the traumatic material totally beyond reach (Brewin 2005, 134). Rather, as Hartman (1995, 540) states, the traumatic word or image is ‘epiph-anic’, or ‘burnt into the brain’.
58 Concerning the relations of Freud’s dynamic unconscious and the emotion-laden cognitive non-conscious, see Modell 2006, 47−48.
59 On the single and multiple representation theories of trauma, see Brewin 2005, 136−139.
verbally accessible (explicit, narrative) memory, and the bodily (implicit) memory, the latter referring to situationally provokable flashbacks of trauma. Due to a thalamic dysfunction, the human brain goes through a profound functional change while consciousness is radically altered, the implicit memory system acting separately from that of the explicit one, while the linear, verbally-based ‘rational’ thinking is taken ‘off-line’ (Southwick et al. 2005, 33, 47; Ogden et al. 2006, 141). It follows that the extremely vivid memory image of the high-arousal event is processed independently from the narrative memory, whereupon trauma can be enacted but not readily spoken out (Brewin 2005, 133–135). This corresponds to a paralysis of our innate capacity of metaphoric thought, while the ‘mind is limited to metonymic associations to the original trauma’ (Modell 2006, 176). But since the bodily memory remains intact (ibid., 139–140, 142), it is translatable later into verbal narratives from the intrinsic sensations and affects combined with the perceptual traces of the mental image. The symbolisation process becomes possible after an adaptive delay, during which the embodied signs of the initial horror are reorganised in the implicit memory in relation to the iconic image of trauma (cf. van Oort 2003, 255–256). In this manner, the dual representation theory lifts emotion to the centre of trauma’s symbolisation, and emphasises the cooperation of the embodied and narrative memory for survival.

Fundamentally, for me, a critical conversion from the embodied imagery into text implies a recovery of metaphoric capacity, understood as an inner faculty of the human unconscious that has co-developed with language (Modell 2006, 189, 191). The question is: how the multisensory image of the event that is stored in the embodied memory as an affectively frozen, dramatic disposition is converted into words, and integrated with the strong affect of horror? Crucial to our psycho-social balance, the grief-work begins as provoked by repetitive recollections of the ‘cold’ flashbacks, always accompanied by a heightened physiological arousal. A sensorimotor reliving of imagery in the presence of an undifferentiated horror is required in order that it can be assimilated into language. Therefore the mind searches for a sufficient linguistic correlate for the sensory and perceptual material during serially emerging expressive re-enactments. But because of the functional impairment in metaphoric thought, the narrative revolves around the most wounding ‘literal’ detail of the event, which is condensed into some metonymical key trope provoking undifferentiated horror. In tandem with

60 The contents of these alternative memory representations differ from each other, the flashback memory containing detailed affective and embodied information of the perceptual and sensory image of the event, and the narrative memory involving fragmented but not totally incommunicable material of emotional and cognitive assessments of the lived.

61 Richard van Oort’s (2003, 250–263) cognitive treatise on symbolic representation in terms of Peircean semiotics aptly presents how bodily indices are transformed into language. Parallel to this, on the evolution of gestural communication into metaphorical language, see Modell 2006, 187–191.
repetitive verbalisations, this initial feeling goes through a transformation towards culturally definable emotions such as fear, rage, shame, and sorrow, whereupon the 'literal' image is imbued with new emotions. Such a reworking leads to a metaphoricalisation of the lived, which makes narration extremely susceptible to phantasmatic variation, and the critical modes of trauma’s fictionalisation extremely polymorphic.62 This progress does not, however, demolish the central metonymy which retains its ability to draw into itself new emotions in new textual contexts, and thus tends to become an emblematic figure. As a result, a successful narrativisation shifts the survivor-writer into a more powerful emotional position in relation to the traumatising agent.63

In summary, the contemporary theory of traumatic memory accords with the postrational concept of subjectivity that is understood as a seamless combination of the embodied, emotional, and cognitive parts of the self. However, the current theory of mind still struggles for a justified place for emotion and a relational embodied simulation of the ‘other’ in cognition and symbolic order (see Hari and Kujala 2009). When now drawing on this embodied concept of working through, I adapt it to Durasian trauma fiction in two meanings: as a creative literary work, and as a thematic structure in the India Cycle. However, the delay or incompleteness of knowing an overwhelming occurrence – both the event and its experience – raises complex ethical problems concerning historical and poetic re/presentations of trauma. As Caruth (1995a, 5) underlines, in our post-traumatic era, it is most important to ‘listen’ to the traumatised other, for each survivor conveys new knowledge about the pathology of human history.64 This crystallises the question in which ways narrativisation of trauma can pay special attention to the embodied referentiality of the matter. As expressive means, mimetic figurative devices are invaluable. But it is just as indispensable to take self-reflexive distance from this ‘literal’ tropology, in order to prevent one from equating traumatic experience with its verbalisations. Focused on these aspects of the India Cycle, my study shows that when Duras’s figures refer to a mimicry and re-enactment of wounding events, her metaphorical extract from life is always filtered through a critical scope of metatextual commentaries which try to prevent secondary traumatisation by challenging all her tentative symbolisations.

62 Modell (2006, 176) importantly observes that, as a response to severe trauma such as the Holocaust, metaphorical thinking is foreclosed forever, whereupon the survivors live in a world ‘beyond metaphor’.
63 On such a process in emotion-focused cognitive therapy, see Smucker et al. 2003; in sensorimotor therapy, see Ogden et al. 2006.
64 As Caruth puts it, the traumatised ‘carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess’ (Caruth, 1995a, 5).
The Outline of the Study

This study is divided into six chapters, of which the first two lay the theoretical basis for an aesthetics of Durasian trauma fiction, and outline the global structure of the India Cycle. The third through the fifth chapters analyse three thematic topics that arise from this formal analysis: the problem of witnessing trauma through narrative constructions, the trope of the madwoman arising from traumatic loss, and the dilemma of the colonisers and their self-destructive passion. These are examined by way of a close reading of the India Cycle's novels in terms of working through historical trauma. The sixth chapter is devoted to the film India Song as the concluding synthesis of all these topics concerning colonial trauma - while its counterpart, Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert, must wait for further cinematic explorations.

Chapter I. introduces the manner with which Duras converts her embodied, emotional imagery of colonial trauma into fiction. At first I specify the notion of critical working-through as a transformation from traumatic memories into art, adding the crucial point of cognitive theory which presupposes fictionalisation to involve an emotional change. From this basis, I turn to examine the transfiguration process of Durasian working-through by comparing Duras's 'intentional affection' with Marcel Proust's usage of involuntary memory as a producer of melancholic nostalgia. Finally, I show that Duras's style appears to be akin to that of some early modernists, especially Virginia Woolf, as she modifies traumatic memories into art with the help of recurring metonymies as a central nodus of an affective change.

Chapter II. interprets the content of the form of the India Cycle as a poiesis of trauma. First, holding trauma as a thematic structure in the light of Rothberg's (2000) 'traumatic realism' and Whitehead's (2004) 'trauma fiction', I elucidate Duras's literary devices such as the repetition of analogical narratives, metafictional structures, and key metonymies, which build a network of mirroring relationships between the colonial accomplices. Second, in the light of possible world theory (Ryan 1991; Herman 2002), I demonstrate how Duras's method of metafiction acts as a witnessing technique, as it creates a stratigraphic system of metaphorical worlds portraying colonial Asia and inter-war Europe. Third, within the frame of this basic architecture, I explore the analytical possibilities of Rothberg's 'traumatic index' for fictionalising trauma. I expand it into an expressive tool, which illuminates the role of the double-edged emotion of horror typical of traumatic memory in a creative metaphoricalisation of traumatic images.

Chapter III. examines the role and function of the two white male bystanders as witnesses of the rejected heroines in Le ravissement and Le Vice-consul. Reading the men's literary testimonies as examples of fictionalising the 'other's' trauma, I interpret them as 'Talking' according to Irene Kacandes's (2001) proposal, which combines Erving Goffman's theory of social exchange with Shoshana Felman's and Dori Laub's (1992) study of witnessing. As two variations of a narrator/
narrated relationship, these tentative testimonies evoke the identity problem of the Western white male writer, thereby epitomising the problems of Western post-rational subjectivity. Being alternative fictionalisations of individual trauma, these narratives disclose the importance of the emotional resonance of a wounded ‘other’ in and for the formation of an embodied social self.

Chapter IV fathoms how the trope of madwoman – the figure of Lol V. Stein assisted by that of the Cambodian mendicant – gradually develops from *Le ravissement* and *Le Vice-consul* via *L’amour* towards a peculiar form of ‘forgetting’ completed in *La Femme du Gange*. To this aim, I treat the notion of ‘madwoman’ as a Durasian version of the classical female trope used as a sign of resistance in the tradition of Western novels. In Duras’s hands, the traumatic rejection of two dissimilar ethnic women creates two distinct routes towards forgetting: social enactment and lonely physical suffering. In *L’amour’s* deserted landscape, the dimension of forgetting is transformed into a subversive trope of an autistic madwoman. I read this new type of modern mendicant as an allegorical figure that dismantles the Western notion of psychic normality by blurring the boundaries between literal/emblematic, body/mind and consciousness/the unconscious.

Chapter V pursues the entanglement of passionate love and self-destructive narcissism represented by the dramatic encounter between the two colonial perpetrators in *Le Vice-consul*, Anne-Marie Stretter and the Vice-consul. I first outline the universe of fictional India as a caricatured system of world within world, and then throw light on the criminal’s character within the framework of Mary Douglas’s theory of the rite of purification (1996). Finally I explore the ritualistic encounter between the protagonists, which revolves around the figure of romantic love at the top of a racial hierarchy. In this drama within drama, the mutual consonance between the perpetrators is concealed from the controlling gaze of the white society. As an outcome of the criminal’s provocative cry, his ritual exclusion reveals the European value system, whereby the notion of possessing love appears to cover the hollow core of the commercialised figure of Western heterosexual love.

Finally, Chapter VI. views the film *India Song* as an ambiguous rite of mourning of decaying colonial power. There the motif of colonial crime is memorialised through the suicide of the white heroine, Anne-Marie Stretter, with peculiar cooperation between dual audial and visual structures. First I illuminate how the cinematic metanarration of timeless dialogues compels the audience to take diverse positions as witnesses by distancing and immersing one in turn. Then I specify how certain key images and sounds are emblematic of the white colonial trauma, and how possessing love in a Western heterosexual relationship tends to establish narcissistic melancholy as mannerism of modernist life. In the end, as it represents a farewell to European colonialism in Asia, the controversial mission of *India Song* is to provide a counter-discourse against apathy and depression as totalising characteristics of Western post-war cultures.
I. Memory, Discourse, Fiction: The Birth of the Absent Story

While the India Cycle represents a rescription of Duras’s own corporeal and affective experiences, it simultaneously thematises man-made historical traumas by paralleling various stylistic pathways to fictionalisation. The resultant work is highly dialogical in nature: four different stories of traumatised people mirror each other as analogical structures, which multiply the motif of loss by gradually building a rich network of intratextual references within the cycle. What is more, preventing identification and closure, a foregrounded usage of self-reflexive and metafictional techniques creates a critical distance to these narratives. These features, especially the complex system of ontological levels, justify for Durasian trauma fiction a place among critical postmodern reworkings of historical traumas. To particularise the India Cycle as an active grief work of historical trauma, it is helpful to distinguish between the notions of mourning and melancholy, all the more so as psychoanalytic interpretations categorise Duras’s rhetorics as melancholic (depressive), while they simultaneously argue for mourning that hovers on the verge of mental illness (see Kristeva 1987, 242). Indeed, Jacques Lacan’s (1965) and Julia Kristeva’s (1987) influential but cursory characterisations of Duras’s work have made such an approach canonical.

Therefore, the following three sections explore the India Cycle as a public mode of a working-through, and posit Duras in the ongoing debate on the reinterpretation of her work. 

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1 ‘What hits one during writing is no doubt quite simply the mass of the lived, if it can be stated so bluntly… But this mass of the lived, non-invented, non-rationalised, is in a kind of original disorder. One is haunted by the lived mass of one’s own. One has to let it happen…’ In the interview with Jean Schuster, published in Archibras No 2, Le Terrain vague, octobre 1967; reprinted in Marguerite Duras by Alain Vircondelet, Seghers, 1972, 173; Quoted in Armel 1994, 15. (Trans. SK)

2 Melancholy as a historically changing concept is beyond the scope of this study. My discussion is purposefully limited to the concept of Freudian melancholy, which I understand as one major turn among the historical definitions and usages of the notion over the centuries in the West. For more on these turns, see Radden, Jennifer 2000; for more references, see LaCapra 2009, 6 n6.

3 Based on Lacan’s Hommage à Marguerite Duras (1965), most of the psychoanalytical oriented studies have been written before the renewed debate on trauma started from the eighties onwards. These studies consider the traumatic memories of Duras’s heroines in terms of Freudian repression, while her presentation of sex and gender is interpreted on the essentialist pole of the bipolar axis of feminist essentialism and constructivism (Winston 1997, 232). This hegemonic line of research that limits Durasian tropology into the Oedipal scheme cannot illuminate how her postcolonial rhetoric rather dismantles the Western concept of subjectivity as a mere Oedipal construction.
of Freudian mourning and melancholy. To this aim, I adapt LaCapra’s proposal of critical working through historical trauma to the current theory of traumatic memory (LaCapra 2004, 55; Ogden et al. 2006). First, I specify how Duras, unlike Proust, transforms trauma from its embodied material into fiction through an emotional change. Second, I outline her ‘intentional affection’ as an intermediary grief work integrating Freudian melancholy and mourning. Third, I identify Duras’s style with that of those modernists who ‘decipher the non-rationalised mass of the lived’ by converting it into specific types of metonymic figures.

In his work History in Transit (2004, 56), LaCapra holds memory-work as ‘one of the greatest challenges in coming to terms with personal and collective traumas’, which needs ‘viable and ethically and politically desirable ways’ of working through. In so saying, he searches for new forms of processing the transformation of mental experiences of historical trauma into arts, which he interprets as a conscious and self-critical mourning. More acutely, targeting the paralysing repression of a melancholic ‘wound culture’ that would follow an unspecified trauma theory, LaCapra demands that this kind of working-through should more clearly adopt the status of socially engaged memory-work (ibid., 123; 2000, 195). His argument thus tries to counteract compulsive repetition of persons and societies possessed by the past (ibid., 55–56). For him, only this kind of critical activity has the capability to generate counterforces to an unprofitable symptomatic ‘acting out’ in transferential relations disturbing everyday life (ibid., 9–10). As La Capra puts it,

Working-through means work on posttraumatic symptoms in order to mitigate the effects of trauma by generating counterforces to compulsive repetition (acting out), thereby enabling a more viable articulation of affect and cognition or representation, as well as ethical and socio-political agency, in the present and future. (ibid., 119, emphasis original)

For Jeremy Holmes (2001, 14), the term ‘working through’ is a ‘glib term for an often unbearably painful process’ which may consist, for example, of ‘reinstating the lost loved in the inner world of the bereaved’. Usually, an effective working-through necessitates a long dialogical relationship with an experienced trauma therapist (ibid., 14–16, 80–84). As it extends beyond a clinical approach, LaCapra’s cultural theory of working through as narration and critical practice offers a relevant ethical contribution.

LaCapra effectively describes the ability of narrating trauma by way of Walter Benjamin’s distinction between his concepts of Erlebnis and Erfahrung. Whereas Erlebnis is an overwhelming, unintegrated experience, such as the shock of Fronterlebnis (the soldiers’ traumatic experience at the front in the World War I), Erfahrung is a relatively integrated experience related to such procedures as storytelling or narration. Thus, narrativisation represents a shift from Erlebnis to Erfahrung (LaCapra 2004, 54–55, 118).

Importantly, LaCapra (2004, 54–55) states that ‘acting out’ trauma should not be pathologised as such, but it can be rather understood as an alternative pathway of reliving trauma, as will be shown in this study. Freud defines the term ‘acting out’ as enacting the traumatic event in case the victim does not remember it: ‘he reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he repeats
As LaCapra’s approach gives the main role to the experience of the historical subject, at the same time it avoids interpreting trauma as a free-floating condition accessible to everyone through a literary text. Critical of Cathy Caruth (1995), Shoshana Felman (1995), and Ruth Leys (2000), LaCapra warns of fusing the absence of total knowledge with historical loss, which may sacralise or render sublime the compulsive repetition of a traumatic past (LaCapra 2004, 119–124).\(^7\) In terms of current trauma theory, such a clinging to an eternal symbolic ‘unaccountability’ of a totalised phenomenon of trauma, without addressing embodied memory as a mode of knowing, produces such an effect. Moreover, while he speaks for a continual rethinking and renegotiation of working through, LaCapra insists on the historical and cultural specificity of the discourses of trauma and memory. He is in line with those theoreticians who start from Theodor Adorno’s late demand: that the aesthetics of trauma must resist the verdict of the inability to express the voice of suffering, and understand post-traumatic memory as a cultural construction which both draws and innovates on the available cultural frameworks and traditions (ibid., 122, 143 n50).\(^8\) The goal of a social working-through is remembering historical trauma with ‘some degree of conscious control and critical perspective that enables survival and, in the best of circumstances, ethical and political agency in the present’ (ibid., 56). Finally, avoiding any homogenising notion of ‘desire’, but taking into account the phantasmatic dimension prevailing in all cultural artefacts – the indirect expressions of repression or dissociation included – LaCapra argues for a critical symptomatic reading that combines both the unconscious and conscious aspects of a transformation of trauma (ibid., 9).\(^9\)

Seen in this perspective, the India Cycle incarnates Duras’s prolonged working-through of colonial trauma as ‘critical mimicry’. In a form of fictional variations, Duras thematises the colonial disaster on the basis of her long-lasting experiences it, without knowing, of course, that he is repeating, and in the end, we understand that this is his way of remembering’ (Freud: Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety 1926, 150, quoted in van der Kolk and van der Hart 1995, 167). This definition corresponds to Janet’s most illustrative example of his patient’s dramatic enactment indicating traumatic memory (ibid., 160–163; Janet 1928). In fact, both Janet and Freud postulated that the unsymbolised, muted affect and cognition associated with trauma can eventually be combined through access to verbal narrative (van der Kolk and van der Hart, 1995, 167).

7 LaCapra (2004, 84–88) resists Leys’s non-psychoanalytic assessment of trauma studies, which categorises these as a mode of symptomatic ‘acting out’ by drawing attention to her own narrative account to the mimetic/antimimetic polarity of trauma studies. Rather, LaCapra advocates a ‘more viable articulation of affect and cognition or representation, as well as ethical and sociopolitical agency’ to mitigate the effects of trauma (ibid., 119).

8 See also Bennett & Kennedy 2003, 12.

9 A homogenising notion of (Lacanian) ‘desire’ as an ‘ontology of lack’ has obviously paralysed psychoanalytic Duras research. Alternatively, I understand ‘desire’ as an ‘ontology of intention’ proposed in the attachment theory’s model of the development of a social self, which emphasises security as produced in an embodied dialogue between the parent and the child, but does not deny the value of sexual desire.
of the Asiatic historical climate in the thirties as filtered through the experiences of World War II and its aftermath. Instead of attempting to faithfully produce mimetic copies of the author’s haunting flashbacks, but rather transforming them into the lives of imagined characters in metaphorical surroundings, the India Cycle epitomises a dialectical memory-work from experiences to their creative fictionalisation. This process leads to a profiled series of interfigural works, upon which Duras discharged her troubling memories. And if not bringing her maternal trauma to a final conclusion, she critically reprocesses the ethical problem of racial and sexual subordination, and distances herself from its depressing powers by various metanarrative devices. Indeed, as Suzette A. Henke indicates in her study _Shattered Subjects_ (2000, xviii), literary expression can be a decisive part of a healing process for the writer, while it offers help for the reader by creating a sense of safety through refigurations of trauma narratives, thus recreating connectedness with others and the world.\(^\text{10}\) Also for LaCapra, one of the important reworkings of historical trauma is experimental narrative, including lyric, essay, and performative modes such as ritual, song, and dance. Especially non-totalising modernist narratives which do not necessarily imply closure or redemption belong to this category (LaCapra 2004, 118).\(^\text{11}\)

With the form of cyclic circulation which defies realistic representation, Duras’s India Cycle can easily be included in non-conventional narratives which have no clear structure of beginning-middle part-end, or stable referential objects of narration.\(^\text{12}\) What needs a precision is the alleged melancholy and nostalgic exoticism reproduced in Duras’s works. I will study this problem in relation to Proust’s method of using involuntary memory, which famously creates an atmosphere traditionally held as melancholic nostalgia in his major work _À la Recherche du temps perdu_ (1908–1922). For, as Duras fathoms profoundly the relation between remembering and forgetting of traumatic loss within the cycle, neither her literary technique nor its highly stylised outcome is comparable to Proust’s incessant textual aspiration for a lost paradise. Rather, Durasian figural aesthetics comes close to those literary experimentations of the modernist writers of loss such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and William Faulkner who, obsessed with emotionally deep personal loss, transferred their traumatic experiences into

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\(^\text{10}\) Henke analyses multiple types of women’s autobiographical narratives considering rape, incest, the enclosure in mental asylums, and sexual and economic subordination due to racial discrimination, written by Colette, H. D., Anaïs Nin, Janet Frame, Audre Lorde, and Sylvia Fraser.

\(^\text{11}\) LaCapra (2000, 182) mentions the novels of Gustave Flaubert, James Joyce, Robert Musil, Virginia Woolf, and Samuel Beckett.

\(^\text{12}\) For LaCapra (2000, 182), conventional narratives and fundamentalist scenarios understand lack frequently as implying loss, whereupon some redemption is needed to bring back the distorted status quo. By contrast, non-conventional, open-ended experimental narratives, which do not exploit a beginning-middle-end plot, enable ‘more desirable configurations that cannot be equated with salvation or redemption’ (ibid., 186).
the arts with help of associative memory and the practice of emotional processing and recontextualisation (Nalbantian 2003, 77, 99). This qualitative difference addresses the problem of the memory work of trauma as a form of critical poiēsis understood as a singular transformation from embodied memory into recurring key figures that pent-up personal affects feed and modify. Not just recording or duplicating the lived, such an individual working-through creates narratives irreducible to any formal calculations or programmatic or dominant discourses (Felman 1992, 108; Neimeyer & Tschudi 2003, 169).

On Duras’s Critical Working-Through

When working on Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein, Duras intuitively grasped the visual zone of her shocking memories with an act of automatic writing, as if resurrecting André Breton’s surrealist intention to pass conscious and rational deliberation without external triggers (on Breton, see Nalbantian 2003, 100, 105). In her excellent article ‘La force magique de l’ombre interne’, Aliette Armel describes how Duras plunged into the dark of her individual l’ombre interne (inner shadow). Wanting to catch the avalanche of her inner images, she wrote them down as quickly as possible, under a psychic pressure the nature of which she voiced: ‘Vite, vite écrire, qu’on n’oublie pas comment c’est arrivé vers soi’ (Quickly, write quickly that you don’t forget how it came to you). But instead of the surrealists’ habit of textualising dreams, Duras made use of the ‘mass of the lived which is neither invented nor rationalised’ as the sheer material of her works, with a qualitatively different memorising method and purpose from that of Proust. She explicitly rejected the psychoanalytical primary process of dreams – Freudian condensation and displacement – as a source, and rather yielded herself up to her most haunting memories. Thus her method was a voluntary exposure to those

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13 In terms of trauma, on Woolf, see Henke and Eberly 2007, on Joyce, see van Boheemen-Saaf 1999.

14 Armel (1994) specifies three further terms that Duras gave from 1966 onwards to her act of recalling the lived past, which describe the hidden, nearly unaccountable side of the human mind. In Le Navire Night (1978), it is l’image noire; in L’Été (1980), it is la chambre noire, as if alluding to Roland Barthes’s La Chambre claire; in La Vie matérielle (1987), it is le bloc noir. Similarly, since the strength of the post-traumatic memory trace appears to be deeply engraved, some psychiatric researchers have called it ‘the black hole’ in the mental life of the person (van der Kolk 1999, 315).

15 As she tells, Duras wrote Lol’s story easily in three months, on the verge of a frightening ‘madness’ (folie) (Adler 2000, 248–253). The novel gave Duras the first vague inkling of a new way of writing from the ‘dark’ that she later defined as ‘ignorance’, her catchword in the beginning of the seventies for the unknown creative source of a woman writer (Cohen 1993, 15).

16 Duras declared in 1986 that she did not utilise her dreams as models of her works: ‘Je ne crois pas au rêve. J’écris’ (‘I do not trust dreams. I write.’ Armel 1994, 15). This opinion naturally does not impede the contribution of dynamic unconscious to her narratives (cf. Modell 2006, 47–48). In Freudian terms, the dynamic unconscious persistently tends to invade and mould the memorised
flashback-like images which were inadequately processed in terms of her emotional memory. These images translated themselves into words during a rescription, whose ‘existential strength overflowed the unconscious’, as Armel notes (1994, 15). But aside from the irresistible need for psychic liberation through aesthetic activity, Duras’s mode of automatic writing also served an emancipatory purpose. By rapidly textualising her multisensory images, unlike the surrealists, Duras did not consciously want to ‘free symbolic signifiers’ by unconscious material or ‘translate the inhibited desires of their dreamlike manifestations’ (ibid.). Rather, the activation of these preconscious images contributed to the deconstruction of terms such as ‘body’, ‘subject’, ‘other’, ‘imagined’, ‘language’ and ‘social’, based on conventional relationships in Western individualism (Marini 1985, 22).17

Hence, when Duras’s translates the haunting memory into artistic realisation, it corresponds to a grief work which intentionally calls up the implicit metaphoric process that is operative in embodied imagery in the presence of strong emotions (Modell 2006, 38). As evidenced in current neuropsychological studies, traumatic memories are stored in three kinds of memory: first, as sensorimotor dispositions and exceptionally clear, selective visual imagery, second, as strong negative affects, both in the implicit memory. Third, they are stored tacitly in the explicit, narrative memory which is arduously awakened after a delay by virtue of either spontaneous or triggered imagery (Brewin 2005).18 Moreover, the multisensory material of the implicit memory is amenable to symbolic processing only when the negative emotions of horror and fear, or other more complex emotions – the emotional unconscious19 – are relived during an imaginative exposure to the past events, and metaphorically rescripted and recontextualised while transformed material, which makes memory a fascinating object of psychoanalytic interpretation. And as indicated by trauma studies, the susceptibility to fantasy tends to increase with the time in both traumatic flashbacks and ordinary flashbulb memories (regarding the latter, see Brewin 2005, 132).

17 Also Susan D. Cohen notes, referring to Teresa de Lauretis, that Duras does not advocate the concept of presentation cut off from concrete conditions, but locates her heroins ‘in the personal, the subjective, the body, the symptomatic, the quotidian, as the very site of material inscription of the ideological; that is to say the ground where socio-political determinations take hold and are real-ized’ (Cohen 1993, 5–6).

18 In this formulation, I combine the ideas of two experts’ reports on traumatic memory: the neuroscientific one, (Brewin 2005) and the neuropsychoanalytic one (Modell 2006). While Chris R. Brewin’s review is based on current neuroimaging (external) techniques in relation to neuropsychological (internal) studies, Arnold H. Modell adapts the results of neuroscience into psychoanalysis. Worth noting here is that Brewin’s dual representation theory was not yet available eight years ago, which is clearly seen in Leys’s *Trauma. A Genealogy* (cf. Leys 2000, 249–251, 265). Also other studies have striven for conceptualising the body as a site of memory so as to find a valid correlate to the embodied memory (Felman 1992, 108; van Boheemen-Saaf 1999, 112–113).

19 As Arnold H. Modell emphasises, the concept of the cognitive unconscious – the ‘adaptive non-conscious’ – is different from the analytical unconscious which Freud defined as being behind repression. This cognitive unconscious – preconscious – must include an emotional unconscious which is not opposite to reasoning but rather part of it (Modell 2006, 47–48, 135).
Fictionalising Trauma

In this light, Duras’s willed exposure to her imagery exemplifies a valuable mode of transferring trauma into artistic language. For only when these images are imbued with emotion in a physical re-enactment, can they carry the past experience into the present and future, thus enabling the appearance of dissociated material for verbalisation and communication.

To be more precise, the embodied material can become integrated into one’s own autobiographical knowledge only when relived in a fashion that modifies unconscious cognitive schemes by changing fear and horror to more empowering emotions. When thus the wordless material is taken into the realm of ordinary narrative memory in a new emotional context which breaks the intact memory image, narrativisation becomes a liberating experience (Smucker 2003; Modell 2006, 40). As Georges Bataille (1995, 226–228) states, an intelligible representation of catastrophe necessitates a lived presence of the emotive element as to be inserted into human cultural history. Hence, any productive access to trauma implies a modifying repetition of the visions of shattering experience as combined with a relived restructuring of schematised feelings, which provides the survivor a stronger, liberating position in relation to the original event. Therefore, searching for this liberation, narratives of trauma do not follow any consistent chronology or causality, but typically reorganise the belated fragments of cyclically recurring figures arising from the embodied representations of the experience (LaCapra 2004, 55–56; Caruth 1995b, 154).

In the light of this approach, Duras’s intention to transgress traditional discourses with a self-induced exposure to visual cognition is informative. Far from being occasional or random, her deliberate evocation of intrusive images makes visible some negative emotional scheme − mainly fear and terror − that emerges from the adaptive non-conscious layer of the embodied memory. This programmatic exposure led Duras to reprocess her most affect-laden memories in a metaphorical procedure which imaginatively changed the meaning of the past. Concerning Duras’s intrusive imagery, according to her interviews and novels, all the models of the India Cycle’s main characters captivated her with unsettling affects which, however, differ clearly from each other in quality. While the memories of the Cambodian beggar women and their dying children elicited

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20 This imagery rescripting and reprocessing therapy was demonstrated brilliantly by Mervin R. Smucker in the European Annual Congress of Cognitive Therapy, held in Helsinki, September 2008.

21 LaCapra redefines Janet’s and Freud’s concept of traumatic memory into his usage of recalling historical trauma during conscious social and ethical memory work. In his words, traumatic memory involves, in Freud’s account, ‘belated temporality and a period of latency between a real or fantasized early event and a later one that somehow recalls it and triggers renewed repression, dissociation, or foreclosure and intrusive behavior’ (LaCapra 2004, 119; see also 55–56). Various usages of parallel terms such as ‘bodily memory’ and ‘deep memory’ can be found in Bennett and Kennedy, 2004.
pure fear and horror (AM, 103−104), those of Lol’s model, an insane young woman in a mental hospital in Paris evoked, besides anxiety and fear, more complex feelings such as curiosity and compassion (Adler 2000, 249−250). Moreover, Elisabeth Striedter, whom Duras saw in Vinh Long at eight years of age, awakened a revelation of female sexuality with a mixture of horror and astonishment, all the more so as the figure was combined with the story of this admirable woman’s lover’s public suicide (AM 109; P, 171). And finally, the Jewish model of the Vice-consul reading the Bible evoked persistently controversial feelings (cf. C, 377–381; Noguez 2001, 75). It is arguable to what extent and in which details these flashbulb-type memories are traumatic, but all of them returned in the haunting manner of traumatic flashbacks which the writer could call out and affectively relive in her mind. Striking here is that only the ethnic ‘other’ and her state of abasement elicited pure horror in the writer, whereas the European white persons induced more complex emotions. Together with the author’s own actual and later experiences of passion and death, these original affects reshaped her memory images into fictional figures, which then began to live their own cyclic lives.

Duras’s technique of rapid note-taking in the dark during her self-induced exposure to memory images is at some critical points similar to Proust’s memory work. Both Proust’s and Duras’s memory retrieval trace the interaction of emotion and cognition by concentrating on sensory, perceptual, emotional and associative material in silence and in the dark, thereby calling into question Western ocularcentrism. Proust was writing in a darkened room, which was illuminated with artificial light during the day as if imitating night so that he would lose none of the ‘intricate arabesques’ arising from his sensations (Miller 1982, 7). Moreover, Duras states of her visual imagery: ‘Les choses terribles ou non-terribles, intimidantes ou insolites… Il faut, ou les taire, ou puiser dans le silence la force de les dire: ce qui, sans doute est écrire.’ (Terrible or not terrible things, intimidating or odd … one must either silence them, or acquire in silence the force to say them: that is, undoubtedly, writing; Armel 1994, 13; emphasis Duras’s). Both Proust
and Duras varied as sensitively and phantasmatically their inner images, which reflects the fact that an occasional sensory trigger and an intrusive traumatic memory employ the same route of embodied memory for linguistic reprocessing (Nalbantian 2003, 67–68). Just as some unexpected physical sensation awakens the involuntary memory and opens the way to the expanding visual scenes of the past for imagination, a casual cue of the traumatic event may elicit the crystal clear, ‘cold’ image of embodied memory with simultaneous affect of terror and anxiety.26 But while both Proust and Duras benefit from the psychic twilight-zone when bypassing the daylight control of the conscious mind, the emotional reorganisation and literary handling of the surfacing memories differs at important points concerning the subject of narration, time, and imagination.

There are several discernable differences between contemplating an involuntarily emerging past and converting haunting traumatic images into fiction. Aside from the mode of eliciting the inner images, these differences concern the grade and quality of the sensorimotor and emotional experience of loss, and the way of casting these images in artistic form. Not suffering from major traumas, Proust yielded himself to an involuntary material as triggered by some occasional sensory signal so as to convert his bittersweet past into symbolic form, whereupon his task belongs to the realm of unimpaired narrative memory. While he strived for memories of a lost paradise, even though these memories were often wounding on his own personal scale, his project was tinged with nostalgic pleasure.27 Elicited mainly by tactile, olfactory, and audio sensations, his scenes produced primarily states of delight, aesthetic pleasure and happiness (ibid., 73–74).28 These chiefly non-traumatic engrams were explicated through widely descriptive, smoothly proceeding language, which enabled the wounding episodes of his paradise to be expressed and iteratively reflected upon. For these reasons, his fluent verbalisation of expanding multisensory visions did not primarily drive at emotional catharsis, but at an imaginative return to an enjoyable past, and contemplative advance in that lost world. The Proustian melancholic compulsion is thus best formulated as a will to translate an object of contemplation into an ‘amorous embrase’, a textual

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26 It is notable here that anxiety and the search for relief are a part of human adaptive functioning, and do not refer to a mental disturbance. But as Modell notes, unlike fear, humans can process anxiety metaphorically and transform it, for example, into an erotic feeling and vice versa. Freud refers to this process as ‘sublimation’ (Modell 2006, 137–138; see also Hartman 1995, 547).

27 Proust’s extreme vulnerability of attachment disturbances allows for the psychoanalytical interpretations of his ‘traumatic’ relationship with his mother (cf. Modell 2006, 46). In comparison to Duras’s prolonged exposure to colonial misery, her brother’s violence and her mother’s raging ‘madness’, Proust’s trauma appears to be a minor one, and can be categorised as belonging to LaCapra’s ‘transhistorical traumas’.

28 According to Nalbantian, Proust suspended emotions during writing. In his own words, the memory weakened once it was associated with emotion, which led to the fading of the sharp and concentrated visual memory into oblivion, the memory which was needed essentially for his extended verbal musings (Nalbantian 2003, 65; emphasis added).
incorporation penetrated by meandering phantasms (Agamben 1993, 20, quoted in Min 2003, 233).

By contrast, Duras intended to surrender to those haunting visual images of her colonial past which evoked anxiety and abomination. Moreover, many of her images included other persons’ traumas which she witnessed or partially shared. Transformation from such a traumatic imagery into language is problematic when narrative memory works in isolation from visual and emotional memory due to a thalamic dysfunction typical of traumatic memory (Ogden et al. 2006, 140–141). For this reason, the encapsulated image and the original affective response to the shocking event cannot be expressed in symbolic form but only gradually, by multiple repetitions which draw themselves forward through the associative emotional material. Therefore, the first problem is how painful affects are adjusted to visual cognition so as to be expressed in and integrated by language. In my view, such an integration through a reliving necessitates a metaphorical change entailed by the activation of emotional knowing where the metonymies of the memory image are reloaded by new, more powerful emotions. That is, to be effective and healing, artistic conversion from traumatic memory into a critical fiction needs an emotional recasting of the relatively stable, ‘literal’ imagery through a specific, episodic mode of reprocessing, which results in a metaphorical reorganisation of the intrusive past into the present. Therefore, when Duras grasps the shocking core of a haunting image which has a strong emotional content of fear or anxiety, her memory project aims at a diverse goal from that of Proustian nostalgic return. Rather, by enriching with metaphors the conflicting memory of the lost object that is not yet sufficiently processed in the unconscious, Durasian discourse seeks liberation from the colonial past. During such a progressive metaphoricalisation, her memory images are unavoidably mingled with the cultural reassessment produced by the postwar time of decolonisation. For these reasons, to label Durasian trauma fiction simply as melancholic in the modern meaning of clinical depression is problematic, and demands further exploration in terms of active mourning of historical trauma.

The final argument making nostalgic melancholy questionable in Duras’s case are some factual details which indicate how her historical and aesthetic awareness of European literature guided her artistic experiments. Being a postcolonial female rebel who had lived in the atmosphere of European inter-war racism, Duras was

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29 Insightfully, Geoffrey Hartman (1995, 540) who supposed that trauma theory can throw light on the poetic language and the symbolisation process of trauma, saw artistic reworking of trauma as being directed by a disjunction between two types of cognition: phenomenal experiencing and understanding.

30 According to recent studies of emotion regulation, a specific, unique mode of processing reduces the intensity of negative emotions as it allocates resources to the elements of associative memory, whereas a general, prototypical mode of processing enhances that intensity (Philippot 2008, 5).
well aquainted with and critically sensitive to the tradition of the bourgeois novel. Playfully and yet seriously she emplots the story of the Cambodian beggar into forgetfulness as an inversion to that of Proust’s project of remembering his European past,\(^\text{31}\) as if she were pointing to the textual omission of French colonial atrocities in the empire’s post-war literature (cf. Cooper 2001, 121–123).\(^\text{32}\) She starts *Le Vice-consul* provocatively by the embedded portrayal of the beggars’ gradual process into oblivion which follows the painful rejection of this colonised ‘other’, thus ironising Proust’s modernist nostalgia in recalling his calm Victorian life. Duras’s reversal creates an ambiguous parallel to Proust’s memory project, as she wants to make visible the dark side of France’s economic and commercial development based on imperialist projects in overseas countries. Thus her deliberate repetition of embodied images is capable of transforming her horror and fear into a textual rescription, which depicts her own loss of a colonised Cambodia through an empathic identification with a rejected indigenous girl in Asiatic deserts, whose prolonged search for forgetfulness results in the total vanishing of memories for her physical survival. But when setting herself temporarily into the horror of the heroine, Duras neither masters the girl’s mind nor succumbs to secondary traumatisation. Instead, with an invented frame narrative of *Le Vice-consul*, Duras both intensifies the opposition between the colonised and the colonisers and distances herself from this opposition. What is more, in the frame story she even makes ironical allusions to Proust when describing the Western male colonials’ romantic dreaming, for example, of a ‘rose, rose, liseuse rose’ lady ‘reading Proust’ in the bitter gales of a far-off Channel port’ (VC, 47), and of a ‘rose, liseuse rose’ housewife reading Proust ‘with frightened eyes during her confinements’ (VC, 211, emphasis added). With these critical references to the solipsistic and Eurocentric introspection of the major French modernist, the India Cycle extends its gaze to the controversial topic of French colonialism in Asia.

Summing up, Duras’s capturing of mental images evoked by traumatic memory strives for reliving through psychic pain and anxiety. With its stylised aesthetics, the India Cycle amounts to a counter-narrative to the Proustian verbal striving for a consoling ‘eternal return’ and dwelling in a ‘paradise regained’ that he spices with a persistent longing for the loving mother. I propose also that the works of the India Cycle are not depressive or melancholic in and of themselves. Rather, as the following chapters will show, the works display the diversity of the rhetorics of trauma by exploring in turn various discursive forms depicting the traumatic crisis,

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\(^{31}\) For Duras, the invention of the impossibility of a conscious going astray was extremely important. In a television conversation in 1987, she asked Jean-Luc Godard, whether he knew that the anti-Proustian idea was realised in *Le Vice-consul* (Duras–Godard 1987).

\(^{32}\) Alongside the forgotten women in the former colonised countries whom the fictional beggar stands for (AM, 106), Duras takes onto the stage the young ‘forgotten’ Western girls aged seventeen to eighteen years by casting two such girls as ‘passive’ timeless voices in the film *La Femme du Gange* (P, 72, 89; WW, 61).
mourning, social enactment and depressive yet passionate melancholy of several fictional characters. Furthermore, taking distance from the face-value of these narratives by various metafictional techniques, the India Cycle avoids reducing the experience of colonial trauma to any absolute closure. As it purposefully leads the hero(ine)’s stories to diverse tragical ends, it is not a mere sign of melancholy, but rather a postcolonial gesture referring to the decay of white power. One stylistic feature in this self-ironic criticism is that Duras parodies idle European life in the Asian colonies with a series of recurring ‘opera lines’ (H, 10), which Kristeva rightly characterises as words that are ‘too learned and superlative, or on the contrary too ordinary and hackneyed, conveying a stilted, artificial, and sickly grandiloquence’ (Kristeva 1989, 226). Contextualised in a fictional South-East Asian colonialism, the cycle also mirrors the rivalry and collaboration between the British Empire and France in Asia. By showing how corruption, madness, and death are corroding the Empire’s national superiority, it reproduces and deconstructs the exotic mythical fiction of French ‘Indochina.’ These features justify for the India Cycle a place among critical postmodern reworkings of historical traumas, while it simultaneously acts as a counter-discourse for the Proustian modernist representation of the European psyche.

Between Melancholy and Mourning: L’affection intentionnelle

To what extent, then, does the Durasian mode of working through offer dynamic literary devices for the narrativisation of trauma? It is known that, when not dismantled in individual or collective mourning, a historical trauma can lead to incessant suffering in the form of persistent anxiety, depression – termed melancholy in the Freudian tradition – suicidality, or other forms of maladaptive disturbances.33 Also Duras’s alcoholism can be held as such a persistent disturbance. Nevertheless, in terms of the theory of an embodied mind, I propose an alternative to those psychoanalytic interpretations of her works which focus on melancholic features through Freudian concepts of pathological obsession, defensive repression and Oedipal triangles in terms of the ‘death drive’. This latter approach tends to engender tautological opinions which do not take into account the emotional quality and dynamic diversity of Duras’s figures and tropes.34 Rather, taking

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33 In clinical practice, it is a known fact that unprocessed traumas may lead to many kinds of mental distress such as depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, generalised anxiety disorder, eating disorders, and multiple personality order. Concerning the medical symptoms of normal grief work, see e.g. Lindemann 1999, 137–141; concerning morbid grieved reactions, 141–145.

34 The psychoanalytic line of research seems to follow a cumulative development model, which Juan Pablo Bonta elegantly outlines in the field of architecture as follows. First, a number of responses to the critique of one art work is condensed into one authoritative opinion, whose
traumatic loss as the semantic deep structure of the India Cycle, I see Duras’s figures of mourning as contrasted and intertwined with that of melancholic absence in the narrative texture created by its individual stories. Understanding Duras’s poetic mourning as her intentional affection (l’affection intentionnelle), and a critical mode of working through loss, I propose that the India Cycle deserves an intermediate place between mourning and melancholy, since it purposefully continues to transform the anxiety arising from traumatic memories into new fictional variations (Woodward 1990/91). In order to specify the core points of my re-reading, I comment on the psychoanalytic reception of Duras at this point, especially in the light of the claim that Freud’s concept of neurotic repetition compulsion is a ‘failed attempt to recategorize the affective memory of traumatic experiences’ (Modell 2003, xvi–xvii).

As the Lacanian tradition of many previous interpretations claims, the India Cycle has a strong psychoanalytical component, whereupon the author’s own traumatisation or melancholy is often confused with the fictional material. Julia Waters (2000, 13) draws attention to this fact by quoting Leslie Hill’s warning to read Duras with one eye in terms of the authors’ autobiography as connected to some particular critical discipline. Moreover, written before the renewed debate of trauma of the last decade, many studies draw upon Lacanian terminology and focus on the fictional characters’ individual pathology in the frame of family romance, thereby limiting the analysis of Durasian rhetoric to the premises of the psychodynamics in Oedipal triangles. They thus tend to generalise psychoanalytical models of the human psyche to be universal, especially, as they take certain terms for granted, such as woman as ‘lack’, or ‘absence’, and a globalising idea of ‘desire’ which draws its energy from competition and comparison in a hierarchically organised sex/gender system. In doing so, these studies restrict the discursive value of Duras’s tropology, fail to discern between the ontological levels of fictional worlds, and deny the status of her works as a literary testimony to historical events (Laub 1992, 108). Unlike psychoanalytic studies, I evaluate the meaning of interpretation is gradually fixed by repetition and reduction through filtering of essential factors. Then, the result is completed by adjusting contradictory aspects into a consistent and logical but often narrowed model of the original object. The canonical interpretation thus overrides the features of the original work (Bonta 1979, 144–145; 156).

35 While Marini (1977), Willis (1987), Glassman (1991) and McNeece (1996) make use of Lacanian terms, Jardine’s (1985) and Selous’s (1988) feminist studies are critical of psychoanalysis. Especially Willis and Glassman promulgate the everlasting, generalised ‘circulation of desire’, and the Oedipal triangles in the love stories of the India Cycle. The triangles will be discussed in this study as dynamic parts of witnessing and the madwoman trope presented in Lol’s storyline.

36 For example, labeling Duras’s fiction as essentialist with the ‘obsessive conjuring up of a nothing’, Kristeva’s reading disregards her figural rhetorics of historical irony and distancing. As she writes, ‘the emphasis on the “nothing” to be spoken as ultimate expression of suffering, leads Duras to a blankness of meaning’ (Kristeva 1989, 258). For Kristeva, Duras’s ‘sickly and undramatic protagonists’ fail to produce but a ‘mere nothing that produces discreet tears and elliptical words’ (ibid., 239). As she writes that they ‘make up a world of unsettling, infectious ill-being’
Durasian literary and cinematic discourse as a signifying structure that is capable of producing emancipatory alternatives for dominant binary oppositions of racism and sexism, and creating cross-cultural and psychological models for working through trauma.

Another limit – and a narratological challenge – is that the psychoanalytical critics have been at a loss as to how to situate Duras’s works into any fixed literary category, which results, as Deborah Glassman observes, from the ‘insufficiency of narrative categories to define the nature of her tales’ (Glassman 1991, 9–11). Within the same perspective, Sharon Willis notices Duras’s marked and remarkable taste for repetition as ‘textual obsession with memory and desire locked together in repetition’. Willis even states that ‘[f]rom linear narrative to the performance of repetition [Duras’s] texts perform the repetition they thematise, reducing the narrative moment to a minimum’ (Willis 1987, 2–3). This lack of precision of Duras’s narrative categories and the meaning of her cyclic repetition impedes one to find a more apposite category than l’écriture féminine which would justify the historical dimensions of Duras’s oeuvre. When evaluating Duras’s political intentions, Jane Winston notes that reading in terms of desire alone perpetuates the critical tendency to hold Duras as the embodiment of l’écriture féminine or feminine writing, and pass over those features of Duras’s style which connects her with such materialist feminist writers as Monique Wittig (Winston 1997, 231–232). In accordance with this observation, I hold the psychoanalytical model as one historical construction among others, and use at times psychoanalytic concepts in light of current neuropsychology.37 Since I think Duras to be drawing on her traumatic memory, I situate her iterative ‘writing the body’ in the category of trauma fiction, which uses two main literary strategies – repetition and indirection – for the efficacy of reprocessing historical trauma. Besides, I see Durasian trauma fiction as calling for historical referentiality by a progressive usage of the indexicality of metaphors and metonymies (Whitehead 2004, 86; Rothberg 2000, 104). Therefore, melancholy in the clinical meaning of depression cannot be attributed to the cycle, for Durasian discourse obviously sets historical and transhistorical traumas in interaction on the levels of both narration and emplotment, thereby actively blurring the boundary between them.

(ibid., 258), she does not pay attention to Duras’s distancing devices. Thus Kristeva’s analysis offers Duras’s ‘blank rhetoric of apocalypse’ a function of depressive rumination of a European, whose dramas’ power of passion ‘outstrips political events’ (ibid. 234). As a result, the historicity of the author’s experience is denied, whereby the referentiality and emotional progression of her figures remain inscrutable (see also Schuster 1993, 149–150).

37 With Modell (2006, 54–55), I think that taking Freud’s concept of unconscious as a mere dangerous source of sexuality which follows the Oedipal law is reductive. Rather, memories and feelings are unconsciously and imaginatively processed as influenced by various personal developmental, perceptual and socio-cultural factors. In the India Cycle, one Freudian trope is the family romance, which I interpret as treating critically the decay of French colonialism, and not merely expressing Oedipal desire.
Seeing the India Cycle as a cultural mode of active mourning posits Duras in the current debate on intermediate modes of mourning and melancholy. As multiple scholars have recently stated, mourning and melancholy were described by Freud as a binary opposition of normality and illness in his *Trauer und Melancholie* (1917; MM, 243), and elaborated in his later essay ‘The Ego and The Id’ (1923; Beauclair 1998, 8–9). Initially, whereas he labeled melancholy as a pathological condition, Freud defined mourning as a healthy reaction to a concrete loss of a loved object. Not being originally interested in developing a theory of ‘normal’ grief work, he defined melancholy as an unsuccessful mourning, which produces hazardous phenomena such as deep anxiety, withdrawal from human relationships, loss of the capability for loving, renouncing active social engagement, self-reproachment and feelings of inferiority (MM, 244). In the prolonged state of melancholy, which often reveals some primordial disorder in early relationships, these symptoms may be followed by various kinds of mental derangement with a shift in the general mood, producing persistent suffering and degraded self-esteem (MM, 246). As Freud states, this is a consequence of the melancholic person’s denial of the withdrawal of libido from the loved object, whereupon s/he is fixated on an imaginary loss, and in its refusal to let go. Furthermore, this can lead to ‘traumatic neurosis’: an interminable, pathological state in the form of inability to work out the loss. By contrast, for Freud, mourning grieves for a literal loss that gradually results in the breaking of an attachment to a concrete lost object (MM, 244–245). As if pointing to traumatic memory, Freud later recognised that unconscious memory makes ‘somatic demands upon the self’, thus foreshadowing the achievements of current social neuroscience.

Recently, a number of commentators on art criticism and philosophers of

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39 For Freud, all these reactions belong to the initial phase of mourning, except the feeling of inferiority.
40 Freud writes in *Mourning and Melancholia*: ‘[M]ourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on.’ (MM, 243). On the history of theorising melancholy, and the historical development of the semantics and usage of the terms melancholia, melancholy, and depression, see Radden, Jennifer 2000, vii–xi, distinguishing between normal melancholy and pathological melancholia, currently defined as depression, 47–48, the cognitivist approach of depression, 317–323.
41 Concerning Kristeva’s psychoanalytical elaborations of Freudian melancholy adapted to Duras, see Beauclair 1998, 8–11, especially, the melancholic-depressive category of a ‘hurt one’, which refers to an incessant feeling of personal emptiness or a more fundamental loss of meaning in life. On the experience of most hidden traumas in Proust, see also Kristeva 1996, 193–194.
historiography have suggested a deconstruction of Freud's opposition of mourning and melancholy as to formulate either of these concepts into that of a more dynamic working-through. The most thorough-going of them is LaCapra who, instead of opposing mourning and melancholy as contradictory signs of health and illness, juxtaposes them as contrary poles on a continuum of reactions in the human psyche. Based on the distinction between historical and transhistorical trauma, LaCapra's model is a useful tool when trying to resist sentimental imitations and other conventionalised forms of social mimicry of trauma (see Jenson 2001, 16). It is liberating in that it admits for both mourning and melancholy a potential creativity that is not evident at first glance. For one thing, LaCapra describes melancholic absence – the reaction to transhistorical trauma – as an inherently ambivalent state: anxiety producing but also possibly empowering, even ecstatic. Nostalgic melancholy can thus be creative, while Proust's incessant recording of involuntary emerging engrams is only one form of the interplay with presence through desire (LaCapra 2000, 183–184, 189). For another, LaCapra's theory discerns the traumatic event from its experience and representation. This gives the social mourning of historical trauma a clear mission converting the experience of a datable and locatable event into a symbolic form. Like LaCapra, but approaching the problem from the viewpoint of prolonged, injurious mourning, David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (2003, 3) argue for the depathologising of melancholic attachment to loss by making visible its creative, unpredictable, political aspects in arts. However, these researchers do not explore the basics of an innovative, critical literary narration.

More apposite towards this goal are the following two studies of literary trauma narratives. When Sam Durrant (2004) studies the narrativisation of colonial trauma, he compares several examples of postcolonial literature as modes of mourning. In Deborah Jenson's excellent study, mimetic trauma is a form of repetitive play which, as in French Romanticism, 'borrows' social suffering by 'performing the seductions of empathy with the trauma experienced by the social 'other' (Jenson 2001, 16; on Romantic idealisation of symbolic wounds and the discourse of pain, 17, 32).

This idea accords with Eero Tarasti's existential semiotic formulation of the permanent state of existential anguish, which can lead to a creative state of a Greimasian 'pathemic' nature. Profound anxiety can give birth to prominent works of philosophy, such as that produced by the aesthetic attitude of Kierkegaard, or to impressive artistic works, such as those of Wagner and Schoenberg (Tarasti 2000, 79; on the term 'pathemic', see Greimas & Courtes 1986, 165). These examples demonstrate the nature of non-historical and historical traumas as crossing phenomena on a continuum, where existential anguish can arise from either of them, the latter often contributing to persistence or culmination of the former.

Also adjusting mourning and melancholy, Timothy Murray reviews cinematic and digital refiguration of historical trauma in the light of the writings of Adorno and Horkheimer, and contemporary postmodern thinkers. He problematises the relation between 'pathos of melancholia' and 'pathos of mass cultural melodrama' by using Resnais' and Duras's *Hiroshima mon amour* and Chris Marker's *Level 5* (Murray 2003, 198).

Durrant refers to the writings of Leela Gandhi and her links to Gayatry Spivak, Jean-François
Instead of trying to exorcise past ghosts, postcolonialism tries to learn to live with the horror of the past by simultaneously summoning and conjuring the dead (Durrant, 2004, 8–10). This idea of literary cure accords with Rothberg’s traumatic realism, for it understands a textual working-through as an epistemological means to create new cognition and a new relationship with oneself, the other, and external world in the presence of the extreme in the everyday. Similarly, and most significantly for the idea of emotional integration, Kathleen Woodward (1990/91) proposes a reconceptualisation of mourning. She argues for a reciprocity of mourning and melancholy by a more active memory work through psychic pain, so as to uncover the fluid connection between these two phenomena. Woodward calls for a discourse about mourning that is more expressive than that provided by Freudian psychoanalysis, which she finds too vague (Woodward 1990/91, 94–96). As an example, she uses Roland Barthes’s intensive grieving – his *l’affection intentionnelle* (intentional affection) – for his mother by the aid of her photos, presented in the lengthy essay of *La Chambre claire* (1980; *Camera Lucida* 1981). For Woodward, artistic activity can be a forceful process of working through traumatic loss, which serves as an intermediate state between normal mourning and pathological melancholy. All these parallel discussions prompt me to envisage Duras’s cyclic repetition as her peculiar *l’affection intentionnelle*: as a self-critical, specific working through her own painful experiences of the colonial situation and war-driven Europe.

**Dismantling Literality**

In answer to Shoshana Felman’s demand: ‘the texts that testify [to trauma] do not simply *report facts* but, in different ways, encounter […] *strangeness*’ (Felman 1995, 18–19; her italics), there is not yet a pertinent theory as to what these ‘different ways’ imply. Many researchers offer non-literal devices as a solution such as metaphorical figures, euphemisms, and catachresis as well as their repetition. But more important than the tropes themselves is their power to make affects meaningful so that they can provoke emotional change in imagination. For me, the key to this change resides not in the semantic meanings of the tropes themselves but in their mutual meaning organisation that is reproduced and

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47 For more on the connection between Barthes’s analysis of literary ‘l’effet de réel’ and the power of photos as items of evidence of the past trauma’s influence to the present, see Knuuttila 2008b.

48 On Barthes’s important share in charting the role of emotion in memory work and its connection with Duras’s *L’amant*, see Gratton 1997, 254; Armel 1994, 16.
restructured in the repetitive recontextualisation of the tropes. This power emerges from the human embodied psyche’s implicit faculty to process memory in terms of nonconscious emotional schemas by using metaphor, to which metonymy contributes as a mediating emotional agent (Modell 2006, xiii, 47–48, 126–127, 141, 175). That is, when an emotionally touching experience presents somatic demands upon the mind, this material is further processed by a specific, unique multisensory thinking which eventually translates itself into linguistic figures. In this imaginative conversion, every single metonymy works on the basis of sensory contiguity in bridging the disjunction between emotional and cognitive processing (cf. Lakoff & Johnson 2003, 270–273; Grodal 1997, 70–71). On this basis, I find the idea of metonymic contiguity most relevant for the technique of using literary figures as a successful ‘verbal fixative’ for an emotionally frozen image of trauma (Hartman 1995, 541).

Using associative imagination, Duras intentionally converts her experiences into a stylised discourse where some key metonyms adopt a dynamic place in the transformative repetition of metaphorical scenes. Psychically but not stylistically this is, in fundamental details, close to the reworkings of some eminent modern novelists, such as Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, and William Faulkner. According to Suzanne Nalbantian’s (2003, 77) study of memory in literature, these novelists transmuted traumatic loss into modernist fiction after World War I in relation to the moral problems of their societies. Nalbantian demonstrates convincingly, yet without using the current theory of traumatic memory, how these writers applied associative memory to their intrusive memories of loss so as to create fictional substitutes for them when trying to come to terms with the bygone Victorian era and its ethical problems. Unlike Proust whose writing tends to dwell in the past, these modernists bring their wounding memories textually into the present in the guise of recurring metonyms, which begin to act as a textual bridge between the embodied memory traces and the present. The trace is usually a visual object or place which once has attached a strong emotional charge to itself, and which therefore begins to act as a symbolic reminder of the lost person or event in the fictional present (ibid. 99). This appropriation of objects for affective metonyms on the

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49 Modell (2006, 175) crystallises his point by saying that ‘our cognitive capacity to empathically know other minds relies on an unimpaired faculty for metaphoric thought’. For more on how he takes his lead from Giambattista Vico’s ideas of metaphor and language, see ibid., 15–16.

50 Günter Radden’s otherwise insightful article on the cooperation of metaphor and metonymy does not make use of Damasio’s detailed theory of emotion, but speaks of emotion as ‘unbounded’ and ‘unstructured’, thus ignoring current studies of emotion (Radden, Günter 2000, 104).

51 For Woolf, it was the climate of late Victorian England, for Faulkner, the post-bellum American South, and for Joyce, the premodern Ireland (Nalbantian 2003, 77). For Duras, concerning the India Cycle, the ethical problem was the process of decolonisation, which vigorously progressed from the beginning of the sixties onwards. At the same time, she was emotionally as touched by the Holocaust and Hiroshima, which can be seen in both her early and later works. For more references on the working of associative memory in emotion regulation, see Philippot, 2008.
basis of physical contiguity is obviously akin to the Freudian theory of Besetzung (cathexis) of the loved object and Donald Winnicott's theory of transitional objects (Modell 2006, 155–156; MM, 249).

The most illuminating example of appropriating metonymy into the service of working through loss is Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927), written 44 years after her mother's death, not mourned but encapsulated by the author at the age of thirteen. In the novel, the central figure of the lighthouse is simultaneously an object and place, and functions primarily as the source of the retrieval of the memory of the lost mother (Nalbantian 2003, 80). It is not a linguistic replica of that memory, but rather a metonymic nodus that tends to provoke emotional reprocessing by virtue of physical contiguity. Nalbantian emphasises that memory retrieval always starts from ‘particular events particularly encoded in particular cognitive environments’, and continues only when the personal emotions associated with these elements are contextualised in new political and personal situations (ibid., 81–82; on this specificity, see also Philippot 2008). When visual objects are engraved in body and mind, they are taken on by associative memory, which combines an individual loss with collective traumas, such as a global war. But in a new historical context, the associative memory adds phantasmatic aspects to the memory, while the figurative language by which it is expressed tends to break the stability of the original traumatic image. Recombined with new imaginative material in new textual contexts, the ‘literal’ metonymy goes through a process of metaphoricalisation, while emotions undergo a continuous differentiation and push forwards cognitive change.

This empowering effect of an emotional change resides in repetition which implies a recontextualisation of traumatic memory, thus uncovering the double temporal structure of the metonymy: the simultaneity of the past and the present (Barthes 1980, 78; Modell 2006, 38). Modell's neuropsychoanalytic theory well illustrates this principle of a critical working-through, as it adds the missing emotional aspect to George Lakoff's and Mark Johnson's (2003) concept of cognitive, body-based metaphor. Understanding metaphor as an experiential, affective structure in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's and Giambattista Vico's terms, Modell characterises it as the ‘selective interpeter of corporeal experience’ (Modell 2006, 156). Modell notes that Freud identified ‘cathexis’ with a neural system that combines motive with memory, thus foretelling the current neurocognitive ideas of an adaptive link between memory, motivation, emotion, and intention. As parts of our belief systems, such cathected objects have qualities peculiar to contagious magia attributed to metonymy by Roman Jakobson (1956/1988, 60; Modell 2006, 103). Adapted to Barthes's punctum and affective metonymy, see Knuuttila 2008b.
Being typical only of humans, metaphor and language interpret feelings by virtue of generative imagination processed within the implicit memory in the bodily unconscious, where lived episodes are represented as multisensory images that we characterise as metaphors and metonymies. For an emotional change – which I see as a specific form of information processing – the mental images are modified through a generation of linguistic or other symbolic figures. Relived in renewed imagery, feelings of negative emotions are imaginatively interpreted, displaced and transformed by means of metaphorical affectivity that the physical contiguity of metonymy essentially guides (ibid., 126–127). This is the way in which old, wounding metonymies are embedded in new metaphorical organisations and lose their literality. As an outcome, the writer/reader moves towards a more powerful emotional position, whereby the intrusive ‘ghosts’ lose their horror-provoking quality.

Seen in this theoretical frame of implicit memory, the India Cycle signifies a fictional reconceptualisation of Duras’s past in inter-war Cambodia, India, and France by finding textual anchors for her traumatic memories of Cambodian and Annamian scenes. This reworking, having appeared after a delay of thirteen years as a complex variant of Un barrage contre le Pacifique (1950), can be characterised as a coming to terms with the bygone colonial era that is the most important prefigurative factor for Duras’s social and political ethos (cf. Nalbantian 2003, 79). The India Cycle is thus a forceful attempt to find a new artistic expression for the thematically radical material which was insufficiency worked through by the realist style of Un barrage. After one more delay of fifteen years, the reworking of this material in the cultural context of decolonisation puts forth the progressive ethical power of Duras’s arts which, however, should not be neutralised by commercial psychologisation (cf. Winston 2001, 29–30). In the stratified storyworld of the India Cycle, like Woolf, Duras recalls the past via the sight of her inner images and the thoughts associated with them, and finds various metonymic correlates for these images, to which renewed emotional energy is attached along with

53 On Vico’s anti-Cartesian theses of metaphor’s affective and imaginatively dialogical nature, see Modell 2006, 15–16).

54 Metonymic contiguity is based on function, ownership or other qualities of the object (see Radden Günter 2000). The physical properties of the object evoke emotion through visual, aural, olfactory, tactile, haptic, and other sensory qualities combined with its functional and causal qualities (see Knuuttila, 2007; 2008b, 2009a).

55 At the time Un barrage was published, Duras’s outspoken style was criticised as propagandist and brutal. From a quite new perspective, Winston (2001, 24–30) views Un barrage as Duras’s response to a striking clash of two issues exposed in Jean-Paul Sartre’s Journal Les temps modernes during the years 1945–46: the introduction of Richard Wright’s Black Boy as an example of Sartre’s engaged writing (littérature engagée), and the simultaneous silence of six months on the Vietnam question during a critical time of Ho Tshi Minh’s negotiations for Vietnam’s political future in Paris. See Winston’s assessment of the novel’s conservative reception, and the struggles around it during the fifties, ibid., 27–36.
new imaginative aspects. As will be shown in this study, as these figures repeat themselves according to the iconic principle of metaphorical similarity, their emotional charge is guided by the indexical principle of metonymical contiguity. The result is a series of 'ungrounded doublings', which, despite their mutual differences, encompass the same phenomena from different perspectives (Miller 1982, 6). Interpreted as Rothberg's 'traumatic index', these metonymies have a double charge of horror, a feature which I will specify in the next chapter, and to which I will return throughout this study.

To conclude, Durasian modifications deal thematically with French colonial domination, failure, and disillusionment, which makes Duras’s fictions move themselves far beyond the mere scope of both the sentimental novel and l’écriture féminine (cf. Gratton 1997, 252; Winston 2001, 54–55). In this light, the psychoanalytic concept of melancholy – understood as clinical depression – appears too pale as a mode of critical discourse, as it predestines apathy and depression as the central tropes for the post-war Western cultures (cf. Radden, Jennifer 2000, 29). Therefore, I argue that Duras’s literary transformation does not only reproduce but also observes and analyses her ‘rhetoric of apocalypse’ with its recurring tropes of trauma. With its self-reflexive play of mimetic mirror structures, the India Cycle also attempts to reformulate the individualist concept of the Western subject of the Enlightenment. Being a part of the aftermath of World War II, it belongs to the self-critical European project prompted by the horror of the Holocaust, Hiroshima, and the beginning of world-wide decolonisation, all of which challenge the illusion of eternal progress on behalf of others more strongly than fifty years earlier. Being critical of both stream-of-consciousness technique and free indirect discourse as a normative means of canonised modernism, Duras in the India Cycle takes distance from these habitual literary representations of the Western psyche. Adapting a variety of novelistic metanarrative techniques – an object of an eager exploration of some French novelists in the 1960s – she constructs a number of stylised fictional environments, the combination of which compels the reader to become aware of their constructive nature. But although her narrative strategies map the functioning of the psyche at a self-reflexive distance, they also offer a possibility to empathic identification on the basis of affective figures. While this method emphasises the semiotic role of metonymic signs in bridging the gap between emotion and cognition, it contributes to the post-Cartesian reformulation of the concept of rationality, exemplified in literature by early modernists.
II. The Aesthetic Strategies of the India Cycle

The most important function of reading fiction as trauma narrative is to bear witness to the cruelty of human history by uncovering its everyday psychopathology. As Laurie Vickroy states, trauma narratives utilise different kinds of artistic and scholarly refigurations so as to illuminate trauma’s private and public dimensions, thus offering an alternative pathway to renovate cultural memory through personal contexts to depersonalised or institutionalised historiographies (Vickroy 2002, 1–5, 9). Moreover, in her study *Postcolonial Duras* (2001), Jane Winston convincingly demonstrates that, wounded by colonial disaster in her youth, Duras was constantly situated in a complex and contradictory borderland of alternative commitments in post-war France. Winston proposes that the ‘unresolvable ambiguity’ of Duras’s postcolonial project is understood most adequately if one ceases thinking in terms of dualist oppositions such as either/or, but rather qualifies her as both feminist and Marxist, political and unpolitical, revolutionary and reactionary (Winston 2001, 6). I think that it is more likely to go beyond such predefined categories with an empathic reading which recovers one’s sense of embodied self and agency as a co-witness of trauma. Indeed, the feeling self is an essential precondition for a non-identificative listening to the ‘departure of trauma’, which realises itself in the controversies of trauma fiction: affective figures, ruptures, blanks, and intrinsic commentaries (Caruth 1995a, 10). Such a testimonial access to trauma fiction aids the reader/viewer to take an ethical and social stance towards suffering and

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1 VM, 33. ‘It isn’t a translation. It’s not a matter of passing from one state to another. It’s a matter of deciphering something already there, something you’ve already done in the sleep of your life, in its organic rumination, unbeknown to you’ (PR, 25).

2 See Winston’s detailed study on Duras’s employment in the Colonial Ministry during the war, and its impact on her post-war psychic and political realignments as a feminist and communist, which are related to the disaster of World War II, especially in response to Nazi atrocities, such as the marginalisation, exile and execution of her employer, the Colonial Minister Georges Mandel (Winston 2001, 14–18).

3 Concerning a renewed conceptualisation of an emotional self and its working in social relationships through mirroring the other’s mind, see Keen 2006, 210–211; Hari and Kujala 2009; Knuuttila [in press]. As Keen (2006, 207) indicates in terms of current neuroscience, an embodied simulation of the other person is elicited not only by non-verbal signs but also by language (see Tettamanti 2005). But while the embodied phenomena of the reader’s response may simulate the metaphorical reprocessing of the author, they are always individual reactions to the art work, understood as negotiations with the work in a new historical and cultural context.
man-made atrocities. But when supposing that the implicit memory – emotions, their metaphorical processing in the body, and unconscious associations – tacitly contributes to writing/reading, one must pay attention to the pitfalls of emotional identification with the text. In this chapter, I will specify how the aesthetic devices by which the India Cycle tackles colonial trauma facilitates the task of such a critical witnessing.

Durasian aesthetics is based on the epistemological and referential aspects lying concealed in the author’s life-long politics of writing, seen as an attempt to transcend the inadequacy of language by a rhetorics which iteratively defamiliarises the recurring figures used. The India Cycle leans primarily on two strategies: comparing parallel narratives of traumatised characters on the basis of analogy, and taking distance from these tentative narratives by various metafictional and self-reflexive techniques. To illuminate the importance of this oscillation between identification and distance, I start from the central theses presented in two studies on literary trauma discourse: Michael Rothberg’s *Traumatic Realism* (2000) and Anne Whitehead’s *Trauma Fiction* (2004). These studies agree on the idea that trauma fiction has common interests with postcolonial and postmodern fiction in two senses. The first is the historical dimension of the topic, while the second deals with the difficulties of building a critical narrative of the unnarratable extremity of trauma in the everyday (Rothberg 2000, 2–9, 100–101, 148; Whitehead 2004, 3–4). Whereas Rothberg develops his traumatic realism in the frame of a wider theoretical evaluation of Holocaust narratives, Whitehead’s study draws on Caruth’s Freudian terminology, and close-reads a variety of novels through the symptomatology of traumatic experience. And while Rothberg deals with the referentiality of trauma narrative, Whitehead ignores this problem, and concludes that trauma fiction mimics the symptomatology of trauma (Whitehead 2004, 83). When combining these approaches, I hold referentiality to be an integral part of the interpretation of trauma fiction. I will examine Duras’s narrative structures as mutually mirroring analogies, and her metatechniques as a method of defamiliarisation by which she resists mimetic narrativisations. This choice detaches me from a mere symptomatic reading of the India Cycle, and allows for an elaboration of Rothberg’s ‘traumatic index’ as a central tool of Duras’s metaphorical reworking.

As a whole, Whitehead’s structural approach orients the reader’s awareness of the discursive practices of trauma fiction. In Caruth’s psychoanalytic terms,

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4 Even though she mentions Rothberg’s traumatic realism, Whitehead leaves the indirect referentiality of Rothberg’s traumatic index unscrutinised, and passes over Geoffrey Hartman’s fruitful idea of a special kind of referentiality of trauma fiction in summary fashion as well (Whitehead 2004, 83).

5 Concerning the anti-mimetic turn within mimetic trauma theory, see Leys 2000, 35–40.

6 By focusing on the textual symptoms of trauma in heterogeneous examples of fictional narratives, Whitehead outlines a formulation to the stylistic devices of trauma fiction as a ‘genre’ by
Whitehead reads the chosen narratives as a trans-generational and collective ‘traumatic haunting’. She claims that a number of contemporary novelists tend to mimic the symptomatology of the experience of trauma due to the fact that conceptualising trauma can take place only backwards, as a delayed construction from its structural effects. As distinctive to trauma fiction, Whitehead defines such devices as figurative repetition in cyclic time, intertextuality, indirection, and a dispersion of fragmented narrative voice. Among these, the two principal devices are repetition which acts at the levels of language, imagery, or plot, and indirection which appears on the level of narrative strategies (Whitehead 2004, 3, 6–7, 81–87). For Whitehead, the fragmented quality of testimonial narratives results in a dispersed narrative voice never fully known or knowable. When thus in Whitehead’s cogent reading the symptomatology of trauma both structures and thematises the text, trauma adopts the role of a thematic deep structure in trauma fiction. Whitehead also rightly reserves a highly unique surface structure for every single work, whereupon she arrives at an intriguing conclusion that ‘trauma, like fiction, occupies an uncertain, but nevertheless productive, site or place between content and form’ (ibid., 161–162). This claim points out that Whitehead does not equate narratives of trauma with compulsive, one-to-one repetition of mimetic copies of traumatic experiences, which would imply a literary kind of ‘acting out’ of trauma. Rather, it reveals that a critical usage of the imaginative devices of narrative memory can break the inflexibility of traumatic memory, as it drives at regeneration and liberation from its paralysing grip through ‘improvisation of the past’ (ibid., 87).

focusing on nine narratives of which three are testimonies – pretended or real – of the Holocaust. For example, she examines the principle of repetition with W. G. Sebald’s *Austerlitz* (2001) and the parallelism of the narratives with Phillips’s *Nature of Blood* (1997), and problematises the authenticity of witnessing through Caryl Binjamin Wilkomirski’s fake autobiography *Fragments: Memories of a Childhood, 1939–1948* (1996).

Dealing with the cyclic recurring of some key figures, Whitehead’s study is consistent with Rothberg’s concept of the repetitive structure of traumatic time (*Jetzheit*) (Rothberg 2000, 10–11, 99–100). Rothberg’s term refers to a temporal construction that emphasises time filled by the presence of now in the time-space system of the Holocaust that he calls a ‘concentrationary universe’ (For more on this topic, see ibid., 115–129).

Cf. Slavoj Žižek’s (1987, 39) illustration of the concept of trauma with an anecdote about a conscript who attempts to escape military service. According Žižek’s circular model, the process itself – his seemingly mad behaviour when searching for the unknown written document of his madness – produces the object which causes it (van Boheemen-Saaf 1999, 68). However, initially, traumatic enactment is not calculated but is a spontaneous eruption of compelling embodied material which can, however, be creatively reprocessed as I show in this study. Similarly, if trauma is re-enacted unconsciously it is not such an intended performance, as my analysis of Lol V. Stein will show.

Whitehead elaborates the idea of trauma fiction as a creative shift from traumatic to narrative memory in her interpretation of Toni Morrison’s novel *Jazz*. With Caruth, she formulates the function of narrative memory as a tool which challenges closure and coherence as solutions of trauma fiction, and argues for disruption and discontinuity as its genuine features. Whitehead
Rothberg’s traumatic realism releases one from symptomatic reading with a more specified aesthetic model. This is all the more important since, during the past decade, Euro-American trauma fiction has already been conventionalised as it imitates the most familiar symptoms of trauma, which maintains the illusion of the victim’s fantasies as a subjective truth, as the notorious example of Binjamin Wilkomirski’s fake autobiography *Fragments: Memories of a Childhood, 1939–1948* (1996) indicates. Also many popular works of current trauma fiction tend to commodify the phenomenon with stereotypified, sentimental emplotments. For this reason, Rothberg’s proposal is inspiring. He claims that, in an act of writing, trauma narrative has to combine three discursive approaches into a constellation of mimetic and anti-mimetic devices: realistic documentation, modernist stylisation and post-modernist multiplication and circulation. In his view, such a combination alone manages to refer to our traumatic reality where extreme events structurate the everyday (2000, 99–101, 109). Notably, Rothberg does not use realist, modernist and postmodernist narrative techniques in the meaning of period codes, but understands them as different historical answers to the problem of historical referentiality of literary discourse, because none of them alone can mediate a truthful image of the world (ibid., 10, 105). This relativist view leads to an intertextuality, whose ironic tone further usurps the basis of referentiality of any discourse, and the very idea of textual veracity. Importantly, such an approach takes European post-war melancholy as but one (2004, 142) thus shares several other trauma scholars’ principle that trauma is irreducible to any calculable control and generalisation of reading and writing, based on Caruth’s worry that the demand for the curative narrativisation of trauma risks losing ‘both the precision and the force that characterises traumatic recall’ (Caruth 1995b, 153; Baer 2000, 11; Wolfrey 2002, 127, 129–130).

Rothberg’s traumatic realism draws upon Theodor Adorno’s theory on the barbarity of mass society and anti-Semitism, based in turn on his and Max Horkheimer’s critique of the heritage of the Enlightenment and the Western notion of rationality in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1947). Adorno’s and Horkheimer’s most important contribution for my study is their formulation of projection and paranoia as the fundamental nature of Western culture, and a crisis of experience which refers to the inability to perceive the other person as a separate subject. This theory inaugurates the critical postcolonial identity theories of self/other, specified in Adorno’s and his colleagues’ later work on the authoritarian personality.

On Wilkomirski’s narrative, see Whitehead 2004, 30–47; on its position in relation to historiography, see LaCapra 2004, 32–34, 207–209.


Rothberg modifies Adorno’s chronotope ‘after Auschwitz’ into a concept of ‘post-traumatic culture’, whose critical documentary and artistic refiguration expresses the idea of the ‘extreme in the everyday’ (Rothberg 2000, 8, 62). Adopting David Rousset’s concept *l’univers concentrationnaire* (concentrationary universe), he examines Ruth Klüger’s *weiter leben: Eine Jugend* (1994) and Charlotte Delbo’s three-volume *Auschwitz and After* (1995), both memoirs from concentration camps, on the basis of Art Spiegelman’s comic strip *Maus: A Survivor’s Tale* (1986, 1991), a fictionalised memoir of his family’s experiences in the Jewish Ghetto during World War II.
cultural variation of social mimesis, its textual re/presentations being comparable with the imagery of traumatic wounds reflected in French Romanticism after the failed revolution (see Jenson 2001, 6–7, 14–29).

Seen within this context, Duras's multilayer combination of direct and indirect discourses in the India Cycle seems to fulfil the criteria of traumatic realism, since Duras transmutes her authentic experience into a variety of alternative fictionalisations such as psychological realism, stylised self-narration and various metatextual structures. As will be shown, the Durasian repetition-variation appears to be not only a mimetic device but also an imaginative, affectively progressing activity, which is a result of implicit memory and cannot be reduced to an automatic kind of Freudian repetition compulsion (Modell 2006, xi–xii). Rather, Duras follows the principle of a critical working-through which seeks individual aesthetic solutions for a singular and particular historical loss in terms of the author's own culture of memory. For, memorising does not consist merely of expression of inner feelings of loss or retrieving the past, but is always subject to historical renegotiation under the prevailing practices of some culturally formed mode of memory (Bennett & Kennedy 2003, 6; Huyssen 2003). Thus a pure textual imitation of the symptomatology of trauma remains always an illusion.

From these premises, the three following sections treat the India Cycle as a Rothbergian constellation. Benefiting from Whitehead's stylistic findings, I first scrutinise Duras's rhetorics in terms of figural repetition and indirection in order to outline the global structure of the India Cycle. Second, I explore Duras's usage of metanarration as an ideological solution, which fathoms the signification of self-reflection to the literary rescriptions of trauma and their witnessing. Third, I elaborate on Rothberg's traumatic index as a key metonymy working in Duras's metaphorical texture by converting it into a vehicle mediating and transforming the emotional core of trauma.

Repetition: Paralleling Analogous Structures

Devoted to her role as a writer of the tragic, Duras translated her affective images into a series of symbolic structures disguised in novelistic, dramatic and cinematic discourses. The rhetoric surface structure of the India Cycle carries out the principle of repetitive mimicry indicated in Whitehead's study, even to an overdetermined extent, for a striking iteration of structural and semantic units interpenetrate and intermingle throughout the entire series of works. This is reminiscent of Michel Maffesoli's thought that the style itself does not represent but helps us to become aware of an 'object never explicable in its totality' by making visible the silhouettes of its essential characteristics with a contrapuntal writing (1996, ix–x). This process is an alternative to Cartesian
causal thinking which proceeds like musical variations of a known theme, ‘like the sea by the shore, by successive waves’ (ibid.). Such statements refer to the analogical (metaphorical, iconic) principle as a form of inference, which the principle of contiguity (metonymical, indexical) emotionally colours (cf. Prendergast 1986, 47). Such a hypothesis is illustrative of Duras’s method of narrating several context-dependent and unique reactions to historical trauma in turn. Proceeding in a pulsating rhythm, the individual narratives form parallel structures that begin to mirror and resist each other as based on the principle of similarity and difference. While this method prepares several options for mimetic identification, it also compels the reader to become aware of the artificial nature of the narratives, whereby the illusion of the rational concept of homogenous subjectivity, especially its racial and sexual premises, is eroded step by step.

When functioning on the thematic, structural, and linguistic levels, repetition has a constant impact on the audience’s capacity of narrative reformulation (Miller 1982, 1–2). As presented in the previous chapter, in the heart of the wave-like variation of trauma narratives is an emotional displacement from one figure to another, guided by textual solutions that elicit an embodied experience in reading. In Durasian postmodernist circulation, the meanings of figures and motifs never remain stable, but a certain dislocation of signification takes place in the network of mutually mirroring scenes. This is due to a rhetorics of figural variation on both a larger and smaller scale, of which the smaller verbal elements – colours, smells, voices, gestures, names, words, lines, and figures of speech – have been examined iteratively in previous studies. Solidifying the macro-structure of the cycle, a lyrical, rhythmical melodiousness of alliteration, assonance and rhyme create an atmosphere of expectance and presence. Most important for my study are a few key motifs that recur systematically so as to be loaded with more intensive meanings in and by new textual and dramatic contexts. These are: passionate love, rejection, illness – especially leprosy and madness – and the effort of telling the other person’s traumatic experience. These motifs are repeated as parts of scenes such as the romantic couple in a ball, the starving indigenous woman, and the narrative act of the Western male writer, each accompanied and tuned by numerous reiterative metonymies.

On a larger scale, Duras transposes the stories of the four protagonists from one work to another in a fashion which guides one to organise these stories into analogical narrative structures. The colonial trauma is expressed

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14 When outlining the non-linguistic notion of the ‘index’, Christopher Prendergast (1986, 46) claims that C. S. Peirce’s index refers to a mere causal relation between the object and the sign. For me, in Peircean semiosis, indexical relations are not defined as merely causal or ‘natural’ such as traces and symptoms (the subcategory of reagents), but they also include cultural and functional relations such as labels and names (that of designations) (see Knuuttila 2007, 2009a). Moreover, these are two-way relations: while the direct relation of determination goes from object to sign in the case of reagents, it goes from sign to object in the case of designations (Johansen 2002, 35–38).
through two rejections of young women, Lol V. Stein, the Cambodian beggar, and one violent attack of a white man, the Vice-consul of Lahore, all of which the ‘woman of Calcutta’, Anne-Marie Stretter, carries in her outwardly calm, eroticised and suicidal body. The twofold historical context under whose influence the protagonists experience their personal traumas is French and British overseas colonies in Asia and the northern coast of Europe. Situated in these opposite settings, and originating from them, each work promotes the narrative twine through a specific discourse, whereby one principal protagonist is taken to the center of investigation in turn. Despite the opposition between the protagonists’ roles, all four trauma stories have the same basic structure. As in an Aristotelian tragedy, a shocking event has afflicted the person before the outset of the story, while the text个体ually figures every single response. During the serial progress, the consequences of the event are effectively arranged as parallel structures by utilising metanarrative and dramatic strategies. Yet, a systematic difference between these strategies prevails in relation to the accomplices of trauma, the perpetrators’ encounter being performed directly, and the victims’ narratives being told indirectly: whereas the perpetrators’ story is realised dramatically on the novelistic, theatrical and cinematic levels, the female victims’ stories are both told by a similar mediator, a white male author. With these methods, Duras manages to show how the imperialist economy of colonialism with its racist and sexist thinking provokes sudden incidents causing the main protagonists experiences of loss, terror and suffering, and simultaneously conditions the outlook and behaviour of the characters.

This aesthetic procedure organises the two main storylines as follows. The first storyline is the double exile story of the rejected heroines, both constructed as two tentative metanarratives invented by two white men. Le ravissement conveys Lol’s story through a male bystander’s autobiography, while the Cambodian beggar woman’s story is disguised in a Western male writer’s novelising in the mise en abyme structure in Le Vice-consul. This storyline is continued in a small visual text L’amour, which as an amplification shows Lol’s madness in an indefinite time and place. L’amour serves as a base text for the film La Femme du Gange, which combines Lol’s ghostly end with the story line of the perpetrators. The second storyline centres upon the dramatic encounter of Anne-Marie Stretter

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15 While the European milieu of Lol’s rejection in Le ravissement is a calm and safe bourgeois small town area somewhere on the ‘Northern coast’, in Le Vice-consul, the South-east Asian colonialism is displayed as a huge, prolonged state of affairs (l’état de choses) of misery in French Indochina and British India, where no ‘partie adverse’ (plaintiff) can be defined for the Western power (VC, 42).

16 In his presentation of ‘Le cycle de Lol V. Stein’, Jean Pierrot interprets the figures of Lol and the Cambodian beggar as being one another’s doubles in analogical narrative structures. Pierrot considers Lol to be the center of the cycle, instead of Anne-Marie Stretter, implying that the theme of rejection was the principal one (Pierrot 1986, 233).
and the Vice-consul by a behaviourist narration from a limited omniscient viewpoint in the frame story of *Le Vice-consul*, which the embedded fiction of the Cambodian beggar insidiously mirrors. Modified on stage in the play *India Song*, this ramification finally adopts a new tone when repeated as an ambiguously retrospective drama in the film *India Song*, where Anne-Marie has drowned herself in the Indian Ocean. The film *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert* completes the perpetrator story by presenting a commentary on *India Song* from a new perspective, as it repeats with the same soundtrack the ancient lines of the colonial society in the empty, decayed palaces. In this bundle of two intertwining storylines, every single plot tends to progress uniquely according to the nature of the traumatic incident and the character’s position in the configuration of trauma. On the basis of this dual development, I construct the structure of the India Cycle as a diagram of two progressive series of stories, where the narrative meta-layers are marked as concentric circles around the works, as follows:

The Structure of the India Cycle

1. **The victims’ storyline: two analogical stories**

   - **Europe**
     - Lol V. Stein, *L’amour*, novel
     - *L’amour*, novel
     - *La Femme du Gange*, film
     - *La Femme du Gange*, film
     - Voices

   - **Asia**
     - *Le Vice-consul*, novel
     - The beggar
     - Anne-Marie & Vice-consul
     - *India Song*, play
     - *India Song*, film
     - *India Song*, film
     - Voices

2. **The perpetrators’ storyline: a dramatic recognition**

   - *La Femme du Gange*, film
   - *La Femme du Gange*, film
   - Voices
   - *Son nom de Venise*, film
   - *Son nom de Venise*, film
   - Voices

The diagram shows how the cooperation of a diversity of styles starts from the two metanarrative novels on the left, which Duras prepared simultaneously in the years 1963–64 (cf. After the aesthetic turn of May 1968, the dual plot of Lol/Beggar and Anne-Marie/the Vice-consul bifurcates. The rejected woman’s story – the upper branch – continues in a direct form in *L’amour* (1971), and is modified in a cinematic form in *La Femme du Gange* (1973), added with a distancing voice-over. The colonial perpetrators’ story – the lower branch – is elaborated in the play *India Song* (1973) also with a voice-over layer, so as to end in the film *India Song* (1974) where similar voices are multiplied. Finally, on the right, *Son nom de Venise*...
The Aesthetic Strategies of the India Cycle (1976) adds a distancing comment to the story with the same soundtrack but a new image. The discovery of the cinematic voice-over thus shifts from *La Femme du Gange* to the play of *India Song* (arrow A), to be repeated in the films *India Song* (arrow B) and *Son nom de Venise* (arrow C). In the last two films, the stories of Lol and the beggar are heard as remote legends told by voices, while the woman of the Ganges is present as a singing and babbling voice as if celebrating the end of colonialism. As can be seen, self-reflexivity plays a re-evaluating role in the twists of the parallel double narratives, where seemingly antithetic roles tend to coalesce into an ambiguous mixture of mutually mirroring elements.

**Homologies, Doublings, Reversals**

As can be seen in the diagram above, the analogical narratives of the India Cycle arrange the protagonists’ stories as each other’s parallels in the colonial universe as they portray their diverse responses to rejection and loss. Jørgen Dines Johansen introduces analogy (iconicity) as one of the basic poetic principles in Roman Jakobson’s terms. He states that on an abstract level, repetition is always a precondition for the emergence of meaning (Johansen 2002, 200). Moreover, forming analogies, repetition works always on the levels of phonology, expression (syntax) and content (semantics) (ibid., 181, 185). As a form of logical inference, analogy has a double meaning:

*On the one hand, like parallelism, it signifies a proportion, a static relationship among different kinds of elements. On the other, it is a type of inference, that is, it is a cognitive process by virtue of which we learn to know before because we draw conclusions from the similarities we perceive between phenomena belonging to different kinds of realms of experience.* (ibid., 185)

Thus, as a rhetorical device in literature, analogy is a comparison of identity and difference of elements or relations, and acts particularly according to the principle of homology (ibid., 191, 200). Concerning the India Cycle, the serial encoding of similar – copy-like or phantasmatically varying – elements by doubling, tripling, and multiplying implies that these elements are not to be

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17 Johansen’s semiotic approach represents a more precise theory of difference than Derrida’s unendless ‘différence’. As Johansen states, meaning ‘grows out of the interplay between similarity and difference and the indexical function of the sign’. Repetition plays a central part in this interplay, since ‘without something being recognized as similar to something else, and without a discernable pattern in the sign itself, meaning is not possible’ (Johansen 2002, 200).

18 Johansen bases his thesis on Jakobson’s classical formulation on the poetic function of language, which projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination (Jakobson 1956/1988, 38–39). Johansen defines parallelism as a minimal exemplification of this function, which in fact is an application of the formal structure of proportion, that is, analogy (2002, 180–181). Formed on the basis of analogical relations, homology reveals similar relational positions which, however, involve differenties.
interpreted on grounds of logical or causal but analogical inference, that is, on the basis of similarity and differences hiding in that similarity. As will be shown in this study, to the similarity, the physical contiguity of different metonymies brings a dynamic, emotion provoking charge. And as repetition produces analogies to which ethnic, sexual and social differences give meaning, it represents the main device that prevents the closure in Durasian trauma fiction as it rather proliferates new meanings in a chain.19

In this frame, Durasian usage of analogies reveals two problems. First, as a series of relations of identity and difference, the analogical narratives put the colonialist identity politics and the concept of European subjectivity under re-evaluation. Second, the interplay of parallel narratives uncovers the romantic formula as a contaminating social phenomenon that regulates the commodification and commercialisation of (female and male) objects in the fictional white society both in the overseas colonies and in Europe. Ultimately, this aesthetic strategy contributes to the demolition of the essentialist concepts of the white race and heteronormative sexuality. To lay a rationale for the detailed exploration of this deconstructive textual politics in the coming chapters, I first peruse the multitude of dialogical pairs of self/other enabled by the internal patterning of difference in similarity through analogies, and then study the usage of the romantic formula and its contaminating power as a catalyst for social mimesis and triangle formation in the colonial setting.

In Rothberg’s vein, the India Cycle makes use of realistic and antirealist tendencies to articulate extremity in the colonial everyday. It starts out as an effective parallelism of two narrative styles of two white men: Peter Morgan’s Erlebte Rede in the embedded story of Le Vice-consul, realised as a stylised free indirect discourse that pretends to express the experience of a Cambodian girl, and Jacques Hold’s autobiographical self-narration that tries to solve Lol’s enigma in Le ravissement. The main narratological difference between these styles is the narrator’s involvement in the story, Morgan being a heterodiegetic, and Hold being a homodiegetic narrator of his story, respectively.20 Yet each narrative reflects on the formal limits of representation by challenging its own validity as truthful presentations of mental life with overtly articulated questions and concerns. In both cases, the sexual, and/or ethnic, and economic antagonism between the narrator and narratee is a hidden play of textual cues, which effectively blurs the binary concept of self/other. Moreover, whereas Morgan’s personality as a witness

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19 Concerning difference and its deconstruction in feminist theory in relation to Derrida’s ‘différance’, see Meese 1986, 79–87; adapted to the problem of racial and social self/Other presented in Duras, see Meese 1990, 91–94.

20 On these terms, see Cohn 1978, 1999, 19. In Gérard Genette’s terms heterodiegetic refers to the extradiegetic level, and homodiegetic to the diegetic level (Genette 1980, 228–231). I will return to the details of the third-person narrative, free indirect discourse, the first-person narrative (self-narration), and fictional autobiography in connection with testimony and subjectivity in Ch. III.
of colonial misery is introduced in the frame story of *Le Vice-consul* in a slightly ironic light, Hold’s entanglement in his white heroine’s re-enactment – a form of ‘acting out’ – obscures his text as a testimony of Lo’s trauma. Based overtly on other people’s memories and second-hand narratives, these fictional constructions are pronouncedly circulating material in themselves, which accentuates the idea of the constitutive role of public narratives in Western social practices (Rothberg 2000, 7, 102–103).

According to the principle of homology, this narrative doubling of the rejected women’s lives demonstrates likenesses and equalities in the unlike, and vice versa. Mapping two ethnically diverse heroines helpless reactions before sudden violent acts in two cultures, these highly ambiguous imitations of a disturbed mind offer two approaches to an unexpected rejection having taken place on the basis of the young female’s immature sexuality. Since each survivor’s fate is filtered through a white man’s eyes and thoughts, it is not only the survivor itself but the narrator/narratee relationship which is mirrored, while the comparison of semantic and structural properties of these relationships are produced by dissimilar narrative devices. According to the principle of analogy, the similarity of the relationships between the heroines and the narrators can be modeled as a four-term homological relationship Hold : Lol : : Morgan : the mendicant of the Ganges (Johansen 2002, 191). That is, the relationship narrator/narratee between Hold and Lol is homologous to that between Morgan and the model of his imagined beggar: the woman living on the Ganges. When the same basic structure varies from one narrative to another, it sets these narratives under examination as examples of the Western (male) literary tradition, and condenses the survivor stories into a double legend far from a truthful representation of reality. Furthermore, the shared properties of these stories transcend the ethnic and economic boundaries between the survivors by itemising their social position respectively in her gender system. By comparing two female exiles in different cultural milieus in terms of trauma, the parallel processing not only deconstructs the alleged ethnic contradiction of European and Asiatic women, but also uncovers the basic divergence of similarities in the heroines’ fates. That is, while some similarities highlight the heroine’s shared fate as women, the semantic differences of their stories underscores the cultural contradiction between their life circumstances, especially that of their genderisation and sexual identity formation arising from the huge economic inequality maintained by racism and imperialism.  

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21 Johansen’s formulation refers to the siblings’ homologies in the tragedies of classical antiquity.
22 This deconstructive doubling paves the way for the paradoxical fusion of the rejected heroines into the autistic madwoman in *L’amour*, which gives the reader the role of a spectator/narrator. But when this visual drama adopts the form of a cinematic image in *La Femme du Gange*, it is distanced by functionally similar anonymous voices as in the films of the perpetrators’ storyline, thus creating a new narrative viewpoint, once again. See Ch. IV.
In contrast to this double metafiction, the dramatic encounter of the (self-) destructive perpetrators, the aggressive and isolated Vice-consul and the seemingly balanced but suicidal Anne-Marie Stretter, occurs without any personal narrator’s mediation. The frame story of *Le Vice-consul* is a limited, omniscient present-tense narrative, which observes the social interaction of the white colonial society from a distance. The unfolding drama consists of dialogues linked by behavioural descriptions, to which the implicit narrator continually interferes with questions and remarks. Never going inside the protagonists, the text rather compels one to infer their mental life through metaphorical episodes and metonymic clues of the protagonists’ nonverbal language. As significantly as the survivors’ stories, the perpetrators’ drama is predominantly seen through the gaze of other people, and mediated through so-called ‘public opinion’, which as controlling power dominates their performance by expressions, such as ‘on dit’ (one says) or ‘on voit’ (one sees). The main purpose of this technique is to call attention to the values and attitudes of the society, while only a vague inkling of the perpetrators’ inner life is given via their intimate and secret conversations. Sometimes the text may adopt the focalisation of a witnessing character, especially that of the attaché Charles Rossett, the erotic rival of the Vice-consul. In the play and film *India Song*, the drama is transformed into the real performance of cinematic images and voices, which offers the audience a limited position of a witness besides several commenting voices of an invisible white society. However, an innovative voice-over creates a distancing meta-level to the performance, as the dialogue of timeless voices comment on the serial interplay on the screen.

Typical of Duras, portrayed by dissimilar narrative techniques – novelistic metanarratives versus dramatic performances – the two story lines are not simply contrasting the roles of victim/survivor and perpetrator. For, if the analogies are able to draw conclusions from similarities between phenomena belonging to different kinds of realms of experience, comparison works as an effective method in challenging fixed roles in terms of traumatic suffering. Repetition thus dismantles the simple opposition between the survivors and perpetrators in favour of a de-demonisation of the latter ones. More homological pairs appear on this basis of difference in similarity, while more cross-references accumulate within the cycle. For example, the relation of perpetrators can be seen as homologous to that of the survivors, that is Anne-Marie relates to the Vice-consul like Lol relates to the imagined Cambodian beggar. Similarly, the mutual relationship of two survivors and perpetrators can be formulated as Lol : Anne-Marie : : the beggar : Vice-consul. The cross-meanings also include any partial similarities such as those between Anne-Marie and the ‘real’ mendicant of the Ganges, or the Vice-consul and Lol V. Stein. One important difference in similarity is formed between Morgan’s invented beggar and the ‘real’ mendicant in Calcutta. Whereas the starving Cambodian beggar descends into oblivion as an ultimate result of
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a total social marginalisation within colonialism, the mendicant of the Ganges survives in Calcutta fishing, singing and laughing. In this fashion, transgressing generic and ontological boundaries, thematical analogies tend to challenge all binary roles in a complex network of mirroring units.

Utilising structural mappings, or conceptual blendings, this technique enables some politically significative displacements of the characters in the course of the cycle, such as their merging into one, stronger figure who continually points to its weaker double. The first remarkable merging is Lol’s transmutation into an abstract figure of a white madwoman in L’amour. Being a dramatic continuation of the survivor storyline, L’amour conveys an anonymous madwomans later life without any distinct layer of auto-commentary, suggestive of an allegory of the madwoman’s psychic state. As this abstract madwoman substitutes Lol as a child-like Western housewife, it begins to function as a strong opposite to Anne-Marie who, iteratively called ‘the woman of Calcutta’, is presented as the admired queen of the colonial power (VC, 93, 96). Furthermore, being Lol’s sexual parallel, but her ethnic antagonist, the imagined figure of the Cambodian beggar girl displays a revealing social contrast to the Western traumatised women. This antithesis is strengthened by symbolic reciprocity created between the imagined Cambodian outcast and her ‘real’ original, the cheerful mendicant of the Ganges, all the more so as the white colonialists tend to confuse these two figures in the frame of Le Vice-consul. Another significative merging occurs in the films India Song and Son nom de Venise, as the haunting figures of both these beggars are amalgamated into one archetypal Laotian woman, whose presence is foregrounded as a talking and singing Laotian voice in the common soundtrack of these films. This audial element becomes a reversed parallel to the Vice-consul’s moaning, when he is cast out from the white society and wanders on the banks of the Ganges among the lepers.

Summing up the postcolonial feminist message of this criss-cross mirroring, the heroines of the India Cycle are tropes that function in rhetoric pairs with regard to women’s alternatives in solving the most important problems in life, such as establishing bonds of love and using intellectual talent in and for society. For one thing, the enclosure of Lol in the nuclear family is set in contrast to the fate of the Cambodian beggar as a prostitute who suffers from a total break from

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23 The significance of this dual strategy is briefly mentioned by Winston (2001, 6) but escapes many Duras studies.

24 In terms of similes and metaphors, the homological pairs which discover similarities in difference and vice versa are structural mappings, or conceptual blendings, similar to the parallel narratives of Jews and Moors in European history in Phillips’s The Nature of Blood (Whitehead 2004, 89–116; see also Johansen 2002, 191–199; Lakoff & Johnson 2003, 261–264).

25 The same confusion troubles the majority of interpretations of the India Cycle. An approach that confuses the imagined and ‘real’ beggar woman, when not recognising the ontological difference created by metafictional strategy, loses the critical point of Duras’s text. See Ch III.
all family bonds. Despite this basic difference, wounded by a total rejection, the Durasian survivors are bound to live in an extreme loneliness amidst people: Lol as a mechanical zombie in wealth, the beggar as an outcast in poverty. For another, the fishing and singing woman of the Ganges – Morgan’s model of the fictional Cambodian beggar – is set in a mirroring position to that of Anne-Marie Stretter, the depressive white ‘prostitute’ of the European enclave of India. Closing the circle, Anne-Marie’s figure points back to Lol’s catastrophe which occurred by virtue of Anne-Marie’s foregrounded, omnipotent sexual attraction. This circular arrangement of silenced women hides an antagonism of two forms of traumatisation: the survivors’ insanity following rejection, and Western melancholy played out by the encounter of the colonists, the imprisoned Anne-Marie Stretter and the Vice-consul who adopts an intermediate sexual position as a rejected white hermit.

**Romantic Formula: Contamination and Multiplication**

Alongside the doublings produced by phantasmatic variations that play with difference and merging, the central factor in the interplay of analogical narratives is the figure of romantic love. The fascination around Anne-Marie and Michael Richards(on) is an organic component of a traditional representational figure, the romantic formula, typically utilised in diverse functions in popular and high fiction. According to my rereading, not Anne-Marie’s attractive figure alone but the trope of everlasting ideal love epitomised by Anne-Marie and Michael, acts as an object of (colonial) desire, reflecting the racist value system which the Vice-consul as a law-breaker will make visible and disturb. This sentimentalised romance acts as the main vehicle producing a multiplication of morbid triangulations in the white society on the basis of the contamination of social mimesis, displayed over the generic boundaries of the India Cycle (Gebauer and Wulf 1992, 5). All other narratives are arranged around this conventional formula, and measured against its magical aura. Thus the radiating core of the colonial universe is not merely the individual character of Anne-Marie, as a number of previous studies have suggested (Willis 1987, Glassman 1991; McNeece 1996). Rather, while the whites unanimously hold Anne-Marie’s

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26 The loss of all family bonds is Duras’s fictional strategy, which does not count on the possible Cambodian kinship systems. As I emphasise in Ch. IV., the two stories are constructed by white men as parallel tragedies, which progress toward madness presented in L’amour’s aporetic end.

27 The ritual encounter of Anne-Marie and the Vice-consul indicates their kindred spirit, which can be understood as another mode of ‘madness’: ‘fou d’intelligence’ (mad of intelligence; E. 21). See Ch. V.

28 Previous studies hold Anne-Marie unanimously as the ‘absorbing center’ of the circulation of the stories, and the love between her and Michael as the main plot. In my view, if the figure of eternal love is taken literally for granted as a plot, the interpretation may dismiss the dramatic top
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The enthrancing character as the absorbing centre of their society in the fictional world, her romance with Michael is the central trope in constituting colonialist practices, which sets in motion a social mimesis of eroticism. According to René Girard's definition, social mimesis 'designates the process in which the rivalries arise between individuals and groups sharing the same goals of action' (quoted in Jenson 2001, 6). Thus, as a commodifying form of social mimesis, the romantic formula reinforces the collective everyday dynamics of the society underpinning the colonial status quo (ibid., 6–7).

Retaining its textual stability throughout the cycle, the figure of eternal passion between Anne-Marie and Michael Richards(on) – in fact the only static replica in the whole story – engages its status as a melodramatic centre both in Lol's story in Europe and in the story of the Vice-consul in Calcutta. Organised by a heterosexual fascination, the romance is a familiar formula of the sudden passionate love between a rich, handsome young man and an attractive and – provocative at the time the novel was published – much elder *femme fatale*. Imagined and believed as if lasting forever, it is a typical commercial rumor circulating in the society in order to maintain or gain political power through publicity. Initially, in *Le ravissement*, the idealised couple is presented in an erotic trance in the Casino of Northern France as an example of mature heterosexual attraction. But later, positioned strategically in *Le Vice-consul* as the primus motor of the French colonial life in British India, the admired couple rather represents more clearly the standards of the racist value system by portraying the alignment of possessive heterosexual love and colonial power. Through this icon of supremacy, sexual infatuation is presented as a Western survival method which helps to forget the surrounding images of hunger, leprosy and death, and ultimately prevents suicide.

Gradually, as the iconised figure of the adulterous couple lingers in the grip of a decaying passion, it reveals itself as a source of contagious cultural practice, which is reflected in the textual proliferation of morbid love triangles in the fictional Western society on both continents. In Europe, the commercial tendency is underlined by reconstructing Anne-Marie's figure in Hold/Lol's imaginations as a female archetype of mature sexuality. Echoing the objectified romantic formula, Lol's secret enactment of her trauma in S. Tahla desperately tries to imitate the passionate love affair between Anne-Marie and Michael. Without genuine passion, she arranges her acting out with Jacques Hold, whose own secret relationship with Lol's old school friend, Tatjana Karl, accomplishes the triangulation. This secretly built triangle does not, however, serve in the goal of Lol's maturation, but leads to an impasse and her further derangement famously referred to as 'madness'. In and the political meaning of the perpetrators' encounter. At the level of the plot, Anne-Marie's instrumental position in the white society is undeniable, but the circulating stories around her is a narrative device which persuades one to identify oneself with the gossiping whites and their values.
The infective power of sexuality takes the form of a second, seemingly resigned triangle in the encounter of the Lol-madwoman, her deranged narrator-helper, and her suicidal fiancé, of which one is unable to distinguish whether it is the ‘real’ continuation of Lol’s story or her own wishful imagination. Intriguingly, this triangle of Lamour draws into itself another madman in La Femme du Gange: Tatiana Karl as a suffering second woman. With such a clone-like multiplication of suffering persons, Duras ironically points to an interminable process of sexual competition, thereby preventing the final enclosure of her cyclic work.

In a fairly same way, in Calcutta, the romance amounts to an eligible model for the colonists’ lifestyle in isolated prison-like conditions, while Anne-Marie’s adulterous relationship is favoured as an acceptable survival solution amidst the colonial horror by her husband, the old French Ambassador Stretter. Closed in erotic rivalry under the influence of this romance, the Europeans circulate it as an object of curiosity, envy and desire. The heterosexual love story is thus presented as capable of cloning itself through cultural modeling in the manner of postmodernist commercial multiplication (cf. Rothberg 2000, 10, 103). This does not, however, diminish Anne-Marie’s power as a liberating model for female sexuality. Quite the contrary, she is characterised by all attributes appropriate to a perfect representative of the female sex and gender at the peak of economic power. Yet, understood as a feminised figure of inexhaustible greed, Anne-Marie is depicted as a marionette of white supremacy, whereby she is capable of eliciting an incessant chain of unhappy triangulations, all the more so as she is the most desperate figure amidst her lovers. Thus the eroticised figure of the white heterosexual couple amounts to the central emblem of the European colonial enterprise, which is based on the belief of the persistency of Western economic progress. Disturbingly, the three other main characters attempt to shake this icon in their unique metaphorical manner presented in separate narratives. The first of the threatening figures is Lol, the victim of the couple’s passionate affair. The second is the Vice-consul who, representing colonial aggression, tries to invade a position at the center of the colonial hierarchy through love. Coming from outside of India, he parallels the third figure, the Cambodian beggar, who incarnates the everyday hunger of the locals. In this manner, the romantic formula persists as a connecting element between the separate fictional worlds of the cycle, while it simultaneously represents a set of hierarchical values behind the slowly developing fates of all four principal protagonists, including Anne-Marie herself.

To conclude, as a style, the Durasian cyclic mimesis points to the racial and gender norms of French colonialism which culminates in the concept of mise en valeur (Cooper 2001, 29). It portrays the colonial failure and disillusionment as a counter-narrative to the ideal of white superiority in a slightly ironising form. The consistency of the India Cycle is based on a Rothbergian ‘reality effect’ created by a cooperation of realistic, stylised, and distanced stories, which alternate as separate
narrative threads so as to be eventually weaved together in the film *India Song*. This principle brings forth a semiotic network of parallel processing and contrasting oppositions, where the distinction between perpetrators and victims is obscured by transcending normative binarities of sexuality, ethnicity, and class. However, every single work draws the contours of its own protagonists with unique expressive devices which tend to induce identification. But traumatic similarity hides in difference, while the intertwining of narratives prepares holes, incompatibilities, and interstices, from which the subversive meanings of these differences will emerge. The stylistic progress thus challenges our conventional ways of interpreting similarity as equality, pointing to the crisis of a European concept of subjectivity. Moreover, repetition stylises the figures in two separate directions: multiplication that provides series of doubles and triangles, and simplification that condenses the figures into archetypes or clone-like copies, which strengthens the political meanings of the phantasmatic fabrication. These are the stylistic reasons why Durasian trauma fiction positions itself as an insistent and critical rewriting of what Duras herself was later to call ‘le vampirisme colonial’, colonial vampirism (Cooper 2001, 121).

Metafiction and Testimony: Possible Worlds


In post-war literary France, in the wake of Jean-Paul Sartre’s philosophical defense of internal viewpoints in literature, a lively debate of new narrative viewpoint techniques arose in the circle of nouveau roman (Morrissette 1985, 59–70, 141, 160–161). Aware of this development – one manifestation of the postmodern crisis of representation – Duras began with her own metafictional experiments with Asian colonialism in the sixties and seventies. The result was a rich multiplicity of auto-commenting techniques, which produce a self-reflexive perspective to traumatic loss and its narrativisation in the works of the India Cycle. Together these techniques exemplify how literary and cinematic stylisation may impact the content of trauma, while they also demonstrate a sensitive self-awareness of discourse as constitutive of human consciousness. It follows that metafiction in the India Cycle undertakes a new mission: it supplies the needs of

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29 *VC*, 60. ‘Why that route rather than any other? Why? Was it the birds she was following, and not a route at all? Or the routes of the Chinese tea convoys of former times? No. Wherever she happened to find a path or foothold, whether among trees or bare slopes, there she walked’ (Peter Morgan’s narrative; V, 44).
the act of witnessing by attacking iteratively artistic conventions as testimonies of the other’s trauma. Most importantly for a theory of trauma fiction, this idea is in line with trauma researchers’ concern for the conventionalisation of trauma narratives. In my view, a skilful dual scope distinguishes Duras’s fictionalisation of trauma, while she navigates between mimetic and metanarrative viewpoints when converting the unattainable referent of the ‘other’s’ traumatic memory into a communicable form. This is why my reading leans on the intrinsic dialogism of language as a means to reach out for the affective center of traumatic experience, which I see to permeate the testimonial heteroglossia of the India Cycle (Bakhtin 1981; Pearce 2006, 226–228).

In this section, I will investigate Duras’s usage of those narrative devices which retain the traces of traumatic disruption and discontinuity but, at the same time, attack their validity as a sufficient symbolisation of trauma. This is to emphasise that the India Cycle does not dwell on trauma but rather struggles for a textual survival. As presented earlier in this study, to transform narrative memory into fiction is to recapture unlocatable experiences from intrusive flashbacks preserved in the paradoxical link prevailing between embodied images and emotions. To integrate them into literary figures requires a recovery of associative imagination that reloa the memories with fresh new emotions. In the India Cycle, this is realised by openly creating imperfect textual discourses which are punctuated by a salient self-reflexivity and metafictional shifting. The cycle appears to be a constellation of mimetic and anti-mimetic discourses in the sense of Rothbergian traumatic realism, which transcends the idea of trauma fiction as a mimetic ‘acting out’ of symptoms. Thus the Durasian phantasm does not want to understand too much about the colonial parties involved, but rather creates highly tentative images of the fictional phenomena, whose vraisemblance is questioned directly by the text itself or indirectly by revealing the narrator(s). In my reading, with its multiple

30  Thinking that narrativisation will ‘understand too much’, Cathy Caruth argues for the force of traumatic memory’s ‘affront to understanding’ (1995, 154). The main purpose of Caruth’s claim is to resist the commercialisation of realistic documentaries of historical traumas by warning one against identifying the narrative with the missing truth of those who did not survive. This point is persistently important since empirical and theoretical knowledge of trauma always influences its artistic handling, while trauma fiction tends to absorb into itself the actual ideological history of trauma.

31  Monica Fludernik (1996, 335–336) holds ‘discourse’ as the main signifying source for (post)modern texts of the twentieth century, which do not delineate one clear story. In Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981, 262–263) vein, I understand ‘discourse’ as a dialogical mediator between the reader and the world, used to represent the diversity of social speech types in the novel. Also Paul Ricoeur defines ‘discourse’ as a manner of speaking which is made meaningful by coupling language with the world. For him, ‘discourse’ does not represent but claims to depict, express and represent the world (Ricoeur 1976, 9).

32  Also Caruth demands that the paradoxical situation concerning the narrativisation of trauma necessitates indirect narrative strategies to communicate and integrate the trauma into ‘one’s own, and other’s knowledge of the past’ (1995b, 152–153).
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perspectives, the India Cycle suggests a new mode of understanding by creating a prismatic effect which results in a stratified system of metaphorical worlds, where a variety of intersecting values gradually deconstruct the exaggerated binarities of its virtual colonialism, including those of colonised and coloniser, survivor and perpetrator, narratee and narrator. The primary goal of the following discussion is to describe the structure of this system of possible worlds, so as to show how the internal narrative viewpoints serve the reader/viewer’s self-awareness in an empathic, yet critical process of witnessing.

As a literary and theoretical tool, metafiction – play-within-play, fiction of fiction, or discourse on discourse – is historical and contextual, and does not limit itself merely to postmodernist literature (Morrissette 1985, 92, 146–150). Metafiction is found extensively in pre-Enlightenment literature and art as a method of breaking the foundationalist idea of literary representations as truthful models of the real(ity) (Waugh 1992, 54–55). Primarily, metafiction refers to a fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact, and challenges it as a valid testimony of reality which is held as a manufactured social construction (Waugh 1984, 2, 51; Berger and Luckmann 1971, 197). To deconstruct postmodernist writing practices of textual autonomy, metafiction breaks the illusion of unmediated experience of reality by calling attention to the ‘frame’, thereby posing questions about the relationships between fiction and reality, and about literary criticism as well. These observations show that the theory of metafiction resists the idea of a simple dichotomy of reality versus fiction, and holds literary ‘reality’ to be a consequence of ‘style’ (Waugh, 1984, 25–30).

With its metatechniques, the India Cycle is one of those works that reflects and contributes to the postmodern crisis of representation by collapsing the distinction between a fiction and the external world. What is more, new contexts such as postcolonialism and feminism open a new interpretative dimension for Duras's usage of metafiction: that of an act of witnessing as a deconstructive methodology which iteratively challenges literary conventions as testimonies of the other’s trauma. When the foregrounded meta-levels of the India Cycle guide the audience into awareness of its own signification process, they alert one of the artificial nature of those discourses which attempt to mediate the victim’s and perpetrator’s experiences. Therefore a viable reading demands three preconditions: an empathic consciousness which actively uses self-reflexive capacity, an unimpaired capacity of metaphorical thought, and a dialogical concept of language as a contextually changing semantic tool (cf. Modell 2006, 187, 191). And as a textual strategy undermines the epistemological foundation of itself as a valid portrayal of the

33 According to Erving Goffman, the term ‘framing’ refers to the organisation of the experience of life in narrative form, especially in conventional literary discourses, such as those found in nineteenth-century realism. Framing also refers to the activity by means of which the notion of history/reality is constructed (Waugh 1984, 30, Goffman 1974, 10–13).
Fictionalising Trauma

‘other’s’ experience, it also evokes the question of one’s own embodied experience of the actual world, thus persuading one to ponder the fictional value system compared with that of the actual one. This thought is the ultimate reason for my investigation of the alternative possible worlds created by Durasian metanarration.

As presented with the diagram of the India Cycle’s narrative whole, each of the storylines reveals a similar aesthetic progression from self-reflexive novels through drama into self-reflexive films. This technique which was probably promoted in the sixties due to the ongoing decolonisation, finds in Duras a clear and sharp tone as a critical discourse in three ways: in the abrupt antithesis of the two stories in the interior duplication of Le Vice-consul, in Peter Morgan’s intricately dialogical narration about the Cambodian beggar, and in the extremely entangled narrator-narratee relationship in Le ravissement.34 These two novels presented Duras the challenge of how to deal with the problem of self/other dialogue – a ‘self’ narrating the experience of a traumatised ‘other’ – in a convincing manner. In Le ravissement, this problem is worked up into Jacques Hold’s autobiographical self-narration that pretends to mediate Lol’s experience. Typically, Hold’s narrative is full of questions concerning Lol’s inner life and its narrativisation:

Aucun signe de sa différence sous ma main, sous mes yeux. Et pourtant, et pourtant. Qui est là en ce moment, si près et si loin, quelles idées roideuses viennent et reviennent la visiter, de nuit, de jour, dans toutes les lumières ? en ce moment même ? En cet instant où je pourrais la croire dans ce train, près de moi, comment d’autres femmes le seraient ? […] (R, 168)

My eyes, my hands can detect nothing in any way out of the ordinary about her. Nor the slightest trace of any difference. And yet, and yet. Who is there now, so near and yet so far, what marauding thoughts and ideas prowl through her mind, again and again, by day, by night, in every light? even right this minute? At this very moment when, holding her in my arms in this train, I might be tempted to think she was no different from any other woman? (LVS, 159)

In the embedded story of Le Vice-consul, the same problem is disguised in Morgan’s modified free indirect style marking the beggar’s experience. Morgan involves the reader in the Cambodian beggar’s narrative mystery as follows:

Depuis combien de temps est-elle sans mémoire ? Quoi dire à la place de ce qu’elle n’aurait pas dit ? de ce qu’elle ne dira pas ? de ce qu’elle ignore avoir vu ? de ce qu’elle ignore avoir eu lieu ? à la place de ce qui a disparu de toute mémoire ? (VC, 73)

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34 The autocommenting mode of omniscient narration already emerged in Duras’s stylistically ‘mature’ works of the fifties, such as Moderato Cantabile and Hiroshima mon amour (cf. Murphy 1982, 11–12).
How long since she lost her memory? How to put into words the things she never said? the things that she will not say? the things that she does not know she has seen? the experiences that she does not know she has had? in the place of that who has lost the whole memory? (cf. V, 55)35

Moreover, as ambiguously, the frame narrator of *Le Vice-consul* often leaves open who speaks, as the laconic end of Charles Rossett’s and the Vice-consul’s conversation shows:

— “La mort dans un vie en cours”, dit enfin le vice-consul, “mais qui ne vous rejoindrait jamais? C’est ça?”
C’est ça, peut-être, oui. (VC, 174)

— “Death in the midst of life”, says the Vice-consul at last, “death following but never catching up. Is that it?”
That may be it, yes. (V, 139)36

The tentative nature of these highly dialogical discourses can be interpreted as Duras’s answer to the problem of the Western concept of subjectivity presented as literary renderings of an alienated ‘I’ (Morrisette 1985, 95–107), yet, with the additional dilemma of dualist contradictions of racial rule. Deepening the problem of the narrator, the plain text of *L’amour* is a new type of sequel to Lol’s story, which after May 1968 marks a stylistic rupture leading to the emergence of a feminist meta-level, that of a female voice-over dialogue commenting on the same drama in *La Femme du Gange*. This enrichment of cinematic distancing methods ends in a more complex voice-over chorus dominating the dramatic and cinematic reformulations of *Le Vice-consul*: the play *India Song*, and the film pair *India Song* and *Son nom de Venise*. The process reveals that Duras’s principal innovation is the (feminist) shift from the pretended novelistic male narration into an oral female commentary distancing the colonial drama, to be completed in the film *India Song* with the final voice-over dialogue between one male and one female voice – that of Duras herself.

Summing up, while several transgeneric shifts modify the recurring material in new narrative registers, the function of metatechniques is to take a critical perspective to all those testimonial reconfigurations that shall evoke virtual worlds in the mind of the reader/viewer. As the close readings of this study will show, displayed as open and hidden *mise en abyme* structures and allegories, the tentative testimonies of the India Cycle present provocative renderings of the colonial trauma and its derivatives, which try to lay bare the culturally constructed racial frames of European thinking. On this basis, I argue that the Durasian usage of

35 I have translated the questions word for word in Duras’s style.
36 The quotation marks are added in order to indicate where the Vice-consul’s line ends. The layout of the published English translation does not make visible this subtle feature.
self-conscious narratives indicate those interpretative schemas that arise from an evolutionary optimism of the Enlightenment and its biased legacy of white supremacy. Accordingly, I see the metanarratives of the cycle as manifestations of the fictional male narrators’ doubtful roles as witnesses of colonial trauma and the colonisation of women. This unreliability originates from the heteronormative status of the men in the racial and sexual hierarchy, which is the construction upon which European thinking is based in reference to its imperialist past. In this light, the cycle represents an exploration of a legitimation crisis of European imperialist politics as reasoned by Enlightenment thought (Waugh 1992, 69). And ultimately, the multitude of perspectives of the India Cycle problematise the notion of rational subjectivity and transparent self-knowledge as a foundation of Enlightenment, a feature which makes Duras’s constellation postmodernist in the critical meaning of the term (ibid., 67).

**Breaking Frames, Creating Fictional Worlds**

The India Cycle can be qualified as a representative of traumatic realism in a Rothbergian sense, because its combination of styles consists of a kind of psychological realism, modernist stylisation, and postmodernist circulation of the same material. As for Rothberg the main problem of traumatic realism is to portray the extreme structures of the everyday, crucial is the impact of style to referential and semantic qualities of the narrative (2000, 12–13). Therefore, he adapts Walter Benjamin’s concept of constellation, which signifies a montage of diverse textual elements arising from the stylistic sources of realism and anti-realism, the latter referring to modernist and postmodernist techniques. For Rothberg, while all these literary discourses are invalid methods for narrativising trauma, they are persistent but dissimilar answers to the referential demands of textualising history (ibid. 105). Whereas realism seeks strategies for documenting the world by mimetic representation of reality – like PeterMorgan’s modified psychological realism – modernism challenges this ability by calling for limits on representation by its self-reflexive devices – like Jacques Hold’s self-narration. In addition, the postmodernist approach attacks mimesis by insisting on the public circulation of discourses, thereby detaching entirely the connections between text and reality – similar to the gossips and phantasms circulating in Duras’s novelistic and cinematic societies, and within her cycle (cf. ibid., 8–9). Whereas none of these styles alone can fulfill the function of symbolising trauma, in combination they can portray its unlocatability by binding together the present of traumatic memory and the past of a traumatic event in the ‘in-between-space’ of traumatic experience (ibid., 12). As an outcome, a constellation of mimetic and antimimetic styles manages to unveil the ‘real’s foundational absence from representation’ (ibid., 103–104).
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Such a metaphorical constellation also brings into being ontologically separate virtual worlds by different types of discourses. Krystyna Pomorska sums up the idea of fictional worlds as value-laden and discourse-dependent entities by referring to Bakhtin:

\[\text{L}ife itself (traditionally considered “content”) is organised by human acts of behavior and cognition (postupok i poznanie) and is therefore already charged with a system of values at the moment it enters into an artistic structure. Art only transforms this organised “material” into a new system whose distinction is to mark new values. (Pomorska 1984, viii, emphasis original)\]

One manifestation of this thought is the current possible world theory, which emphasises the power of discourse to evoke fictional worlds that act as autonomic universes, and which are charged with beliefs and knowledge according to the discourse in use (Ryan 1991, 20). Accordingly, while the concept of ‘world’ refers to a semiotic world formed discursively, ‘discourse’ refers to a constitutive narrative vehicle which organises every phantasmatic world according to some specific mode of perception and social orientation in relation to space, time, and social frame of reference (Dolezel 1998, 255; Ryan 1991, 3–4, 7, 23–24, 51; Stockwell 2000, 91). As a consequence, each metaphorical world functions according to the laws and values constituted by the discourse. David Herman presents a welcome precision to this model with his concept of ‘storyworld’, which emphasises an emotional organisation of such a projected environment:

More than reconstructed timelines and inventories of existents, storyworlds are mentally and emotionally projected environments in which interpreters are called upon to live out complex blends of cognitive and imaginative response, encompassing sympathy, the drawing of causal inferences, identification, evaluation, suspense, and so on (Herman 2002, 16–17, emphasis added).

37 In reference to William James, Patricia Waugh states that while the idea of possible worlds is not a new one, in a postmodern condition possible worlds are not understood as states of consciousness forming monological wholes, but rather ‘universes of discourses’ evoked, for example, by (Lyotardian) language games (Waugh 1992, 55–56). However, Marie-Laure Ryan’s (1991) theory clearly relates all imagined worlds ontologically to the primary, actual one.

38 Ryan defines her term ‘world’ as construct of the mind and a semantic domain projected into the text, not a rigid logical domain but a semiotic domain having philosophical aspects such as modalities (Ryan 1991, 4). As Lubomir Doležel puts it, the ‘discursive restrictions of separate environmental macrostructures determine the general order and the condition of the fictional universe the persons are existing and acting in’ (Doležel, 1998, 255). The modalities of an artificial possible world depend on discursive features used, of what and how this has been expressed, including what has been omitted. Here the explicit textual strategy of the narrative serves as the main referential role, with its foregroundings and ontological gaps, which all function as suggestions for those semantic and modal qualities of the fictional world that the audience is able to produce (Ryan 1991, 32–33).

39 Herman’s (2002, 13–14) concept of storyworld refers to the spatio-temporal organisation of
While a possible world is never a copy of the real world but its phantasmatic variation, it is in some emotional and perceptual relation to the actual, historical world through some narrative strategy which guides the reader’s imagination (Ryan, 1991, 20, 22, 43–44). From this perspective, the complex macro-sign of the India Cycle can be justified as an artistic artefact and an imaginative storyworld in itself, despite its seemingly authentic historical and geographical places (Dolezel 1998, 13–14). In the cyclic configuration, every individual narrative tends to evoke its own virtual world, which relates to another world and to reality through a narrative strategy. Thus any metanarrative challenges the validity of every other world as a representation of reality, while any self-conscious comment breaks the ontological unity of the world in question (Ryan 1991, 22).

Starting from these premises, I sketch six ontologically separate worlds in the possible realm of the India Cycle, each evoked by a different narrative voice. The gradual evolution of this system begins from Jacques Hold’s narration, which outlines the first possible world in *Le ravissement*. It is a region of three imaginary coastal towns, S. Tahla, T. Beach, and U. Bridge, somewhere in northern Europe, where Lol V. Stein re-enacts her indelible experience. This virtual Europe is juxtaposed with two concentric narratives created by the *mise en abyme* structure of *Le Vice-consul*. The second possible world, set side by side with Lol’s Europe, is the virtual India created by an omniscient narrator in the frame story of *Le Vice-consul*, and shaped retrospectively from a later moment of time in the film *India Song*. The third possible world grows from within the novelistic India, like a satellite of it, as written by Peter Morgan’s psychological realism which pretends to present the Cambodian girl’s experience of the countries of French Indochina. Next, in *L’amour*, a fourth possible world appears, that of Lol’s madness called S. Thala. It is told without an identifiable narrator as a dream-like milieu, and transformed into a more realistic European small town in the image of *La Femme du Gange*. The fifth possible world, that of timeless narrative voices, is created by the cinematic voice-

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40 As Ryan holds our actual world as a starting point when departing on our journey through the possible fictional worlds, she ignores the decentered postmodern ideal of the endless chain of parallel simulacra. The actual world – ‘reality’ – is always the ontological basis, defined as a hypothetical production of our minds, upon which the possible worlds are built hierarchically, as several kinds of *mise en abyme* structures, or like satellites circulating around it. Hence, the first fictional level produced by the first narrative means another ontological level, while every intradiegetic narrator may in turn create a new, ontologically separate world inside the already narrated fiction, even in an unending succession. (Ryan 1991, 24 –25, 29–30).

41 While Herman’s ‘storyworld’ refers to a mental model (or a discourse model) as a patterning of textual cues with mental representations, it applies both to fictional and nonfictional narratives (Herman 2, 9–10).

42 Originally, Duras’s planned that two such stories would develop on two parallel levels at two different times (see Hill 1993, 172 n5).
over in La Femme du Gange, where two anonymous women discuss the film, thus evoking a feeling of an ontologically different world from that of the spectacle on screen. And finally, similar to the fifth one, a sixth possible world is created by the common soundtrack of the films India Song and Son nom de Venice with a rich multitude of narrative voices coming from unknown spatial and temporal levels.

These six virtual worlds constructed by reading are hard to localise temporally and spatially in relation to each other and reality. To shape their mutual topological organisation would be an interesting visuo-spatial task which, however, is not in the scope of my study (cf. Morrissette 1985, 73–75). More interesting is that none of Duras’s texts tries to imitate real geographical places; rather, they evoke stylised, even caricatured locations by phantasmatic repetitions of scenes and figures. Typically, each world tends to emerge – at least in part – from within a former fictional world, thereby compelling the audience to vacillate between several perspectives on the same set of phenomena – a ball, a walking beggarwoman, or a white man observing a woman – but without giving any precise reference marks of a permanent nature. The result is an insecure universe with temporal and spatial blanks and inconsistencies, and blurred boundaries between its parts, through which intratextual references can be made forwards as well as backwards in cyclic time. These features provide an epistemic uncertainty, of which some examples are necessary at this point.

The temporal consistency of these worlds must be inferred merely from the age of the main characters which are purposefully inexact. The first event in the chain is Lol’s rejection, after which Michael Richardson is said to have left for India at 25 years of age with the ‘much elder’ Anne-Marie who has a daughter in her teens. In Le Vice-consul, Michael Richards appears in Calcutta at about 30 years of age (VC, 137) while Anne-Marie Stretter is (still) in her late thirties and has been the wife of the French Ambassador for seventeen years (VC, 136). But seventeen years after Lol’s rejection (A, 75), Michael arrives as an anonymous traveller at the ghostly city of S. Thala followed by a wife and two children, while Lol has by this time become an autistic madwoman followed by a modification of Jacques Hold as a madman. Oddly, this seems to occur much later than Anne-Marie’s drowning in 1937 in the film India Song. The crowning act is the unknown space and personality of the narrating voices in all three films, which increases the feeling of timelessness, and makes the whole cycle an ever-circulating chain of scenes where one cannot locate a fixed point. These ambivalent features of the worlds violently question the parameters of normative cognition by confusing the temporal and spatial coherence of the multi-level virtual universe, thus accentuating their metaphorical nature as testimonies.

More important than a clear-cut shape of this universe is the organisation of each world around some specific value-centre. Such a value-centre can be viewed as following the order of some modification of Bakhtinian classical
Fictionalising Trauma

chronotopes, such as ‘way’, organised by hunger (the Cambodian beggar’s grief work), ‘provincial town’, organised by bourgeois stagnation (Lol’s obsessive re-enactment), and ‘salon’, organised by ‘crime’ (the whites’ destructive, passionate domination in Calcutta) (Bakhtin 1981, 226, 246–247). Each of these single possible worlds can be seen to function according to its own laws dependent on the discursive value system, respectively. But if the relation of the values of these Durasian subworlds remains to be analysed, what is the referential relation of the virtual worlds to the actual world? Waugh offers an answer by defining ‘reality’ as a perspectival consequence of style in a Bakhtinian vein. She notes that metafiction primarily deals with the repercussions arising from the shifts between ‘reality’ and ‘fiction’, and the complicated interpenetration of these two (Waugh 1984, 36). The idea of seeing discursive and actual worlds as interpenetrating each other has a sounding board in Benjamin Harshaw’s (1984) ‘double-decker model’, which understands fiction as a composite of two fields of reference, the internal and the external one. For one thing, fiction always creates an ‘internal field of reference’, a large universe comprised of a multitude of interrelated frames of reference, by projecting new referents by referring to them (Harshaw 1984, 230–235; cf. Ryan 1991, 15). For another, language is always (to some extent) dependent of ‘reality constructs’, that is, on the ‘external field of reference’, which refers to historical reality by elements of the actual world, such as names, places, events, dates, or actual historical figures (Harshaw 1984, 243–244; cf. Ryan 1991, 29). Hence, what counts when evaluating the values of a possible world is the referential tension produced between the virtual pseudoreality and actual world, created by way of discursive choices which signal a signifying mind to notice the specific laws of the virtual world, thus providing alternative ways of comprehending the human Umwelt.

As a temporary conclusion, whereas Durasian fiction seems to situate fictional figures in historical places of the real world, the world portrayed is always a virtual one, with elements of the external field of reference situated in the internal one. The power of the co-presence of miscellaneous discourses is that it forces one to see how conventional frames condition our everyday understanding when relativising our discursive presentations of reality (Martin 1986, 150, 179–180). In addition, the novelist and cinematic devices of the India Cycle interfere radically in the general aesthetic tendencies of their time, while their metatextual framing attacks several conventional literary and cinematic discourses. But as importantly, as will be shown in the chapter concerning witnessing, the deconstructive activity of Durasian metafiction consists in laying bare and breaking frames by which historical traumas are constructed as artistic testimonies. This formal tendency

43 Harshaw specifies the frame of reference as a semantic continuum of two or more referents, such as a scene in time and space, a character, an ideology, a mood, a state of affairs, a plot, a policy, a theory, etc. (Harshaw 1984, 230).
to repeat world-within-world structures indicates Duras’s intention to explore the human imaginative ability to project oneself into the inner world of the ‘other’, identify oneself with the unfamiliar values of other realities, and challenge the value hierarchies of one’s own culture.

**Accessing Trauma Through Narrative Holes**

A favourable outcome from a recognition of alternative discourse universes would be in Waugh’s words, the ‘possibility of a genuine recognition of otherness, a non-egotistic awareness of our tendency to incorporate the worlds and experiences of others into our own’ (Waugh 1992, 57). But how does such a genuine recognition of the other’s trauma occur when reading a cooperation of multifaceted perspectivalism? Neither Rothberg nor Caruth gives an answer to this problem but emphasise the absence of trauma. Rothberg stresses self-reflexive testimonies and traumatic figures as constitutive of the presence of the trauma as they point in the text to a ‘performative repetition of its absence from representation’. This seems to fulfil Caruth’s idea that trauma narrative should preserve both the unaccountability and referentiality of historical trauma. However, there is vagueness regarding the question of how the coexistence of narratives produces in the reader a consciousness of the presence of trauma’s absence from representation.

I propose one answer to this question with Bruce Morrissette’s illustration of the topological arrangement of several types of narratives intersecting each other in metafictional structures. As presented above, Duras’s constellation of testimonial voices orchestrates several modes of stylised discourses. An effective dialogism at the level of discourses, such as auto-commenting self-reflexity, irony, and mobile shifts of focalisation comes into play. Such a narrative dialogism also draws attention to the disruptions and discontinuities between the narratives, which addresses the reader like a Bakhtinian ‘hidden polemic’ (Pearce 2006, 227–228). Therefore, the reader’s experiential truth can only be found, not in the narratives themselves, but from between stylistic alternatives, in their very co-existence which unveils their artificial nature as discourses. That is, the reality is revealed in the experience of the ontological difference prevailing between the virtual worlds as provoked by the ellipses between them. This produces an epistemic uncertainty at the intersection of discursive codes, whose co-presence forces one to see her/his conventional frames. Such intersections between diverse narratives are visualised metaphorically as holes in the topological diagram of ‘Klein Worms’ as adapted to metafictional constellations as follows (Morrissette 1985, 80):

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44 Durasian language cultivates a subtle internal dialogism in the two Bakhtinian meaning: at the level of the individual word of speech as a double-voiced discourse, and at the level of narratives. On narrative dialogism and the novelistic hybrid, see Bakhtin 1981, 360–161.

45 The figure is only a part of the ‘Klein worms’ taken from geometry (**Radical Software** No 3,
In my view, in the topology of the coexisting narratives, the presence of the fundamental absence of trauma from representation is to be found in every transitional hole – a structural opening between narratives, seen in in my quote of Morrissette’s Fig. 1. – through which the reader has an imaginative entry from one virtual world to another (Morrissette 1985, 74–75). I understand the mental keyhole as a cognitive pause that occurs implicitly between the embodied episodes of literary experience provoked by ontological shifts in consciousness during reading. Such mental keyholes between virtual worlds can evoke the presence of the trauma’s absence from representation when the reader is imaginatively displaced from one world to another. Adapting current empirical studies of reading, during such a transitional pause, the presence of trauma’s representational absence may be felt non-verbally as an affective shift taking place in the implicit memory as an ‘expressive enactment’ of an embodied mind (Kuiken et al., 2004, 269).

Spring 1971:2, which Morrissette adapts to Robbe-Grillet’s novels as metaphorical visualisations of their *mise en abyme* structures so as to illuminate their Möbius-band-like connections.  

David S. Miall and Don Kuiken indicate such a transition between impressive episodes in
wordless transition between states of consciousness produces new implicit cognition on the constructivity of all re-presentations, which is experienced as an insight in the ‘felt presence’ of a feeling and sensing reader. It also tends to produce new insights into the constructivity of one’s own beliefs (Kuiken 1995, 142–144; see also Stern 2004, 23–25). Here the reader’s own fantasy – ‘the strange or unnatural’ – comes into play in reconciling the artificial logics of metaphorical worlds (Culler 1981, 61). In this manner, every epistemic shift between fictional worlds prepares the reader for an awareness of the representational absence of trauma from the narrated colonial universe.

In summary, Durasian modes of metanarrative chart the problem of symbolising trauma by using multiple testimonial voices and discourses, all of which attempt to reach the co-presence of the colonial extreme and everyday from a number of perspectives. This aesthetic arrangement justifies the Durasian approach to the colonial universe as a representative of Rothbergian traumatic realism. As an interplay of indirect and direct narrative devices, the India Cycle poses a question concerning the modifying power of emotion in literary experience, especially its ability to shift one beyond initial, ordinary cognitive schemas (Miall 2006, 44, 67). One place for such an emotional transition is prepared by the text in the textual transition points between possible worlds. I find this constructionist feature an effective means in bearing testimony. For, when the reader/viewer moves in empathic imagination from one discursive world to another, a cognitive shift in implicit memory may occur, through which several trauma narratives can be reorganised and recontextualised in relation to each other. Such a cognitive shift occurs only by virtue of an emotional insight which tends to break conventional schemas of world, self and the other, as discussed further in the next section.

The Traumatic Index

Le Vice-consul jette un coup d’œil dans la salle octogonale, il continue à sourire. L’air d’Indiana’s Song lacère la mémoire de l’acte solitaire, obscur, abominable.47

The outstanding characteristic of the India Cycle is an intratextual network of recurring tropes, which creates a flexible matrix of key figures that strengthen the coherence of each storyline by criss-crossing between works. In what follows,

their extensive studies of empirical reading. Their ‘expressive enactment’ is close to Daniel N. Stern’s study of the implicit knowing in the present moment, which is an avalanche of emotional and perceptual micronarratives that can be made conscious at any time. Stern compares this to Merleau-Ponty’s description of the same phenomenon as the ‘upsurge of a fresh present – the all-of-a-suddenness of a memory of a new thought or perception’ (Stern 2004, 25).

47 VC, 103. ‘The Vice-Consul, still smiling, looks around the octagonal ballroom. The tune, Indiana’s Song, evokes the memory of that lonely, dark, abominable act.’ (V, 79)
I will examine these figures under the name of ‘traumatic index’, Michael Rothberg’s adaptation of a Peircean semiotic concept, so as to amplify it in terms of emotion. According to Rothberg’s definition, the traumatic index is a metonymy that points to the foundational absence of trauma from historical representation (Rothberg 2000, 104–105). In my emotion-focused cognitive frame of reference, the traumatic index refers to a metonymical figure that conveys some embodied detail of traumatic memory in a symbolic form within the metaphorical texture. But I understand the traumatic index also as a vehicle of emotional transferral, which typically reproduces the double affectivity of the traumatic experience: the horror of life and the horror of death (Caruth 1996, 58, 62–65). This idea is akin to Walter A. Davis’s psychoanalytical thought of traumatic image in his inspiring work Deracination: Historicity, Hiroshima and the Tragic Imperative (2001). Davis develops Silvano Arieti’s ‘creative image’ as a dialectic tool in order to make more palpable its affectively empowering effect; especially its tendency to transform emotion, maintain motivation, and preserve the possibility of resistance by building up inner reality (ibid., 193). Davis’s model guides me to specify Durasian metonymies as ‘affective traumatic indices’ when exploring the emotional aspect that the traumatic index lends to metaphor, a view not discussed in Rothberg’s study.

Davis’s implicitly Damasian psychoanalytic philosophy defines traumatic image as a ‘complex of conflicted affects and motives arrested in a moment of time’ (ibid., 196). This Freudian drama expresses the concrete experience of catastrophe as a ‘great gap in being’ from which the transformation of trauma emerges into figures, defined as permanent, arrested (literal) records of those experiences that matter most to us. Davis describes the dramatic core of such records as a dialectical fusion of two opposed movements: that of repressive self-fragmentation, and that of an assertion against forgetting. But despite the figure’s potential energy, he emphasises trauma’s paralysing impact on memory: ‘In an image we freeze an experience and put it on ice’ (ibid., 200). This statement is strikingly similar to Duras’s description of Lol V. Stein’s frozen condition after her trauma:

Voici, je crois, ce que j’ai déjà dit de ce livre: au moment du bal de S. Thala,
Lol V. Stein est tellement emportée dans le spectacle de son fiancé et de cette inconnue en noir qu’elle en oublie de souffrir. Elle ne souffre pas d’être oubliée, trahie. C’est de cette suppression de la douleur, qu’elle va devenir folle. […] C’est

48 Arieti sums up the six characteristics of the creative image in his Creativity: The Magic Synthesis (New York, Basic Books, 1976, 53–65 (Davis 2001, 193–194). For Arieti, the ‘image is the first act in which we refuse to adapt passively to reality’ (ibid., 195).

49 In this later essay, when talking about Le ravissement, Duras makes use of the name ‘S. Thala’ of L’amour’s ghostly town − a modification of Lol’s home town ‘S. Tahla’ – and not the name ‘T. Beach’ of Le ravissement, the place of her original trauma.
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Here is what I think I have said: during the actual dance at S. Thala, Lol V. Stein is so carried away by the sight of her fiancé and the stranger in black that she forgets to suffer. She does not suffer at having been forgotten and betrayed. It’s because her suffering is suppressed that she later goes mad. [...] It’s a kind of oblivion. Like a phenomenon related to the freezing of water. Water turns to ice at zero degrees, but sometimes, when the weather’s very cold, the air is so still that the water forgets to freeze. It can descend to five degrees and freeze only then. (PR, 27), emphasis original

From such rapidly frozen sensorimotor images, the literary metaphors of trauma find their origin. However, unlike Davis who thinks that the literalisation of image is the death of metaphor (2001, 211), I see metonymical details being always present in the structure of metaphor as factors that set the iconic meanings of metaphor in motion by virtue of emotion. For, in Caruthian terms, by reason of contiguity in relation to its object, Rothberg’s traumatic index behaves like a metonymy which mentally activates the experience of the object (the target domain; Barcelona 2000, 4). In this case, it is an overwhelming horror induced by trauma. Understood as traumatic indices in this manner, Duras’s figures offer an empathic reader not only a multisensory channel of emotional identification with the imagined trauma but also a departure from that identification.

As Rothberg searches for a form of documentation beyond direct reference and coherent narrative, he takes the most salient memory traces presented in some Holocaust narratives as examples of his notion of the traumatic index. Rothberg’s definition represents a sophisticated variant of Peirce’s semiotic concept of index. Similar to metonymy, an index is a sign that stands for, or points to, its object on the basis of physical and/or causal contiguity (Johansen 2002, 38; CP 2.306). The classical examples of genuine indices are the reagents

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50 Cf. Ogden et al. 2006, 29−31, for the description of traumatic immobilisation as a result from the activation of the dorsal parasympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system.

51 By definition, metonymy is a ‘conceptual projection whereby one experiential domain (the target) is partially understood in terms of another experiential domain (the source), while the metonymic mapping gives rise to the mental activation of the target domain (Barcelona 2000, 4). Henceforth, I will use the terms ‘index’ and ‘metonymy’ as each other’s substitutes, but will not problematise their differences here.

52 On Peirce’s triadic concept of sign (semiosis) as a process of the mind, see Johansen 2002, 27−29. The sign is always three-dimensional, having an iconic (analogical), indexical (contiguous), and symbolic (arbitrary, conventional) aspect in relation to its object. Important here is that the meaning of conventional signs − language − grows out of and in a connection with the interplay between similarity, difference, and the indexical (contiguous) function of the sign (ibid. 200).
such as symptoms, like the somatic markers of trauma seen in the bodies of
Duras’s heroines (Johansen 2002, 35–36). Another subclass of index are
designations such as proper names of persons, places, and key melodies, for
example, Battambang for the beggar’s place of trauma and ‘India(na’s) Song’
for the Vice-consul’s crime (ibid., 37–38). But as Rothberg observes, such a
figure is capable of substituting for the trauma only indirectly in its attempt
to symbolise its frozen memory (Rothberg 2000, 101). That is, as a key figure
stands for the very core of the traumatic experience, it neither claims to be real
nor points to the historical event itself as the genuine Peircean index, but rather
points to the absence of its symbolisation. Therefore, the traumatic index is
defined as an ‘effect of the real that points to the real’s foundational absence from
representation’ (ibid., 103–104).

Furthermore, for Rothberg, the traumatic index does not embody the real(ity)
but rather its ‘startling impact’, thus evoking the real as a ‘felt lack’ (ibid., 103). This
thought echoes Caruth’s thesis that trauma is ‘not the event but the structure of its
experience’, quoted by Rothberg (ibid., 136, emphasis original). Nevertheless, Caruth
does not find an access to trauma in the structure of its experience, but accentuates its
inaccessibility. This epistemic uncertainty is strongly evocative of problems concerning
general existential anxiety and the ‘sublime’ nature of transhistorical trauma (Tarasti
2000, 81), including a Freudian trauma beyond repression. Instead, to dismantle
the idea of a total inaccessibility, my cognitive model focuses on trauma’s typical
impact: an unintegrated feeling of horror by which the ‘felt lack’ of the real expresses
itself. For, at the moment of shock, the emotional charge of the ‘literal’ memory of
trauma is immediately attached in the implicit memory to some perceptual sign,
which is committed as a key metonymy carrying along the referentiality of trauma as
motivated by horror. This is the idea of an affective index that preserves an embodied
accessibility to trauma, for the experience is ‘particularly encoded in particular
cognitive environments’ in the historical body as sealed by emotion (Nalbantian
2003, 82; cf. Ogden et. al 2006, 11). Arguing for a critical working-through, I propose
that the power of trauma’s critical narrativisations to discharge the initial horror relies
potentially in key metonomies and their repetitive recontextualisations. To demonstrate
how this works in metaphor and reading, I explore the nature Durasian traumatic
indices, especially their dual affectivity.

53 The two subclasses of indexical signs are defined as follows. The reagent is an object that
becomes a sign by virtue of being influenced by the object it represents, while the designation
functions similarly as the pointing finger (Latin index) as it locates and identifies an object in
time and space within a given universe. In general, the relation between index and object implies
their former co-presence: while the object determines the reagent, the designation indicates the

54 In a broader (LaCapra’s ‘transhistorical’) frame, every linguistic sign is ‘traumatic’ in this
regard.

55 In Caruth’s ‘Trauma and Experience’, 4, quoted in Rothberg 2000, 136.
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Literality and Affectivity as Powers of Change

With her famous concept of *mot trou* (hole-word) presenting Lol's traumatic shock in *Le ravissement*, Duras brilliantly outlines the main principle of the traumatic index as a crisis of representation in the face of historical catastrophes. The following passage is the central part of the more lengthy description of the fleeting moment when Lol realises that she is going to be rejected forever. As an extended metaphor, it is an eloquent description of the absence of representation at the moment of a personal disaster:

[S]i Lol est silencieuse dans la vie c'est qu'elle a cru, l'espace d'un éclair, que ce mot pouvait exister. Faute de son existence, elle ce tait. Çaaurait été un mot-absence, un mot-trou, creusé en son centre d'un trou, de ce trou où tous les autres mots auraient été enterrés. On n'aurait pas pu le dire mais on aurait pu le faire résonner. Immense, sans fin, un gong vide, il aurait retenu ceux qui voulaient partir, il les auraient convaincus de l'impossible, il les aurait assourdís à tout autre vocable que lui-même, en une fois il les aurait nommés, eux, l'avenir et instant. Manquant, ce mot, il gâche tous les autres, les contamine, c'est aussi le chien mort de la plage en plein midi, ce trou de chair. Comment ont-ils trouvés les autres? [...] et parmi eux, ce mot, qui n'existe pas, pourtant est là : il vous attend au tournant du langage, il vous défie, il n'a jamais servi [...] (R 48–49, emphasis added).

[F]or a split second, she believed that this word *might* exist. Since it does not, she remains silent. It would have been an absence-word, a hole-word, whose center would have been hollowed out into a hole, the kind of hole in which all other words would have been buried. It would have been impossible to utter it, but it would have been made to reverberate. Enormous, endless, an empty gong, it would have held back anyone who had wanted to leave, it would have convinced them of the impossible, it would have made them deaf to any other word save that one, in one fell swoop it would have defined the future and the moment themselves. By its absence this word ruins all the others, it contaminates them, it is also the dead dog on the beach at high noon, this hole of flesh. How were other words found? [...] this word, which does not exist, is none the less there: it awaits you just around the corner of language, it defies you – never having been used [...] (LVS, 38–39, emphasis added).

The text claims that the missing sign alone – the non-existing word – is supposed to prevent the disaster of loss. As comprised itself of accelerating micrometaphors such as an ‘empty gong’ and a ‘hole of flesh’ which all try to circumvent the lack of symbolisation, the hyperbolic figure of the hole-word embodies the resistance not

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56 The impressive concept of *mot trou* holds a central place throughout the extensive Lol exegesis and is widely analysed in all interpretations of *Le ravissement*. 
only to the existential absence of itself but also to all conventional representations which try to give form to the subjective experience of an overwhelming attack of loss (Hulley 1992/93, 32). The ‘absence-word, […] the kind of hole in which all other words would have been buried’, is Duras’s most powerful contribution to the compelling debate on the problem of trauma’s uncommunicability and the ‘sublime’ after the Holocaust.\(^57\) The normative interpretation goes as follows: the metaphorical complex of ‘hole-word’ plays with the axis of existence/non-existence, and tends to evoke a permanent vacillation between the impression of presence/absence and full/empty that seemingly perpetuates an existential horror on the verge of nothingness.

However, most importantly for my affective traumatic image, in the core of this extended metaphor is one solid detail, the metonymy of the ‘dead dog’, with which the missing word is also equated. Being a physical detail into which the terrifying loss is condensed, the ‘dead dog’ is a typical traumatic index that specifically absorbs into itself the undifferentiated horror typical of traumatic shock. As the dead dog is simultaneously identified as a ‘hole of flesh’, it naturally elicits the Freudian connotations of Lol’s sexual trauma. But regarded as a literal figure, when the ‘dead dog’ recurs several times in L'amour, it is viewed by the Lol madwoman and her former fiancé on the deserted beach. This scene cumulatively produces the final metaphor of Lol’s story: the ‘dead dog of the idea’ that points to the death of romantic love in the phantasmatic land of madness (A, 115; cf. Lala 2002, 108–109). The ‘dead dog’ is also impressively echoed by the figure of the ‘leper’ in Le Vice-consul, as will be shown. As a whole, the metaphor of ‘hole-word’ epitomises my affective traumatic image, since it includes in an exemplary manner a traumatic index and its progressive repetition, by which Duras restores the cooperation of narrative and embodied memory in her rescriptive working through colonial trauma.\(^58\)

A cooperation between metaphor and metonymy characterises a rich variety of figures by which the India Cycle brings into being its critical attempt to bridge the abyss between literal and metaphorical capacities. Typically, the traumatic accident crystallises in a partly audial, partly visual memory image of each protagonist, which culminates in some metonymic detail of a larger metaphorical scene of the lived event. For example, in Lol’s imagery, her rejection reaches its wounding peak in Anne-Marie’s female body dressed in the black tulle attire that is to be

\(^{57}\) Being an integral theme in the writings of Duras, and for example, those of Edmond Jabès and Maurice Blanchot, the problem of the unsayable referred to as the sublime constitutes a separate field of exploration (see e.g. Freeman 1995, 127, 139; Killeen 2004, 13).

\(^{58}\) As discussed in the Introduction in the light of Brewin (2005), narrative memory functions independently from embodied memory under the horror of the initial shock. In the key position in symbolising trauma is the emotional change produced by a rescripting process of imagery. Nevertheless, every symbolic expression referring to trauma is doomed to be a euphemism: partial, indirect and approximate, if not silenced completely (cf. Nalbantian 2003, 82).
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undressed by Michael (R, 46), and reverberated in Tatiana Karl's nude body under her black hair (R 115–116). For the Vice-consul, his violent attack condenses into a self-image of a mute, isolated clown who wakes up in the morning after having blazed mindlessly away at night (VC, 127), a figure reprocessed when he cries out in public. In turn, the adolescent beggar girl is haunted by the image of the threatening mother, a role mirrored persistently by her own pregnant body of a starving prostitute, which culminates as she rejects her starving baby (VC, 10). And finally, Anne-Marie's flashback of a beggar woman selling her newborn baby in Savannakhet recurs as triggered by the Laotian voice of the beggar woman in Calcutta, which can be combined with Anne-Marie's hidden 'heaven of tears' and her future suicide (VC, 72, 171, 196). Recurring frequently in new textual contexts, such key metonymies alert the reader to register them as wounding punctums – to use Barthes' famous term – pointing to past traumatic events.

To make more sense of the affective power of the Durasian traumatic index, a cognitive concept of metonymy deserves a precision in terms of emotion, shock and the impairment of metaphoric thought. As a response to a sudden trauma, the most wounding detail is selected as a key sign from among the components of a multisensory perceptual image. This perceptual key is invested by an affect of an undifferentiated horror towards emptiness and loss, whereby it points to the absence of trauma from representation. In a later process of narrativisation, displaced to a literary metonymy such as sound, smell, place, or name, the emotion-loaded metonymy begins to act as a traumatic index within a metaphorical whole of trauma's memory image. Furthermore, during an empathic reading, in a metaphoric textual context, the traumatic index tends to elicit an existential horror on the basis of human embodied mirroring.59 This thought is implicitly proposed by Caruth (1996), who lifts the double affect of a traumatic flashback into the centre of narration: the simultaneous horror of death and horror of life. Caruth demonstrates this controversy by bringing forth Freud's interpretation of Torquato Tasso's poem La Gerusalemme Liberata (1580).60 The romantic parable shows the hero Tancred killing his beloved Clorinda in a duel while she is disguised in the armour of an enemy knight. Only later when he slashes with his sword at a tree in a magic forest, does Tancred hear Clorinda's cry from the bleeding trunk, complaining that he is killing her again (Caruth 1996, 2). Typically for a traumatic hallucination, the echo of the victim's voice emerges

59 This is the principle of contiguous or contact magia (mentioned by Jakobson 1956/1988, 60, and treated in the Freudian context by the term 'cathexis' (Modell 2006, 155−156). But as Arnold H. Modell notes, our cognitive capacity to empathic mirroring relies on an unimpaired capacity for metaphoric thought (ibid., 175).

60 Presented in Freud’s essay Jenseits des Lustprinzips (1920). Caruth (1996, 58) emphasises that the value of Freud’s theory of individual trauma can be understood merely by interpreting it in the context of collective historical violence, which Freud examines in his essay Der Mann Moses und die Monotheistische Religion (1939, Moses and Monotheism).
from the perpetrator’s emotional memory as triggered by a bodily act similar to the original killing, which makes him aware of his crime. The dramatised repetition unveils a double wound: while expressing the horror of death it also induces the horror of life (Caruth 1996, 1–4, 64, 72). For me, the fusion of the two horrors referring to destruction and survival characterises the traumatic index, and makes it the most effective aesthetic vehicle of Duras’s critical process of working-through.

So as to interpret Duras’s polytrope of leprosy, I first adapt Caruth’s double horror to Rothberg’s most significant example: the image of socks in Ruth Klüger’s memoir weiter leben: Eine Jugend (1996). When portraying the concentration camp of Birkenau, Klüger utilises the stereotypical trope of barbed wire as a rhetorical tool indexing the concentrationary universe of the Holocaust, which binds the text metonymically to the material conditions of the concentration camp and to the literal death of the victims (Rothberg 2000, 130–132). The traumatic index is then exemplified by the following episode. Two Hungarian prisoners, a woman and her small daughter, are just arriving to the camp without any premonition of their imminent death. Klüger’s mother tries to throw a pair of wool socks over the barbed wire as a gift to the newcomers. The socks unfortunately become snared in the wire as the woman with the baby is brought to be executed in the gas chamber. This gesture charges the originally compassionate image of a sock with the double affect of horror. Whereas the socks’ meaning as a gift expresses empathy with the victims of genocide, the failure of presenting the socks to them establishes the opposite meaning: the horror of murder. Thus the everyday metonymy of the socks amounts to the central figure pointing to the extreme catastrophe of the Holocaust (ibid., 133–134). As a metaphor, on the basis of similarity, the image of the socks continues to vacillate between the poles of contrasting meaning-pairs such as container/content, full/empty, and present/absent. But as a metonymy, on the basis of emotional contiguity, the sock hanging on the barbed wire elicits both the horror of death and the horror of survival, thereby embodying the crime of the genocide that is absent from historical representation. Ultimately, the reference of the socks is the silenced murder of those victims who will never receive the proper gift: the right to life.61

The affective similarities of this model with Duras’s ‘hole-word’ are obvious, the ‘dead dog’ indexing the horror of irrevocable death and the horror of a

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61 There is a striking similarity between Klüger’s metonymy and Proust’s memory of the Christmas stocking interpreted by Walter Benjamin (Miller 1982, 9–10). The recurring figure of the socks also acts similarly in Virginia Woolf’s To the Lighthouse. However, a huge difference prevails in intensity and the scope of the trauma. While Klüger’s sock is an index of a major historical trauma, its metaphorical opacity interferes much more vigorously with the metonymic, affective materiality of the figure.
life in the (sexual) flesh. The traumatic index can now be seen in the light of Roman Jakobson’s classical theorem of two aspects of language in poetic function. According to Jakobson, the metaphoric and metonymic poles co-function in all poetic discourse, even in all cultures (Jakobson 1956/1988, 60–61; Lodge 1977, 79). That is, the semantic principle of analogy characteristic of metaphor is deeply intertwined with the principle of contiguity characteristic of metonymy. From this basis, I argue that emotion plays an integral role in all cognitive processing as mediated by the embodied contiguity of metonymy residing in any metaphor, be it a mental representation or literary figure. So as to specify the Lakoff-Johnsonian cognitive model of innate metaphoricality of human thought, this stance can be reasoned with the current neuropsychological research on emotion. Our spatio-temporal orientation acts through an intimate cooperation of emotional appraisal and procedural memory, which actively conduces to the perception of time and space and their affective metaphoricalisation (Modell 2006, 45, 137–138, 145–146). This hypothesis is also consistent with the empirical reading studies which show succinct literary metaphors emotionally structuring and pushing into motion our intrinsic cognitive schemas in an ‘expressive enactment’ of figures (Kuiken et al. 2004; Miall 2006, 152).

Accordingly, the dual emotion of horror also resides in one major trope of the India Cycle: the multifaceted image of leprosy. Alongside the ‘hole-word’ metaphor, ‘leprosy’ is the most illustrative example of the Durasian usage of a traumatic figure pointing to (the unrepresentability of) the colonial trauma. The figure of leprosy recurs throughout Le Vice-consul and India Song in the white society’s small-talk, which circulates around as linked to the Vice-consul’s crazy attack, as follows:

— Il a fait le pire mais comment le dire?
— Le pire ? tuer ?
— Il tirait la nuit sur des chardins de Shalimar, où se réfugient des lépreux et les chiens.
— Mais les lépreux ou des chiens, est-ce tuer que de tuer des lépreux ou des chiens ?

[...]
— Les lépreux, de loin, avez-vous rémarques ? On les distingue mal de reste, alors …
[…] — Entendez-vous crier ?
— Ce sont des lépreux ou bien des chiens ?
— Des chiens ou des lépreux.
— Puisque vous le savez, pourquoi avez-vous dit les lépreux ou des chiens ?
— J’ai confondu de loin, comme ça, à travers la musique, des aboiements des chiens et ceux des lépreux qui rêvent.
— Cela fait bien de le dire aussi. (VC, 94–95)

— He did the very worst thing. How can I put it?
— The very worst thing? Did he kill someone?
— He fired shots in the Shalimar Gardens, where lepers and dogs shelter at night.
— Lepers and dogs! Can you call it killing, when it’s merely a question of lepers and dogs?
[…]
— You may have noticed that, from a distance, a leper looks much like anyone else, which suggests…
[…]
— Can you hear shouting?
— What is it? Lepers? Or dogs?
— Dogs or lepers.
— Why say dogs or lepers, when you know perfectly well which it is?
— In the distance, with the music playing, it’s hard to distinguish between the dogs barking and the lepers crying out in their sleep.
— That’s one way of putting it. (V, 72–73)

The slight irony given to the conversation by rhyme and assonance can barely hide the felt horror ‘beyond words’ (VC, 96). Reflecting the colonial perpetrators’ paranoia, the metaphor of leprosy as an extremely contagious disease is amplified in Le Vice-consul and India Song into a multifunctional figure. As Susan Sontag states, leprosy has for ages served as an emblem of decay and corruption, the subjects of the deepest dread are identified with it, and the disease is associated with the most moralistic and punitive of meanings (Sontag 1977, 58).64 But in Duras’s usage, ‘leprosy’ does not limit itself to such a simple metaphorical meaning. Rather, Duras distances herself from its everyday usage as she caricatures leprosy into hyperbolic dimensions by depicting the benches

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64 Sontag indicates that aside from syphilis and cholera, leprosy belongs to the group of most feared illnesses presented as aversive, disgusting and punishing. These have also been located among the most dangerous collective accidents, as is plague, and currently, AIDS. Nourished by ancient fantasies, they connote the idea of a contaminated society which is punished by the illness for some unknown sin (Sontag, 1988, 44–46).
along the Ganges as filled by masses of ill people, thus referring to the Indian demographic catastrophe. Even though – or because – she as a child was afraid of leprosy, Duras’s hyperbole is meant to point to the locals’ ‘mono-alimentation’ in a fictional Calcutta (P, 120, 207). By contrast, the whites are portrayed as being persistently afraid of the contagious power of the disease when living protected by railings in hygienic palaces. As shown in the passage, their conversations try to overcome the fear of death, hunger, pain, and insanity. The fear culminates in the traumatic index of the ‘leper’, which points to the numbed bodies of ill locals who lie entangled with dogs as ‘crumbling material’ (VC, 164, 165). Echoing the ‘dead dog’ metonymy in the metaphor of Lol’s ‘hole word’, the identification of lepers with dogs reflects not only the horror of death but also that of physical ugliness projected onto the living, infected body of the ‘other’. The shame of human animalness hides also in the figure of the ‘dead dog’ which, shifted from the ‘hole-word’ metaphor to Lamour, refers to the death of romantic love for the benefit of physical caritas, thus creating a meaningful interfigural linkage between Le ravissement and Le Vice-consul.

Hence, regarded not only as a fatal or humiliating disease, the image of leprosy is skillfully harnessed to mediate the aversion of the Europeans based on racial prejudices regulating their behaviour in the political impasse of colonialism. Moreover, the politically signifying role of ‘leprosy’ is strengthened by drawing a parallel between the ‘madness’ caused by nervous leprosy and the alleged insanity of the Vice-consul, whose colonial crime seemingly endangers the mental and racial purity of the whites. As will be shown in this study, ‘leprosy’ is also used as a multifaceted symbol in the modern rite of purification that finally excludes the Vice-consul from the white society of Calcutta. But Duras does not content herself with the mental effects of physical leprosy. Rather, to the contrast prevailing between the horror of infection and that of the criminal’s out-of-control aggression, she adds a third meaning by calling the erotic desire ‘lepre du coeur’ (leprosy of the heart; IS, 21). This figure refers to the sexual infatuation which as an entertaining intoxication is hoped to calm down the Western invaders’ anxiety, and save them from suicide in their self-made prison (VC, 157, 161). Thus ‘leprosy of the heart’ turns around and doubles the numbing effect of the illness: signifying (Anne-Marie’s) possessing desire, and bound together with the ironic ‘dead dog’ that signifies the death of (Lol’s) romantic

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65 Duras reveals her fear of leprosy in childhood in Les Parleuses (P, 207–208). She shifted her experiences of the Mekong into that of the imaginary Ganges, and transformed some episodes of leprosy in Indochina and Singapore into the hyperbolic image of the illness invading Calcutta (P, 120, 206, 230).

66 Similar to Klüger’s barbed wire, the iron railings bind the text metonymically to the material conditions of colonialism and to the illness and starvation of the locals (Rothberg 2000, 130–131).

67 This evokes the transhistorical trauma of the animal nature of humans: our ‘alienation from species-being’ (LaCapra 2000, 195).
love, the critical prism of ‘leprosy’ is made still more acute.

Taken together, Duras’s aesthetic strategy of figural repetition is meant to intensify the embodied metaphors to those of creative emotional polytropes. Just as Klüger’s everyday index of the socks hanging on the barbed wire points to the ‘deleted’ victim and the horror felt in the face of extreme violence, the ubiquitous figuration of leprosy in Duras’s works points to the powerless absence of the suffering locals who are kept physically out of the reach of the Europeans. But whereas for Klüger the metonymy of the socks substitutes for the omitted cause of the trauma – the ethnic murder as a crime against humanity as its ultimate reference – for Duras, the metonymy of physical leprosy substitutes the ‘deleted’ destructive deeds of the European colonialists (Lodge 1977, 75–76). Textually, ‘leprosy’ dovetails the (absent) atrocities of colonialism with an ambiguous fusion of cultural hypersensitivity and anaesthesia by showing how the numbing effect of the ‘disease of the heart’ unpleasantly corrodes the colonial perpetrators’ eroticised but fearful life. And importantly for trauma’s symbolisation, as ‘leprosy’ iteratively carries the double horror of the historical situation to the present of reading in new textual contexts in Le Vice-consul and India Song, it is capable of transforming the horror into other, identifiable and more bearable emotions.

This model also characterises other emotion-provoking metonymies in the India Cycle, though on a minor scale. These are the physical places of trauma, musical pieces, and somatic symptoms, all foregrounded and expanded in both the novels and films of the cycle. Strung together by a progressive repetition variation, the emotional ambiguity of these indices alerts one to attribute them to the traumatising episode of each character’s past. For Lol, a central spatial index is the casino of T. Beach, which grows in L'amour into a colossal symbol of her mental prison: ‘l'énorme masse du coeur de S. Thala’ (the enormous mass of the heart of S. Thala; A, 112) dominating her (inner) land of madness. For the Vice-consul, the metonymy based on ‘ownership’ is the melody of ‘Indiana’s Song’, a memory from his childhood which he is often whistling. Typically, whereas for him it implies longing for the mother now substituted by the figure of Anne-Marie, for his rival, Charles Rossett, the melody connotes the man’s horrible crime (ibid., 103). In the cinematic usage of India Song and Son Nom de Venise, the musical piece of ‘India Song’ broadens to symbolise the whole colonial disaster. Furthermore, for Anne-Marie, the musical pieces of Schubert that she plays in Le Vice-Consul, and Beethoven’s fateful ‘Diabelli Variation No XIV’ in the film India Song, point to her secret suffering for a colonised India. As reminders of her career as a promising pianist in Italy, they point also to the rise of Fascism and Nazism. Additional indices are all the names of the traumatic places, such as ‘Lahore’ for the Vice-consul, the village of ‘Battambang’ for the beggar woman, ‘Savannakhet’ for Anne-Marie and ‘S. Thala’ for Lol as a substitute for T.

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68 In a metonymical expression, the omitted linguistic item is substituted by some feature contiguous with that term, such as property, function or a part of it (Lodge 1977, 75–76).
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Beach in *L'amour* and *La Femme du Gange*. These examples are representative of the multifunctional value of Durasian figures which, depending on the textual context and the interpreter, flexibly change their emotional charge.

Finally, the most intriguing dilemma of the traumatic image has been its literality. As seen in the elaborations above, I solve this with Duras's traumatic index which affectively varies itself in new textual contexts. To clarify the creative nature of this method, I will employ Eelco Runia's characterisations of metonymy in the context of historiography. Parallel to but different from Rothberg, Runia (2006, 1) claims that, being typical of prosaist texts, metonymy is the major trope capable of transferring the historical presence of the past in the very presence of its absence, the 'presence' understood as being in touch with our often 'awesome' reality by a historical reference (ibid., 5). In Runia's words, being denotative and literal, metonymy can transfer the touch of a presence by its nature as a *Fremdkörper* (a foreign body) that originates from another time (ibid., 19). As can be seen, any verbal correlate of trauma can be taken for a 'foreign body' emerging from the past with an unknown semantic content searching for a (lost) signified.

More interestingly, for Runia, metonymy acts also as a 'fistula', or an 'abnormal passageway' between two *topoi*, through which the past discharges into the present (ibid.16, see also 18, 27). Adapting to Duras, her traumatic indices act as *fistulae* through which the European colonial past leaks into the present. But for Runia, metonymy is also a vehicle not expressing directly what once occurred, but conveying the presence of the past as a 'stowaway' (ibid., emphasis original).

For me, the principal characteristic of a critical reworking of trauma is the revival of metaphorical capacity. In literary trauma fiction, the development from frozen literal images towards critical metaphoricalisation implies dynamic

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69 As a number of modern analysts of trauma claim, when going through the process of narrativisation, traumatic images remain literal as they tend to retain their nonsymbolic nature. Thus they are 'resisting cure' by reproducing the 'absolute truth' of traumatic flashbacks (Caruth 1995a, 5). Regarding some efforts to open up this alleged stability, see van Boheemen-Saaf 1999, 69–71; Wolfreys 2002, 142–143; 140.

70 I thank Lisa Muszynski for drawing my attention to Runia's article. Runia adapts the idea of metonymical bond between the past and present to W. G. Sebald's novel *Austerlitz*, especially to its geographical places and buildings.

71 Using semiotic concepts, as it points to the unlocatable signified of trauma, the traumatic index is a relative of the existential semiotic idea of a pre-sign as an emergent meaning process that searches for its proper historical signified (Tarasti 2000; adapted to Duras's India Cycle, see Knuuttila 2003).

72 Runia makes a reference to Barthes's *punctum* as an individual hole through which the past leaks into the present, but does not deal with Barthes's affectivity in reading photographs (2006, 16; cf. Knuuttila 2008b).
repetition and variation, whereby the semantic content of a key metonymy goes through an emotional transformation in new textual contexts. Thus the traumatic index is far from being a stable entity, but the affectivity that the mental image has absorbed in itself at the historical moment of trauma will be changed during rewriting. Trauma can then be mediated in an empathic reading of textual metonymies as guided by the narrative texture where these metonymies are embedded. For, if trauma by definition is displaced to some perceptual element of the traumatic scene, what is verbally omitted in this substitution is the felt emotion evoked by the metonymy. However, this dislocation may realise itself in a reading experience when the literary expression of a physical object is mirrored implicitly in the receiver’s body as coloured by some specific textual context as ‘felt engagement’ (Kuiken 1995, 167). This sense of lived presence compels the reader to acknowledge the real as something different from mimetic effect that relies on pure textuality. Accordingly, Duras’s metonymies have the power to substitute a hollow absence of the real with a new mode of referentiality of the sign, that of mirroring affectivity in a feeling body (Keen 2006, 211; Knuuttila 2008b, 131–133; 2009a 150–152).

In summary, the foregrounding devices that the reader encounters in Durasian trauma fiction are the repetition of traumatic indices, including blanks and silences, embedded in metaphorical structures. Metonymies that indicate the absence of what cannot be immediately known, such as geographical places, physical objects, voices, smells or melodies function as textual anchors for the retrieval of traumatic memory throughout the India Cycle. That is, the main characters are anchored by the traumatic indices within the fictional world, where these indices act as reminders of the unrepresentable reality of terror and violence. Like in a modernist poem, imitating the fragmentation of perception, traumatic indices create a new coherence within the narrative via a network of analogues that deviates from the conventional linear narration. As a result, as one main tool of a critical fictionalisation, the affective metonymy of trauma uncovers how a socially capable subject is balanced by further emotional appraisals. For, alongside a heightened sense of self in the reader, Durasian trauma fiction guides one to re-evaluate one’s feelings in light of new textual contexts. If conventional perceptual schemas are not apparently broken by any radical or new metaphorical substitution in Duras, the systematic repetition of metonymies compels the meanings of metaphorical images to be reprocessed. This tends to rescribe the reader’s conventional racial and sexist beliefs, since the effectivity of the traumatic image lies in its affective metonymical relation to its omitted object: the extreme in the everyday.
III. Witnessing Trauma: Writing the Novel – Writing the Self

In ritual, the world as lived and the world as imagined [...] turns out to be the same world.¹

In the beginning of the sixties, the interplay of a signifying subject and representation was one central matter of dispute in the humanities. From the perspective of trauma theory, Duras approaches this problem by mediating the stories of traumatised women, Lol V. Stein and the Cambodian beggar, as parallel testimonies compiled by two white men, Jacques Hold in Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein, and Peter Morgan in Le Vice-consul. Being highly self-reflexive, these novels problematise any literary discourse as a valid testimony of the other person’s experience of trauma. But Duras’s metatextual strategy is also a feminist element of the postmodernist demand common of the French novel and literary theory: the dethroning of the divine Author.² As Susan D. Cohen and Martha Noel Evans propose, Duras’s usage of the male narrator signifies a cultural protest which calls for a profound transformation of the male-dominated literary canon (Hill 1993, 72, 170).³ Drawing attention to the conflict between the implicit memory of a female body and modernist conventions of representing consciousness, Duras dismantles the illusion of a transhistorical, disembodied narrative identity. She accentuates this conflict by constructing an ethnic difference between her heroines, and assigning the symbolisation of their memories to two men who belong to a similar category of ‘race’, gender, and social class. Thus Hold and Morgan act supposedly on the basis of a similar cultural prefiguration with regard to ethnicity, genderisation, and sexuality (Somers 1994, 608; Ricoeur 1984, 52–54). However, constructed as opposite intra- and extradiegetic strategies, the pretended testimonies become highly individual, whereby each narrator shows a diverse subjective development, respectively. The following two chapters explore

² This claim is most clearly formulated by Roland Barthes in his essay La mort de l’auteur (1968), which ends up with the demand: ‘The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author’ (Barthes 1977, 148). On Barthes’s attempts to reformulate an embodied, affective reader see Knuuttila 2008b.
³ Cohen and Evans consider Le ravissement as a critique of male literary tradition on the basis of a female subtext behind that of the male narrator (Hill 1993, 72). But as Leslie Hill rightly points out, as Cohen’s reading confuses Duras’s ‘female’ and Hold’s ‘male’ voice and vision, which are inseparable, it tends to ‘efface the tension between them’ (ibid., 170). This flaw does not erase my idea that Duras’s two novels together suggest a reorganisation of literary canons which exclude female writers.
these two modes of witnessing by focusing in turn on each heroine’s cultural specificity, which tends to modify the content of the narrative, especially the gendered and racialised rules of the Eurocentric cultural order.

Working simultaneously on both novels, Duras had the insurmountable difficulty of verbalising the experience of the wounded person through other informational routes except that of an imagined interaction with a fictional narrator. The feverish writing of *Le ravissement* during three months in 1963 occurred in the grip of a frightening experience of ‘blankness’. The inspiration originated from the shock elicited by the ‘serene autism’ of a deranged young woman in a psychiatric hospital in Paris (Adler 2000, 248–253). This emotional turmoil prevented Duras from approaching her traumatised protagonist directly (P, 14–15). Rather, when several distancing gestures by which she outlined Lol’s characteristics appeared to be insufficient, she created Hold as a mediator for Lol’s unknown intentions which Duras herself intimately shared (Adler 2000, 248–250; VM, 35–38). In *La Vie matérielle* she writes:

*Il y a aussi des choses qui restent ignorées de l’auteur lui-même. Il en est ainsi, pour moi de certains gestes, de certaines audaces de Lol V. Stein […]. L’attitude de Lol V. Stein, cette connivence qu’elle a avec Jacques Hold pendant ce dîner et qui a changé la fin du livre, je ne sais pas la traduire, dire le sens qu’elle a parce que je suis avec Lol V. Stein et qu’elle, elle ne sait pas tout à fait ce qu’elle fait et pourquoi elle le fait. Blanchot m’a reproché de mètre servie d’un intermédiaire comme J. Hold pour approcher Lol V. Stein. Il aurait voulu que je sois sans intermédiaire avec Lol V. Stein. Or moi, je ne peux la saisir que lorsqu’elle est engagée dans une action avec un autre personnage, que je l’écoute et que je la regarde. Elle n’est jamais corps contre corps avec moi comme l’est le Vice-Consul.*

And some things remain unknown even to the author. In my case, some of the things Lol V. Stein does, some of the risks she takes […]. Her attitude – the secret understanding between her and Jacques Hold during dinner, which changes the book’s ending – I can’t translate it or convey its meaning because I’m completely with Lol V. Stein and she herself doesn’t know what she’s doing or why. Blanchot

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4 Duras observes: ‘La peur a commencé avec Lol V. Stein, un peu avec *Moderato*, je dois dire. Elle a été très grande pour *Détruire*, dangereuse un peu’ (The fear began with Lol V. Stein, and a little with *Moderato*, I have to say. It became extreme with *Détruire*, almost dangerous). She also anticipates the reader’s possible horror during reading, which indicates the writer’s and the reader’s sharing of the zone of uncanny experiences, as she says, in a ‘périmètre’ [of trauma] (P, 14–15, WW, 4).

5 The young patient called Manon was staring blankly in front of her. During her visits, Duras took her out for a walk and listened to ‘someone who was considered to be mad but who made sensible comments’ (Adler 2000, 249–250).

6 Duras worked Manon’s appearance up with that of her childhood friend, Colette (Helene Lagonelle in *L’amant*; Adler 2000, 60). The new figure received a name from an actress, Loleh Bellon, first modified into ‘Loleh Blair’ before finally becoming Lola Valerie Stein (ibid., 248).
Witnessing Trauma

has criticized me for using someone like Jacques Hold as an intermediary, in order to get close to her. He'd have preferred there to be no intermediary. But I can only get to grips with her when she's engaged in some action with another character; when I can see her and hear her. She is never hand-to-hand with me like the Vice-Consul. (PR, 31, emphasis added).

The excerpt indicates Duras's willed aim to keep the deranged woman's inner world at a distance by yielding her own authorial responsibility to a fictitious European man. But opening herself to 'empathic unsettlement' as she affectively takes the virtual position of the two others, she as if simulates their interaction similar to that presented in current two person's neuroscience (Hari and Kujala 2009, 457; cf. Knuttila 2008b, 131–133). Thus Duras manages to produce a creative fictionalisation of a social re-enactment of trauma which counteracts identification still retaining empathy (LaCapra 2001, 78).

Likewise, in tandem with Le ravissement and during the coming five months, Duras was striving for an ethically acceptable solution for the Cambodian mendicant's narrative in the novel Le Vice-consul. This time the problem considered the most effective adjustment of two ontologically separate fictional worlds, that of the colonised victim and that of the European colonialists. The struggle ended by inverting the narrative roles, which created the most satisfactory aesthetic result in Duras's own eyes (Armel 1990, 63, 92). It was a far-reaching decision which illustrates the inner contradiction of Duras's own writing practice as a female colon and a critical Western author (Winston 2001, 95). For while the embedded novel demonstrates the male coloniser's attempt to mediate a muted indigenous woman's traumatic memory, it touches upon the tender spot of colonialism neglected in literary Orientalism: sexist racism and its demographic and economic consequences for the colonised women. The mise en abyme structure also calls into question the right of a European colonialist to go under the skin of an ethnic, socio-cultural and sexual other by way of a written testimony, independently of the stylistic means employed. But again, incarnating the woman's experiential self as a discourse of a man, Duras repeats the idea of a multiple narratorial voice which plays with the genderisation of language in favour of the empathic value of a testimony.

During three years, Duras invented a series of opposite solutions for the mise en abyme structure planned for Le Vice-consul, which complicated markedly the completion of the novel (E, 25). The reason for the prolonged wrestling was, again, an ambiguous reluctance to directly approach the traumatised person. As she states, any 'objective' writing of the Annamite's experience was not possible with a 'personal realism', (Duras's terms for her modernist style indirect libre; Armel 1990, 63). But the terrifying memories of the Cambodian beggar women of Duras's childhood, combined with the fear arising from her mother's fear, forced her to retextualise these experiences, which finally found a provocative form as an embedded narrative of a white man (Adler 2000, 257; E, 32–33).

Instead of embedding the French Vice-consul's world within that of an indigenous woman, he was placed in the frame story of colonised India where a British writer invented the third-person narrative of the Cambodian beggar (Hill 1993, 94, 172–173).
As the two metanarrative solutions display an attempt to communicate the heroine’s unknown trauma through the words of an enabler, the inscribed and actual readers are summoned as co-witnesses on textual, literary and cultural levels (Kacandes 2001, xvi, 111). In my reading, the analogical narratives of the women’s ten-year process towards madness takes the shape of an effective counter-movement in time and place. While the one is wandering ten thousand kilometres from the place of trauma in Cambodia to Calcutta, the other tries to return to the place of her rejection, the Casino of T. Beach in Europe. This counter-movement parallels the problems of the indigenous women in overseas colonies with those produced by subordinating middle-class women in modern Europe, whereby it manages to question postcolonial issues of female gender policy over cultural boundaries. In this extended cultural frame, the aesthetics of Durasian trauma fiction serves the needs of postcolonial feminism by capturing her heroines ‘at the moment of their crisis’ (Winston 2001, 139), yet, showing the salient differences of their imagined lives by arranging them on opposite sides of the colonial setting for a critical comparison (cf. Whitehead 2004, 86–87). This dual narrative does not, however, equate all female suffering. Rather, while it combines the two major movements of emancipation in the European sixties – the worldwide process of decolonisation and the second wave of feminism – the strategy epitomises those social differences prevailing on both sides of the power system which contribute to the cultural appraisal of each traumatic loss.

Treated as literary testimonies, each of Duras’s metanarratives can be likened to an ‘orientation to exchange’ in Erving Goffman’s terms. Starting from this idea, Irene Kacandes envisages the narrative of the survivor’s trauma as ‘Talking’ of the text, meant to provoke a distinct response in the reader in the actual world. This implies a collaborative activity of co-witnessing the survivor’s fate with a textual enabler, which presupposes an empathic reader (Kacandes 2001, xv- xvi). For Kacandes, the prerequisite for an empathic reading is that the narrative role of some co-witness-enabler is understood as an amalgamation of the real author and the fictional narrator. She understands this fusion as a ‘text-as-statement’ that mediates the traumatic memory of a survivor whose self-narrative envelope is disrupted, and intrapsychic self-reflective witnessing is restricted (ibid., xvi, 23–24, 95, 99). I find this concept a useful vehicle for dealing with the entangled discourse of Duras-Hold where the differences between male and female language cannot be distinguished. But how is one to evaluate the ‘reliability’ of such a text-as-statement during an empathic exchange? In Ansgar Nünning’s insightful view, the narrator’s ‘reliability’ can be assessed by weighing

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up the values of the fictional world in relation to the accepted cultural models or literary conventions of the actual world (Nünning 1999, 61, 64). This thought is akin to what Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (1992, xiv–xv) demand: a contextualisation of the text by the historical, autobiographical, political, and intellectual aspects of its production in a dialectics with the witnessing reader’s continual reevaluation of her/his own preexisting ‘conceptual prisms’. These ideas specify Kacandes’s schedule of ‘Talking’, and help me to contrast Duras’s two text-as-statements with Hold and Morgan in terms of trauma.

The following two chapters respond to Duras’s and her male narrators’ surrogate testimonies by analysing them as ‘Talking’ at several levels. Typical of them is a dialogical heterogeneity expressed with overt hesitation, direct questioning and explicit inventing, which all foreground the issue that trauma can never be fully captured in words, memory, and thought (Laub 1992, 63). As modes of interpersonal witnessing between fictional characters, I will evaluate the status of these tentative testimonies in the light of two frames of normative beliefs: the fictional and the real (Kacandes 2001, 105, 108). To this end, I explore the narratives at the level of each novel’s discourse in relation to the culture and time the story was written, that is, in the light of the values of the European bourgeoisie in the thirties and sixties. In so doing, I intend to link the tension between the traumatised heroine and the narrator to the prototypical role of the male writer as a (Cartesian) subject of knowing. First, I will explore Hold’s account for Lol V. Stein’s traumatic re-enactment and then turn to Morgan’s manuscript of the Cambodian beggar’s misery.

Jacques Hold and Western Subjectivity:  
*Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*

When Duras constructs a male medical doctor as the narrator of Lol’s traumatic memory, the point of view structure of her text-as-statement is complicated to the extreme. In his short but influential psychoanalytic essay, *L’hommage à Marguerite Duras* (1965), Jacques Lacan ignores this complex system of stratified focalisations, and classifies the novel as a man’s homage to his beloved woman. Lacan treats Lol and Hold’s relationship as a psychoanalytical transference between doctor and patient, and sees Hold as the object of Lol’s seduction from

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10 Nünning does not deal with the norms and values of some abstract ‘implied author’. Rather, the critical measure for discovering the narrator’s adequacy as a witness is the awareness of the reader’s own understanding of such concepts as ‘normal moral standards’, ‘basic common sense’, and ‘human decency’. Thus the story is not meant to mediate any ‘historical truth’ of trauma but, rather, its experiential truth with regard to different value systems (Nünning 1999, 64).
which, however, he recovers as an outcome of their interaction.\textsuperscript{11} Under the spell of Lacan’s model, a number of feminist studies pass over the multifaceted perspectives of Hold’s narrative strategy, and interpret Lol’s alleged mental ‘illness’ as expressing female desire in given psychodynamic terms without challenging its constructive content (e.g. Marini 1977; Borgomano 1985; Willis 1987; Glassman, 1991).\textsuperscript{12} However, in the beginning of the nineties, the dominance of Lacan’s favoured view gave way to new close readings, which assess Lol’s psychic condition and subjectivity in relation to her interaction with Hold through his narrative (see Hill 1993, 169–171 n5–n7; Cohen 1993; McNeece 1996). Drawing from this line of study, I focus on analysing those nuances of the text-as-statement which indicate Hold’s secondary traumatisation following his implication in Lol’s traumatic re-enactment.

Paraphrased from the narrator’s perspective, the story of \textit{Le ravissement} is as follows. Jacques Hold, a medical doctor aged 36, has worked for one year at the hospital in the service of one doctor Pierre Beugner in S. Tahla. Being the secret lover of Beugner’s wife, Tatiana Karl, he meets her weekly in a hotel on the outskirts of the town. Visiting the Beugners often, Hold once sees an unknown woman unexpectedly arriving there. Just as he hears Tatiana calling the woman ‘Lola’, he sees the wild, desiring gaze of this woman fixed upon him. Since then Hold is eager to find out the meaning of this gesture. He hears from Tatiana, the eye-witness, the story of this old school-friend of hers: after having been rejected by her fiancé for an unknown femme fatale, Lol lived in U. Bridge for ten years in a marriage with Jean Bedford, and then returned to S. Tahla with her family. Next, seducing Hold secretly in her own party, Lol confesses that she has chosen him for her helper-lover. She reveals that she knows of his and Tatiana’s love affair, and lies on the ground in the rye field behind the hotel where the couple is making love. Attracted by this deviant behaviour, and ready to embrace Lol’s advances, Hold soon finds himself enacting her old trauma instead of a mere mental reconstruction. While their conversations about Tatiana substitute for Anne-Marie in Lol’s imagination,\textsuperscript{11}

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\textsuperscript{11} Lacan considers Hold to be the proper subject of the story who finds his real subjectivity (je) by losing his imaginary subject (moi). He reduces Lol to a hysterical patient who is paralysed by Tatiana’s beauty and stops gazing at an internal, static Oedipal triangle, thus eliciting a number of tautological interpretations of repetitive ‘triangles of desire’ (Lacan 1975, 95, 97; Hill 1993, 77). Moreover, in a provocative manner, Lacan wants to activate the reader into thinking about her/himself as immersed in a triangle where the other two members are the writer and the fictional character, like himself, Duras and Lol V. Stein. This obscures the division between Hold’s fictional world and the actual world, but also identifies both Lol and Duras with the ‘seducers of the novel’ who lose their subjectivity by making themselves unconscious objects of the text (Hill 1993, 69, 71; cf. Lacan 1975, 93–94).
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he himself begins to substitute for Michael. Finally, in the place of her rejection, the Casino of T. Beach, their first act of intercourse in a hotel precipitates Lol’s confused identification with Tatiana, while the coherence of Hold’s own identity is made questionable. Keeping in line with Lol’s demand, Hold continues his relationship with the suffering Tatiana, while Lol goes on lying alone in the rye field.

Operating on two levels of witnessing, Hold recounts Lol’s trauma through three distinct routes: other people’s stories of the original rejection, Lol’s restaging of her implicit memory in the present, and his own intellectual and emotional struggle to understand the enactment into which he is drawn. To dramatise this troublesome intertwining of interpersonal and intrapersonal circuits of testimony, Duras makes Hold divide his narrative into two parts by withholding at first his self-narrator’s identity. In the introductory part, the as-yet-unknown narrator is collecting the stories of Lol’s catastrophe and its consequences from several surrogate witnesses. In the latter, major part, the now identified self-narrator, Hold, is shown as being entangled in Lol’s traumatic enactment, thus exposing himself deliberately to the contagious power of her acting out. This part portrays the interplay of Hold and Lol as his intrapsychic experience, with him partaking as a catalyst in the reconstruction of Lol’s wounding. As the whole novel represents Hold’s rescripting of the process drawn up afterwards, it represents his post-mortem testimony to an interpersonal enactment of a female sexual trauma. His position as a witness is thus comprised of several successive roles: originally, he is an onlooker but soon takes the part of a midwife-lover for Lol’s enactment so as to gradually become an involuntary object of the same process. After all, he is the talking subject who reflects upon himself, Lol’s implicit memory, and his method of its symbolisation. From this point of departure, Hold’s testimony is a calculating textualisation of his intrapersonal development prompted by an organic interplay with Lol’s intuitive acting out of trauma.13

The withholding of the autobiographical knowledge about the self-narrator is the main tropological effect of *Le ravissement*, which makes understandable Lol’s choice and gives it meaning. Hiding at first almost entirely the narrator’s involvement in Lol’s story, the text unveils Hold’s personality only after the first third of the novel. The deferral is planned to draw attention to two necessary features in Hold’s person which make him a suitable partner for the social restaging of Lol’s dissociated memory, which she, deprived of symbolic representation is unable to otherwise handle (see Howell 2005, 6–7). First, Hold is a stereotypical middle-class ‘ladies’ man’ (R, 52, LVS, 43), second, he is the

13 For LaCapra (2004, 54–55), ‘acting out’ (compulsive repetition) refers to a social enactment of historical trauma, which does not always imply psychopathology. As presented below, Elizabeth F. Howell (2005) gives a firm basis for this stand with her brilliant presentation of the renewed concepts of dissociation and projective identification.
secret lover of the only eye-witness of Lol’s rejection, Tatiana. These attributes correspond to Lol’s bursting need of restaging her disowned, unconscious affect of loss, which is only possible with an erotically active, sexually mature male partner who is prone to keep her secret during their two-person interaction. The meaning of the shrewd, misleading absence of information from the outset is to foreground these properties by galvanising the novel’s opening with an epistemic gap which vigorously guides the expectations of the reader, all the more so as the unknown self-narrator hints at having direct information about the love object of Lol V. Stein (R, 39, 42, 49). Only after quoting the stories of other people – Lol’s mother, husband, maid, but especially Tatiana – about Lol’s catastrophe and the ‘illness’ following it, the self-narrator reveals his autobiographical facts with the first laconic statement of the eighth chapter:14

Trente-six ans, je fais partie du corps médical. Il n’y a qu’un an que je suis arrivé à S. Tahla. Je suis dans le service de Pierre Beugner à l’Hôpital départemental. Je suis l’amant de Tatiana Karl. (R, 75)

I’m thirty-six years old, a member of the medical profession. I’ve been living in S. Tahla only for a year. I’m in Pierre Beugner’s section at the state Hospital. I’m Tatiana Karl’s lover. (LVS, 66)

At one stroke, as the discovery of the narrator’s persona fills the epistemic hole, it brings together all the elements needed to explain Hold’s position as a witness in the configuration.15 Until this very moment, Lol and Hold have been portrayed in the third-person narrative as stereotypical figures, while the self-narrator has presented himself as a separate, inventing, ‘I’, who speaks with a cryptic voice about the encounter of ‘elle’, Lol, and ‘il’, the man: ‘L’un de ces hommes est celui qu’elle cherche. Il la voit pour la première fois’ (One of them is the man she is looking for. He sees her for the first time R, 72; LVS, 63). At the point of revelation, a qualitative leap in signification occurs, while the sudden disclosure puts the missing elements in place as to reorganise all the earlier information for understanding. The narrating ‘I’ is disclosed not as being an abstract ‘implied author’ without sex, or even Duras-in-the-flesh, but identified as the lover of Tatiana, the prime source of knowledge of Lol’s traumatic loss. Moreover, she is the lady with whom Lol saw Hold going to the place of her own unfortunate

14 The autobiographical knowledge gives us the ability to identify the narrator as a historical person. It consists of the person’s attributes such as sex/gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, social and age class as well as the proper name, thus corresponding to the notion of an autobiographical self (Somers 1994, 631).

15 When this epistemic hole is filled, it reveals the way in which Hold is involved in Lol’s traumatic re-enactment. This may provoke in the reader an awareness of the representational absence of trauma, as presented in Ch II.
love with Michael: the Hôtel des Bois.\textsuperscript{16} As a crowning act, all this information fuses with the fictional fact that the narrator is the same man whom Lol just gazes at with her ‘immensely hungry’ eyes, desiring an intimate bonding with him (R 78; LVS 69).

The revelatory turn is a strategic trick which indicates Hold’s person as tailored to respond to the obsession of Lol’s internal, trauma-induced working model and complete her ‘enactive procedural representation’ in society (Howell 2005, 7). Hold’s medical profession is not constructed to emphasise his role as Lol’s healer in a strict sense, but rather explains his and Lol’s fluent non-verbal exchange as they belong to the same social class.\textsuperscript{17} This narrative plan discloses the emotive reciprocity of Lol’s and Hold’s mutual projective identification. As it soon takes the form of a physical relationship that culminates in sexual intercourse, the process uncovers the presuppositions of the fallogocentric sex-gender rules of the upper middle class on two levels of information.\textsuperscript{18} For one thing, while Hold has access to Lol’s trauma through the memories of Tatiana, it is Tatiana’s romantic, jealous opinions that taint his first imaginations of Lol’s fantasies. For another, being a narcissistic ‘incorrigible ladies’ man’, Hold is willing to assent to Lol’s erotic invitation, for he shows ‘regards qu’il avait pour les femmes’ (the way he looked at women), even ‘that initial expression that Michael Richardson had had’, and a ‘body which, with every glance, demanded more’ (R 52; LVS, 43). Hold’s person is thus designed to be utterly compelling for Lol who intuitively selects him as a partner with whom to process further her interrupted sexual development.

As he reconstructs the story of Lol’s awakening from her frozen psychic state, and her silent struggle out from under this inertia, Hold breaks the ‘tyranny’ of autobiographical silence that closes her inside a self-imprisonment outside human relatedness (Laub 1995, 64). However, as his own implication in the evolving drama compels him to waver between projective identification and distanced empathy, Hold’s witnessing concerns in fact the interplay of their unconscious self-states produced in and by the atmosphere of the upper middle-class post-Victorian biases of sexual behaviour. As a result, his curiosity about Lol’s implicit memory changes in time to a report on Tatiana’s and his own

\textsuperscript{16} Seen in the light of Wayne Booth’s theory of textual reliability of the narrator, such a revelation combines both the implicit intentions of the author, Duras, and those arising from the alleged conspiracy of the ‘implied author’ with the reader (Booth 1961, 301–303, 330).

\textsuperscript{17} Lacan’s reading takes Hold’s profession of medical doctor as an absolute sign of his activity as Lol’s healer. Thus Lacan provokes an idea of a (physical) sexual affair between doctor and patient which in fact has to be excluded from a psychotherapeutic relationship.

\textsuperscript{18} Duras focuses on the lifestyle of the European upper middle class with all its habitual practices and pre-existing suppositions that predetermine and limit the perception of the world, to which Hold’s profession is fused through numerous textual links. One of these is his subordination to Tatiana’s husband, Dr. Beugner, which makes I him economically and professionally dependent on him.
suffering, finally leading up to a bewilderment at the edge of Lol's unknown fantasy world. When thus Duras takes a virtual position of both male and female bodies, the text-as-statement combines two complementary issues. On the one hand, it realises the idea of transgressing the heroine’s traumatic dissociation by an eloquent testimony of a male witness; on the other hand, it uncovers the silenced voice of the European middle-class woman through Lol’s non-verbal re-enactment. This problematises the question of a simply gendered quality of language in favour of a more radical concept of dialogical subjectivity akin to Kristevian *sujet en procès*, which constitutes itself throughout life contextually, both in verbal and embodied – ‘semiotic’ – mirroring interaction with others (Suleiman 1990, 116; Kristeva 1985, 19–20; cf. Hari and Kujala 2009, 457).

Hold’s position as an intradiegetic self-narrator in itself complicates the process of witnessing with a multitude of shifting focalisations of an obscure quality. Moving blithely between immediacy and distancing, Duras creates a diabolic palimpsest of Western stereotypes of both woman and man. Confusingly, the stereotypical characterisation of a virile white man is made through a dual focalisation: formulated by Hold himself with a third-person narrative but imagined as Lol’s way of seeing him. But meanwhile, as presented through the eyes of a restrained housewife, the man’s figure is paralleled with the portrayal of this same woman’s elegant modesty (R, 52–53). The juxtaposition of two bourgeois stereotypes stratifies three attitudes one over the other: the view of the speculating male narrator, his narcissistic dwelling as an object of the lurking heroine’s desire, and her feelings and imaginations. These three positions are fused into a common contract about the man’s heterosexual sex appeal, behind which hovers the image of the ideal romantic hero: the outstanding, ‘gloomy’ Michael Richardson. Also Lol’s and Hold’s wordless interplay is registered through the prism of several focal points: his own excitation, Tatiana’s jealous desire, Dr. Beugner’s calmness and Jean Bedford’s blue-eyed, yet chauvinist

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19 This ambiguity has given cause for several conflicting interpretations. The narratorial voice has been seen, for instance, as Duras’s ironising authorial stance to her male narrator (Suleiman 1990, 116), a stance which Hill agrees with (1993, 170–171). When not denying Duras’s irony, I propose that, while the male stereotype here is a production of genderisation in modernist Western society, formed according to patriarchal presuppositions, it is taken for granted by all the members of the fictional society. The text-as statement thus points to a formation of public opinion on the basis of the cultural unconscious.

20 Notably, when analysing Duras’s style, Kristeva does not include her in the series of those writers who put into effect bodily rhythms arising from the ‘semiotic’ unconscious, *chora*, as a ‘genotext’ (Kristeva 1974, 17–100; e.g. on Céline’s style, see Kristeva 1981, 140–146, on polylogue and the musical rhythms of language, see ibid., 167–183). However, Kristeva does not provide a reason this regrettable omission when she analyses Duras in her *Soleil noir* (1987).

21 The focalisation is here not an optical point of view but a cognitive, emotive and ideological orientation (Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 77–82). Regarding the network of shifting focalisations and Hold’s performative statements such as ‘I invent’ or ‘I imagine’ in the light of Émile Benveniste’s linguistics, see Cohen 1993, 43–49.
ignorance of his deranged wife’s intelligence and intention. Hold’s tendency of continually guessing other key person’s motives creates a paranoiac atmosphere of rivalry, which catches the hidden practices of possessive love pervading Western middle-class genderisation; that is, how sexual relationships are established by projecting unfinished – exploitative, controlling, denying or disparaging – emotional material onto the partner. In a vicious circle, such projections maintain rivalry by virtue of a patriarchal binarity of suppressing female sexual enjoyment and reducing male sexuality to a cultivated, seemingly ‘free’ rapacity. Duras’s skilful viewpoint technique thus blurs the distinction between historical and transhistorical trauma by unveiling the discriminative practices arising from the cultural unconscious in question (LaCapra 2000, 194–195).22

When comparing this text-as-statement’s value system to that of critical feminism, this former appears to be an exploration of the suffocating gender values of the upper middle class, which restricted women’s sexual behaviour in European bourgeois societies in the thirties (Nünning 1999, 61, 64).23 The narrative shows the sexual identities and behaviour of the protagonists to be as constituted and reproduced by the biases embedded in the commercialised forms of romantic formulae, which influence Western genderisation by modelling tacitly our embodied interaction. Specifying Lucy McNeece’s thought, typical of the gender values of patriarchy is that the myth of the absence of female sexual lust and pleasure is imbued with the stereotypical sentimentalism of the romantic formula, which denies sexual maturation for women while allowing it for men (McNeece 1996, 27–28). As Hold’s figure thus reflects the normative habit of men to establish free-wheeling love affairs within patriarchy, it accentuates Lol’s silent search for sexual passion through an invisible social acting out. Moreover, his involvement in forming a secret ménage-à-trois with the housewife Lol and the childless, idle Tatiana is complicated by his working status under the supervision of Tatiana’s husband. And compared to the sexual emancipation that the feminist movement has achieved for Western women today – which Duras’s narrative speaks for – Hold’s implication in solving Lol’s sexual trauma cuts across melodramatic thinking that tends to emplot the life of Western middle-class women.

To summarise, the text-as-statement proceeds in a spiral which blurs the boundaries between subject and object, and cause and effect (cf. McNeece 1996, 22  The cultural unconscious is here understood as a cultural specific formation and not an universal phenomenon.
23  Taken as a ‘text-as-statement’, Duras/Hold’s testimony cannot be ranked in the category of an unreliable narrator merely on the basis of a creative usage of other persons’ narratives. Neither is Lol’s inner life ‘completely opaque’, or just a ‘parody of the bourgeois fantasy of immediate and total access’ (McNeece 1996, 35). Rather, Hold’s mirroring capability gives an infatuated picture of his struggle to understand Lol’s interrupted sexual maturation in relation to his own stereotypical male imago, as will be indicated in the latter part of my discussion.
This persuades one to strain the ear for the nuances of European gender practices and their binary oppositions pervading the rational concept of the Western psyche. The proper dilemma is the extent to which Hold’s narrative style constitutes Lol’s trauma or vice versa, textually brought up by his overt insecurity and based on the secrecy of his and Lol’s precise verbal communication. In the light of LaCapra’s theory of critical working through trauma, Duras’s strategy raises three questions (LaCapra 2004, 54–55). First, how does the text-as-statement fulfil the criteria of a critical rescription of traumatic experience as it restages a compulsive repetition of sexual trauma in social relations? Second, to what extent becomes Hold conscious of his projected role in Lol’s enactment during their interaction, or does only the reader’s become aware of it during the unfolding drama? Third, if Hold’s involvement aspires towards Lol’s sexual liberation and/or his and Tatiana’s release from the sexual triangle in which they are caught up, does the text enlighten the reader about the power of historical pathology in producing disorders of intersubjective attachment? (cf. Hill 1993, 74, 77; Caruth 1995a, 3–4; Guidano 1991, 75–81.) In what follows, these questions are explored by analysing the figural forms of repetition that Hold’s narrative conveys of Lol’s re-enactment.

Re-Enacting Suffocated Love

The moment that discloses Hold’s personality propels his and Lol’s common story in motion. The narrative then builds a succession of dramatic equations between Lol’s original experience and its episodic replications with the surrogates, Hold and Tatiana. Since the text hardly refers to Lol’s and Hold’s confidential conversations, it remains unclear how much Lol answers for the emplotment of the narrative. In my view, Duras utilises Hold as a flexible means by which to transmute Lol’s dissociated memory into a tacit re-enactment, of which he renders an account in retrospect.25 The re-enactment of trauma as projective identification is most brilliantly explained in Elizabeth Howell’s (2005) innovative study on the innate nature of the human dissociative mind.26 As Howell indicates, in the post-traumatic condition, the wounded emotional

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24 Referring to Barthes’s A Lover’s Discourse, (1979), McNeece (1996, 28–29) builds a chain of multifaceted ravishment between Michael, Anne-Marie, Lol, Jacques, and Tatiana. She links this with the Western myth of colonial power: the subject’s ‘urge to know and possess the Other’.


26 Howell gives a cogent interpretation of the psychoanalytical concept of projective identification as a phenomenon occurring in the realm of the cultural unconscious (Howell 2005, 6–7). On the developing concept of the unity and multiplicity of the self in context, see Howell’s concise but rewarding historical review, ibid., 38–48.
part of the self is dissociated from the apparently normal everyday part of self which, however, continues to conduct itself adequately in social situations. And since the emotional part of the self is frozen in trauma, the information is not processed further but is insufficiently integrated into the psyche. This split makes the survivor inclined to seek out a partner whose emotional schema meets the needs of her emotional failure arising from the trauma in question (Howell 2005, 131–133). Therefore, an essential precondition for a social re-enactment of trauma is the availability and receptivity of a person whose unconscious emotional schema of intersubjective attachment is complementary to that of the survivor, which enables a repetition of the disorder. Adapted to *Le ravissement*, being hypersensitive to Lol’s bodily yet childish gestures which evoke Hold’s erotic responses as a virile man, his personal habits allow Lol a compulsive re-enactment of her sexual trauma in the everyday. This psychodrama does not necessarily lead to a recovery but rather perpetuates Lol’s dysfunctional scheme, that of numbed emotions and avoidance of mature sexual behaviour (see Howell 2005 6–7; Young et al. 2003, 13–14).27

Quoting Vittorio Guidano, ‘in the process of bonding to somebody, one does not choose a person so much as the mode of experiencing oneself with that person’ (Guidano 1991, 75). This implies that, instead of being an intrapersonal psychic phenomenon, a traumatic re-enactment is a failure of our ‘unconscious procedural relational knowledge of being with another person’ (Howell, 2005, 7). But a relational bonding is always affected by the cultural unconscious, formed by virtue of dominant norms which constitute our individual identities through the everyday practices we live in. Accordingly, Lol’s original relationship with Michael was underpinned by the bourgeois norms of sexual bonding expressed in the myth of ideal love narrated as a romantic configuration of dyadic fulfilment.28 These norms of the psychoanalytic family romance are broken by the ‘bird of prey’ who brings death to Lol’s love: a sexually mature, attractive woman, Anne-Marie Stretter. Fusing the opposite figures of whore/mother, her figure subverts the double standard of sexual morality of the society, thereby unconsciously orienting Lol to establish a seductive relationship with Hold. This turns the narrative focus of *Le ravissement* to the denial of female sexual pleasure by

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27 Leslie Greenberg’s (1993, 5) concise definition of emotion schemes reads: ‘complex synthesising structures that integrate cognition (in the form of appraisals, expectations, and beliefs) and motivation (in the form of needs, concerns, intentions, and goals) with affect (in the form of psychological arousal and sensory, bodily feeling) and action (in the form of expressive-motor responses and action tendencies).’

28 McNeece (1996, 27) states in her Lacanian reading that ‘*Le ravissement* is about dispossession and the problem of identity in a society which is attached to romantic ideals of individual autonomy and dyadic fulfilment’. However, McNeece does not quite reach the point as she identifies Hold’s act of narration with an imperialist mode of knowing, and the deranged Lol as an exotic object of his pursuit that seeks not the truth but possession (ibid., 1996, 28).
presenting it either as being suffocated in marriage, as in Lol’s case, or excluded outside it, as in Tatiana’s case. In so doing, the story categorises the fulfilling of sexual need as a ‘betrayal’, and labels it ambiguously as a haunting ‘crime’ in Le Vice-consul and India Song. Hence, through Lol’s and Hold’s reciprocal projective identification, a radical literary figure is formed: their alliance of lover/witness and mistress/survivor.

Enabled by his and Lol’s seamless non-verbal cooperation, Hold hits upon an apposite, yet self-reflective reconstruction of Lol’s re-enactment. This is possible with the innate faculty of their reciprocal mirroring which nourishes Hold’s imaginations of Lol’s feelings, intentions and motivations. Being a tacit negotiation for their mutual recognition, the mental ‘figural dance’ of Lol and Hold tests the limits of the perceptual schemes which prevent one of becoming aware of the dominant but unconscious norms regulating the habits of one’s own society.29 As Hold adequately matches the needs of Lol’s dissociated, sexually inexperienced part, he is eager to contribute to Lol’s secret attempt to express the frozen emotions that constrict her female sexuality. A typical example of the ambiguous beauty of his empathy is the following passage, which expresses a lyrically toned hesitation when trying to reach and verbalise the thoughts and emotions going through Lol’s deranged mind:

Lol ne répond pas tout de suite, tous la regardent, il passe quelque chose dans ses yeux, comme un frisson. Elle s’immobilise sous le coup d’un passage en elle, de quoi ? de versions inconnues, sauvages, des oiseaux sauvages de sa vie, qu’en savons-nous ? qui la traversent de part en part, s’engouffrent ? puis le vent de ce vol s’apaise ? Elle répond qu’elle ignore avoir jamais habité. La phrase n’est pas terminée. (R, 145–146)

Lol doesn’t answer, all eyes are upon her, something, a sort of shudder, passes across her eyes. She freezes because of something going inside her, what? unknown, savage leitmotifs, wild birds in her life – how can we tell? – which wing through her from side to side, and are swallowed up? and then, after they are gone, the wind caused by their passage subsides? She says that she doesn’t remember ever having lived.30 The sentence remains unfinished. (LVS, 135)

Hold foregrounds two episodes which both mimick Lol’s trauma as modifications of the original scene of the melodramatic l’amour fou in the Casino ten years earlier.31 The first episode is Lol’s first gaze upon Hold, and the second is her

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29 The dialogue of looking and hearing, speaking and keeping silent, is displayed and textualised just as in the frame story of Le Vice-consul, as I will indicate later in this study.

30 In the English translation, the sentence ends with the word ‘there’, which destroys the double semantic content of Lol’s truncated expression.

31 The original scene is also the result of a hybrid scope: seen from Tatiana’s romantic focalisation and formulated by Hold’s dramatic eloquence.
avowal of why she has chosen him: because of his secret love affair with Tatiana. The result is a parallelism of figures which articulates the ritualist restaging of Lol’s sexual wounding with the original event. Marking the start of their secret drama, Lol’s first gaze is performed as a well-timed and calculated gesture. Noticed by Hold alone, this gaze is a symptomatic sign that reveals Lol’s insufficiently processed physical desire. Being imitative, though contrasting, the ‘immense, half-starved’ gaze pierces Hold over Tatiana’s shoulder (R 78; LVS 69). Without genuine passion, Lol’s gaze is both a modified repetition of Michael’s first look at Anne-Marie, but also a reversal of Anne-Marie’s impassive and well-versed ‘non-look’, with ‘an almost painful discoloration of the pupil that was diffused over the entire surface of her eyes’ (R, 16; LVS, 6).32 In hindsight, the gaze signifies for Hold the initial ‘magical minute’ of the interplay between him and Lol, which he then, extrapolating from Tatiana’s portrayal of the fateful night in T. Beach, equates with that of Michael’s and Anne-Marie’s sudden erotic bond formed in the Casino. The following passage anticipates this minute:

Les dix-neuf ans qui ont précédé cette nuit, je ne veux pas les connaître plus que je ne le dis, ou à peine, ni autrement que dans leur chronologie même s’ils recèlent une minute magique à laquelle je dois d’avoir connu Lol V. Stein. Je ne le veux pas parce que la présence de son adolescence dans cette histoire risquerait d’atténuer un peu aux yeux du lecteur l’écrasante actualité de cette femme dans ma vie. (R, 14, emphasis added)

As for the nineteen years preceding that night, I do not want to know any more about them than what I tell, or very little more, setting forth only the straight, unadulterated chronological facts, even if these years conceal one magic minute to which I am indebted for having enabled me to meet Lol V. Stein. I don’t want to because the presence of her adolescence in this story might somehow tend to detract, in the eyes of the reader, from the overwhelming actuality of this woman in my life. (LVS, 4, emphasis added)

When identifying the gaze as the fateful moment when Lol temporally ‘begins to move towards him’ from her traumatic separation ten years earlier (R, 14; LVS, 4−5), a sequence of Lol’s ‘advancing’ gestures repeats itself in the text. Hold’s theatrical words of Lol’s ‘overwhelming actuality in his life’ mimic – ironically, on the textual level – Michael’s falling in love with Anne-Marie at first sight in T. Beach. The ‘opera’ tone tells that Hold voluntarily surrenders under Lol’s absorbing power from that moment on.34 As the following passage

32 Originally, this often mentioned non-look ‘logeait dans toute la surface des yeux’ and had ‘d’une décoloration presque pénible de la pupille’ (R, 16).
33 I have translated the italicised expression word for word.
34 The style follows Duras’s usage of ‘opera lines’ which are not meant to be taken literally (see H, 10).
indicates, when the temporal distance of ten years is textually fused with the spatial distance between Hold and Lol, a temporal ‘fistula’ is formed, through which the emotional charge of the past event discharges into its reconstruction on the present (Runia 2006, 1).35

Elles sont très proche de la terrasse. D’une minute à l’autre la distance qui les sépare de cette terrasse va être couverte à jamais.

Avant que cela arrive l’homme que Lol cherche se trouve tout à coup dans le plein feu de son regard. Lol, la tête sur l’épaule de Tatiana, le voit : il a légèrement chancelé, il a détourné les yeux. Elle ne s’est pas trompée.

[…] Enlacées elles montent les marches du perron. Tatjana présente à Lol Pierre Beugner, son mari, et Jacques Hold, un de leurs amis, la distance est couverte, moi. (R 73−74, emphasis eadded)

They are almost at the terrace. At any moment, the distance separating them from that terrace is going to be covered, forever.

Before that happens, the man Lol is looking for suddenly finds himself in the direct line of her gaze. Lol her head on Tatiana’s shoulder, sees him: he almost lost his balance, he turned his head away. She was not mistaken.

[…] Arm in arm, they ascent the terrace steps. Tatiana introduces Pierre Beugner, her husband, to Lol, and Jacques Hold, a friend of theirs – the distance is covered – me. (LVS, 65, emphasis added)

The last word of the passage equates the male object of Lol’s gaze with the self-narrating ‘me’, thereby turning around in effect the traditional sexual roles of man and woman. With the word ‘moi’, Hold is immersed in Lol’s intuitively directed, trauma-induced enactment, the ‘cinema of Lol V. Stein’ (R, 49; LVS, 39).36 Then, with the help of Hold’s indulgence, his and Lol’s bodily dialogue unfolds in the form of a well-timed discourse which conducts the restaging throughout the novel. This seamless non-verbal parole amounts to an unrivalled textual celebration of the interpersonal mirroring faculty of humans (Hari and Kujala, 2009). To interpret such an embodied psychodrama presupposes a cognitive understanding of mental events, such as intentions, feelings, and contents of mind, as intersubjective material which is uninterruptedly played out by way of

35 On Eelco Runia’s meaning of the fistula as clarifying the nature of the traumatic index, see Ch II.

36 The famous ‘cinema of Lol V. Stein’ is for me not only Lol’s phantasm evoked by the window of the hotel where she, laying in the rye field, sees Hold and Tatiana after their love act, like a number of interpretations have claimed (cf. McNeece 1996, 33–34; Cohen 1993, 90). Instead of being reduced to a voyeuristic vision, I understand Lol’s inner ‘cinema’ to be the tacit re-enactment of her trauma represented both physically with Hold/Tatiana and in her imagination, completed in L’amour’s ghostly world.
physical movements, gestures, positions and distances in an interdependence of affect and cognition (Guidano 1991, 13, 23). It is obviously based on the innate capabilities of envisioning the other person’s intentions and feelings by resonating with her/his embodied mind. But whereas Lol’s acting out unconsciously guides Hold and Tatiana to their tricky roles, Hold does not foresee his coming destiny. He immediately adopts his role in the silent dramaturgy without suspicion, and sensitively follows the pace of Lol’s mental advancing upon him which he feels as a ravishing ‘in the making’:


Mais qu’est-ce que j’ignore de moi-même à ce point et qu’elle me met en demeure de connaître ? qui sera là dans cet instant auprès d’elle ?

Elle vient. Continue à venir, même en présence des autres. Personne ne la voit avancer. (R, 105−106, emphasis added)

I see everything. I see love itself. Lol’s eyes are stabbed by the light: all around, a dark circle. I see both the light and the dark which surrounds it. She keeps advancing toward me, at the same pace. She cannot advance any faster, or any slower. The slightest modification in her movement would seem to me to be a catastrophe, the definitive defeat of our affair: no one would be there for the assignation.

But what is there about me I am so completely unaware of and which she summons me to know? Who will be there, at the moment, beside her?

She is coming. Keeps on coming, even with the others present. No one sees her coming. (LVS, 96, emphasis added)

Validating this absolute self-assurance as typical of Lol’s somnambulist mind, but not surmising her intention to exclude Tatiana, Hold assists Lol in realising her intuitive plan of building a repetitive triangle of love among the three of them. Besides her calculative first gaze, Lol arranges a second mimicking episode of the original trauma. This occurs with her private avowal that she has ‘picked’ Hold as her lover because of his love affair with Tatiana (R, 112). The most enlightening part of the restaging is at hand when Lol speaks of Tatiana’s nude body, which ‘explodes its meaning’ for Hold whose sexual lust is now disclosed:

37 As Guidano (1991, 75) puts it: ‘[T]he physical linkage with the other’s rhythms brings about a quality of immediate experiencing (“I”) more specifically perceived as one’s “real” self (“Me”).’ See also Knuuttila [in press].
– Votre chambre s’est éclairée et j’ai vu Tatiana qui passait dans la lumière. Elle était nue sous ses cheveux noirs.

Elle ne bouge pas, les yeux sur le jardin, elle attend. Elle vient de dire que Tatiana est nue sous ses cheveux noirs. Cette phrase est encore la dernière qui a été prononcée. J’entends : “nue sous ses cheveux noirs, nue, nue, cheveux noir”. Le deux derniers mots surtout sonnent avec une égale et étrange intensité. Il est vrai que Tataiana était ainsi que Lol vient de la décrire, nue sous ses cheveux noirs. Elle était ainsi dans la chambre fermée, pour son amant. L’intensité de la phrase augmente tout à coup, l’air a claqué autour d’elle, la phrase éclate, elle crève le sens. Je l’entends avec une force assourdissante et je ne la comprends pas, je ne comprendre même plus qu’elle ne veut rien dire. (R, 115−116, emphasis added)

– The light went on in your room, and I saw Tatiana walk in front of the light. She was naked beneath her black hair.

She does not move, her eyes staring out into the garden, waiting. She has just said that Tatiana is black beneath her dark hair. That sentence is the last to have been uttered. I hear: “naked beneath her dark hair, naked, naked, dark hair”. The last two words especially strike with as strange and equal intensity. Tatiana was as Lol has just described her, naked beneath her dark hair. She was that way in the locked room for her lover. The intensity of the sentence suddenly increases, the air around it has been rent, the sentence explodes, it blows the meaning apart. I hear it with the deafening roar, and I fail to understand it, I no longer even understand that it means nothing. (LVS, 105−106, emphasis added)

According to the creative principle of the traumatic index, the phrase ‘She was naked beneath her black hair’ shifts onto Tatiana’s body the double horror that Lol feels towards Anne-Marie’s body, which is ‘naked beneath her black tulle attire’ so as to be disrobed by Michael. This simple phrase from the mouth of a desiring but sexually innocent woman hints that Lol is truthful in claiming not to have suffered from the loss of her fiancé (R, 170; cf Lacan 1975, 97). Rather, what is lost is the idea of romantic love at the cost of sexual passion, which makes palpalpe Lol’s ignorance of the numbed emotional part of her embodied self. Her claim for the cause of her crisis – to be detached from the sight of the couple dazed in a sexual infatuation – creates a further parallelism in the series of Lol’s repetitions of the traumatic image: the unclothing of her attractive substitute, Anne-Marie. Creating the horror of a numbed body and that of sensual, carnal love, the naked body of Tatiana – for Hold ‘an extraordinary whore’ (117) – plays the role of the traumatic index. Filtered through Hold’s male imagination, it confirms (him) the painful core of Lol’s trauma: the absence of female sexual pleasure, the blind spot of Victorian morality. Lol’s virginal desire is completed by Hold’s discovery during their kissing: Lol cannot love but with her face (R, 173; LVS, 163). And as Hold ‘horrified and thrilled’ sees Lol in the rye field from the hotel window, he understands that, during the love act of others, Lol enjoys
her fantasies while caressing herself in the rye field, as Hold’s words seem to indicate.38

Jeanne retourné à la fenêtre, elle était toujours là, là dans ce champ, seule dans le champ d’une manière dont elle ne pouvait témoigner devant personne. J’ai su cela dès le même temps que j’ai su mon amour, sa suffisance inviolable, géante aux mains d’enfant. (R, 125, emphasis added)

I went back to the window, she was still there, there in that field, alone in that field in a way she could never reveal to anyone. She told me, at the same time as I became aware of my love, of her inviolable self-sufficiency, a giantess, with the hands of a child. (LVS, 114, emphasis added)

Hold’s conclusions of Lol’s inner life are derived mainly on the basis of their bodily interaction and not from her words. Juxtaposing his reconstructions of other people’s narratives, the text-as-statement produces a series of Lol’s flashbacks which gradually lead to the moment of separation in the dawn.39

The peak of the drama ends with the double horror produced by the absence of an impossible traumatic image of a mighty ‘hole-word’ which alone could stop the world from spinning, which the traumatic index of the ‘dead dog’ seals with the meaning of the death of romantic love (R, 48; LVS 38).40 Thus the culmination point of Lol’s enactment is a silent call for female sexual enjoyment in its unrestricted, orgasmic form. Hold realises himself to be the man who is to initiate Lol into her adult sexuality, sheltered by the new triangle where Tatiana plays the part of Lol’s sexual identification. But as a logical sign of an abortive traumatic enactment, where the heroine’s ‘wounded emotional part of the self’ is not fused with the ‘apparently normal everyday part of self’ (Howell 2005, 131), Lol’s return to the Casino with Hold elicits no emotional empowering typical of working-through trauma.41 What reveals more, Hold’s disrobing her provokes in Lol a state of dissociation with panicked feelings, such as a delusion of the arrival of the police referring to a crime. Fatally, during their love act while Lol confuses herself with Tatiana but does not feel genuine passion, Hold, feeling anonymous,

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38 It is not too shocking to see a woman laying in the rye field, but to see her masturbating there can be ‘horrifying’ and ‘thrilling’.
39 I will specify the meanings of these flashbacks in connection with the madwoman trope in Ch IV.
40 Regarding the hole-word as a traumatic image and the ‘dead dog’ as a traumatic index, see Ch II.
41 Concerning this failure of a therapeutic working out’, cf. Grobbel 2004, 132–133. Typical of Freudian interpretation, Michaela Grobbel takes Lol as an object and subject of an undefined ‘desire’ without articulating precisely what a healing from trauma implies. As presented in Ch I., a recovery from trauma refers to an emotional change that shifts the survivor into a more powerful emotional position in relation to the traumatising agent. Such an empowerment induces a cognitive change which strengthens the survivor’s own social agency.
seems to lose his male potency (R, 188; LVS, 179). This crowns the failure of the initiation as a metaphor of the dethroning of Man from the place of a romantic hero, Michael Richardson. The unfinished denouement of the novel shows three unhappy results of the narrator’s role in the enactment: Hold himself losing his male dignity, Lol sinking deeper into her absence and not finding her sexual pleasure/identity, and Tatiana becoming absorbed in suffering.

Finally, despite all these failures, the act of witnessing is subversive for the narrator. While Lol’s wanderings as a Sleeping Beauty begin to modify Hold’s narrative identity, the quest for her past becomes Hold’s progress towards his own authentic, immediate selfhood in relation to an embodied other person.\(^42\) In the enactment with Lol, Hold finds his experiential self over sexual boundaries, for his interaction with Lol’s instinctive non-verbal idiolect teaches him an emancipating form of embodied knowing that escapes the conventions of bourgeois communication amidst modern social rites. Just like Lacan proposed, this feature can be understood as Hold’s development towards his ‘real’ self – in Lacan’s terms, his ‘moi’ instead of ‘je’ – however, not as a healer but as a loving counterpart. Another subversive result arising from Lol’s procedural guidance is that, whereas Hold’s double role as Lol’s lover-helper interferes more and more with his narrative identity in producing confusion, his experiential self resists the normative definition of Lol’s ‘illness’. Therefore, in contrast to an objectifying sexuality which relies on stereotypically guided perceptual images of male possession, Hold’s emotionally expressive, caring love for Lol represents an alternative to romantic love. But controversially, this shall result in his secondary traumatisation shown in *L’amour* and *La Femme du Gange.*

In conclusion, *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein* makes visible the postmodern and postcolonial identity problem of the inventor: the white male author. As an accomplice of Lol’s enactment, Hold’s narrative produces an ironic distance from the moralist model of female erotic awakening based on the dualist figure of the whore/mother. Thus when Duras employs Hold as a vehicle in reshaping a female quest story, she manages to interfere with the formulation of postmodern gendered identity through the stereotypical roles of the sentimental romance. She enables this by designing Hold as a creative talent, who penetrates into his heroine’s inner life by using a mirroring imagination in inventing her mental movements by way of a poetic style. Hence Hold’s voluntary immersion in Lol’s mental semiosphere represents an attempt to give her traumatic experience a verbal form through an embodied, emotionally toned understanding. In doing so, the text-as-statement partakes in the dismantling of those cultural values which limit and suppress women’s sexual behavior in the modernist European culture.

\(^42\) Being the complementary of a self-reflective self (“Me”) in cognitive theory, the experiential self (“I”) reflects the psychological apparatus with which a person tries to catch the essence and existence of the other in an emotional interdependence (Guidano 1991 29, 75).
of the thirties. As a result, on behalf of the heroine who herself is not liberated from her dissociative numbness, the psychodrama between Hold and Lol rewrites post-Victorian narratives of female sexuality and challenges their normative beliefs. While Lol becomes a critical female trope of the melodramatic novel tradition, Hold’s stereotypical narcissism is gradually dissolved for the benefit of his experiential self to the extent that he himself succumbs to a secondary trauma. The end of Hold’s benevolent testimony will be seen in Lamour, where he lives in the oneiric ‘land of madness’ as one of its insane inhabitants.

Peter Morgan and the Ethnic Other: Le Vice-consul

I am often struck by the obvious fact that the other is impenetrable, intractable, not to be found; I cannot open up the other, trace back the other’s origins, solve the riddle. Where does the other come from? Who is the other?43

While the self-narration of Le ravissement guided me towards deciphering Hold’s textual and experiential involvement in Lol’s enactment, the textual strategy of Le vice-consul turns my attention in a new direction. With an abrupt mise en abyme structure, this novel asks whether and how a white male colonist, Peter Morgan, can account for the traumatic exile of a colonised woman, the Cambodian beggar. Morgan’s novel epitomises an object lesson of how the representation of an ethnic female ‘Other’ is constructed and reproduced by literary discourse (de Lauretis 1987, 2–3).44 With its free indirect style, it steps far beyond the gender problems arising from a nuclear family romance, which the confused self-narrator of Le ravissement presents in face of the heroine’s post-Victorian obsession of the female body.45 Complementary to Hold’s male complicity in the Western woman’s trauma, Morgan attempts to set himself into an indigenous mendicant’s experience in order to create a literary portrayal of sexual, ethnic, and social alterity produced by French and British colonialism in Asia. Duras exposes this epistemological problem by creating the figure of a double beggar which provides an exploration of habitual racial thinking underpinning European domination in Indochina and India.46 With this dual scope of mimicry and empathy, Le Vice-

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43 Barthes 1979, 134.
44 In Foucault’s and Althusser’s terms, Teresa de Lauretis (1987, 2–3, 5) includes literature and cinema in social ‘technologies of gender’ which are themselves the process of producing the symbolic system of gender while they re/produce this system. Importantly, gender is also constructed by deconstructing the discourses of these technologies.
45 For ‘free indirect style’ I will alternatively use ‘narrated monologue’, Dorrit Cohn’s (1978, 99) term for the French ‘style indirect libre’ and German ‘erlebte Rede’.
46 Reviving the category of ‘race’ with new connotations, both writers and researchers who are people of colour want to reposition the notion of a (black) racialised subjectivity for emancipatory
consul allows the reader to look into the everyday presuppositions of which (we) Europeans are not aware, but which automatically regulate our orientation to sexual, ethnic, and social other(s). In doing so, the dual employment calls for co-witnessing a Cambodian woman’s imagined life by evaluating the discourse with which it is encoded against the writer’s characterisation as a Western man. The reciprocity of the two narratives addresses the man-made trauma of double colonisation: the subordination of colonised people, and the marginalisation of women and children among them. This is the focus of the following reading, which tries to be sensitive to gender, racialisation and social class as well as their discursive mediation (Meese 1990, 2–3, 27; Spivak 1987, 241).47

As Morgan’s manuscript pretends to express the inner life of his exotic protagonist through an identification with her, it openly proclaims its status as a cultural construction which transcends his own life-experiences. Set in contrast to his fiction, Morgan’s characterisation in the frame story acts as a proof of Duras’s self-critical position on the universalisation of the European concept of identity formation. In regard to witnessing, again, one has to go beyond the question of reliability: whether Morgan can bear a truthful testimony to his mute heroine’s degradation which is bound up with European economical oppression. Two obvious reasons for this suspicion can be distinguished. For one thing, as a European man, Morgan unavoidably lacks the modes of wordless knowing that belong to the realm of the embodied unconscious of the indigenous woman, that is, a personal experience of pregnancy and malnutrition which develops in a specific cultural context.48 For another, Morgan’s knowledge of Indochinese and Indian cultural contexts does not originate from the colonised woman herself, but from the racially tuned beliefs of his British countrymen. Neither of these shortcomings gives rise to a credible narrative of the beggar’s consciousness. But viewing the story as a text-as-statement in Kacandes’s vein, it is capable of ‘Talking’ for the Cambodian woman on the limited conditions purposes. In my view, Duras aims at a similar goal as she exposes self-critically the normatively white and European heterosexual practices. She wants to take part in dismantling the unfounded and unscientific illusion of the biological and cultural supremacy of white people as a ‘race’.47

Elizabeth A. Meese (1990, 1–28) discusses the shift that took place in white feminism in response to black, Marxist, and lesbian feminists in the course of the eighties. With her theorising of the ‘Other’, she argues for a renewed deconstructive understanding of difference within the category of ‘women’, which exposes the ethno- and fallogocentric assertions of authority and domination exerted by Euro-American feminism (ibid. 27). Similarly, Gayatry Spivak (1987, 118–133) claims that the principal defect of Euro-American feminist criticism is to constitute its object, ‘Third World women’, through ‘hegemonic First World intellectual practices’. Finding the history of this undifferentiated, fallible object and its testimonies insufficient, Spivak defines this as ‘epistemic violence’, as the colonial object is represented through the great European theories, such as Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxism.

47 This is not to say that female embodied experience is necessarily an essentialist female property. Rather, I see every individual experience as filtered by some specific gender that is an ‘imitation without original’ as Judith Butler defines it (quoted in Stam 2000, 244).
of corporeality and trauma (Kacandes 2001, 24–25). From this viewpoint, I ask in which terms the difference between the narrator and his heroine allow for an empathic narrative for her silenced experience of total marginalisation. For, urgently for neocolonialism and globalisation, such a hybrid narrative defies the idea of producing a mere Orientalist representation of otherness in the meaning of discursive consistency (Said 1978; quoted in Harrison 2003, 19). This claim invokes a further problem concerning Morgan's discursive values as compared to ours: does the Cambodian story display a form of discursive colonisation of women which, reducing subaltern persons to victims, homogenises all such ‘victims’ and gives them unfamiliar qualities of Western individualism (Spivak 1987, 253; Talpade Mohanty 1989, 260, 262)?

The following two subsections study the problem of colonial discourse as tackled by Duras with Morgan's literary style and the interplay of two possible worlds in *Le Vice-consul*. Concerning witnessing, Duras's struggle for the novel's aesthetic form is informative. Despite her personal female experiences of horror, hunger, and prostitution in Indo-China, she found it ethically questionable to identify with and directly speak for a representative of Cambodian culture, whose suffering was due to European domination. Remaining faithful to her ideals in the climate of decolonisation of the sixties, she invented Morgan to take the responsibility for the beggar novel's style already written with a modernist psychological realism. This resolution that was originally not self-evident serves to subordinate Duras's literary discourse to be explored as a dialogical social construction, which both reflects and constitutes individual experience. It provides *Le Vice-consul* with typical postmodernist and postcolonial questioning of how such constructions are received and utilised as representations of reality. What is specifically brought into focus is the unknown reality of a marginalised woman, who has no other access to re-presentational realms than her public visibility as an outcast, and for whom the Western writer creates a story through his literary discourse.

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49 The fusion of male and female voices does not seem to evoke similar passions today as in the period of second wave feminism in the sixties. Instead, some contemporary postcolonial writers have identified themselves textually with the fictional figure of another sexual or ethnic person to speak for them. An illustrative example is Caryl Phillips’s *The Nature of Blood* (1997), which comments upon African-American politics by combining the narration of a young Jewish girl’s experience of the Holocaust with Anne Frank’s diary (Whitehead 2004, 92).

50 Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1989, 262) emphasises the historically specific, material reality of groups of women as a basis for ‘sisterhood’, instead of a homogenisation of ‘women’ on the mere basis of gender. See also Harveen Sachdeva Mann’s (1995, 70–71) concise and profound article on the tension between western and non-western feminisms, especially her review of the criticism of the Eurocentric, middle-class phase of feminism, and her analysis of Spivak’s stand (ibid., 79).

51 On ‘colonial discourse’ as an oppressive, ethnocentric and racist practice, see Harrison 2003, 18–19.
The dual disposition of *Le Vice-consul* implies that, although the resultant text-as-statement addresses us about the beggar woman’s distress, it cannot erase the fictional narrator’s position as a white male coloniser and his ethnocentric unconcern of the heroine’s cultural background. This epistemological conflict is made more pointed by showing Morgan as observing a ‘real’ mendicant on the Ganges and contrasting his own perceptions and feelings with the fictionalised life that he creates for this woman. Moreover, following a seriality of trauma, Morgan’s project is propelled by a ghostly beggar figure which haunts Anne-Marie’s traumatic memory as triggered by the ‘real’ mendicant’s voice. Therefore the main problem of bearing testimony to Indochinese reality prevails between Morgan’s character and his novelist style of modernist psychological realism, both seen in relation to Duras as a border-crossing product of two cultures. At first, I will consider the antithesis that Duras creates between the content of Morgan’s novel and his personality introduced in the frame story. Second, I adapt to Morgan’s character Homi Bhabha’s (1994) concept of colonial stereotype and racial mimicry to be able to specify the meanings of Morgan’s free indirect style as a mediator of the beggar’s embodied mind, especially the implicit memory of her trauma.

**Interconnected by Differences: ‘Morgan’**

Being in a key position as the creator of the embedded story, Morgan’s figure is shaped as a seemingly innocent intermediator between Duras and the beggar. The function of his personality as a white man is to call into question European cognition of Asiatic reality, and to illustrate the role of the colonial value system in the fundamental split of the two worlds. The sparse autobiographical knowledge about him is organised strictly around his writing project. He is a young English writer in his thirties, who has just arrived at Calcutta for the first time and views the milieu of India with fresh eyes (VC, 29). Living as a guest in the French Embassy, he belongs to the intimate group of Anne-Marie Stretter as one of her British admirers. Morgan’s interest in one certain beggar woman on the Ganges is elicited by Anne-Marie’s traumatic memory of a beggar girl who tried to sell her starving baby in Savannakhet, near the Laotian border, seventeen years earlier. The Laotian singing of the ‘woman of the Ganges’

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52 This fact is all the more so because, like her fictional narrator, Duras never visited the district of the Lake of Tonle Sap and the Mountains of Cardamon in Northern Cambodia, which form the principal geographic stage of the beggar’s rambling (E, 32–33).

53 From this onwards, I will use consistently the expression the ‘woman of the Ganges’ about the ‘real’ beggar in the frame story, so as to keep her figure apart from the imagined Cambodian beggar girl who belongs to the ontologically separate world of Morgan’s manuscript. This is consistent with the title of the film *La Femme du Gange*, which refers to the analogue between Anne-Marie and the woman of Ganges. Yet, the imagined beggar is one more facet in this analogue, for her
triggers intermittently the recurrence of this flash-back-like episode, which once
brought Anne-Marie to the verge of despair, from which she was rescued by the
old Ambassador. Prompted by this impressive memory, Morgan's enthusiasm for
Indian misery expresses itself in a novelistic manuscript about a pregnant girl’s
long wandering from Battambang to Calcutta, which culminates in the scene of
her delivering the dying baby up to the whites. To collect enough material for
this plan, Morgan utilises as his primary perceptual source the woman of the
Ganges, and as secondary sources the narratives of Anne-Marie and his British
countrymen.

When Duras eventually invented Morgan, she had already finished the beggar
story. Her main incentive in modeling Morgan's character was to take distance
from the style of the story which was continually gnawing at her aesthetic and
ethical sensibility.54 Before constructing this metanarrative viewpoint, Duras
revealed her helplessness to an interviewer:

La chose est écrite, elle est complètement faite, elle est complètement sincère et
je vais très certainement être obligée de la rejeter du roman que j’écris ... Je suis
passée par une sorte de réalisme personnel qui fait que cette chose vécue me paraît
complètement étrangère à la littérature que je fais d’habitude ... Je ne peux plus
me permettre d’être naïve et maladroite en ce qui concerne les épisodes les plus
tragiques de mon enfance. (Armel 1990, 63)

The thing is written, it is completely done, it is completely sincere, and I am
certainly obliged to reject the novel I am writing ... I have utilised a kind of
personal realism which makes this thing I have experienced seem to me completely
unfamiliar compared to the literature which I am used to writing ... I can no
longer allow myself to be naïve and awkward when dealing with the most tragical
episodes of my childhood. (trans. SK)

Despite sincerity, a skilful ‘personal realism’ did not remedy the incommensurability
that Duras felt between the ‘naïve’ free indirect style and her experiences of
colonised women. After a prolonged ethical impasse, she found a satisfying
solution. Contrary to expressing an essentialising presentation of female suffering,
Duras capitalised on a white man surrogate as her spokesman. This choice reaps far
more political benefits than a pretended identification with the colonised heroine.

54 Besides the fact that Duras was scared of beggar women in the forests and streets, one cannot
avoid thinking of Duras’s own fate as a beaten daughter who brought money to her poor mother
by prostitution (C, 44–48, 66–69). She has accounted for her relationship to the ‘mad’ mother
and the violent brother in a number of interviews and autobiographical works. Compared with
Binjamin Wilkomirski’s fake autobiography which claims for him to have suffered in the con-
centration camp, Duras metanarrative is a significant ideological move, which helps her to avoid
equating her white colon’s experiences to those of a colonised person.
For, when the responsibility of the story is given to a well-off representative of British colonial power, an incisive self-criticism is evoked towards the values and ways of knowing of a European author-in-flesh. This is provided by creating a cognitive and emotional difference between Duras herself, the male co-narrator, and the beggar’s narrated monologue. Beside contrasting Duras herself and the indigenous woman, this reform sets Morgan and the woman of the Ganges in an epistemological antithesis, which underscores the ontological status of the Cambodian beggar’s exile as a fiction while hiding the origin of the story in Duras’s own experiences. As a radical outcome of the new solution, the persistence of these two conflicts erodes the face value of the embedded story as the beggar’s inner speech, thereby pointing to any indigenous other’s right for her singular experience of trauma.

By way of positioning a white man as the narrator, Duras questions the *vraisemblance* of her modernist psychological realism. However, despite the open status of Morgan’s story as a representation of representation, a number of feminist researchers have limited their analyses of Morgan’s fiction to linguistic and psychoanalytic analyses, added with a few postcolonial comments (Marini 1977, Glassman 1991; McNeese 1996, Vickroy 2002). From a narratological viewpoint, Cohen (1993, 20) makes insightful remarks regarding Morgan’s objectifying attitude towards women from a feminist viewpoint, but passes over his status as a colonial writer by stating that Morgan remains a ‘figure devoid of personality’. Also Louise McNece specifies the linguistic details of Morgan’s discourse, but does not relate them to his characterisation as a Western man. Moreover, it is symptomatic that the previous studies often tend to conflate Morgan’s fictional beggar with its model, the woman of the Ganges. This inaccuracy may result from the researchers’ unwilled but revealing identification with fictional colonists, who erase the ontological difference between these two figures acting in two separate fictional worlds. But offering a valuable starting point for my reading, Mieke Bal shows with Lucien Dällenbach’s theory on the mise en abyme how the fictional worlds of *Le Vice-consul* reflect each other mutually in regard to content, form, and code, whereupon the beggar’s story is not technically inferior to the frame story.

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55 My study is in debt to Vickroy’s work on trauma narratives, Cohen’s thorough study on Duras’s poetics and McNece’s analysis on Duras’s postcolonial meanings. Vickroy’s comparative work with Toni Morrison’s and Duras’s stories is the most pertinent contribution to the studies of subordination of women in slavery and colonialism. On Duras’s creative ignorance, intertextuality, and dialogical language in reference to the historical context, see Cohen’s insightful introduction (Cohen 1993, 1–12). However, all these studies, including that of Glassman (1991), paraphrase the beggar’s story as Morgan’s pretended portrayal of ‘suffering of India’, but do not extend their analyses in the frame of postcolonial theories (Glassman 1991, 65–67; Cohen 1991, 17–23; Vickroy 2002, 86). Regarding Marini’s (1977) psycho-linguistic, neo-Lacanian reading of the beggar story through Irigaray’s feminism, see Winston 2001, 67.

56 Marilyn R. Schuster (1993, 59–60) makes a remark about this dual postcolonial strategy.
Witnessing Trauma

but equal with it (Bal 1977, 196; Dällenbach 1977, 61).57

As a fortunate result of Duras’s narrative reorganisation, the mise en abyme structure of Le Vice-consul becomes a critical example of the Bakhtinian dual-voiced-discourse, which successfully reveals the discursive nature and changeability of two moral worlds. As a disillusioning device, the mise en abyme structure draws attention to the constructive quality of both narrative discourses used, whereupon it compels the reader to search for meanings that arise from between the fictional worlds of the frame and the embedded story, in a hole or transitional pause where trauma’s absence from representation can be felt.58 Confusingly, the two fictional worlds tend to fuse during reading as if on a Möbius strip, where the outer and inner surface cease to exist as distinct categories (see Schattschneider 2004, 242). It follows that, while the distinction of form/content is broken down, the structure itself becomes meaningful as an interplay of two discourses (Martin 1986, 178–181). Hence the different value systems of the two possible worlds begin to overlap, while the logics of ‘both-and’, instead of that of ‘either-or’, begins to dominate the relation of the colonisers’ India and the imagined beggar’s Indochina. This obscure parallelism gives rise to a meaningful confusion between the two beggar characters. For me, the strategy represents a stylistic trap which demonstrates the colonists’ – and everyone’s – difficulty in distinguishing between the corporeal ‘other’ and a narrative construction about her/him. Thus it addresses the reader’s sense of constructivism by testing her/his ability to distinguish between fiction and reality. Accordingly, the woman of the Ganges acts as a contrasting element when co-witnessing the Cambodian girl’s imagined trauma, whereupon the double narrative appears to offer one more productive ambivalence of colonial stereotypes (Bhabha 1994, 66–67).

Hence, through the dual scope of metafiction one can evaluate Morgan’s novelistic testimony to the fictional beggar’s life: his observations of the woman of the Ganges combined with his consultations of the whites, and his psychological realism as the product of both of them. Similar to Le ravissement, a parallelism of two acts of observation is created, but this time operating on separate ontological levels. Whereas Hold’s personality was seen through his stratified self-examination which has no narratorial reference point outside his story, Morgan’s figure is made visible by the implicit narrator, whereupon one can compare the values of his perceptual and imaginative material to those of his literary style. That is, just

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57 According Lucien Dällenbach, in the reduplication of a mise en abyme, the interior story always reflects the theme, the thesis and/or the plot of the frame story (Dällenbach 1977, 51–52; 61). Bal specifies this definition by adding that it is merely some essential aspect of the whole that is mirrored by the interior story (Bal 1977, 123). Accordingly, Bal suggests that the [postcolonial] plot of Le Vice-consul’s interior story anticipates that of the frame story (ibid., 81).

58 Regarding this idea, see Ch II.
as Morgan who is observing the real beggar within the frame story, the implicit narrator of the frame story allows the actual reader to observe Morgan. It follows that Morgan can be seen to create a picture of the woman of the Ganges on the basis of ‘mimicry of man’, expressed by his thoughts about his literary plan in the discussion with other European men. This is the manner in which the reader is invited to witness the productive antithesis between Morgan’s novelist discourse and his construction as a stereotype of a coloniser.

Unlike the narrator of Le ravissement, the author of the beggar’s story is introduced by the first sentence of Le Vice-consul: ‘Elle marche, écrit Peter Morgan’ (VC 9; She walks on, writes Peter Morgan). Nevertheless, this strategy controls the reader’s response as effectively as in Hold’s case. Except for the English male name and one short remark, the personality of Morgan is veiled until the whole story of the girl’s refuge through the Cambodian landscape is available (VC, 72–73), which allows for the reader undisturbed time and space for identification with the beggar. Only close to the girl’s final separation from the mother before her childbirth, a shadow of verbal and dramatic irony falls over Morgan with the following remark which discloses the naïvety of Morgan in an ironic light by shaping his simplistic way of imitating a subaltern:

Peter Morgan est un jeune homme qui désire prendre la douleur de Calcutta, s’y jeter que ce soit fait, et que son ignorance cesse avec la douleur prise. (VC, 29)

Peter Morgan is a young man who wants to take on the suffering of Calcutta, to plunge into it so that it would be done, and his ignorance would cease with the suffering taken.

The verbal irony lies in the echoing effect which repeats Morgan’s Christ-like thoughts ‘prendre la douleur de Calcutta’ as combined with his intention to make a quick end of his ignorance (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 243). But the passage also evokes romantic irony on the dramatic level by at first telling of the shocking rejection of the Cambodian beggar − her horror, helplessness and rambling at random with the growing belly in the desert − and by revealing only afterwards the writer’s character, whereupon a feeling of suspicion is created (Booth 1961, 59–60).

The start of Le Vice-consul is interpreted by Glassman 1991, 63 and Cohen 1993, 17.

I have translated the excerpt word for word so as to demonstrate the nuances of Duras’s language which underlines Morgan’s simplistic, innocent attitude. Susan D. Cohen notes that the verb prendre indicates Morgan’s modernist outlook on the world: ‘Weltanschauung which equates possession and knowing’, whereupon his ‘need of a cartharthic act’ leads him to the ‘textual sublimation’ with the ‘female abject’ in order to detach him from the misery (Cohen 1993, 20–21).

According to Sperber and Wilson (1986, 243), the two-voiced meaning of irony is based on the relationship between the thought of the speaker and that of some other person who repeats the speaker’s thought. Here it is the invisible narrator of the frame story who repeats Morgan’s alleged thought. The reader has to infer the implicit critical meaning of the expression as guided by the textual context.
Furthermore, Morgan's slightly pathetic lament over the horror of the metropolitan slums makes shallow his 'sincere' desire to write an individual tale of woe amidst the huge mass of poor people:

Déjà, de loin en loin, Calcutta rémue. Nid de fourmis grouillant, pense Peter Morgan, fadeur, épouvante, crainte de Dieu et douleur, douleur, pense-t-il. (VC, 30)

Already, then and when, Calcutta begins to stir. A swarming ant's nest, thinks Peter Morgan, dinginess, horror, the fear of God and dolour, dolour, he thinks.

While I understand emotions as evaluative catalysts in cognition, Morgan's thoughts are indicative of his values and implicit beliefs. Notably, whereas Aristotelian catharsis implies provoking fear, horror, and pity in the audience, Morgan substitutes pity with fadeur (boredom, dullness). But while 'dullness' or 'dinginess' points to the emotion that Morgan feels as a Western visitor, he wants to elicit 'disgust' in his readers in the first place, explicated later in his talk with his countrymen (VC, 182). And whereas 'horror' and the 'fear of God' represent the general feelings of the white society, the tourist-like repetition of 'dolour, dolour' refers to the suffering of the people in Calcutta, unavoidably eliciting a sense of irony. And as Morgan's romantic desire for 'taking the Indian dolour' is paralleled with the 'old-fashioned agriculture' in the Indian countryside, where the masses of slaves toil in the fields (VC, 175−176), it reveals the shallow nature of his 'passion'. Morgan also says that 'every time he sees the Delta landscape, he finds that his passion for India is even more intense than he had thought', whereafter he falls asleep (VC, 177). In the light of these examples, the 'respiration of Indian dolour' which Morgan himself claims to strive for in his

62 Here Duras utilises the same device as with Hold's introduction to elicit surprise. But Hold's self-revelation does not evoke the feeling of contempt − as here − towards him as the narrator of Lol's story, because his loving self-narration of Lol is overtly questioned as narratives of other people. Rather, the effect of irony is felt as pity towards his struggle for a truthful self-image.

63 I have translated also this passage word for word so as to emphasise Morgan's emotional reactions to Calcutta (cf. the English translation in V, 18.) For me, Durasian repetition of 'dolour, douleur' creates an ironising tone towards Morgan's tourist-like attitude, the second word 'douleur' being an ironic as-if-lamenting echo of the first.

64 Fadeur is an ambiguous word that characterises both a person who is bored but also something that is insignificant, dull or tiresome (LPR, 989). It is translated as 'dinginess' in the English version, obviously referring to 'dinge' used of black people (V, 18). On the cultural 'shackles' of (English) emotion words, see Anna Wierzbicka's (2009) insightful article.

65 Compared with Kurtz's last words 'horror, horror' in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, Morgan's repetition of 'dolour, dolour' points to his sympathetic yet detached view of the colonial situation.

66 At this point, the frame narrative uses the same words for the Indian countryside as Morgan’s manuscript uses for the Cambodian one: 'de vaste étendue de marécages que mille talus traversent en tous sens' (the vast marshlands, bewilderingly criss-crossed by a thousand causeways' (VC, 9, 175). Such repetitions tend to fuse the two fictional worlds into the same colonial universe.
novel appears as a mere textual entertainment, while his psychological realism begins to seem artificial when taken as a serious portrayal of the indigenous people's suffering (VC, 157).

These ambivalent affects confuse the first impression of Morgan's literary effort. More information of his intention concerning indigenous alterity is given by his activity as a writer. He collects material with direct perception and interviewing, and motivates his narrative which an emotional pathos described above. The manuscript is based on three secondary sources. First, Morgan observes from near the appearance of a mendicant sleeping on the riverbanks of the Ganges (VC, 29, 72). Alongside his own perceptions, feelings and associations, he does not expect any direct material of this woman herself whom he qualifies as 'tout à fait folle' (quite mad, VC, 156). Second, he learns the major information of the daily life in India and Indochina from Anne-Marie's British friends, especially from an older colonial employee, George Crown (VC, 155). The third source, and the crucial route to an empathic identification, is Anne-Marie's most traumatic memory from Cambodia, which returns as triggered by the Laotian singing of the woman of the Ganges (VC, 72–73). When Anne-Marie was twenty-two years of age, seeing a young woman selling her dying baby in Cambodia, she collapsed from anxiety and shame, then turned suicidal, but with the time suffocated her pain with love affairs that mask her persistent mourning. Thus, in the end, it is four women's colonial trauma that gives wings and emotional tuning to Morgan's writing, whereby the figures of Anne-Marie and both beggarwomen offer a rich wellspring of metatextual mirroring in the mise en abyme structure of Le Vice-consul. But as informative as this symbolic bond between women over ontological and temporal borders is, it does not override young Morgan's revealing role as a male colonist and narrator.

Finally, Morgan's moral position in the creation of colonial discourse can be inferred from his manners in social interaction which are particularised through his behaviour and talk. He is the youngest in the four men's group around Anne-Marie: Michael Richards being her 'official' lover, Charles Rossett playing the part of the tentative one – the vice-consul left outside as his unfortunate rival – and George Crown characterised as a cruel-looking, intimate, old friend. In this configuration, Morgan is shaped with a few strokes as a blue-eyed moralist of double standard, who draws rigid boundaries between sexual, social, and ethnic groups. For example, he believes that Anne-Marie cannot visit the night club of 'Blue Moon,' for it is rumoured to be a place of local prostitution and leprosy (VC 152–153). His overt repulsion of the Vice-consul – a tense law-breaker and odd 'virginal' hermit – refers to an obedience to colonial law, and a preference for normative and pure heterosexuality (VC 73, 127, 154). Fittingly, it is Morgan who takes the crying Vice-consul away from the reception of the Embassy by saying arrogantly: 'Forgive me, but a man of your sort is only interesting in his
absence’ (VC, 147). He also stops conversation about him by saying ‘Assez avec ce type’ (That’s enough of the fellow, VC, 154), expressing all the men’s jealous fear that the Vice-consul’s violent rage would indicate a need for attention, even love, from Anne-Marie (VC, 160). This readiness to discriminate against others suggests that Morgan takes for granted the prevailing colonial order which holds the indigenous people in ‘savagery’ outside the privileges of modern society. The contradiction thus created between his character and the empathic content of his novel points to Morgan’s thinking in terms of colonial discourse as a ‘Mimicry of Man’, to which I will soon return (Bhabha 1994, 86).

Keeping Duras’s aesthetic choice in mind, Morgan’s – and not directly Duras’s – project of writing is consistent with Gayatry Spivak’s characterisation of the benevolent desire of the Western elite to approach subaltern material so as to speak for the cultural, sexual, or social other through identification. Spivak denies the possibility of identifying (with) the position of the other through difference as follows:

The position that only the subaltern can know the subaltern, only women can know women and so on, cannot be held as a theoretical presupposition either, for it predicates the possibility of knowledge on identity. Whatever the political necessity for holding the position, and whatever the advisability of attempting to ‘identify’ (with) the other as subject in order to know her, knowledge is made possible and is sustained by irreducible difference, not identity. What is known is always in excess of knowledge. Knowledge is never adequate to its object (Spivak 1987, 253–254, emphasis added).

As Spivak states, a theoretical presupposition for knowing and speaking for the subaltern cannot be based on a felt or assumed sameness with her/him but, rather, on an irreducible difference, since an identification on the basis of alleged and defined identity would assume a shared psychological – cognitive and emotional – and moral ‘world’ between the writer and the character. Such a presupposition cannot act as a justification for literary domination over any other person, especially someone who has lost the faculty of verbalising the experience of trauma (Baer 2000, 10–11). Rather, one has an access to the excess of knowledge of the other’s experiential reality only through an irreducible difference, a phenomenon accentuated in the case of individual trauma which resists all generalisations. This stand is consistent with Bhabha’s outline of a subjectification which occurs in the colonial condition through a...
discursive production of ambivalent stereotypes in a continual, affective play of identification and difference (Bhabha 1994, 76–77). But in my view, while this interplay does not count on any factual knowledge, it may consist of a mirroring exchange of embodied signs between parties. This idea saves a pathway for the ‘victim’s’ experiential truth made possible by the hybrid compound of Duras/Morgan, as I will show in the next section.

Summing up, whereas Morgan appears to be a naïve, implicitly racist person, the metanarrative construction maintains for Duras a role as the major inventor who speaks for the fictional beggar through and over Morgan. But since the dual scope of the mise en abyme keeps Western Orientalism under self-critical investigation, a female link between Duras-in-the-flesh and the heroine is preserved. This yields an intriguing benefit for Duras as her own ghost writer. For, protected by the fictional proxy who is a blue-eyed European novice in India, Duras can remain true to a spontaneous verbalisation of her terrifying memories of Cambodian madwomen, added with her own experiences of hunger, failed pregnancy, and a dead newborn baby (Armel 2000, 99–100; O, 351–353). As Aline Mura-Brunel (2002, 189) aptly notes, the dual scope of narrative and poetics gives Duras the freedom to express her ideas at two fluctuating and indecisive levels of genre and aesthetics: the novelistic level of énonciation, and the poetic level of énoncé. It results that, being intuitively aware of the epistemological difference between cultural life experiences, Duras gives up pressing unproblematised views of psychological mimicry upon the colonised other by her imagination. Rather, by creating an ambiguous perspective to the white man’s portrayal of the subaltern woman’s plausible life, she prevents the non-Western ‘other’ from being simply boxed into the theoretical premises of the Western romantic theory that understands psychological individuation as a unique, homogenous self-realisation. This rhetorical move refuses to universalise the Western conception of disembodied, decontextualised self-development, and concedes the formation and equality of psychic realities different from the Euro-American ones.

**Between Mimicry and Mirroring: The Double Beggar**

The interior duplication of *Le Vice-consul* creates two issues which call for postcolonial refiguration: Morgan’s attitude to the real beggar woman in the world

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68 Bhabha’s famous outline of the mimicry of colonial discourse in his article ‘Of Mimicry and Man’ defines colonial imitation as a ‘discursive process by which the excess or slippage produced by the ambivalence of mimicry (almost the same, but not quite) does not merely ‘rupture’ the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject in a ‘partial’ presence. By ‘partial’ I mean both ‘incomplete’ and ‘virtual’’ (Bhabha 1994, 86; emphasis original).

69 Thus the structure of *Le Vice-consul* implicitly agrees with and points to Spivak’s argument that a representative of colonial exploitation has to take on the right to speak for her-/himself as an agent of her/his own history in order to rectify the cognitive failure of the oppressor.
of the frame story, and the narrative constitution of his imagined heroine. In the following discussion, I shed light on Morgan's colonialist attitude with Bhabha's (1994) theory of the ambivalence of the white man stereotype and the 'Mimicry of Man'. Then I analyse Morgan's free indirect style (Dorrit Cohn's 'narrated monologue') as compared to this attitude which Morgan shares explicitly with the white society. This division is to emphasise that a postcolonially meaningful ontological difference prevails between the figure of the woman on the Ganges and Morgan's narrative constitution of his imagined heroine. For, despite being separate constructions, these figures threaten deceitfully to fuse in the readers mind, just in the way they become interchangeable in the minds of the fictional white men. When this difference is clearly understood, one can tackle the text-as-statement of Morgan's psychological representation and its probable 'Talking' to the reader of the injustices of colonialism (Kacandes 2001, xvi, 23–24). What I intend to do is to indicate that the metanarrative structure of Le Vice-consul does not allow for any simple interpretation of Morgan's literary witnessing, but rather proposes a combination of empathy and critical distance.

Direct information on Morgan's literary intention is given by his conversation with the British men, with whom he ponders the aim of his manuscript (VC, 179–184). According to what he has seen of the real mendicant on the Ganges, he explains:

*Elle est sale comme la nature même, ce n'est pas croyable... ah, je ne voudrais pas quitter ce niveau-la, de sa crasse faite de tout et déjà ancienne, pénétrée dans sa peau – faite sa peau; je voudrais analyser cette crasse, dire de quoi elle est faite, se sueur, de vase, des restes de sandwiches au foie gras de tes réceptions de l'ambassade, vous dégoûter, foie gras, poussière, bitume, mangues écailles de poisson, sang, tout...*

*(VC, 182, emphasis added)*

*She is as dirty as nature itself, it's incredible... Oh! I want to dwell on that level, her filth compounded of everything, and for a long time now ingrained in her skin, a component of the skin itself. I want to analyse her filth, describe what is in it; sweat, river-mud, scraps of stale, foie-gras sandwiches from your Embassy receptions, dust, tar, mangoes, fish-scales, blood, everything. I want to disgust you.*

*(V, 145–146, emphasis added)*

When Morgan equates woman and Nature with these romantic words, he combines them into a research object that brings to mind the Cartesian ideal of the human subjectivity inherited by modern positivist science. For one thing, his desire to analyse the woman's body repeats a literary reification in portraying woman by her appearance. For another, using an iconising way of seeing, Morgan places the female body in an ideologically coloured order of a 'dirty' Nature, the quality of
which the male intelligence should specify and categorise (Cohen 1993, 22). This stand reminds one of Western anthropologists’ hidden racist attitude towards indigenous people, which Trinh T. Minh-ha sharply criticises in connection with the documentation of other cultures. She states:

*The move from obnoxious exteriority to obtrusive interiority, the race for the so-called hidden values of a person or a culture, has given rise to a form of legitimized (but unacknowledged as such) voyeurism and subtle arrogance – namely, the pretense to see into or to own the others’ minds, whose knowledge these others cannot, supposedly have themselves […]*. (Trinh T. Minh-ha 1991, 66, emphasis original)

As Trinh T. Minh-ha (1989, 100) succinctly notes, a sexualised body is the most important basis for racist and sexist ideologies. While Morgan expresses his personal disgust of the animal-like body, his feeling of repulsion is mixed with an inspiring fascination in the face of the dirty skin. Excluding the possibility of an empathic mirroring, his objectifying gaze epitomises how emotions motivate the cognitive formation of a mental image of the other into a racist belief. According to Bhabha’s theory of colonial discourse, an objectifying visual perception of the colonised other reduces differences to the visual attributes of sex and the colour of skin in a naturalising act of iconisation, thereby justifying the surveillance of colonial power over the other (Bhabha 1994, 49, 76, 80). In this light, Morgan’s stereotypifying fantasy appears to be an unreflected mode of seeing indigenous people, while his Orientalist view of the exoticised other is produced as a marked opposite to the white’s universalised norm of racial purity and overly hygienic cleanliness. This racist mimicry is similar to the manner of the French literary tradition in portraying Indochinese women as disgusting and dirty objects of sexual desire. What is more important, for Bhabha, while representing colonial alterity as the tropes of fetishism, stereotypical seeing partakes in the process of colonial subjectification of the viewer himself through an affective ambivalence of simultaneous desire and fear (ibid., 66–68, 77). This affective ambivalence of narcissistic and aggressive identification expresses both a wish to be whole oneself and the fear of being similar to the opposite. In this frame, Morgan

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70 When dealing with the colour of skin, Nicholas Harrison notes that we think of ‘seeing’ as too neutral an activity, when we take visual differences of the body simply as ‘existing’. Instead, we should take ‘seeing’ as a part of the process of sense-making (Harrison 2003, 76). See Ch V. where I make a distinction between two ways of visual signification, the ‘iconic’ (objectifying) seeing and the ‘indexical’ (empathic) seeing.

71 The racist way of seeing can be found in the French novels about colonial Indochina during the French colonial history since the nineteenth century. These novels perpetuate the negative stereotype of Vietnamese (Annnamese) woman by representing them as disgusting, dirty and fickle objects that fulfilled voluntarily the sexual needs of the coloniser, whereas Cambodian and Laotian women were depicted as less repulsive concubines (Osborne 1990, 165–167).
appears to treat the woman of Ganges as an exotic 'dark continent' that he wants to occupy by his Western literary discourse (Knuuttila 1998, 113).

Hence, according to the mixed economy of pleasure and horror, Morgan articulates the ethnic and sexual difference into a fallogocentric stereotype of the 'real' woman of the Ganges as a projection of his own hidden sides that he does not want to identify in himself. In the light of his speech, he wants to create a plausible developmental story for this 'native victim', which does not offer the imagined correlate any social agency, but represents her rather as an isolated outcast without any cultural bonds. In order to enhance verisimilitude, Michael Richard proposes an alternative as follows:

Les autres comme elle? demande Michael Richard. Si elle est toute seule dans le livre, ça ne sera pas aussi intéressant que si … Quand tu parles d'elle je la vois parmi des jeunes filles, d'autres jeunes filles, je les vois vieilles entre le Siam et la forêt et jeunes à leur arrivée à Calcutta. C'est peut-être ce qu'Anne-Marie m'a raconté, mais à Savannakhet je les vois assises dans cette lumière que tu disais sur un talus de rizières, obscènes, le corps découvert, elles mangent des poissons crus que leur donnent des enfants que pêchent, les enfants ont peur, et elles, elles rient. Au contraire, plus tard, près de l'Inde, elles sont jeunes et graves, elles sont assises sur la place d'un marché – tu vois, en petit marché où il y a quelques Blancs – elles sont dans la même lumière, elles vendent leur nouveau-né. – Il réfléchit, reprend. – Mais tu peux choisir de ne parler que d'elle au fond. (VC, 180)

‘What about others like her?’ asks Michael Richard. ‘Surely, it will detract from the interest of the book to concentrate on her alone. Then you talk of her, I see her surrounded by girls, other girls. I see them growing old on the journey from Siam to the forest, and I see their youth restored in Calcutta. It may be because of what Anne-Marie has told me, but I see them in Savannakhet, in that light you were talking about, on a causeway among the rice-fields. As I see it, they are obscene, with bodies exposed, eating raw fish given to them by children who have been out fishing. As I see it, the children are frightened of them, but they only laugh. By contrast, near India, later, they are young and serious, they sit on a market place – you see, a small market place where there are a few whites – they are there in the same light, they sell their new-born children. He pauses for reflection, then goes on, ’But you can choose to speak of just the one girl.’ (V, 144)

Remarkably, the British men discuss the indigenous women's degradation as a normal condition of the imperialist project. The passage also reveals the Western lens through which nakedness and the Asiatic habit of eating raw fish is misjudged as being 'obscene'. What is more, this iconic scene of stereotypical women as inferior sexual and cultural creatures erases the plausibility of any women's culture, while the view of a generalised female body tends to deny a contextualised narrative of embodied individuals. And while the scene refers to the painful and wasted
reproductive function of colonised women in former colonised countries, Duras’s novel addresses the international problem of a demographic catastrophe taking place in our neocolonialist condition where new-born babies die of malnutrition while women's intellectual and social capacity is ignored.

Finally, being convinced of the real beggar's madness on the basis of her alterity (VC, 156), Morgan tells his colleagues about his story's denouement as follows:

*Elle serait à Calcutta comme un … point au bout d’une longue ligne, de faits sans signification différenciée? Il n’y aurait que … sommeils, faims, disparition des sentiments, et aussi du lien entre la cause et l’effet? (VC 182)*

*In Calcutta, will she be a… dot at the end of a long line, the last distinguishable fact of her own life? With nothing left but… sleep, hunger, vanishing of sentiments, and also the link between cause and effect? (V, 146)*

Such an abstract end of the imagined madwoman outlines a deterministic linear development of life as a mechanistic chain of cause and effect, as if neither the woman's own agency nor any cultural intervention could interfere in her fate. It invokes the idea of Gérard Genette's ‘retrograde determination’, the alleged inferior ethnicity taken as a naturalised ‘cause’ for the effect of hunger and suffering (Harrison 2003, 26; Genette 1969, 97). Namely, what draws attention is the text's tacit normalisation of hunger as one among natural rhythms such as the alternation of night and day. By this naturalisation, on the behalf of his narrative's beautiful rhythm of wandering that is to imitate writing (VC, 179–180), Morgan's plan masks the failure of colonial domination. As the frame story reads, while intermittent famines manifest the decay of British and French colonial projects in the thirties, the Europeans in Calcutta hold them as a plague of God confronting (only) subaltern people, a problem which cannot be tackled due to the ‘defective sense of national unity’ (VC, 161). From their unmistakable hegemonic position, they thus invert the order of cause and effect.

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72 Harrison refers to Genette's 'Vraisemblance et motivation', *Figures*, II, Paris: Gallimard, 1969, 71–99. Harrison starts from Christopher Prendergast’s words, 'The language of mimesis re-presents not the worlds but the world as already organised in discourse', and reveals the circular logics of realism which forgets about its constructive nature. To this goal, he adapts Genette's critical analysis of the ‘retrograde determination’ of our psychological models, so as to open up the biases of realist representation used in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

73 Genette writes: '[F]inalistic determination […] bestows upon itself the *because* whose job is to make you forget the *why* and so to naturalize, or to realize, the fiction […] by concealing it deliberateness [and] artificiality: in short: its fictionality' (Genette 1969, 97, his emphasis; quoted in Harrison 2003, 26).

74 The Europeans say: ‘Qu’est-ce qu’ils vont faire pur la soudure du riz sur la côte de Malabar? — Rien. Pas d’esprit fédératif, alors rien de sérieux.’ (What are they going to do about making good the failure of the Malabar rice crop? — Nothing. There’s no spirit of national unity, so nothing effectively can be done; VC, 161).
Witnessing Trauma

by interpreting the consequence of colonial domination – inferior ‘race’ – as its cause. That is, taking their unspoken right to enjoy the bounty and benefits of Nature in luxury, they silently agree on the indigenous people's loss of the products of their soil for the profit of Western empires, including the ensuing lack of cultural improvements such as education and health. However, qualified as merely ‘irritating’ in European conversations, the threat of hunger gives rise to mystical suicides among those who never suffer from starvation. In this climate of suppressed fear, Morgan's plan does not evoke any idea of colonial injustice but rather a disembodied aesthetic interest. Duras comments on this solipsistic intention by having Michael say:

\[ \textit{Je crois que il veut dire, dit Michael Richard, c'est plus encore, il voudrait ne lui donner d'existence que dans celui qui la regarderait vivre. Elle, elle ne ressent rien.} (VC, 182) \]

‘What he means, I think’, says Michael Richard, ‘is something even more extreme, he wants to deprive her of any existence other than her existence in his mind when he is watching her. She, she is not to feel anything. (V, 146)\textsuperscript{75}

Summing up what I have said until now, one would expect that Morgan's story of the Cambodian beggar would represent a textual mimicry of Morgan's beliefs imputed to the colonised woman and her degradation (Jenson 2001, 184–185). Indeed, concerning the general structure of the embedded story, it appears to be a psychologically ‘reasonable’ description of sudden trauma, to which the story creates a linear coherence of a posttraumatic stress disorder. Evolving around a typical course of an acute traumatic stress reaction – known in Western psychology in the thirties and sixties but not yet by this name – the affective repertoire is comprised of a logically ordered sequence of intense emotions and flashbacks, ending up with final separation from the threatening mother.\textsuperscript{76} The structure suggests that the \textit{vraisemblance} of the story is built upon the underlying assumptions of the Western individual psychology which is taken as a universally pertinent model of the human psyche, whereupon the text endorses the beliefs and values of that psychology. However, echoing the fractured subjectivity of a colonist in Bhabha's vein, Duras's hybrid text destabilises Morgan's compact personality as a subject of knowledge ‘at the point of enunciation’ with two devices: contrasting the fictional beggar and Morgan's mimicry of the woman of the Ganges, and creating a hybrid style of a complex text-as-statement which still needs the following, narratological, precision.

Stylistically, Morgan's literary discourse consists of an extremely skilful

\textsuperscript{75} According to the original text, I have added a repetitive 'she' to the English translation instead of 'herself'.

\textsuperscript{76} This psychological development will be specified in relation to the madwoman trope in Ch. IV.
compilation of narrated monologue, psycho-narration and quoted monologue, all pretending to mediate the beggar's mental and bodily life. According to Dorrit Cohn (1978, 112–113), the indirect third-person narrative of narrated monologue is the most common literary method in rendering human consciousness since the nineteenth century. It is combined in numerous ways with modes of direct narration in conservative realist novels as well as experimental modernist classics. In Tzvetan Todorov's succinct words, with style indirect libre one 'transfers oneself into the characters' in order to mediate their emotions, perceptions, thoughts and memories (quoted in Cohn 1978, 114). The effectivity of this style relies in its faculty to reduce the gap between the narrator and the figure to a minimum, while at the same time blurs the boundary between narration and quotation (ibid., 113). Being an excellent example of this quality, Morgan's style imperceptibly merges Western thinking with that of the beggar, thereby imposing universalising, unquestioned ways of perception, feeling, and sensing on the heroine's mind and body.\(^7\) This may be also the reason why Duras characterised the style as being 'naïve', and created the character of Morgan so as to take a critical distance from the face value of her discourse.

Moreover, as Harrison (2003, 24) notes, a realist representation organises life according to a 'commonsensical and intuitive set of beliefs and values'.\(^7\) As presented above, as realist representation tends to determine the means teleologically by the ends, it creates plausibility and truthfulness of imagined characters by shaping their behaviour textually as coherent and consistent patterns (ibid., 25–26; Genette 1969, 85). However, whereas the misery of the 'real' woman of Ganges represents for Morgan the concrete 'result' of a definitive development as reasoned by the racialised order, the style with which he rescripts the traumatic shock and exile of the imagined beggar girl indicates a willingness to produce an empathic narrative. But as current trauma theory claims, the human response to an overwhelming historical trauma is not universal, while the experience of a major loss is narrativised arduously and only with an emotional rescription of the experience.\(^7\) Aside from individual differences arising from heritage and development, any reworking depends on cultural modes regulating such a condition. On such a basis, Duras's aesthetic gesture of distancing

\(^7\) As Monika Fludernik (1996, 367) aptly states, any formal innovation can become automatised, whereupon it loses its semantic impact and ideological force. The free indirect discourse epitomises such an automatised style which once innovatively represented the stream of consciousness of a Western psyche, but which may mediate a distorted picture of a culturally different 'other's' mental world.

\(^7\) In other Harrison's words, 'earlier events are coloured or given their shape by later ones, to which they thus seem to lead inexorably and inevitably'.

\(^7\) On this process, see Holmes, 86–92. Among others, one has to be aware of the fact that, like 'sad' and 'afraid', also 'loss' is felt and evaluated differently in different cultures (see Wierzbicka 2009, 3–4).
Morgan’s ‘psychological realism’ epitomises a critical working-through, since it manages to question those Western empiricist and universalist assumptions of disembodied psychology which create a pre-constituted mimetic ‘reality’ of human consciousness.

To conclude, while the free indirect style of Duras/Morgan merges male and female voices to express the girl’s inner life, as a text-as-statement it strives for an empathic mirroring of the survivor so as to assure the effectivity of the narrative as ‘Talking’ for her. That is, the metanarrative construction unveils that Duras’s purpose is not to demonstrate an essentialised other produced by Morgan’s literary discourse on the grounds of sex and ‘race’. Rather, the three-layer narrator – a white man’s fantasy about a native woman’s experiences constructed by a white woman author – allows her to take a critical standpoint to herself as a representative of the colonising power. With the double narrative, objectifying and emphatic at the same time, Duras exposes her ambiguous relation to colonialism and the fate of indigenous women in French Indochina. Therefore, the metastructure does not simply ironise white male Orientalism, but confesses the compelling position of a white female writer to truthfully bear witness to a colonised woman’s suffering that is a consequence of ethnic and economic discrimination. Moreover, the interplay of discursive worlds of Le Vice-consul provides a series of ontological and moral differences between Duras, Morgan, the woman of Ganges, and the imagined Cambodian beggar. In the actual world, constructed as a fictitious counter-figure for Duras, ‘Morgan’ illustrates patriarchal thinking in relation to emancipatory, feminist values. In the world of the frame story, Morgan’s objectifying one-way relation to the woman of the Ganges incarnates the illusion of Western supremacy in the stagnation of Asiatic colonialism in the thirties (Cooper 2001, 117–130). And finally, being the Europeans’ sole contact surface to the indigenous people, the body of the woman of the Ganges offers the vantage point from which the reader can judge the ‘realistic’ discourse that pretends to represent the exile of the fictional Cambodian beggar.
IV. Modifications of the Madwoman Trope

Duras's figure of madness is one of those subversive tropes that she diversified from the middle fifties onwards for over a period of four decades, others being such as love, desire, crime, the Jew, woman, the proletariat and the body (Hill 1993, 22, 30–31). With the two figures of the rejected madwomen, Lol V. Stein and the Cambodian beggar, Duras defies the illusion of a compact, Cartesian rationality and subjectivity. As she notes, the absent state of these madwomen does not refer to a mental illness but to a state illuminated by the 'ignorance' of their 'inner shadow', which places the women radically – but not unambiguously – beyond all moral evaluations (Armel 1994; P, 123). Seen within the frame of traumatic loss, Duras's usage of the madwoman trope maps a spectrum of consequences arising from a restriction of women's social agency in diverse cultural situations and milieus. In the India Cycle, madness isthematisedin the guise of sudden trauma in two principal ways: by portraying silenced heroines in the aftermath of a rejection, and showing how their traumatic symptoms are labeled by other characters as insanity. Underneath the heroines' lack of language, a number of recurring figures point to the irrationality and violence of colonialising practices. In a rich network of such cross-references, the muted female body is reworked into a traumatic index, which points to the biased practices of two sex–gender systems in different cultural conditions. Fulfilling Caruth's (1996, 7) succinct thesis, each wounded survivor reveals the pathology of history by carrying in herself the double horror of life and death. From this abiding predicament emerges their extraordinary state referred to by Foucault as a 'memory of forgetting' (memoire sans souvenir) (Armel 1994, 17). These preliminary remarks lead me to explore 'Lol

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1  'If one brings everything to the light, one is mad. Mad people operate outside the transformation of the lived life. The illuminating light which penetrates them has expelled the inner shadow and replaces it. The mad ones alone write completely.' Duras in an interview by Jean Schuster 1967, 175. Archibras No 2, Le terrain vague, octobre 1967, quoted in Armel 1994, 14–15. (Trans. SK)

2  As Shoshana Felman states, for Foucault the turning point of the philosophical development of Western subjectivity was Descartes' first Méditation, where he 'expels madness from the confines of culture and robs it of its language, condemning it to silence'. This was followed by the oppressive clinical order exercised by the French monarchic regime (Felman 2003, 38–39).

3  As another type of ‘insanity’, the reverse figure of the Vice-consul’s mute aggression and Anne-Marie’s silent mourning will be discussed in connection with self-destruction and passion in Ch. V.

4  Foucault defined madness as a ‘lack of language, an “absence of production”, the silence of a stifled, repressed language’ (Felman 2003, 14).
V. Stein’ and the ‘Cambodian beggar’ as subversive rhetorical figures, with which the India Cycle tackles the devastating effects of the sexually and racially reasoned discrimination of women.

Madness has functioned as a trope for various literary purposes in different periods of time. From the nineteenth century on, a burgeoning clinical discourse began to contend against philosophical and literary discourses (Felman 2003, 51; Caminero-Santangelo 1998). In her study Writing and Madness, as Shoshana Felman reads Foucault’s historical analysis of ‘madness’ presented in his major work, Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique (1961; Madness and Civilisation 1973), she specifies with Derrida the ‘false concept’ of madness as a ‘loss of the relation to the mastery of meaning’ (Felman 2003, 54). Using this definition, Felman takes a critical stand against the domination of psychiatric discourse over philosophical and literary ones. In so doing, she celebrates the potential of literature in challenging the clinician’s power by giving routes of expression to what culture excludes under the label of madness, that is, ‘nonsense, alienating, strangeness, transgressive excess, an illusion, a delusion, a disease’ (ibid., 2−4).

Being aware of the historical development of literary madness, and not wanting to reduce it to clinical meanings, I will lean on Felman’s analysis of madness as a rhetorical device, which understands literature as having a mission to give voice to what is ‘socially or medically repressed, objectified, unauthorized, denied, and silenced’ (ibid., 4). Moreover, Marta Caminero-Santangelo’s study on contemporary women’s literature develops a nonclinical view of female madness in the frame of Foucault’s major work (Caminero-Santangelo 1998, 52). Reviewing the history of the term, she starts from the Freudian theory of the psyche and its new formulation of female sexuality in the beginning of the twentieth century, when the novels dealing with women’s liberation used the figure of female hysteric as a protest against the sexual biases of Victorian morality. Then the clinical hysteria was still held as a feminine ‘illness’ reflecting female stereotypicality, and having no critical power (ibid., 69−70). After World War II, as prompted by the experiences of Holocaust victims, Western women’s struggle from their cultural and sexual impasse was strengthened. This period marked a dramatic increase in attention to issues of mental illness in general, all the more so in that the improvement of curative devices changed the nature of mental insanity. With the second wave of feminism in the sixties and seventies, female madness became a compelling image for women writers both

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5 I use the concept of trope in the meaning of the figure of speech, which means to ‘turn or twist some word or phrase to make it mean something else’ (BGCLT 2003, 490).
6 Felman analyses the forms of Western literature considering madness in the nineteenth century in terms of the major madness philosophers such as Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan, so as to ‘test twentieth century theories on texts that were not consciously written out of them’ (Felman 2003, 270).
7 On the feminist debate regarding connections between hysteria and femininity, see Caminero-Santangelo 1998, 69−70.
in Europe and America. In complicity with the antipsychiatry movement of the
time, female 'hysteria' was reworked into a subversive, ironic, artistic tool against
traditional sexual morals and the institution of the bourgeois family (ibid., 5,
52−53).8

Belonging to the last phase of this development, the Durasian concept of
madness appears to be an emancipatory vehicle whose power relies on the fact that
it flees from all control of reason. Since Duras builds a mirror image of traumatic
rejection on both sides of the colonial system in the thirties, the question arises
concerning the postcolonial dimensions of this combination. Illustrative of this issue
is how the colonial madwoman figures are analysed in British feminist criticism
from the seventies until the present. Especially the reception of two intertextual
novels: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), and its postcolonial re-writing, Jean
Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), shows how Western feminist criticism shifts
from the problems of Western 'white' psychology to those of ethnic and economic
differences within the category of women.9 First, in the spirit of second wave
white feminism, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1980, 88) interpreted Brontë's
lunatic, Bertha, as the female author's own rage under patriarchal domination
(Caminero-Santangelo 1998, 1). One decade later, Bertha was interpreted as an
autonomous colonial subject by comparing *Jane Eyre* with Rhys's novel, where
Rhys constructs for Bertha (Antoinette) a past as a white Creole, and reasons her
psychological breakdown by way of racial degradation. From the nineties on, also
the stereotypicality of Antoinette's black nanny is explored, while the racialised
position of Antoinette-Bertha is brought into a more specific light (Plasa 2001, 56,
71, 83).10 As can be seen, only step by step, the focus of white feminist criticism is
turned in the direction of the interrelated discourses of ethnicity, female madness,
colonisation, and imperialism, which are both embedded within the novels and
disguised by them (Caminero-Santangelo 1998, 17).

In a similar spirit, and published in the same year as *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Duras's
*Le Vice-consul* contrasts the fate of the indigenous madwoman with that of the
white lunatic, Lol V. Stein, thereby mapping the differences of social injustices

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8 In the sixties and seventies, both feminism and antipsychiatry wanted to use madness as a
vehicle of cultural critique (Caminero-Santangelo, 1998, 4–5). The leading personalities of these
two movements were Betty Friedan in the USA, and Thomas Szasz and R. D. Laing in Europe
(ibid., 52).

9 Each of the novels deals with the pivotal role of the Caribbean Creole woman, Bertha Mason,
for the British governess *Jane Eyre's* struggle for marital love in Victorian society in the nineteenth
century. Being the hero's first, mad and violent wife, Bertha is secretly imprisoned in the tower
of the Gothic house.

10 See Carl Plasa’s (2001) review of several insightful studies of Rhys. For example, Spivak
observes Antoinette as a victim at whose expense the white heroine can achieve a decent, 'white
feminist' place in British society through marriage. For Gayatri Spivak, Rhys also denies the
voice of Antoinette’s black female servant just as Brontë’s novel silenced the Creole woman
(Plasa 2001, 56).
which women meet on two sides of the colonial system. Duras's insistence on the white madwoman trope is seen in her tendency to multiply mad heroines who all originate from the ruined figure of Lol V. Stein (VM, 36). As if assuring the pattern of smothering, numerous Western women identified themselves with Lol's absent-minded housewife archetype in the seventies and eighties, while, at the same time, her mental 'illness' was psychoanalytically interpreted as a form of hysteria. But this alone cannot do justice to Duras who, contrasting Lol's social enclosure with the life of the Cambodian vagrant, poses postcolonial questions for white feminist criticism. As I have presented, *Le Vice-consul* shows how Morgan perceives the woman of the Ganges as a racial stereotype, whereas the *Le ravissement* portrays Lol as a literary incarnation of Hold's interplay with her re-enactment of trauma. Besides, both these narrators convert the heroines' traumatic memory into a digestable symbolic form with a metaphorical language which avoids the fixed code of a clinical discourse. For these reasons, ultimately, Duras's double narrative tackles the cultural differences of gender and social class within the category of women under colonialism. Therefore, I ask how Durasian tropes of the 'madwoman' and 'memory of forgetting' communicate the moral problems of decolonisation and racialisation through sexual difference and genderisation.

To this aim, my exploration shifts from mere iconic, 'visual fascination' or a general but vacuous 'circulation of desire', to a more detailed understanding of the muted madwoman as a critical trope which goes beyond the Freudian psychologism of obsession and repression, identification and projection. For this effort, Caminero-Santangelo’s study of madness as a metaphor of resistance and transformation of oppressive sex-gender systems is valuable. In accordance with Felman, she examines ‘madness’ that is unmoored from the binary associations of mental illness as constructed by clinical and popular discourses (Caminero-Santangelo 1998, 2, 9). But for Felman, the challenge of an unclinical approach is also to analyse the relation of madness and the 'literary thing', which refers to a ‘transferential drama’ understood as the reader’s ‘performative enactment of the rhetoric of the text’ during reading (Felman 2003, 31). Adapted to an embodied mind, this implies that a verbal tropology can evoke the reader's implicit

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11 I use the term archetype in a sense developed by Estella Lauter, for whom the repetition of basic experiences and cultural or existential crises tends to form mental images in the form of patterns which are dramatised in narratives and rituals (Lauter 1984, vii-xi, 4).

12 The ‘literary thing’ refers to what the text does to the reader in literary experience. Felman condenses her theory of reading effect in the principle ‘what happens to the reader is specifically literary’, and sees this as contradictory to literature as a bourgeois institution (Felman 2003, 31, 271–273; emphasis original).

13 This proposal is similar to Irene Kacandes’s Goffmanian concept of the ‘Talking’ of the text as an orientation of exchange between the text and the reader, which reasons her thought of literary text as a testimony of trauma (Kacandes 2001, 23). Both these approaches have repercussions in current theories of empathic reading which are directed against numbness and emotional exhaustion arising from the gap between ‘representation and responsibility’ (Dean 2004, 7; Keen 2007).
emotional resonance with the textual discourse. Accordingly, I will neither read the madwoman's textualised body language as symptoms of a feminine hysteric in Freudian terms nor as a reactive irrationality of women under oppressive circumstances. Rather, I see the traumatic response which the Durasian madwoman carries in her mute body as an adaptive reaction to an overwhelming event, expressed by traumatic indices which are outside logos but transformed into linguistic figures standing for suffocating cultural practices. On this basis, the two following chapters specify the postcolonial meanings of Lol's and the Cambodian beggar's madness, respectively, while the third chapter focuses on the anonymous madwoman in *L'amour*’s seemingly psychotic landscape.

**Obsession in the Provincial Prison: Lol V. Stein**

With the following two phrases from *Le Vie matérielle* written 23 years after Lol's story, Duras underlines Lol V. Stein's status as a mythical figure representing madness: ‘Lol V. Stein est détruite par le bal de S. Thala. Lol V. Stein est bâtie par le bal de S. Thala.’ (Lol V. Stein is destroyed by the dance at S. Thala. Lol V. Stein is created by the dance at S. Thala. VM, 35). With its intentional reversal, this chiastic metaphor voices the idea that the bond established between Michael and Anne-Marie at S. Thala both gives birth to and kills the fictional figure called Lol V. Stein. It implies that, as an archetype of a deranged survivor, Lol gains literary existence by the mere act of rejection which, in the end, builds her character and punctuates the course of her life. In short: ‘Lol’ as a madwoman is made possible by suppression (cf. Felman 2003, 52). Thus the whole arc of Lol's development from the scenery at the ball to the problematic state of ‘madness’ fits between the two phrases quoted above: starting from the rejection in *Le ravissement*, it proceeds via the horrible autism of *L'amour* and *La Femme du Gange* to the final oblivion performed in the film *India Song*.14

Later, in the same essay of *La Vie matérielle*, Duras claims that this implies ‘telling the absence of [Lol’s] story through its absence’ (VM, 35). For me, this refers to the muted story – a genotext – which the reader has to construct from the textual signs that imply the inner development of Lol’s traumatic enactment through the prism of other persons’ views. Finally, Duras gives the interpretative responsibility to the reader-creator, and divides the audience into two parts in relation to Lols’ madness:

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14 Strikingly, as if labeling the whole story as madness in 1987, Duras calls the place of rejection by the name of S. Thala, which in fact comes up only in *L'amour* referring to the land of total disaster. Whereas the place of Lol’s trauma in *Le ravissement* is the casino of T. Beach, this later essay deforms the place of that fatal event into an abstract, oneiric realm of madness called S. Thala, an innovation made up out of S. Tahla, Lol’s provincial home town.
Le ravissement of Lol V. Stein est un livre à part. Un livre seul. Qui opère à lui seul une séparation entre certains lecteurs-auteurs qui ont adhéré à la folie de L.V. Stein et les autres lecteurs du livre. (VM, 35)

The ravishing of Lol V. Stein is a book apart, the only one of a kind. It separates the readers-cum-writers who have identified with Lol V. Stein’s madness from those who have not. (PR, 27)

Indeed, an integral part of the ‘ravishment’ of the novel is the reader’s adherence to Lol’s madness, which occurs if s/he enjoys the subtle erotics of Lol’s and Hold’s secret interplay in watertight co-operation amidst their own society. At a more sophisticated level, Lol’s deceitful re-enactment is achieved at a reflective distance when keeping an eye on fictional truths, compared with those of actual reality. Emphasising that such a distinction between fiction and non-fiction should be carefully made, Jørgen Dines Johansen notes that the reader’s desire to define a fictional character’s illness reveals the difficulty of distinguishing between reality and fiction in the reading process. Because we do take utterances and actions as indexical signs representing psychological states, we have a strong propensity to explain fictional characters’ behaviour psychologically (Johansen 2002, 391). Therefore, to assess the meaning of a character as a trope which contributes to the rhetorical significance of the text, the reader needs knowledge about the fictional world’s values. This makes me draw critical attention to some researchers’ tendency to take Lol’s ‘illness’ for granted. Similar to the manner that they agree with the whites in Calcutta by taking the beggar’s ‘madness’ at face value, some researchers repeat the opinion of S. Tahla’s people when taking Lol’s symptoms as signs of her clinical ‘illness’. However, in terms of a madwoman trope as a means of critiquing white gender and class relations, the nature of this fictional ‘fact’ can be problematised in the context of those beliefs of the fictional society that constitute its concept of mental health. From this viewpoint, Lol’s ‘illness’ reproduces her society’s assumptions originating from the sex–gender system of the upper middle class in the metaphorical semiosphere of European provincial towns.

Admittedly, Lol’s initial shock reaction – collapse, rage, numbness, fragmentary speech and withdrawal – can be identified as a typical post-traumatic stress

15 Quoting Peirce, Johansen (2002, 115) observes that if we dispute whether Hamlet is mad or not, our attitude ‘exemplifies the necessity of indicating that the real world is meant, if it be meant’ (CP 2.337).

16 Psychoanalytical studies read Lol’s story implying a Freudian-Lacanian obsessive neurosis or ‘hysteria’. While Lol’s conduct is seen to reflect the preconceived ideas about women’s hysteric sexuality, in Lacanian terms, her figure is referred to as a ‘lack’, and her personality to an obscure ‘absence as a multitude of nothingness’ without further specifications (Willis 1987, 69–83). Finding these negations vacuous, I will rather follow how the white society evaluates Lol’s condition, and how Hold transforms her hidden traumatic images into verbal figures as a result of social mirroring and imagining.
disorder.\textsuperscript{17} But from a non-clinical perspective, her behaviour is a post-Victorian young woman's adaptive response to the sudden interruption of an unexpected scene of sexual infatuation. It is not without meaning that it is Lol's mother who interrupts her daughter's experience. All that follows demonstrates a young woman's imprisonment in the bourgeois family. When the mother appears in the casino and puts the blame on the 'criminals of love' with her 'sentimental, muddy wailing,' Lol releases the first cry, knocks the mother down, attempts to prevent the couple from leaving, and when they go, finally, blacks out (R, 22; Ferrières-Pestureau 1997, 116). Thus Lol's raging is not without an object but is directed against the mother's control over her daughter's 'decency,' and, ultimately, against the definition of white womanhood which defines female sexual passion immoral or insane (Olaussen 1993/2001, 91).\textsuperscript{18} To the extent that the mother acts as a Victorian antagonist to Anne-Marie Stretter's erotic figure, she displaces Lol back into the position of a child. The mother takes over the social control of the bourgeois 'scandal' by reporting on Lol's psychic condition to the neighbourhood. Trapped under the mother's patriarchal patronage, Lol becomes helpless and silent, and feels frustrated with her personality. Her situation is also complicated by the mother's hasty measures to marry her off. It is a conservative middle-class contract made in order to save the family's face from social shame, which reproduces an objectification of women as an instrument of social exchange.\textsuperscript{19} All these well-meaning but violent precautions reinforce public doubts about Lol's sanity, and situate her in a 'correct' position in the prevailing sexual order as a wife and mother in a nuclear family, which has a suppressive impact on her recovery. Driven away from a familiar milieu by the marriage, Lol loses the possibility for triggering events, which mechanises her behaviour for ten years, while the encapsulated trauma throws her into a prolonged latency of a total limbo.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17} The usual symptoms of acute grief are clinically portrayed as uniform. The phase of outcry is comprised of somatic distress: sighing respiration, digestive symptoms, lack of strength, loss of patterns of conduct, sensory changes, and strong emotions, such as feelings of guilt and hostility (Lindemann 1999, 137−139).

\textsuperscript{18} Just as Jean Rhys's novel shows Bertha Mason's rage not to be aimless, but in response to an attempt to neglect her legal rights, \textit{Le ravissement} presents Lol's reaction as an effort to resist smothering and control.

\textsuperscript{19} Agnes Heller notes that the authority of shame is a social custom represented by the eye of others. As an innate affect, shame forces us to conform to our cultural environment by utilising rituals, habits, codes or schedules of behaviour, for example, when a family member does not match up to the norms or standards of a closed, integrated society (Heller 1982, 215, 217).

\textsuperscript{20} In the clinical frame, the most striking and frequent reaction of distorted grief is postponement, which can take months, years, even decades. The duration of the withdrawal depends upon the success with which the bereaved does the grief work: for example, in the case of the loss of a loved person, emancipation from the bondage to the deceased, readjustment to the environment in which the deceased is missing, and the formation of new relationships (Lindemann 1999, 137−139). In the first place, rejecting wholly the traumatising fact by forgetting is an adaptive phase of mourning. First the denial or avoidance usually takes place unconsciously to reduce
Against the beliefs and gender norms of her society, Lol’s violent shock reaction amounts to a social protest against these norms, although her potential future seems to be lost and dishonored. The idea of Lol’s ‘illness’ maintained by the gossiping society’s guardianship represents everyday psychological thinking used to neutralise threatening psychic phenomena. According to the belief of the middle class, the sudden rejection that befalls a young bride is a personal catastrophe: ‘This one place in the world where, it was thought, she had, in time past, lived through a painful experience, or what they called a painful experience [...]’ (R, 42–43, emphasis added). Occurring in a summer ball which is one of the rituals regulating sexual relationships in Euro-American cultures, the rejection is assumed to destroy all of Lol’s and her family’s expectations which are invested in the picture of an ideal marriage. Originating from the mother, Lol’s symptoms are narrated as the typical response of a traumatic disorder following acute loss. The general opinion predicts a spontaneous recovery, for she is seen ‘exhausted, depressive, and immensely suffering’, while her exhaustion and pain represent just a ‘normal feeling of inferiority in her own eyes’ (R, 24). But in the end these explanations which neglect her personal experience suppress her social agency. Repudiating all questions concerning herself, Lol becomes a numb, absent-minded listener who accepts everything that is proposed (R, 23–25). As if echoing the beggar’s aimless rambling in the Cambodian landscape, the text eloquently reads: Lol becomes a ‘desert into which some nomad-like faculty had propelled her in the interminable search for what?’ (R, 24).

From this socially determined reaction to a historical trauma, Lol’s image as a madwoman grows into a subversive trope. As Leah Hewitt notes, though Lol resists being reduced to Hold’s object, her subjectivity is hard to define since the point of view is always relative to others and not a fixed property of the self but split and mobile (Hewitt 1990, 98). As a consequence of her history, Lol’s body represents the most important reference point which divulges the traces of a lived shock and social withdrawal. Expressing the unfulfilled sexual needs of a woman, her body indexes the loss of her own desire and will by reverting to that of a fifteen-year-old girl, being thus reminiscent of the abused Cambodian beggar. From the focalisation of her future husband during their first encounter, Lol’s body is likened to some long-unused ‘thing’:

*Ses cheveux avaient la même odeur que sa main, d’objet inutilisé. Elle était belle mais elle avait, de sa tristesse, de la lenteur du sang à remonter sa pente, la grise pâleur. Ses traits commençaient déjà à disparaître dans celle-ci, à s’enliser de* emotional pain. Then a working-through will begin, but the unexpected truth reaches the suffering person’s consciousness very slowly. Meanwhile, sensory material is detached from cognitive abilities, while understanding of the accident is impossible (Horowitz 1999, 260–268).
**Fictionalising Trauma**

...nouveaux dans la profondeur des chairs. Même quand je l’ai connue à mon tour, elle était restée maladivement jeune. [...]

Elle se releva vers lui, quelqu’un qui étouffe, qui cherche l’air, et il l’embrassa. C’était ce qu’elle voulait. (R, 29)

**Her hair had the same odor as her hand, the odor of some long-unused object. She was beautiful, but there was sadness about her, as though the blood were slow to circulate in her veins, a grayish pallor. Her features were already beginning to fade into that pallor, to bury themselves anew in the depths of her flesh. She had grown younger. She looked no more than fifteen. Even when I met her later, she still had that morbidly young look about her. [...]

She raised herself toward him, someone suffocating, coming up for air, and he kissed her. That was what she wanted. (LVS, 19)

The object-like properties predicated to Lol’s person reveal the use-value of women in the bourgeois society of the times, thus indicating the homogenising biases constituting female bodily self under the pressure of patriarchal norms. Whereas her ‘morbidly young’ body signals the conflict between an objectifying practice and natural sexual desire, her suffocating kisses cry for an intimate touch. Aggravating this contrast, Jean Bedford is told to marry Lol because he liked ‘only women whose hearts had been broken,’ and who ‘aroused in him his special penchant for young girls, girls not completely grown into adults, for sad, obscene young girls without a voice’ (R, 29–31). The slight sexist irony expressed by the plural form posits Lol among girls who are defined as men’s objects of sexual desire and betrayal, which impel them to adopt an accepted social function of a sexual property as ‘mad’ women.

As a trope, Lol’s body acts as a form of resistance against the tacit assumptions underpinning the bourgeois practices of gender: ‘Lol was imitating someone, but who? The others, all the others’ (R 34). The ‘impeccable order’ of the house (R 34) and the ‘cold, ready-made taste’ of the owner of this ‘silken body which no awakening would ever change’ (R, 33) uncover her paralysis. As Lucy McNeece (1996, 32–33) observes, the description about Lol’s life echoes ironically that of Flaubert’s *Emma*: ‘Dix ans de mariage passèrent’ (Six semaines s’écouleront, *Emma Gustave Bovary*, 34) thereby evoking the monotony of bourgeois women’s idle days.\(^21\)

Gradually, Lol’s immobile figure begins to act as the metaphor of

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\(^{21}\) McNeece’s (1996, 34) statement that this hiatus of ten years has ‘failed to heal Lol’s psyche’ is in accordance with the typical organisation of historical trauma: the recovery is possible only when completed after a delay by a cognitive process, where intrusive negative affects provoked by repetitive flashback-like memories emerge in succession. Only then can a new cognition of self, life, and world be reformulated.
a whole social class which devastates women as social subjects in the marital prison. Moreover, pointing intertextually to the Cambodian beggar’s ten years of wandering at the mercy of Nature, Lol’s ten years embodies the cultural restrictions that compel Western middle-class housewives to throw away their intellectual capacity. Whereas hunger forces the pregnant beggar girl to take care of herself by begging and prostituting herself from early adolescence onwards, the patriarchal order regulating bourgeois genderisation protects Lol against every danger except itself, forcing her to react with sexual immaturity. Thus, Lol and the beggar together form a complementary double trope of the madwoman, each incarnating those everyday cultural practices, respectively, which constitute and reproduce the concept of female ‘normality’ in terms of a dominant sex–gender system.

Rebuilding the Triangle, Renouncing Progress?

Lol’s progression towards ‘madness’ begins after the mother’s death, when she wakes from her total ignorance of the traumatic event as exposed in S. Tahla to familiar places. Just as the beggar's walking, the rhythm of Lol’s steps evokes her embodied memory. But as an inversion of the development of the Cambodian beggar whose images of the mother successively become less and vague, Lol’s memories grow:

Des pensées, un fourmillement, toutes également frappées de stérilité une fois la promenade terminée – aucune de ces pensées jamais n'a passé la porte de sa maison – viennent à Lol V. Stein pendant qu'elle marche. On dirait que c'est le déplacement machinal de son corps qui les fait se lever toutes ensemble dans un mouvement désordonné, confus, généreux. […] Pensées naissantes at renaissantes, quotidiennes, toujours les mêmes qui viennent dans la bousculade, prennent vie et respirent dans un univers disponible aux confins vides et dont une, une seule, arrive avec le temps, à la fin, a se lire et à se voir un peu mieux que les autres, à presser Lol un peu plus que les autres de la retenir enfin. (R, 45)

Thoughts, a welter of thoughts, all rendered equally sterile the moment her walk was over – none of these thoughts had ever crossed the treshold with her into her house – occur to Lol as she walks. It would seem as though it was the mechanical movement of her body which summoned them forth, all of them together, in a chaotic, confused, and ample surge. […] Thoughts born and reborn, daily, always the same thoughts that come crowding in, come to life and breathe, in an accessible, boundless universe, out of which one thought, and only one, eventually manages at long last to make itself heard,
The recurring thoughts lead to the memorialising of the fatal night of the ball, which Hold transforms into a linguistic series of phantasmatic images. Yet, the cyclic return of these flashbacks can imitate grief work only superficially, for a fortunate progress of working through trauma necessitates that the upsetting imagery arising from the implicit memory would be rescripted with the survivor’s own imagination and verbal narrative, which would give her a more powerful emotional position (Smucker et al., 2003, 182). The text does not assign such an activity to Lol, who sinks into the phantasm of the ball during lonely wanderings. This fatal turn indicating a failure of grief work is uttered with Hold’s lyrical metaphor: ‘She begins to walk in the sumptuous palace of S. Tahla’s oblivion’ (R, 43). From this moment on, Lol’s flashbacks progress gradually from the triangular setting of the ball to the peak of the drama: the moment of separation in the dawn. Hold’s first parable of the scene displays the ball as a ‘trembling wreck’, which is transformed to a ‘ship of light to which Lol enters every day’. Step by step, Lol is caught within the hypnotic images of the past:

*Le bal tremblait au loin, ancien, seule épave d’un océan maintenant tranquille, dans la pluie, à S. Tahla. (R, 45)*

[…]

*Le bal reprend un peu de vie, frémit, s’accroche à Lol. Elle le réchauffe, le protège, le nourrit, il grandit, sort de ses plis, s’étire, un jour il est prêt. Elle y entre. Elle y entre chaque jour.*

*La lumière des après-midi de cet été-là Lol ne la voit pas. Elle, elle pénètre dans la lumière artificielle, prestigieuse, du bal de T. Beach. (R, 46)*

[…]

*Et cela recommence : les fenêtres fermées, scellées, le bal muré dans sa lumière nocturne les aurait contenus tous les trois et eux seuls. (R, 47)*

[…]

*Il aurait fallu murer le bal, en faire ce navire de lumière sur lequel chaque après-midi Lol s’embarque mais qui reste là, dans ce port impossible, à jamais amarré et prêt à quitter, avec ces trois passagers. […] (R, 49)*

In the distance the ball trembles, ancient, the only wreck on a now-peaceful ocean, in the rain, at S. Tahla.

[…]

22 This model concerns traumas which, besides fear, involve other emotions such as embarrassment, powerlessness, humiliation, self-blame, guilty, shame, rage, and grief (Smucker et al. 2003, 182, 185, 190).
The ball revives, ever so slightly, shimmers, clings to Lol. She gives it warmth, protects it, nourishes it, and it grows, ventures forth from the protective layers, stretches, and one day is ready.

She enters it.

She enters it every day.

That summer, Lol fails to see the light of the afternoon. No, she is making her way into the wondrous artificial light of the T. Beach ball. (LVS, 36)

[...]

And again it begins: the windows closed, sealed, the ball immured in its nocturnal light, would have contained all three of them, and they alone. (LVS, 38)

[...]

What Lol would have liked would have been to have the ball immured, to make this ship of light upon which, each afternoon, she embarks, but which remains there, in this impossible port, forever anchored and yet ready to sail away with its three passengers. (LVS, 39)

From this onwards, Lol’s imaginative repetition of the ball scene – Lol seeing Michael as ravished by Anne-Marie’s overwhelming attraction – aims at a timeless sexual pleasure she had transitorily experienced in the original triangle. The oblivion of T. Beach progresses from such imaginations to a peculiar act of erasing the original trauma: Lol’s re-enactment of the triangle with Hold and Tatiana. This development is necessitated by Lol’s new awakening by the secret love relationship of Hold and Tatiana, enabled by a trigger event that shatters the imagined ‘ship of light.’ It occurs as Lol overhears by accident a couple speaking about herself in the street. The woman’s – Tatiana Karl’s – phrase concerning Lol, ‘[m]orte peut-être’ (dead perhaps) awakens Lol from the stupor (R, 38). It is the familiar tone of the woman’s voice, and the guilty kiss of the lovers which touch the most wounding point in Lol’s memory: the lost bodily passion (cf. Ferrières-Pestureau, 1997, 139).

At this point, metaphorically, Lol ‘stirrs, and turns over in her sleep’ (R, 39). But importantly, the real love relationship stops the flow of her previous imagery: ‘the light of the ball [is] suddenly extinguished. She can no longer see it clearly. The faces, the bodies of the lovers are covered over with an even layer of gray mildew’ (R, 67, emphasis added). With the revelation of Hold’s and Tatiana’s secret affair in the Hôtel des Bois the direction of the events is sealed, and Lol’s re-enactment of the past is set in motion.

The immersion of Hold and Tatiana into Lol’s re-enactment is an integral part of the subversive dimension of the madwoman trope. When Lol guides them to play

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23 See the analysis of this re-enactment in Ch. III. where I reason why the whole re-enactment signifies Hold’s famous expression of the ‘cinema of Lol V. Stein’.

24 This point corresponds to the intrusive phase of PTSD. The delayed reactions start when triggered by some occurrence recalling the original loss, whereafter painful remembering gradually leads the bereaved closer to a new level of consciousness, while the emerging images will open the possibility to substitute the broken beliefs by new ones (Horowitz 1999, 262–265). Clinically, Lol does not proceed to this latter phase.
the principal roles as substitutes of Michael and Anne-Marie in her triangle, she makes Hold into her object, thus inverting radically the patriarchal order. In her passionate world of sexual infatuation, Lol's thoughts and feelings are permanently focused on the end of the fatal night: separation. The maddening power of the last, shocking second is indicated by the absent, mighty 'hole-word', an impossible sign which alone could stop the world from spinning (R, 48). This hyperbolic metaphor draws attention to the empty signified of the trauma, as follows:

A cet instant précis une chose mais laquelle? aurait dû être tentée qui ne l'a pas été. A cet instant précis Lol se tient, déchirée, sans voix pour appeler à l'aide, sans argument, sans la preuve de l'inimportance du jour en face de cette nuit, arrachée et portée de l'aurore à leur couple dans un affolement régulier et vain de tout son être. Elle n'est pas Dieu, elle n'est personne. (R, 47, emphasis added)

[...]

[S]i Lol est silencieuse dans la vie c'est qu'elle a cru, l'espace d'un éclair, que ce mot pouvait exister. Faute de son existence, elle se tait. Ça'aurait été un mot-absence, un mot-trou [...]. (R, 48, emphasis added)

At that precise moment, some attempt – but what? – should have been made which was not. At that precise moment Lol is standing, completely undone, with no voice to cry out for help, with no convincing argument, with no proof of how unimportant the coming day was compared to that night, uprooted and borne from dawn toward that couple, her whole being filled with a chronic, hopeless feeling of panic. She is not God, she is no one. (LVS, 37, emphasis added)

[...]

[If] Lol is silent in her daily life it is because, for a split second, she believed that this word might exist. It would have been an absence-word, a hole-word [...]. (LVS, 38, emphasis added)

As presented earlier in this study, as a traumatic image, the figure of the ‘hole-word’ stands for Lol's silent cry of ten year's suppressed pain. Expressing double fear, that of being a subject of her own life, and that of never becoming one, the pang of Lol's unexperienced emotions grows into existential panic on the border of nothingness. The figure of the all-mighty mot-trou tries to make bearable the impossibility of stopping the time at the peak of the first experience of erotic passion, and of preventing its catastrophal loss. As it is harnessed to express a feeling of an unconceivable event, too overwhelming to experience at the moment it takes place, mot-trou evokes the transhistorical trauma of accessing female sex. The ensuing repetition of the phrase 'Elle n’est pas Dieu, elle n’est personne’ (R 47, 49), accentuates Lol's helpless desire for mastering mature sexuality, which masks the disappointment and psychic pain which have to be suppressed. The lyrical metaphor: ‘Then one day this infirm body stirs in the womb of God’ (R, 51) repeats the idea of her burgeoning inner progress. It indicates that Lol is not yet being born
as a female subject, but aspiring desperately for such a birth in an imagined act. Hence, while the ‘hole-word’ expresses the inability to prevent the unavoidable destruction of romantic love by stopping time at the ‘primal scene’, it also points to Lol’s painful revelation of her own defective sexuality at the moment when the couple still is in her sight. Mot-trou is a split sign whose signified is comprised of two contradictory poles. On the one hand, it refers semantically to the crisis beyond description at the time it occurs, on the other, including all the words of the world, it alludes to the potential plenitude of sexuality which Lol is going to lose.

Figuring Durasian madness, Lol’s irrational struggle for the perpetuation of the last second ambiguously signifies an intense aspiration for sexual desire as rebuilt by substituting the lost persons with new ones. At first sight, the reconstruction of the original scene seems to pose Hold and Tatiana on the places of Michael and Anne-Marie in the (Oedipal) triangle between Lol, Michael, and Anne-Marie. However, a careful reading of the text evokes another type of image, that of a traumatic triangle of existential quality. The passage reads:

Elle se voit, et c’est là sa pensée véritable, à la même place, dans cette fin, toujours, au centre d’une triangulation dont l’aurore et eux deux sont des termes éternels: elle vient d’apercevoir cette aurore alors qu’eux ne l’ont pas encore remarquée. Elle, sait, eux pas encore. Elle est impuissante à les empêcher de savoir. Et cela recommence. (R, 47, emphasis added)

She sees herself — and this is what she really believes — in the same place, at the end, always, in the center of a triangular construction of which dawn, and the two of them, are the eternal terms: it is the moment when she has just become aware of that dawn, while they have not yet noticed it. She knows; they still do not. She is powerless to prevent them from knowing. And it begins all over again. (LVS, 37, emphasis added)

The passage offers a renewed view to Lol’s imagined position, not at the third angle of a competitive triangle but in the middle of an existential triangle, whose three eternal landmarks are Michael, Anne-Marie and the rising sun. The place in the center posits Lol as the principal observer of the scene, and gives her a new social agency, in Freudian terms, that of a voyeurist. But more importantly, the same move gives an existential role to the temporal dimension. The dawn signals the end of the scene, which Lol alone realises one minute before it happens. As an impressive result, the sunrise – the metaphorical light of her would-be-revelation

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25 This episode has been exhaustively studied as a Freudian ‘primal scene’ in Lacan’s terms. These interpretations tend to universalise the fundamental role of the Oedipal triangle in a child’s sexual development. Such a (post-Victorian) fascination of possessive, fetishising sexuality is understandable, but I would adapt it only to emphasise Lol’s – a woman of nineteen years of age – late development in the post-Victorian atmosphere.
which returns in *L'amour* – begins to signify the poignant moment of Lol's loss of knowledge, as it were, the driving from the paradise without even eating from the fruit of the tree of knowledge. The outcome amounts to an ultimate psychic impasse. As Hill (1993, 76–77) brilliantly formulates, when the first rays of the dawn illuminate the delayed, ‘brutal’ separation, Lol ‘hangs in the balance’ between separation and fusion, her gaze oscillating between the couple and the rising sun. While Lol alone is aware of the temporality of the event which is about dying out, all her energy is fixed – ‘cathected’ – on the minute when the distinction between separation and fusion is endlessly obscured. This mythical dimension makes Lol herself a traumatic index, whose isolated, emotionally frozen body echoes the two horrors of life and death.

At a metaphorical level, the irrevocable balance between loss and desire brings into being the subversive meaning of the white madwoman trope. Propelling existential anxiety on the verge of subjectivity, the dawn as the temporal landmark of the threatening separation combines the historical trauma of rejection with the transhistorical trauma of sexuality. The controversy of the crucial moment relies on two incompatible narratives concerning female embodied self, that of sexual death and that of rescue from it. This conflict is condensed into the traumatic index of the ‘dead dog’ which the madwoman of *L'amour* literally sees on the deserted shore. Vacillating between these two poles of horror, the survivor does not know which is better: to confront death or to survive (cf. Caruth 1996, 7). Therefore, the best psychic solution is to be fixed between them forever, like Lol, returning in the dark to the rye field in an eternity of a ‘temps pur, d’un blancheur d’os’ (time in its purity, bone-white time; R, 47; LVS, 37).

Finally, the denouement of a psychic exile is strongly evoked by the text. When Lol returns with Hold to T. Beach, he observes that ‘she is seeing her present memory for the last time in her life, she is burying it’. Lol shows no emotions in the casino but gives a cry, while ‘[t]his trip, in the future, will be like the town of S. Tahla is for her now, lying in ruins beneath her footsteps of the present’ (R, 175). The regression into the ‘monumental calm’ of a timeless time of fantasy is expressed before Lol’s last confusion during their sexual act as follows:

> […] Un couple d’amants est arrive sur elle, bolide lent, mâchoire primaire de l’amour, elle ignorait encore ce que ca signifiait. Un crépitement d’accidents secondaires, des cris de mère, se produisent. La vaste et sombre prairie de l’aurore arrive. Un calme monumental recouvre tout, engloutit tout. Une trace subsiste, une. Seule, ineffacable, on ne sait pas où d’abord. Mais quoi? Ne le sait-on pas? Aucune trace, aucune, tout a été enseveli, Lol avec le tout. (R, 181, emphasis added)

*A couple of two lovers came toward her, a slow-moving comet, the primary maw of love, she still didn't realise what it meant. A sputtering of secondary incident, a mother’s screams, occurs. The vast dark field of dawn arrives. A monumental*
Modifications of the Madwoman Trope

In conclusion, Lol’s story ends with her oblivion, while she does not restructure her emotions typical of working through trauma. A recovery from trauma, however, refers to an emotional change induced by a cognitive rescription which strengthens the survivor’s social agency, and shifts her/him into a more powerful position in relation to traumatising factors. However, Lol’s madness is her fixation on one sole minute of an imagined balance between desire and loss, which intertwines the past with the present. This condenses the figure of her failure as an outcome from her re-enactment. It follows that, when not grieving actively the loss of the past and not fighting for a corporeal sexuality in the present, Lol displaces her own potential suffering to Hold and Tatiana, thus perpetuating the trauma by contaminating others. Nevertheless, at the figural level, her solipsistic passivity turns out being subversive; for, with an immersion in the eternal passion of others, she resists the competitive, fallogocentric dimension of the patriarchal model of the Oedipal triangle. Ultimately, the trope of Lol/madwoman makes visible the Oedipal competition as a norm and a foundation of the heterosexual agreement of her/our society. By renouncing a mature love relationship, Lol gives up the challenging position in the heterosexual order. Yet, controversially, she reproduces and maintains the hidden sides of this order, thus adopting the role of a diabolic yet ravishing madwoman.

Sorrow in Exile: The Cambodian Beggar

Le Vice-consul’s young heroine, the Cambodian beggar woman, is a rare ethnic exception among Duras’s deranged heroines who are usually European bourgeois women. The beggar’s exile unfolds from the experiences of sexual abuse, unwilled pregnancy and rejection, which together destroy her life in the family and culture. Besides this direct violence, the narrative of her insistent struggle for survival in the desert maps those insidious forms of historical trauma which pervade indigenous women’s everyday life in colonialism. Like ‘Lol’, the trope of the Cambodian madwoman defies the concept of trauma as an illness by drawing attention to the systemic forms of women’s oppression, especially, to the marginalisation based on a racialised concept of gender. The story demands that one take women’s and children’s traumatisation in the context of family violence as seriously as masculine war trauma (Brown 1995, 100–107). As Ann Cvetkovich (2003, 32) states, such

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a claim rightly dismantles the binary opposition of private and public life by situating violence in the home within the public sphere. Also Barbara Freeman (1995, 128–129) points out, when studying Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved* on black slavery, that making everyday violence visible is a matter of reconstructing a forgotten history from amidst a knowledge which ‘nobody thinks about’ or ‘nobody knows’. This does not, however, imply that silence is to substitute for speech. Rather, it prompts one to retrieve the traces of unspeakable, unspoken experiences which nobody has witnessed, and give them some bearable symbolic form, just as Morgan who is asking:

> Depuis combien de temps est-elle sans mémoire? Quoi dire à la place de ce qu'elle n'aurait pas dit? de ce qu'elle ne dira pas? de ce qu'elle ignore avoir vu? de ce qu'elle ignore avoir eu lieu? à la place de ce qui a disparu de toute mémoire? (VC, 73)

> How long since she lost her memory? how to put into words the things she never said? how to say what she will not say? how to describe the things that she does not know she has seen, the experiences that she does not know she has had? how to reconstruct the forgotten years? (V, 55)

Duras’s project is thus similar to that of Jean Rhys, who creates a missing past for Brontë’s fictional white Creole woman. But Duras foregrounds the anonymity of the Cambodian madwoman so as to highlight the globality of the problems that she wants to portray. As presented elsewhere in this study, since Duras inhabits the voice of the beggar through a narrator, she avoids exerting oppressive pressure on her, although she speaks on the behalf of Cambodians (cf. LaCapra 2004, 138). Rather Duras operates at the same time at two critical levels: while challenging free indirect discourse as a universal representation of the human mind, she explores womanhood in poverty by bringing up women’s suffering from lost maternity and wasted reproduction in the economic disaster of colonised countries. Duras writes on her plan as follows:

> Le Vice-consul débute par l’enfant de quinze ans qui est enceinte, la petite Annamite chassée de chez sa mère et qui tourne dans ce massif de marble bleu du Pursat. […] Je me souviens que j’ai beaucoup de mal à trouver cet endroit-là, cette montagne de Pursat où je n’étais jamais allée. La carte était là sur mon bureau et j’ai suivi les sentiers de la marche des mendians et des enfants aux jambes chassées, sand plus de regard, jetés par leurs mères, et qui mangeaient les ordures. C’était un livre très difficile à faire. Il n’y avait pas de plan possible pour dire l’amplitude du malheur parce qu’il n’y avait plus rien des événements visibles qui l’auraient provoquée. Il n’y avait plus que la Faim et la Douleur. (E, 32–33)

> In the beginning of *Le Vice-consul* there is a fifteen-year-old child who is pregnant, a small Annamian girl whom her mother has expelled from home and who is
wandering around among the blue marble mountains of Pursat. [...] I remember that I had much trouble in finding that place, the Pursat mountain to which I had never been. On my desk there was a map, and I followed the paths where beggars and one-legged children abandoned by their mothers walked with dead eyes, eating waste. That book was hard to write. I could not explain the range of the disaster, for there was nothing of those events which had caused it. Only Hunger and Dolor were left. (Trans. SK)

As can be seen, Duras intends to limit her narrative to the misery of indigenous female outcasts which she witnessed in Indochina during her childhood. Whereas a rich variety of cues in Lol’s story foreground Western middle-class genderisation as a regulative force, the beggar girl’s story is stripped-down from almost all local associations on women’s gendered positioning in relation to the man and family. Saliently, Duras gives no causes for the disaster other than the predicament of ‘hunger’. Instead of alluding to the Cambodian kinship systems which she did not know from within, she focuses on women’s pain as an object of sexual abuse and its consequences. Reflecting extreme poverty, the beggar’s experience of starvation, continual sexual abuse in prostitution, and the ensuing pregnancies is historically plausible, something that, in Gayatry Spivak’s words, belongs to the realm of what ‘could only happen to a woman’ (Spivak 1987, 184). In this light, the missing social context of Duras’s writing does not render an ‘unreal’ political life, or ‘antisocial’ or ‘apolitical’ mode of ‘free individuation’ as Kristeva claims (Kristeva 1987, 143; quoted in Vickroy 2002, 111). Rather, representing an embodied mirroring of the ethnic other’s sensations and feelings, Duras’s madwoman trope underlines the disempowering influence of economic oppression to the development of one’s social agency.

Nevertheless, some studies reduce the beggar girl’s escape as a psychoanalytical drama between mother and daughter in the Oedipal triangle, thereby raising the question of whether Duras’s novel addresses mainly the (transhistorical) separation trauma and absence of the origin (see e.g. Marini 1977, 194–201). Finding this interpretation too narrow, I rather propose that the two historical traumas – falling pregnant through sexual abuse, and being expelled from home – evoke the transhistorical trauma of initiation into sexuality in an exceptionally cruel historical manner. For, whether or not it is rape – a problem as it is not explicated...
the innocent girl is obliged to experience an unwilled pregnancy conceived by a seventeen-year-old fisherman, and then experience extreme hunger and pain in her adolescent body in the desert. Again, reminiscent of Lol’s story, the mother’s behaviour is such that the daughter’s sexual development suffers further serious impairment. Using hunger as her justification, the mother drives the girl away forever with the result that the girl’s future as a social subject is damaged. To posit such a situation brings up a thematic antithesis of postcolonial and feminist importance: whereas Lol’s sexual and social agency is smothered in the enclosure of the Victorian marital institution, the Cambodian girl loses all her family and every cultural bond, which refers to the cultural consequences of imperialist politics. Since the girl has no opportunity for education and work in her own culture, she resorts to the only livelihood available in the colonial misery: begging, stealing, and prostitution. For these reasons, articulating the break of family ties and cultural traditions of the colonised people, the Cambodian madwoman trope does not only manifest the child’s separation from the mother, but points also to the destructive power of colonial exploitation, while the motif of sexual abuse/rape and domestic violence addresses those forms of subordination which befall women everywhere.

However, this madwoman trope does not imply victimisation, as I will show with my discussion. From the beginning, the Cambodian story is pervaded by the figure of ‘savage silence’ (mutisme sauvage), which refers to Duras’s famous concept of the ‘organic night’ (nuit organique) of the female body (Marini 1985, 37). As a sign of total helplessness, silence dominates the girl’s initial accident, for she neither resists being sexually abused nor being expelled. But specifically for Duras, silence acts as the most powerful attribute of women, through which she hopes to penetrate into the depth of an overwhelming social incident that can overtake only a woman. She exemplifies this thought with the fate of an extremely poor, backward French woman in the essay of ‘Le Coupeur d’eau’ (The Cutter-Off of Water) in La Vie matérielle (1987). In despair, the woman kills her two children, husband, and herself after the water is cut off in the heat of summer (VM, 115–116). The example which is based on a newspaper article from 1984 is informative of Duras’s thinking of silence as a mode of talking about unsymbolisable issues. The crucial detail resembling the beggar’s behaviour is that the woman does not argue with the male cutter-off-water for her family’s right to live, but rather goes to the local café and utters a few words to the female café-owner. Duras writes:

_Now I restore the silence in the story between the time the water was cut off and_
the time when she got back from the café. In other words, I restore the profound silence of literature. That's what helps me forward, helps me get inside the story. Without it I'd have to remain outside. She could just have waited for her husband and told him she'd decided they must die. But instead she went into the village and into the café. (VM, 117, PR, 92, emphasis added)

[...]

She must have said something that took the place of her decision; something that was equivalent to it for her and that would be equivalent to it for all people who heard the story. [...]

Those three words, the last before the implementation of her death, were the equivalent of those people's silence all their lives. But no one has remembered what those words were. (VM, 118, PR, 93, emphasis added)

[...]

She knew she couldn't count, now any more than ever, on anyone's helping her and her family out. She knew she was abandoned by everyone, by the whole of society, and that the only thing left for her to do was die. She knew that. It's a terrible, fundamental, awful knowledge. (VM, 119−120, PR, 93−94, emphasis added)

The excerpt reveals an avalanche of disappointment which overrides any language. Being reminiscent of Lol V. Stein's shock which can be expressed only by the seemingly empty 'hole-word', this despair is beyond words, yet saved as anxiety in the embodied memory. It is a crushing blow that can be mediated only by an unconscious dislocation or slippage of meaning which displaces the experience to other verbal or non-verbal signs (Robson 2004, 102, 181). Just as the order to cut off the water shocks the French woman, the mother's rejection shocks the Cambodian girl who automatically obeys the order. Carrying the shock in her bodily and emotional memory, she resigns herself to the fate of becoming one of the thousands of homeless and mute women (VC, 14). This development is construed as a peculiar textual variation of the Bakhtinian chronotope of the 'Way' with help of numerous physical details which establish the lonely madwoman figure as a trope of colonial exploitation. It is a monumental textual exile that meanders through huge austere landscapes, and proceeds through signs that tell as traumatic indices of two historical traumas: women's subordination and colonial disaster. The girl's progress into madness is voiced by a discourse imitating the temporal rhythm of wandering and sleep, day and night, which give a timeless cyclicity to her purposeless exile. Morgan explains:31

Elle marcherait, dit-il, j'insisterai surtout sur cela. Elle, ce serait une marche très longue, fragmentée en des centaines d'autres marches toutes animées du même balancement – celui de son pas – elle marcherait, et la phrase avec elle, elle suivrait une ligne de chemin de fer, une route, elle lasserait – derrière elle qui passe – les bornes fichées en terre qui porteraient des noms, ceux de Mandalay, Prom, Bassein, elle avancerait tournée vers le soleil couchant, à travers cette lumière-ci,

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31 Many studies have exhaustively demonstrated Duras's analogue between walking and writing.
à travers Siam, Cambodge et Birmanie, pays d’eau, de montagnes, dix ans durant et puis à Calcutta elle s’arrêterait. (VC, 179–180)

She will walk’, he says, ‘I shall make a great thing of it. It will be an immensely long trek, broken up into hundreds of days of walking, all pulsating with the same rhythm – the rhythm of her footsteps – she will walk, and the sentence will walk with her footsteps, she will follow a railway line, a road, she will leave – behind her, as she goes – signposts driven into the ground bearing the name of places, Mandalay, Prome, Bassein, moving always towards the setting sun, towards this light here, through Siam, Cambodia, and Burma, the countries of water, of mountains, ten years it will take and then, in Calcutta, she will stop. (V, 144)32

Emplotted around pregnancy, Morgan’s narrative parallels the girl’s internal sensations of the growing foetus and hunger to her external perceptions of the Cambodian country. His manuscript is divided into two parts in relation to the birth of the baby. The first part of the story portrays the journey from Battambang to Savannakhet, and consists of the first, most painful experience of the beggar’s many pregnancies: extreme suffering of hunger and working through the separation from the mother. The latter part starts from the parturition in the desert, and lasts until the delivery of the starving baby to the whites after one year. Through both these parts, the flashbacks of the threatening mother recur, formally imitating Lol’s flashbacks of the ball. However, unlike Lol, the beggar goes through a cavalcade of progressing emotions which culminate in the delivery of the child, which allows me to consider her separation as a mode of grief work. I focus on the textual meanings of the two parts in turn, so as to illuminate how the signs of trauma function, despite all misery, for elaborating a peculiar concept of a non-victimised madwoman. In so doing, I analyse Duras’s writing the female body, however, not as an elitist and undifferentiated mode of white l’écriture féminine, but from within the perspective of a marginalised woman as a demand for every woman’s right for bodily self-determination and autonomy.

Bodily Suffering as a Mode of Resistance

The girl’s panicked escape from Battambang finds a textual outlet in the repetition of words ‘il faut’ which tell of the girl’s fear and helplessness in the situation that she cannot yet understand. They are phrases such as ‘Il faut se perdre’ (One has to vanish), and ‘Il faut être sans arrière-pensée’ (One has to be without thinking) as well as ‘Il faut apprendre’ (One has to learn), and ‘[Il faut] se disposer à ne plus reconnaître rien de ce qu’on connaît’ (One has to refuse to recognise familiar

32 To preserve the rhythm of Duras’s language, I have taken the full stop marks away from the English translation, and added the original hyphens. Moreover, I have preserved the name Siam for Thailand, since Duras herself prefers it.
landmarks), or ‘Il faut insister’ (One has to ask; VC 9–10). In order to keep on walking, she keeps on saying: ‘Je suis trop petite encore, je reviendrai’ (I am still too young, I will come back; VC, 10). She addresses this to the haunting image of the threatening mother when moving in wide circles in the home district and searching for the way to an uncle in the Plain of Birds in order to find work in accordance with her father’s advice (VC, 10). Showing her constant awareness of the odd state of pregnancy, the text focuses on the growing belly and feelings of hunger:

Le ventre s’arrondit. Il tire l’étoffe de la robe qui chaque jour se relève davantage […] Le ventre dans l’étrangeté du pays reste un grain très fin […] L’étrangeté véritable, c’est l’absence de nourriture qui se prolonge. (VC, 15)

Her belly is growing. It draws taut the cloth of her dress and lifts it higher every day […] The texture of her distended belly remains downy and delicate in the strange country […] The strangest thing of all is the absence of nutrition which is prolonged. (cf. V, 6)

These words start the textual moulding of a starving body into an amplified figure of economic oppression. The girl first begs for rice, pig’s bones, and rancid fish (VC, 17). Then she searches for wild rice and mangos while roaming aimlessly about the terrain. However, her stomach cannot bear the raw food. The text focuses on the emaciation of the body:

Elle vomit, s’efforce de vomir l’enfant, de se l’extirper, mais c’est de l’eau de mangue acide qui vient. Elle dort beaucoup, elle est devenue un dormeuse, c’est insuffisant: nuit et jour l’enfant continue à la manger, elle écoute et entend le grignotement incessant dans le ventre qu’il décharne, il lui a mangé les cuisses, les bras, les joues – elle les cherche, il n’y a que des trous là où elles étaient dans le Tonle-Sap –, la racine des cheveux, tout, il prend petit à petit la place qu’elle occupait, cependant que sa faim à elle il ne l’a pas mangée. Le feu acide de l’estomac apparaît comme un soleil rouge pendant le sommeil. (VC, 18)

She vomits, she retches, hoping to bring up the child, to root it up, but all she brings up, is sour mango juice. She sleeps a great deal. She has become a sleeper, but it is not enough: night and day, the child continues to devour her. She feels and hears it nibbling incessantly in her belly. It erodes her body. It devours the flesh of her thighs, her arms, her cheeks. She touches them, and finds hollows where there used to be plumpness in the days of Tonle Sap. The child has devoured everything, even the roots of her hair. Little by little, it is elbowing her out. The only thing it has

[33] Many studies point out the ambiguity of these first thoughts, which can refer to Morgan’s thoughts of his writing. The same ambiguity can be found also elsewhere in the story, especially created by direct questions.

[34] I have translated the passage word for word so as to preserve the original tone and rhythm.
not taken from her is her hunger. During sleep, the corroding acid in the pit of her stomach rises before her like a blazing red sun. (V, 8)

Moreover, as the hunger increases, some very small but clear textual hints begin to include the foetus and underline its status as an outcome of sexual abuse. Taken as a traumatic index, the growing belly points to the (absence of) the sexual abuse (from representation) which the girl does and did not understand (Rothberg 2000, 103–104).\(^3\) Being unavoidably present all the time, the corporeality of the pregnant belly provokes a double horror of death and life: the fear of dying of hunger and killing the unwanted fruit of the intercourse, and the fear of continuing the desperate struggle for life in a hostile environment. This implicit, unequivocal horror is textually displaced into the girl's internal feelings of the foetus incessantly gnawing her aching body from inside like rats in her home cave: 'Elle cherche. Nature donne-moi un couteau pour tuer ce rat.' (She searches. Nature, give me a knife for killing this rat'; VC, 19).

Seen from outside, following the course of a fatal *circulus vitiosus* of malnutrition and pregnancy, the simultaneous wasting and swelling of the girl's belly becomes an analogical landscape of the economic and social exploitation of the country.\(^4\) The metonymic details of the terrain are successively compared to those of the female body, thus pointing to two forms of imbalanced consumption: economic and biological. For example, the bare terrain resembles the girl's naked, atrophic and gum-like skin, and her bald skull from which the hair comes out in handfuls (VC, 17). The fractures and holes in the quarries of the Cardamom Mountains where mine workers labour at exportable marble are like the infected wound in her leg where the worms eventually swarm (VC, 15, 65). Furthermore, fishes seething in the waters are likened to the 'bataille de poissons dans son ventre, jeu sourd et comme gai de l'intolérable enfant' (the fight of fishes in her belly, a dull but somehow joyful play of the intolerable infant; VC, 12). The maternal waters of the lake of Tonle Sap and the River of Stung Pursat simulate the inner space of pregnancy, while the gradual swelling of the body imitates that of the buffaloes in the waters (VC, 12, 13). Compared with Lol's blond and silken beauty, the mother of three children, who lives in abundance, the beggar's dirty body parallels a man-made ecocatastrophy on which that abundance is built. Whereas Lol 'vomits words' about her ancient memories near the place of her rejection, the beggar vomits the nutrition that she painfully needs, as if signaling the aversion of being raped.\(^5\)

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\(^3\) Michael Rothberg (2000, 103–104) defines the traumatic index as an 'effect of the real that points to the real’s foundational absence from representation'. For more of the concept and its double affectivity, see Ch II.

\(^4\) The female body as a metaphor of the colonised land – of the country as a nation – is a traditional literary trope is not enough for Spivak, who searches for more critical alternatives when interpreting Mahasweta Devi’s *Stanadayini* (Spivak 1987, 244). Here the body is compared with the earth in order to emphasise twofold exploitation.

\(^5\) The figure of dual nausea returns in *L’amour* (see next chapter). Earlier psychoanalytical stud-
Modifications of the Madwoman Trope

Indicating ethnic duality, the emancipatory meaning of the madwoman figure resides in this parallelism: finally, just as Lol who due to her immobility becomes ‘une dormeuse debout’ (an upright sleeper, R, 33), the wandering beggar becomes a waking, physical zombie.

What escapes Morgan who defines the beggar’s madness as being the result of hunger, illness, social isolation and heat (VC, 70), is the sexual abuse together with its consequences. As the growing foetus persistently and literally points to the lived violence as a traumatic index, it reveals male insensitivity to the role of prostitution as a traumatising factor in the creation of madness, which Morgan in vain tries to catch (VC, 183). As malnutrition blurs the girl’s bewildered mind, there is a remarkable delay until she can think of the ‘playful’ intercourse from which her catastrophe started. After weeks of wandering, the issue returns as enabled by a vague but significant moment of self-reflexive self-identification, when the girl realises herself to be a dismissed individual of a certain age and sex who tries to understand the factual nature of pregnancy, as follows:38

Elle trouve qu’invisiblement il se passe quelque chose, qu’elle voit mieux le reste qu’avant, qu’elle grandit d’un certain façon comme intérieure. L’obscurité environnante se déchire, s’éclaire. Elle trouve : je suis une jeune fille maigre, la peau de ce ventre se tend, elle commence à craquer, le ventre tombe sur mes cuisses maigres, je suis une jeune fille très maigre chassée qui va avoir un enfant.

Elle dort : je suis quelqu’un qui dort. (VC, 18)

She discovers that, imperceptibly, something happens, that she is beginning to see better than before, that she is growing internally in a certain way. The surrounding darkness tears, clears itself. She thinks: I am a young, thin girl, the skin of this belly is so tense that it will crack, the belly sags above my thin thighs, I am a young, thin girl who has been driven from my home and is going to have a baby.

She sleeps: I am somebody who sleeps. (V, 9)

This short revelation happens at the peak of hunger, when she, crying, vomits blood while her body can no longer digest the raw nutrition of the forest. It reads:

Le feu la réveille, son estomac flambe, c’est du sang qu’elle vomit, ne plus manger

38 I have translated some of the following passages more directly, following the laconic tone of the original text.

La jeune fille est sous la faim trop grande pour elle, elle croit quela vague va être trop forte, elle crie. Elle essaie de ne plus regarder le Stung Pursat. Non, non, je n'oublie pas, je suis ici où sont mes mains. (VC, 18–19)

The fire wakes her up, her belly is in flame, she vomits blood, no more sour mangoes for her, only green rice. She searches. Nature, give me a knife with which to kill this rat. There is nothing in the ground but round pebbles worn smooth by the river. She turns over, poses the belly among the pebbles, the nibbling ceases, ceases, ceases altogether, she is suffocating, she raises herself up, the nibbling starts again.

The young girl’s hunger is too much to her, she thinks that this wave will be too strong, she cries. She tries to keep her eyes away from the Stung Pursat. No, no, I don’t forget, I am here where my hands are. (cf. V, 9–10, trans. SK)

Pawing the soil with hands in search of digestable food, and seeing fishermen going by the cave where she lives, the girl remembers her first sexual experience: ‘Le voisin de la famille avec lequel je suis allée dans la forêt était un pêcheur du Tonle-Sap, je suis trop jeune pour comprendre’ (The neighbour with whom I went to the forest was a fisherman from Tonle-Sap, I am too young to understand, VC, 19–20). The shocking result of the first intercourse is characterised by employing the euphemism of falling from a tree while playing in the forest: ‘[E]lle a été chassé parce qu'elle est tombée enceinte, d’un arbre, très haut, sans se faire de mal, tombée enceinte’ (She has been driven away for she has fallen pregnant from a great height, from the top of the tree, painlessly, fallen pregnant, VC, 20). Typical of rape narratives, the litotetic image understates the abusive nature of the incident, which remains off-centre and is conveyable merely through two dislocations: between the words such as ‘falling’ and ‘pregnant’, and between the incomprehensible experience and words (Robson 2004, 102–103). But at the same time the understatement reveals the man’s unconcern of the possible pregnancy, a problem which is typically left as the women’s own responsibility. When the pregnant girl submits herself to

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39 The gesture of searching for food recurs in Morgan’s ignorant observation of the ‘mad’ woman of the Ganges, who paws the soil with hands. He interprets this activity as a sign of insanity and not that of poverty and hunger (VC, 182).

40 As Kathryn Robson explains how physical and sexual abuse in childhood is inscribed in women’s writing, she refers to Tali Kal’s important note on two forms of dislocation when narrativising trauma: the dislocation between the words and experience — an invisible disjuncture between meanings when the traumatised person uses a term such as ‘terror’ — and the dislocation of meaning within language, that is, between signifiers (Robson 2004, 102).
the fishermen in the cave, a few laconic sentences reveal her collision with the bare truth: she has to save herself and the baby from dying by accepting the abusive objectification of her female sex, as follows:

Un pêcheur est entré dans la carrière, puis un autre. Ils cognent contre l'enfant, ce rat, il faudra bien qu'il sorte. Avec l'argent des pêcheurs, a plusieurs reprises elle va à Pursat, elle achète du riz, le fait cuire dans un boîte de conserves, ils lui donnent des allumettes, elle mange du riz chaud. L'enfant est près d'être achevé. La faim des premiers jours ne reviendra jamais. (VC, 23)

A fisherman comes to the gravel pit, then another. They pound against the child, that rat, it would be fine if it would come out of there. With the money she gets from the fishermen, she goes several times to Pursat, she buys rice, cooks it in an old tin can, they give her matches, she eats hot rice. The child is almost full-grown. The hunger of the first days never returns. (cf. V, 12, modified by SK)

The awkward portrayal of the physical abuse is the start of the prolonged prostitution. As turned up on a vicious cycle of hunger and repetitive pregnancies, prostitution is semiotised as a general signifier of oppression of the female subaltern. Like thousands of female outcasts, the young woman earns her living by prostituting herself for ten years, and leaves the coming babies dying at the mercy of the desert. The death of the newborn children repeats the lengthy portrayal of Un barrage contre le Pacifique (1950, 115–118) which, in hyperbolic fashion, foregrounds the wasted reproductive faculty of women in former colonised countries. In the new form of Le Vice-consul, the morbid reproductive cycle of the beggar amounts to a symbol of sexual exploitation, which her anonymous intimacy underlines. The Cambodian madwoman's body thus figures a tragic key coincidence of the historical, socio-economic trauma and the structural, biological trauma of the female sex. Therefore the literary emphasis of women's sexual subjugation poses the question of a profound cultural re-evaluation of reproduction in resolving human demographic crises. Adapting Spivak, the female reproductive faculty and mothering should be understood in terms of production as to concede women's embodied specificity in producing socio-economic and cultural value (Spivak 1987, 248–249). Such a reformulation of female gender increases awareness of women's key position in managing the growth of a population, echoed in the figure of the Cambodian madwoman's repetitive but useless pregnancies.

Another relevant point to the metaphorical meaning of prostitution is evoked by Barbara Freeman's study of the female body as a mode of 'the sublime', which takes a critical attitude to Kant's immaterial 'das Erhabene', and emphasises a

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41 This passage of Un barrage was negatively criticised at the time of its publication in the fifties, which, again, points to an unconscious defence against the Western man-made misery of the indigenous 'other' (cf. Winston 2001, 30–40).
woman’s body as a site of unsymbolisable knowledge. As an example, Freeman takes Sethe’s thick, insensitive scars in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* as mute signs pointing to the history of black slavery. This reminds me of Spivak’s interpretation of Draupadi, the title character of Mahasweta Devi’s Bengalian novel. Spivak characterises Draupadi’s naked, inactive and raped body as a ‘superobject of (re)search’, at once a ‘palimpsest’ and a ‘contradiction’ (Spivak, 1987, 184). But whereas Draupadi is a female partisan who is raped during war, the Cambodian beggar is a helpless outcast whose iterative and unwilled pregnancies point as mute signs to women’s sexual subalternisation. This does not imply, however, that the Cambodian madwoman personifies victimisation. Rather, she is an anti-heroine who, signifying the female sublime as an inseparable nearness of life and death, engenders a strong metaphysical sense of corporeal life on the border of mortality.

**Towards Forgetting and Freedom**

The beggar’s gradual separation from the mother takes place through a cavalcade of traumatic flashbacks, which unfold from her escape until the delivery of the child. Signifying a restructuration of emotion, the recurring image of the mother indicates a progress from fear through hatred to sorrow. This appears to represent a typical integrative mode of working through loss – which Lol’s re-enactment does not bring to an end – originating from two intertwining traumas, that of having an unwanted baby, and that of being rejected by the mother, which eventually merge in the figure of giving the baby away. The visual memories are combined with the girl’s inner dialogue with the mother’s figure, at first expressing fear and humbleness, as follows:

*Dans le sommeil, la mère, une trique à la main, la regarde: Demain au lever du soleil, va-t-en, vieille enfant enceinte qui viellira sans mari, mon devoir est envers les survivants qui un jour, eux, nous quitteront … va-t-en loin… en aucun cas tu ne dois revenir … aucun… va-t-en très loin, si loin qu’il me soit impossible d’avoir de l’endroit où tu seras la moindre imagination… prosternez-vous devant votre mère et va-t-en. (VC, 10)*

*In her sleep, she sees her mother standing over her, brandishing a cane: Tomorrow,*

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42 Spivak analyses Draupadi’s public nakedness as a gesture of political resistance, which marks the boundary of male leadership, and acts as a proof of male power in war raging within a culture. The indirect neglect of the Cambodian beggar’s autonomy in the determining of her right over her own body can be paralleled to this abuse as a sign pointing to the structural violence of colonialism.

43 This progress is reminiscent of emotional restructuration which is a decisive part of an effective working-through since it facilitates the survivor to adopt in memory a more powerful emotional position in relation to the perpetrator (Smucker et al. 2003).
at sunrise, you must go. You, my child, being with a child, are old. You have no husband. You will grow old alone. My duty is to the younger ones who, in their turn, will also leave us. Go. Go far. You must never come back. Never. Go very far, so far that it will be impossible for me even to imagine the place where you are. Pay your respects. Prostrate yourself before your mother, and go. (V, 2)

The dialogue with the mother is repeated some ten times in the course of wandering, while the recurring dreams and hallucinations keep the emotional progress in motion. When the feeling of the devouring fetus overwhelms the girl from inside, the initial fear turns to hate against the mother, ’that ignorant peasant’ and ’author of all [her] misery’ (VC, 20, 25). The inner speech with the mother expresses bitter feelings of the exile and the impossibility of being released from the predicament of hunger and pregnancy:

Les explosions des carrières et celles des corbeaux, je te les raconterai peut-être un jour, car je te reverrai, J’ai l’âge de te revoir et puisque nous sommes en vie toi et moi? A qui d’autre que toi raconter, qui m’écoutera et qui ça intéressera que la nourriture absente je la préfère à toi maintenant? […] Elle deviendra pour lui dire, à cette ignare qui l’a chassée : Je t’ai oubliée. (VC, 20)

One day, perhaps, I shall describe to you the explosions in the quarries, and the crows scattering in the sky. For I shall see you again. I must, since we are both living, you and I, and I have a lifetime before me. Who else but you should hear the tale I have to tell? Who else does it concern that now I long for the food I cannot have more than I long for you? […] One day she will go back and say that ignorant peasant who drove her out: I have forgotten you. (V, 10–11)

Being an adaptive and empowering psychic reaction to the rejection, the verbalised anger in the passage equates the absent mother with absent nutrition in a burst of hostility towards the imagined perpetrator. When searching for the place where she would give birth to the baby, the girl – now becoming a young woman – puts the blame for the accident on the mother, and expresses a hope of a new beginning:

Elle part, elle part pour chercher un endroit où le faire, un trou, quelqu’un qui le prenne à son arrivée et le sépare complètement, elle cherche sa mère fatiguée qui la chassée. Sous aucun prétexte tu ne dois revenir. Elle ne savait pas, cette femme, elle ne savait pas tout, mille kilomètres de montagnes, ce matin, ne m’empêcheraient pas de te rejoindre, innocente, dans ta stupéfaction tu oublieras de me tuer, sale femme, cause de tout, je te rendrai cet enfant et toi tu le prendras, je le jetterai vers toi et moi je me sauverai pour toujours. (VC, 25)

She moves on, seeking a birthplace for the child, a hole somewhere, searching for someone, to take up the child when it is born, and sever it from her completely, she seeks her worn-out mother who drove her from home. On no account are you
to come back, ever. That woman did not know, she did not know everything, a thousand kilometres of mountains, nothing can stop me from coming back to you today, innocently, you will be too stupefied and forget to kill me, dirty woman, the cause of everything, I shall bring this child back to you, and you will take it, I shall throw it at your feet and run away, never to return. (V, 13–14)

The expressed defiance in memory discharges the hatred for the cruel fate. Arguing against the mother's will in an imagined act of mirroring, the beggar wants to 'return her this child', thereby voicing ambiguously her own painful wish to be herself returned to the mother as a child, and to make the whole situation undone by freeing herself from being a mother:

Elle a peur. La mère fatiguée la regardera venir depuis la porte de la paillote. La fatigue dans le regard de sa mère: Encore en vie, toi que je croyais morte? La peur la plus forte, c'est celle-là, son air lorsqu'elle regardera s'avancer son enfant revenue.

Tout un jour, elle hésite. Dans un abri de gardiens de buffles, sur la rive du lac, elle reste sous le regard, arrêtée.

[...] Ah! Sa mère ignore qu'elle a le droit? Eh bien, elle va l'apprendre. Elle lui interdira d'entrer, un bâton à la main, celle qui se souviendra. Mais cette fois, attention à toi.

La revoir et repartir dans la mousson. Lui rendre cet enfant. (VC, 26)

She is frightened. The tired mother watches her from the door of the straw hut. That look of utter weariness on her mother's face: still alive? I thought you must be dead. That is the thing she dreads most of all, the look in her mother's eyes, when she sees her banished child coming back towards her.

For a whole day she hesitates. Sheltering in a herdsman's hut on the lake shore, paralysed by that reproachful look.

[...] Oh! her mother ignores that it is her right? If not, she will soon learn. With a cane in her hand, she will refuse to let her in, though she will recognise her. But this time, watch out for yourself.

To see her once more, then vanish into the monsoon. To render up the child to her. (V, 14, modified by SK)

The emotional bond with the mother is breaking down towards the parturition. The coming detachment is represented by dislocating the felt mixture of feelings – in the way of cathexis – to the children's song from Battambang which, taking the place of a transition object, remains the only persistent sign from the beggar's family background, as the following passage strongly indicates:

Dans la lumière bouillante et pâle, l'enfant encore dans le ventre, elle s'éloigne, sans crainte. Sa route, elle est sûre, est celle de l'abandon définitif de sa mère. Ses yeux pleurent, mais elle, elle chante à tue-tête un chant enfantin de Battambang. (VC, 28)
In white, searing light, with the child still in her belly, she goes further, fearlessly. Her way, she knows, will be that of the mother's definitive abandonment. Her eyes are crying, but she, she is singing at the top of her voice a children's song of Battambang.

The name of Battambang is all that is left of the beggar's own language. It is a powerful, multi-dimensional traumatic index which returns throughout the interior story of Le Vice-consul. Similar to the song of the 'hole-word' in Loï's story, 'Battambang' points to the absence of trauma from historical representation. The name has a tone of a tight drum like the pregnant belly, which accentuates the bodily rhythm of walking away from the rejecting mother: ‘− Battambang. Les trois syllabes sonnent avec la même intensité, sans accent tonique, sur un petit tambour trop tendu. Baattamambbanangg’ (Battambang. All three syllables boom with the same intensity, without accent, as though rapped out on an over-stretched tambourine. Baattamambbanangg. VC, 21; V, 11). In Eelco Runia's terms, ‘Battambang' is a historical metonymy that has the power to carry a plenitude of meanings as a 'stowaway' into the present, which every reader may wordlessly interpret in accordance with her/his own meanings emerging from individual experience (Runia 2006, 1). As an ubiquitous traumatic index, 'Battambang' evokes the beggar's bitter loss of home in all its historical and cultural meanings, while it points to the absence of all that is loving, lovable, and safe from her presence. Gradually, through creative repetition, ‘Battambang' and its cyclic song begin to signify an ecological victory over shock and despair. Moreover, in Duras's subversive script, the word is emptied from all meanings for the forgetful beggar, thus becoming a sign without signified on the fictional level. For an empathic reader, 'Battambang' keeps this triple content which is echoed every time the heroine utters this empty signifier of her ‘memoire blanchie'.

The birth of the child leads to a controversial denouement of the story, which emphasises women's cooperation over ethnic and social boundaries. It happens in a cave with the help of an old indigenous woman, who tells the girl that white people take starving children into their care. One year later, the scene of the delivery begins as a prolonged drama in the street, and ends up with a visual exchange between both sides of the window of the white family's villa. The receiver is a white lady who, under the insistent demand of her small daughter, eventually makes a positive decision and takes the dying baby into the house (VC, 59).

44 In a chiastic form, the song presents the buffalo as a symbol of cyclic change in Nature where birth and death coexist in eternal circle: ‘Chant joyeux de battambang qui dit le buffle mangera l’herbe mais qu’à son tour l’herbe mangera le buffle lorsque l’heure sonnera.’ (The joyful song of Battambang, which proclaims that the buffalo will eat the grass, while the grass in its turn, when the time is ripe, will swallow up the buffalo. VC, 58, V 43).

45 The persistence of the little white girl is connected with the idea of the goodness of God: ‘Nothing to fear: the white child of the white lady wills it. God will it’ (VC, 59). When the baby is inside the room of the whites, it is the 'little white children' who make God exist (VC 60–61).
the baby in the lighted room is seen from the outside focalisation of the beggar girl, whose perceptions are accompanied by the repetitive thoughts of her own, threatening mother. At first they evoke her own painful loss: ‘The mother, thin and furious, reduces her memory to ashes with one searing blow’ (VC, 64), but towards the end of the episode, they show sorrow, though bitter fear: ‘How late she will be getting back to her mother, how late getting home [...] to be beaten by her mother, to be beaten to death’ (VC, 67). Being ambiguously parallel to Lol’s erotic ‘cinema’, the motif of the lighted window serves here for a frame of feeding, cleaning and medicating the dying baby surrounded by white children. The minor common denominator between these two scenes is a silent visual exchange galvanised by strong emotions. Adapted into quite a different situation, the motif of affective watching those who are ‘inside’, again, portrays the difficulty of an impossible detachment, but now from the economically fortunate ones who, in the frame story, enjoy ‘excellent nutrition’ (VC, 184).

Ironically, malnutrition and illness force the beggar to repeat her mother’s deed and give away the new daughter, which completes the final separation. But the figure of giving the baby away also carries with it contradictory meanings as did the period of pregnancy. For one thing, since it is hunger that lies at the root of the original rejection, the incident does not merely signify an obsessive repetition of the universal (transhistorical) trauma of separation, or a psychic transhistorical trauma, but is a literal historical trauma which arches over generations due to the socio-economic catastrophe of colonialism. For another, to give away the unwilled fruit of the sexual abuse is a gesture of resistance to this abuse. But the delivery also has a third, more positive implication, which does not, either, point to an automatic repetition: it saves the dying baby. This gesture makes the delivery a sign of survival, which transcends the economical abyss between colonial and colonised women and brings their shared womanhood into being. As presented elsewhere in this study, Duras’s embodied self includes a sensitive talent for resonating with the other’s emotions, intentions and feelings, in this case, those ensuing from overwhelming loss. This faculty can produce an imagined, yet faithful report of a fictional person’s emotional progress with traumatic flashbacks. But ambiguously, as Duras inscribes her own female self-experience of sex, gender, and trauma into Morgan’s story, there is a persistent epistemological gap in her/his Western narration: that of an authentic experience in context-specific human relations. While the story does not lack knowledge of pregnancy, hunger, and pain, it fundamentally lacks the specificity of the experiential knowledge felt and processed through a Cambodian female person and, as Trinh T. Minh-ha would say, Oriental metaphysics (1991, 66).

Since this event is based on Duras’s childhood memory of a beggar selling a dying newborn to her mother, herself being the insistent white daughter, the allusion to God reflects anxiety and helplessness, but can also be understood as an ironical postcolonial comment on white supremacy (Barat & Farges, 1975, 84–85; quoted in Marini 1977, 142).
To sum up, both narratives of Durasian madwomen bring together similar structural elements of historical trauma: rejection, exile, repetition of flashbacks and forgetting. Despite the analogy of these thematic structures, a blatant opposition of cultural factors delineating the two portrayals contribute to the Durasian trope of unreason. Whereas Lol’s withdrawal hides a mental famine in the desert of mechanised bourgeois habits, the beggar’s exile is typified by permanent physical needs. Complementary as they are, these strategies of isolation form a madwoman figure for whom any other social agency is neglected but that of an outsider. With a foregrounded feature of mute avoidance, the dual trope of the madwoman manages to challenge women’s silent complicity to patriarchal marginalisation. Lol, who remains in the state of ‘not being [mentally, sexually] there’, escapes the crushing power of rejection by retreating into a timeless sphere of an imagined menage à trois. In contrast, the beggar’s random exile unveils a grief work which allows her to reject the original rejection. Yet, each woman lives a kind of non-life in social oblivion crystallised by Duras’s famous expression ‘death in life’, thereby defying victimisation on behalf of individual social agency (VC, 174). Moreover, since the two survival strategies are economically asymmetrical, they act together as a critique of material colonialisation. In this manner, Duras’s madwoman trope approaches the selective amnesia of collective and public history by addressing something that the white characters of the frame story – and we – do not want to remember, and what history elides: the different and heterogeneous ‘other’ as a unique self.

In the Madwoman’s Land: L’amour

In the intertextual frame of the India Cycle, L’amour appears as an important text that evolves the Durasian madwoman trope into a powerful emblem of a traumatised psyche. While the preceding two novels, Le ravissement and Le Vice-consul, guide the reader into the anonymous madwoman’s uncanny world, the film script of La Femme du Gange and the play India Song give valuable information about L’amour’s plot and casting. By expanding its drama, and naming the characters, these sequels strengthen this enigmatic work’s position as an important semiotic link between the novels and films. Typical of L’amour’s exegesis until now is that most studies content themselves with decoding its linguistic and narrative properties. However, being alerted by the extreme stylisation of the work, some researchers ponder the questions of its plausible allegorical nature and emblematic meanings (Hill 1993, McNeece 1996). These analyses are a fruitful starting point for the exploration of the problem of madness as forgetting, in what follows.

Drawing mainly on the script of La Femme du Gange with some allusions to the play India Song, I will read L’amour intertextually as an allegorisation of
the madwoman's psyche.\textsuperscript{46} In my view, as \textit{L'amour} completes the progress of the traumatic re-enactment outlined in Lol's story, it ends the survivors' storyline by portraying the rejected heroine's final psychic state as a literal drama, but also elevates its meanings onto a metaphorical, emblematic level. Reading the cycle in this fashion demonstrates the reversibility of the works' circularity, and enhances the semantic richness of the former works. A subsidiary advantage is that Duras's aesthetic intentions are clearly revealed in the three-piece cluster of \textit{théâtre-text-film}.\textsuperscript{47} Thus \textit{L'amour} amounts to a peculiar form of a postmodernist allegorisation, where the semantic and stylistic content amalgamate and the alleged boundaries between historical and transhistorical trauma tend to dissolve.

As I have proposed until now in this chapter, the double story of rejected heroines uses the female body as a mute repository of traumatic knowledge. Elaborating on this theme, \textit{L'amour} combines the figures of Lol V. Stein and the Cambodian beggar into a nameless madwoman, an 'elle', who moves in an onerific seaside resort called S. Thala in relation to two men, a madman (\textit{fou}) and a traveller (\textit{voyageur}), each referred to as an 'il'. Duras points out that the mad heroine of \textit{L'amour} does not represent the indigeneous beggar woman, but is rather to be understood as Lol's later incarnation, confirmed also in \textit{La Femme du Gange} (P, 69; FG, 101, 109). However, resembling an unattainable sleepwalker to a greater degree than her two predecessors, the new heroine features one central attribute of the beggar, that of being continually pregnant, which can be understood both as a physical and an imagined condition (A, 34). She is watched over by a reticent madman who stands for what is left of Jacques Hold, Lol's narrator-lover, which brings his secondary traumatisation under further investigation (FG, 101, 146).\textsuperscript{48} His continual walking in the deserted terrain reproduces the Cambodian beggar's rhythmic wandering as an imitation of writing. Moreover, the traveller is a later version of Lol's fiancé, Michael Richardson, who returns as a suicidal perpetrator to the place of Lol's trauma after seventeen years (A, 75, 116). Refiguring radically the former erotic triangles of Lol's story, these three persons move in relation to each other in a slowly progressing drama related by a hardly discernible implicit

\textsuperscript{46} In \textit{La Femme du Gange}, Duras brings together the two storylines of the India Cycle. The most important aesthetic innovation of the complicated film is the female voice-over (P, 69−70; WW, 46). Here I will refer only to those characters of Lol's story which are present both in \textit{La Femme du Gange} and \textit{L'amour}, while the soundtrack of \textit{La Femme du Gange} will be discussed in connection with the film \textit{India Song} in Ch. VI.

\textsuperscript{47} The play \textit{India Song} does not add much to the emplotment of \textit{La Femme du Gange}, but rather elaborates its timeless sound world to greater effect.

\textsuperscript{48} As the script of \textit{La Femme du Gange} indicates, although the madman is never called Jacques Hold, he acts as a witness for Lol's fate. The text states that he has 'never stopped being present in S. Thala, Lol's film begins again with him in S. Thala' (FG, 146). Duras précises this by saying: 'Il est poreux, le Fou. Il n’est rien, donc les choses le traversent, complètement. Donc l’histoire de S. Thala le traverse.' (The madman is porous. He is nothing, that is, the things cross him, completely. That is, the story of S. Thala crosses him. L., 96; Grobbel 2004, 170 n41).
Modifications of the Madwoman Trope

narrator. This textual scope gives direct insight into the universe of Lol's madness, which represents for me a separate possible world with highly subversive values different from those of the preceding novels.

Together, L'amour and La Femme du Gange conclude the motif of unreason by condensing it in a figure of forgetting called ‘memoire blanchie’ (blank memory; Armel 1994, 17) or ‘mémoire de l'oubli’ (the memory of forgetting; Gamoneda Lanza 1994, 191). According to Duras, she continued Lol's story because the readers of Le ravissement could not attain the message of the novel. Despite the fact that Lacan's (1965) Freudian explanation of Lol's psychopathology gained acceptance from even Duras herself, she wanted to make Lol's fate as a madwoman more conceivable, and changed style for the sake of the content (see P, 160–161; L 98–101). This highlights the growing importance of a renewed poetics for her artistic work from 1968 onwards. When the ideas of liberty and equality soon after the events of May 1968 shattered, it compelled Duras to banish all previous literary models for a direct authorial word (Pierrot 1986, 268–271; Bakhtin 1981, 45). Written in a desperate mood against her former literary self which Duras wanted to forget, L'amour allegorises the political disappointment by its deserted landscape of destructed memory, which tells of an increasing intention to portray marginalisation and suffocation (Adler 2000, 274–275). But if Duras's own loss of communality is epitomised in L'amour’s ironical setting, the work also precipitates her cyclic aesthetics by bringing the story of rejected heroines to an end, which guides her towards the discovery of the timeless female voices of La Femme du Gange and India Song/Son nom de Venise.

The highlighted laconicity of L'amour depicts Lol's later psychic condition in the guise of an anonymous madwoman. The new style is crystallised in the word ‘ignorance’, Duras’s feminist incentive for writing since this period (Cohen 1993, 50–51).

49 Armel (1994, 17) quotes Hélène Cixous’s definition of Duras’s ‘art of poverty’, which prompts Michel Foucault to identify Duras’s and Maurice Blanchot’s discourses as a ‘memory totally purged of any remembrance’ and a ‘memory of a memory’, ‘effacing each remembrance, indefinitely’. (Michel Foucault and Hélène Cixous: Apropos de Marguerite Duras, in Cahiers Renaud-Barrault, No 89, octobre 1975, 10; translated in Grobbel 2004, 153).

50 During the period of political demonstrations, Duras’s activity in the Comité d’Action étudiants-écrivains had been – idealistically and romantically – for ‘anonymous, non-proprietorial collectivity’ and ‘absolute refusal as the only valid form of political resistance’ (Hill 1993, 8–9). She longed to convey texts outside traditional genres and without her male partners’ commentary (Adler 2000, 277). Yet, writing L’amour was not like the unconscious flow while writing Le ravissement but reflects a mental crisis (ibid., 282; L, 90).

51 It is as if Duras’s reluctance – signaling fear of her own madness – to approach directly the traumatised object had subsided. The years from 1969 to 1971 mark Duras’s development from metanarration to dramatic expression, and herald her dedication to film-making for ten years (see Adler 2000, 278–282).

52 Duras herself states that the title L’amour is an ironic comment on commodified, romantic love. The irony is that no one in S. Thala loves anyone else any longer with a passion represented by the classics of French realism (P, 140).
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Fictionalising Trauma

Without any forethought or plan, *Lamour* draws systematically from a ‘darkness’, thus experimenting with women’s ways of finding their own voice. As Duras states: ‘C’est en fait ma seule préoccupation: la possibilité d’être capable de perdre la notion de son identité’ (It is in fact my sole preoccupation: the possibility to lose the notion of one’s identity; Gamoneda Lanza 1994, 185). This deliberate indulging in subconscious meanings created the nightmarish atmosphere of *Lamour*: a confusing mixture of condensations and displacements eliciting a surreal universe full of polysemous signs. The recognisable cultural context is swept away, the protagonists are reduced to mere pronouns, and their interaction is reduced to minimal gestures and movements in a deserted land where only the rhythm of natural elements punctuates the flow of time. Like Beckett’s last plays, *L’Amour’s* overlapping form and content contaminate the reader, being inextricable from each other (McNeece 1985, 72). Viewing this absurd drama as replacing Lol’s former re-enactment of trauma makes me ask whether its literal level offers a good enough sense by itself, or is there a doubleness of intention which would make the verbalisation of trauma ‘richer and more interesting’ (Fletcher 1964, 7; cf. Quilligan 1979, 28). Since an allegorical reading conveys another, secondary world alongside the literal one, my question is: how does *Lamour*, being a continuation of Lol’s story, point to emblematic meanings in terms of trauma and madness, for example, to the socio-political discrimination of women, and/or the failure of romantic love?

In her examination of the modern theories of allegory, Lynette Hunter sums up the idea accepted by many theorists that reading a literary work as an allegory is a matter of stance. She concludes, ‘if once you make a decision to read actively you enter the allegorical, but if you make no decision, you enter fantasy by default’ (Hunter 1989, 140). Such reading involves the original Greek hypothesis of a doubleness of meaning levels in allegory – literal and emblematic – the emblematic meaning pointing to an ‘other’ (*allos*) world which is not possible to express in public for some reason (ibid.). However, a number of studies exploring the elusive meanings of the ‘difficult’ work of *Lamour* do not even try to decipher its fantastic

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53 McNeece (1985, 72) compares *Lamour’s* atmosphere to the Heideggerian ‘thrownness’ characteristic of Beckett’s plays, and interprets this as being evoked by the ‘centrifugal tendency’ of the story which has no narrator or centre, and which lacks any ‘coherent historical background’.

54 Besides the two ontologically different meaning levels, Maureen Quilligan (1979, 28) includes in the linguistic identification marks of allegory the surreal, absurd surface of the text. However, she emphasises that reading this surface ‘vertically’ in relation to some ‘deep’, emblematic meaning is not in the core of allegory, which rather works horizontally, with criss-crossing intertextual references, from which the reader may create the emblematic meaning.

55 Hunter’s presentation includes the theories of allegory developed by Angus Fletcher, Edwin Honig, Maureen Quilligan, Gay Clifford, with some remarks by way of Paul de Man and Walter Benjamin. She specifies the main points of allegory on which these experts agree.

56 See also Fletcher 1964, 2, Flores 1996, 4–5.
Modifications of the Madwoman Trope

As an exception, Pierrot evokes the idea of *Lamour* as a 'scene of a mental theatre', and not that of a realistic life (Pierrot 1986, 245). The most thorough narratological research is made by Lucy McNeece, who extensively specifies the dramatic devices and linguistic attributes of *L'Amour* in Lacanian terms. McNeece (1985, 78, 80) incidently characterises the work's desperate atmosphere as the thematic climax of Lol's storyline, which mediates the content by a timeless geometrical abstraction of ritual movements pointing to some 'absent story' that 'projects the conflict onto the mind of the reader'. She reads *Lamour* as a collapse of language and representation through recurring negations of 'flat' characters, thus suggesting an interplay of literal and metaphorical levels of meaning (ibid., 92–95). Promisingly, she finds the usual 'accessory elements' of the setting – sand, sea, light and sounds – 'inverting the hierarchy of elements', yet, she does not specify their emblematic role in the drama (ibid., 72). Later, McNeece characterises *Lamour* as a radical commentary on the Western commercial love (1996, 75) and a doubly deceptive postcolonial allegory in Homi Bhabha's terms (ibid., 76, 80).

In the light of the protean generic nature of allegory, *Lamour* is an exceptional solution to the formal problem of narrativising trauma (cf. Fletcher 1964, 3–7). Apposite to my purpose, Mihai Spariosu's postmodernist proposal of an allegorical discourse as a 'doublespeak' is reminiscent of Caruth's definition of trauma.68 Spariosu sums up:

> The history of the use of the term shows that allegorical discourse may appear, as a rule, under two interrelated circumstances: when the wealth of experience is felt to be so overwhelming that it can only be dealt with on several levels or a multiplicity of dimensions, and this we may term the pluralistic use of allegory; and when what is felt as truth is, for some reason, unreachable, inaccessible or elusive. Because of its double structure of openness and closure, which necessarily implies ambiguity, allegory may also be put to what may be termed a totalitarian use, especially in political discourse. […] In a totalitarian context, then, allegory returns to its concrete etymological meaning of the discourse of the other, or what is not or cannot be spoken of in the agora or out in the open. (Spariosu 1987, 60–61, emphasis original)

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58 As Spariosu analyses George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, he characterises the hermeneutic practice of the ‘science of interpretation’ as ‘doublespeak’ in Orwell’s words (1987, 60–61).

59 As Spariosu explains, after a long period of devaluation among the means of expression, allegory regained some of its cultural prestige in the modernist period in ironic and parodic forms. Yet, the reading of postmodern literature renewed the perspective by claiming that all discourse was allegorical, and, as a reaction, a non-allegorical world of simulacra was postulated by postmodern literature. The most extreme theorist of postmodern allegory is Paul de Man whose theory of deconstruction does not allow any referentiality for allegory (Spariosu 1987, 60–61; about the
Both of these cases – an experience too overwhelming to be verbalised, and that of an unreachable truth – bring to mind the unsayable nature of a traumatic experience. In Spariosu’s vein, I read *L'amour’s* dream-like drama as an allegorical discourse which mediates Lol’s state of madness by furnishing the metonymical signs with emblematic meanings beyond the literal ones, thus giving this discourse of forgetting a semiotic excess. Having several advantages, such an insight does not only facilitate an understanding of Lol’s final condition but also uncovers the subversive meaning of Duras’s madwoman trope. It is also consistent with my former readings of Durasian ‘madness’ in that it locates *L'amour’s* discursive world in the realm of rationality as a potent social refusal, instead of interpreting its illogical features as signs of a clinical mental illness. Allegorical reading as a ‘doublespeak’ as well revives the most intriguing dilemma of narrativising trauma: the question of the literality of traumatic images and their imaginative reformulation. This duality produces a continual allegorical wavering between the meanings of two possible worlds within the same work: a ‘rational’ world where Lol encounters her two lovers at once, and an ‘irrational’ world conditioned by her idiomorphic way of experiencing reality, in which both these men are immersed.

**A Universe of Despair: The Perpetrator’s Return**

Admitting an allegorical status for *L'amour*, both Hill (1993) and McNeece (1996) categorise it as a metatext or metacommentary on *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*. However, when speaking of its ‘pseudo-colonial’ (Hill) or ‘postcolonial’ (McNeece) world, neither of them outlines this seemingly illogical drama as progressing between the ‘elle’ and the two ‘ils’ in a consistent emotional exchange with the key polarities of Nature. Hill aptly states that *L'amour*’s new location, S. Thala, is emblematic in relation to the places of its precursor, *Le ravissement.* But while his idea of metonymical displacement between these locations is worthy of development, Hill’s short review of this apocalyptic ‘derelict Babylon’ passes over some crucial details, thus giving place for a precision of the inherent logic of the madwoman’s world (ibid.; A, 106). Similarly, when McNeece returns to *L'amour* in 1996 under the provocative title ‘Eyeless in Gaza’, she defines it as a

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60  Hill (1993, 80) compares the relationship between these two fictional worlds with that between the fictional world of *Le ravissement* and the historical writing place of the novel, Trouville. The comparison outlines a chain between separate ontological worlds, where some key elements of the former world become the setting of the next one.

61  Hill (1993, 80) compares the relationship between these two fictional worlds with that between the fictional world of *Le ravissement* and the historical writing place of the novel, Trouville. The comparison outlines a chain between separate ontological worlds, where some key elements of the former world become the setting of the next one.

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For Hill, *L'amour* presents a world turned inside out’, while there ‘[m]emory is […] externalised and projected onto the outside environment’ (1993, 80–81). Similarly, Gamoneda Lanza (1994, 184) defines that a ‘fusion d’ordre métaphorique entre l’intériorité des corps et l’extériorité’ (a fusion of a metaphorical order between the inside of the body and the outside world) is inscribed in *L'amour*, among others.
‘failure as a love story’ and a ‘shadow (re)play’ of Lol’s earlier betrayal’ (McNeece 1996, 80). She rightly states that _L’amour_ reorganises our ‘habits of perception and their corresponding epistemological categories’, and promisingly proclaims to read the text as a twofold allegory of Western alienation: that of ‘colonialist order’, and that of Lol’s madness (ibid., 77). However, leaving the theoretical problems of allegorisation untouched, McNeece does not ground these ideas with her excellent close reading of 1985. These discoveries prompt me to study the laws and values of _L’amour’s_ universe of madness through the interaction of its metonymic elements, which create a mythical logics between the outer world and the inner world of the madwoman (Gamondeda Lanza 1994, 184). To attain the emblematic meanings of the work, I first account for _L’amour’s_ plot − what happens literally to the madwoman and men − and then move to specify its symbolism evoked by its intricate figurative discourse.

_L’amour_ begins with one sole word ‘Une homme’ (a man), which announces the traveller’s arrival in S. Thala, the location of Lol’s trauma. The place is a phantasmatic variation of T. Beach, the name being modified of her home town, S. Tahla. At the core of this seaside resort, there is the casino where Lol was rejected. Being the ‘man who regards’, the traveller finds an autistic woman and a madman living outside on the shore62. The deranged female figure gradually appears to be Lol, while the traveller is identified as Lol’s fiancé who returns to the scene of their breakup after seventeen years (A, 116–117). The text also drops subtle hints of the madman’s role as Lol’s former narrator-lover, Hold. Proceeding in a wave-like crescendo, a slow but definitive progress can be discerned in the relationships between these three characters, expressed with an elastic geometric triangle between them. The men are typified by the manner in which they move, the madman walking with regular, mechanical steps, and the traveller with the uncertain steps of a newcomer, while the Lol-figure who is hardly aware of her surrounding either sleeps in the sand or suffers attacks of nausea. This configuration invokes the formation of a new triangle in place of the old (Oedipal) one. The speechless, sensorimotor drama unfolds by virtue of the highlighted acts of seeing/being seen and hearing/being heard, which carry along the embodied interaction of the parties, as follows:

_Quelqu’un marche, près._

_ L’homme qui regardait passe entre la femme aux yeux fermés et l’autre au loin, celui qui va, qui vient, prisonnier. On entend le martèlement de son pas sur la piste de planches qui longe la mer. Ce pas-ci est irrégulier, incertain._

62 The pronouns _elle_ and _il_ act as metonymies in which the polarity of genderisation in heterosexual love is condensed (cf. Fletcher 1964, 161).
Le triangle se défait, se résorbe. Il vient de se défaire : en effet, l’homme passe, on le voit, on l’entend.

On entend: le pas s’espace. L’homme doit regarder la femme aux yeux fermés posée sur son chemin.

Oui. Le pas s’arrête. Il la regarde.

L’homme qui marche le long de la mer, et seulement lui, conserve son mouvement initial. Il marche toujours de son pas infini de prisonnier.

La femme est regardée. (A, 11–12)

Someone walks, near.

The man who regarded goes by the woman with closed eyes and the other person in the distance, that who comes and goes, the prisoner. One hears the battering of his steps on the planked road which runs along the sea. These steps here are irregular, uncertain.

The triangle ravel out, melts away. It has raveled out, in fact, the man goes by, one sees him, one hears him.

One hears: the steps spread out. The man has to look at the woman who with closed eyes is blocking his way.

Yes, the steps stop. He looks at her.

The man who walks along the sea, and only he, keeps his initial movement, He walks still with the infinite steps of a prisoner.

The woman is regarded. (Trans. SK)63

In this abstract atmosphere, everything in L’amour revolves around Lol’s rejection at a moment when the perpetrator returns to the place of trauma. What happens is the following. The madwoman and madman initiate the newcomer with their non-verbal language and sparse lines into S. Thala’s theatrical milieu of changing lights, tidal waves, sudden outcries, and sirens signaling intermittent fires in the town.64 The traveller who lives in the hotel with the drugs for his intended suicide (A, 22), is recognised by the madman with the words ‘you have come back’ (A, 67). In a house, the traveller meets a black-haired woman – a later incarnation of Tatiana Karl – and postpones his suicidal plan after telling her it (A, 75; P, 160).65 She relates the prevailing conditions in S. Thala: herself having overcome the past events, but Lol being there as a deranged ‘prisoner’ (A, 73, 78). Next, as the wife of the traveller with two small children appears and demands him to return home,

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63 All the translations of the passages henceforth are mine.
64 Action in a sense of the literary narrative as defined by Ricoeur (1984, 55) must include in Duras her usage of unconscious non-verbal language. Moreover, here signs of Nature as a form of action strongly carry the plot forwards.
65 Duras (P, 119, 158–159) explains that this modified figure of Tatiana is mad as a result of a fully lived life (folle au bout d’un vie vécue) while Lol is mad due a non-lived life (folle au bout d’une vie non vécue).
he stays, while the family leaves forever (A, 79–93; FG 126). Then the peak of the drama is at hand: the common walk of the traveller and the madwoman to the casino, the place of their trauma. Embracing and caressing the forgetful woman who hardly can remember the ball (A, 104–106), the traveller leaves her sleeping body near the casino (A, 110–112), goes into the ballroom, and sobs there (A, 115–122). The madman understands that the suicidal man has visited the place of the old love and rejection. In the end, all three are shown on the shore, the men watching the dawn and the madwoman lying in an unconscious state in the arms of the traveller.

Related in terms of the plot, the events flow rather consistently. However, a saliently ambiguous narration combined with the truncated lines of the characters engenders an ambience of uncertainty, which inhibits the reader’s psychological identification with almost anything of the ongoing drama (McNeece 1985, 73–75). Yet the extremely elliptic rhetoric does not allow its meaning to be reduced to only this surface value, but necessitates a double attention of images and agents. Therefore, to become initiated into the subversive values of Lamour’s world necessitates a renewed insight to its seeming illogicalities as understood to follow a specific logics of ‘unreason’. This is facilitated by a concentrated usage of individual words such as articles and pronouns, which invite the reader to view S. Thala with – not through – the fresh eyes of the arriving traveller. Thus the reader is compelled to assume the role of a witness who has to ‘listen’ to the exchange of metonymical signs between the characters and Nature so as to decode the unfolding mental drama. But while such reading builds up the surface drama of Lol’s life after her ‘second falling into insanity’ (A, 104), it also extrapolates an intrinsic, emblematic (other) world of madness, which is a semantic simulation – a simulacrum – of a deranged person’s perceptual and emotional experience of an alienating world. In other words, as Lamour’s counter-discourse metaphorically presents such an idiomorphic experiencing with a chain of metonymic words, at the same time it carries in itself a detailed literal portrayal of Lol-madwoman’s psychic state in terms of physical distances and reciprocal movements on the axis ‘near/far’. As an outcome of one’s awareness of both levels, the old conflict of love

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66 According to La Femme du Gange, Michael Richardson marries this woman after Anne-Marie Stretter’s death, and has two children with her (FG; 126).

67 Whereas McNeece (1985, 70–71) finds Lamour as ‘severing logical connections’, I want to emphasise the logicality of seemingly illogical but very consistent metonymical connections which function on the basis of contiguity on the syntagmatic axis of Roman Jakobsons’ (1956/1988) poetic function.

68 Here registering metonymical signs corresponds to Caruth’s (1995a, 5) suggestion of ‘listening to the departure from trauma’.

69 In the end of Le ravissement, Lol’s attitude to her mental insanity is expressed by her concern as to ‘whether they will let me go for a walk again’ (‘est-ce qu’ils me laisseront me promener’; R, 139), pointing to the possibility that her odd lying in the rye field would be noticed. There is also a passing note on the ambulance which will take her into a mental asylum.
and loss presented in *Le ravissement* will find a tragic, aesthetic if not cathartic, denouement in *L'amour*’s ironical setting.\(^{70}\)

What primarily guides the reader in the peculiarities of this foreign land is the systematic ambiguity created by pronouns pointing simultaneously to multiple referents, which tend to (con)fuse the characters and natural elements.\(^{71}\) While ‘*elle*’ may simultaneously signify the woman, the sea (*la mer*), the shore (*la plage*) as well as the light (*la lumière*), ‘*il*’ may point to each man, the cry (*le cri*) or the sky (*le ciel*). This polysemous effect gives an equal dramatic role to some natural elements in comparison to the characters’ non-verbal interaction. The recurring elements constitute the cyclically changing intensity of light, the nauseating waves of the sea, the endless sand measured by the fool’s mechanical steps, and the sirens indicating intermittent fires. Signifying the memory of the old trauma, these signs act as triggers to which the mad characters respond with minimal movements and lines. On the basis of physical contiguity of an interpersonal embodied simulation, a foregrounded proxemics and kinesics mediate the intentions and emotions of the principal protagonists.\(^{72}\) Substituting mental relationships, the carefully timed physical interplay bridges the abyss created by the defective verbal language. And as one cannot discern whether the regularly alternating rhythm of waves and lights follow the madwoman’s moods or vice versa, this surreal theatre creates a continuous timeless present of a traumatic universe outside causality and linearity (Jetztheit; Rothberg 2000, 11; 53). As a result, the characters’ non-verbal parole and signs of Nature create together a fusion of external and internal worlds, absorbing one in the extratemporal universe of exile and madness that points to the unsayable content of Lol’s trauma. Upon such a basis, I will next focus on the interplay of four pervasive motifs expressed as metonymic contiguity, in order to attain the madwoman’s traumatic cul-de-sac as an extended metaphor which in the end provides a Durasian ‘ambivalent cosmos’ (Fletcher 1964, 145).

**Refiguring Lost Emotions: Love as Care**

*L'amour* places the heroine in the symbolic center of her lost memories in a ritualistic psychodrama between people and Nature, where no aspect is supernatural but expresses a conflict of painful feelings outside language. The principal four

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\(^{70}\) As Duras (P, 67) notes, she found the title ‘*L'amour*’ as a reaction to similar titles. *L'amour* is not a love story but rather refers to the outdated and commodified passion of the class society, depicted by Stendhal, de Balzac and Proust (ibid., 140).

\(^{71}\) Duras’s peculiar manner to emphasise the power of isolated words evokes the observation that a language where isolated words are foregrounded like metonymies can act as a counter discourse (Ashcroft et al. 1989, 70–72).

\(^{72}\) As presented elsewhere in this study, such an interplay is based on the human capability of interpersonal mirroring, which here is modified and carried to the extreme as a method of signification.
elements pointing metonymically to the old trauma are the changing light, the mystical cry of an unknown child, the madwoman’s continual ‘pregnancy’ signaled by nausea, and the fire alarms indicating S. Thala’s intermittent burning. These cyclically alternating motifs form an extended metaphor as a larger organisation symbolising trauma. From this perspective, Lamour’s tropology appears to be an emancipatory counter discourse which, substituting metonymically a sentence by one sole word or a broken line, does not submit itself to any dominant discourse. Rather, this rhetoric subverts the ‘rational’ order, such as the hierarchy of human beings as opposed to natural elements (Terdiman 1985, 56, 72). But although the four motifs are isolated from each other in a paratactic manner typical of allegory, they are unified during reading into a non-hierarchical network of signs referring to two unexpressed things disconnected by sudden trauma: overwhelming emotions and the unverbalisable memory of loss (cf. Fletcher 1964, 162). The first two metonymies, the light and the cry, give an emotional shape to those literal elements of Lol’s flashback that signify the moment of separation in the casino: the dawn and her first outcry (R, 22). To this configuration, pregnancy brings a horrifying hyperbolic dimension, while the fourth, the fire, expresses the feelings of love and longing which is left over when the madwoman’s symbolic memory is eventually obliterated.

Every time the intensity of light increases, it makes palpable Lol’s anxiety of separation by pointing to her secret cry heard during the night. The figure of the secretly crying madwoman is successively built up throughout the story until it is, in the end, frozen in the position of a child in need of care (A, 130). As a traumatic index, this ultimate image stands for the transhistorical trauma of separation from the m/other. Soon after the traveller’s arrival, the mystical and frightening cry coming from near the dike is heard at a critical moment when ‘no one hears, no one listens to’:

\[\text{Et puis il y a un cri :}
\text{l’homme qui regardait ferme les yeux à son tour sous le coup d’une tentative qui l’emporte le souleve, soulève son visage vers le ciel, son visage se révulse et il crie.}
\text{Un cri. On a crié vers la digue.}
\text{Le cri a été proféré et on l’a entendu dans l’espace tout entier, occupé ou vide. Il a lacéré la luminère obscure, la lenteur. Toujours bat le pas de l’homme qui}
\]

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73 Fletcher (1964, 85) considers metonymy and synecdoche as teleologically controlled tropes as elements of allegory, which can give the whole particular symbolic force while the whole as well determines the sense of the parts. While synecdoche always includes an ellipsis (Lodge 1977, 75 −76), it calls for a larger organisation of symbols, which is the idea of an extended metaphor.

74 In La Femme du Gange, the light and the sounds are harnessed more clearly to express emotions mimetically. First of all, the pulsating sound (battement) of the earth increases regularly when Lol comes closer to the casino, thus pointing to her distress. Second, the light increases according to Lol’s expectations, whereas it stagnates as the traveller views the sky (see FG, 115, 119–121).
And then there is a cry:

the man who looked closes in turn his eyes in an attempt which tears him away so as to raise, to raise his face towards the sky, his face is turned up and it cries.

A cry. There was a cry somewhere round the dike.

The cry was uttered and heard in the whole space, be it occupied or empty.

It bound the obscure light, the slowness. The steps of the walking man are still pounding, he did not stop, he did not slow down

but she, she raised lightly her arm with a gesture of a child, she recovered her eyes with it, she remained so for some seconds,

and he, the prisoner, he saw this gesture: he turned his head in the direction of the woman.

The equivocal usage of pronoun (il) suggests that it is the traveller (or his face) who cries. However, the madwoman's arm which she moves with a childish gesture is an analeptic figure that will recur later as connected with the cry, which is then identified as the woman's own wailing. At this point, the increasing light is repeated several times as pointing to the traumatic memory of separation: 'Le lumiére change de l'intensité, elle change. Elle blanchit, elle se change, change' (The light changes the intensity, it (she) changes. It (she) pales, it changes, changes. A, 16–17). Under the increasing light, the woman asks the voyager: 'Did you hear that someone cried?' (A, 16). Later, the text points to the woman herself and her voice of a child: 'At once, a wailing. At once, a wailing of a child intervenes the noise of the motors and the brute of the sea. It seemed to come from the site where she sleeps.' (A 43). To the voyager's question, 'cette plainte, c'est elle?' (This wailing, is it her?), the madman answers in the positive but understating a feeling of anger (as if dismissing the idea of any emotional working through):

— Oui − elle s'impatiente vous comprenez, mais elle dort − il s'arrête − ça c'est de la colère seulement, ce n'est rien.
— Contre quoi ?
Il montre autour de lui le mouvement général.
— Dieu − il reprend − contre Dieu en général, ce n'est rien. (A, 43, emphasis added)

75 Unlike McNeece who does not find any narrative center in L'amour, I hold that the centre consists of the image of the crying madwoman who is frozen amidst her escape with outstretched arms in the position of a needy child (cf. McNeece 1985, 72).
— Yes – *she* is impatient, you see, but *she* sleeps – *he* stops – *this* is just the anger, it is nothing.
— Against *what*?
*He* beckons around himself with a general movement.
— *God* – *he* starts again – against *God* in general, it is nothing.

The cry returns at night as an animal wailing which appeals to the voyager near the woman who sleeps and dreams. In an important passage, the perpetrator listens to his victim’s voice, while the body is described synecdochically through its parts:

*Ses lèvres sont entrouvertes. La plainte d’aminal rêvant se fait plus douce. La tête est parfaitement endormie. Il se penche, pose sa tête sur sa poitrine, entend la plainte de l’enfant et les coups du cœur conjugués, la plainte de l’enfant, la colère du cœur.* (A, 46)

*Her lips are open. The wailing of a dreaming animal comes out more softly. The head has perfectly fallen asleep. He straightens himself up, sets his head on her chest, listens to the wails of the child and the conjoined pulse of the heart, the wails of the child, the rage of the heart.*

This episode is reminiscent of Tasso’s parable of Tancred and Clorinda in that it shows the former fiancé in magical surroundings to listen to his not-intended victim’s voice which he did not hear at the moment of insulting her (Caruth 1996, 4). Thus the caring gesture of the traveller evokes the *Nachträglichkeit* of the perpetrator’s trauma, which here lends itself to de-demonising his suicidal figure.

As propelled by the nocturnal cry, the motif of the pregnancy grows as a traumatic index into hyperbolic measures. There the Lol-madwoman’s life as a female person has changed her into an ‘absolute object of desire’ who can be ‘taken by anyone who wants her’ (A, 48), like the Cambodian beggar or Anne-Marie in *Le Vice-consul*. ‘Carrying’ this object within her (A, 48), the madwoman has transmuted the ‘absolute object of desire’ into a literal series of pregnancies, which points to an endless source of surreal creativity. When the rolling surges of the sea cause her nausea, she withdraws behind the dike to give birth to S. Thala’s ‘children,’ who emerge from a mass of dense gloominess, typified as a ‘trick’:

*Il montre au voyageur l’épaisseur, la masse de S. Thala.*
— *Ses enfants sont là-dedans, ce truc, elle les fait, elle leur donne – il ajoute – la ville en est pleine, la terre.*

*Il s’arrête, il montre au loin, du côté de la mer, de la digue.*

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76 This repetition strongly evokes the transhistorical trauma of the animal nature of humans.
77 The ‘trick’ (*truc*) is also the word repeated in the last, apocalyptic lines, then pointing ironically to God.
— Elle les fait là, du côté du cri, elle les laisse, ils viennent, ils les emportent. Il fixe la direction de la digue, il continue:
— C’est un pays de sables. (A, 49–50, emphasis added)

He motions to the voyager the density, the mass of S. Thala.
— Her children are over there, this trick, she makes them, she gives them – he adds – the village is full of them, the ground.
He stops, he beckons to the distance, towards the sea, the dike.
— She makes them there, close to the cry, she leaves them, they come, they carry them off.
He gazes in the direction of the dike, he continues:
— It is a land of the sands.

Here are more than enough allusions to the Cambodian beggar’s useless pregnancies. While the sand symbolises a timeless time and the idea of forgetting, the nausea with the idea of pregnancy alludes to Lol’s pent-up, unspoken ‘mass of the lived’ which she ‘vomits’ to Hold in the end of Le ravissement (R, 174). More intriguingly, accompanied with cries expressing simultaneously a child’s need of care and the adult’s emotion of rage (colère), the ‘population’ given birth by the madwoman generates a configuration of horrible dimensions. With the prismatic figure of nausea, pregnancy and the increasing amount of these mystical ‘children’ of madness, the contaminating power of an unexpressed despair symbolises the failure of romantic love as displaced to the increasing number of S. Thala’s mad inhabitants. In another – feminist – symbolical perspective, this exaggerated configuration acts as a protest against the marginalisation of women’s social agency and the loss of female voice. Finally, at the level of narration, the hyperbole allegorises L’amour itself as an example of how the unknown mass of women’s forgotten history beyond representation – their historical trauma – can be verbalised.

Furthermore, as part of the mythical atmosphere, the fire alarms carried from S. Thala bring out an element of danger and destruction. Being the most threatening

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78 The sand is throughout the drama stepped upon by the madman’s walking feet, and repetitively compared to the immensely increasing, uncanny ‘population’ of S. Thala. In La Femme du Gange this figure of timelessness and growth is enforced by the soundtrack, while the script identifies the sound as the subterraining pulsation of the heart of the earth (FG, 115).

79 In Les Parleuses, Duras explains that the society comes and takes the children from the madwoman whom she identifies with the remains of Lol V. Stein (P, 68–69; WW, 44–45). This is reminiscent of how her own dead newborn baby was taken from her (see C, 361–363).

80 In this respect, McNece’s (1996, 76) idea of a double betrayal on the level of the content/form of the text is insightful. The first betrayal is Lol’s abandonment that functions invisibly from Le ravissement onwards as the primary motor for the whole India Cycle. The second is the betrayal of the reader’s desire for identity by language and representation. My rereading gives evidence to the emblematic meanings of those signs of L’amour which provide the text with sufficient coherence to understand its metonymies as pointing to the absence of trauma from representation (Rothberg 2000, 103–104).
counterpart of *L'amour*'s rich arsenal of sounds, the alarms indicate the fires which
the madman secretly kindles. The literal origin of the fires is at first unknown,
and the ‘prison of S. Thala’ seems to burn spontaneously at intervals, which is
perceived by dark smoke in the sky. Yet, the first cue of their affective symbolism
appears when the traveller’s wife arrives and the alarms are constantly ringing,
as if signifying passion disappointed in a bourgeois marriage (A, 91). Eventually,
seeing the sooty hands of the crying madwoman (A, 95), the traveller realises that
the woman is complicit in the burning of the ‘prison of S. Thala’. This metaphor
of a dangerous passion grows to its full measure with the huge, destructive fire lit
by the madman. The woman says: ‘This night he will return … This night he
will set the fire in the core of S. Thala’ (A, 126–127). These words foreshadow the
end of *L'amour*: the traveller’s return to the original place of the historical trauma.

The return to the casino uncovers the core of the perpetrator’s mental progress
from ignorance to a final revelation in this ‘colossal mass of the core of S. Thala.’
As guided by the odd logics of S. Thala’s prisoners, the traveller encounters in the
dancing hall his own memory, while the woman sleeps outside.81 The traumatic
index of the ‘dead dog’ – the physical foreign body in the core of Lol’s ‘hole-
word’ – which the couple has repetitively seen on the shore, foretells of what
the man is going to encounter in the casino: the dead idea of romantic love.82
There he sobbingly attempts to open the door through which they ‘once left,
separately’ (A, 121, 124), and which he used with Anne-Marie to get out of the
impending bourgeois marriage. The door is, however, closed, as if symbolising
the impossible escape from the prison of the memories. This perpetuates S. Thala
as a metaphorical mental prison, imagined by Lol as ‘pure bone-white time’ of
forgetting in *Le ravissement* (R, 47). Towards the end of the episode, the figure
of the madwoman is solidified in the position of a child who expresses her need
of care with outstretched hands (A, 128). This image evokes the transhistorical
trauma residing in the core of Lol’s historical trauma, the separation from the m/
other. Completing the scene, the madwoman turns slowly like a plant following
the light of the final, putrifying fire, as if foretelling her mythical rebirth into an
ecological social agent (A, 130).

The drama ends with an apocalyptic view of S. Thala’s burning, while the
madman appears from out of the darkness accompanied by heavily ringing alarms
(A, 129). Stating, ‘if she does not sleep, she will die’, the men take care of the woman
who sleeps in the arms of the traveller. Somebody’s (perhaps even the madman’s)
cryptic last words, commented upon with a passive of ‘one hears’, predict that the
unconscious woman will awaken, as if it were the birth (or creation) of a (female)

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81 In *La Femme du Gange*, the increasing psychic pain of this scene is intensified with a pulsating
sound of the earth heard in a crescendo.

82 For more of the traumatic index of the ‘dead dog’ in the core of Lol’s missing ‘hole-word’,
see Ch II.
individual from out of another (male) person’s body (as in the Old Testament):

On entend :
— Pendant un instant elle sera aveuglée. Puis elle recommencera à me voir. A
distinguer le sable de la mer, puis, son corps de mon corps. Après elle séparera
le froid de la nuit et elle me le donnera. Après seulement elle entendre le bruit
vous savez ? … De Dieu ? … ce truc?…

Ils se taisent. Ils surveillent la progression de l’aurore extérieure. (A, 130,
emphasis added)

One hears :
— During one moment, she will be blinded. Then she begins to see me again. To
distinguish the sand from the sea, then her body from my body. Then she will
separate the cold from the night, and give it to me. Only then will she hear the
noise, you know? … Of God? … that trick? …

They fall silent. They follow the progression of the exterior dawn.

Ending L’amour, this impressive view remains hovering on the verge of an unknown
evolution of the individual/world, while the transhistorical trauma of human existence
is suggested with a deux ex machina by pointing to the ‘noise’ of an unknown ‘God’.

To conclude this descriptive analysis, ending the dystopia of L’amour, the
summation scene condenses the madwoman trope into a subversive figure of social
refusal. As emblematic gestures, the cries and fires made in secret by the mad
persons accomplish a double grief work by embodying unexpressed emotions on two
ontological levels of understanding. On the literal level, the key metonymies together
function as traumatic indices by expressing both despair and desire, destruction and
care. But on the symbolic level, in Duras’s ‘realm of death which is, however, a realm
of birth’, the insistently self-piloting drama amounts to a rejection of social institutions
(P, 121–122).83 For, as the drama metaphorically detaches sexuality from the (re)
productive dimension of the female body, it creates a disbelief in the combination of
female sexual passion, bourgeois marriage, and women as socially creative agents. In
addition, as Lol’s former lovers take care of the remnants of her helpless, unconscious
body, they incarnate a surprising tale of caritas. This denouement consummates
the protagonists’ refusal of conventional bourgeois life realised in their living an
extremely simple life outside in Nature. The burgeoning communality, combined
with compassion and charity, tells also of subversive ecological strength. Even if it
represents a dead point without progress (P, 234), orchestrated around the forgetful
madwoman trope, L’amour’s landscape of despair is a strong proposal for a profound
reorganisation of life values in the face of the (eco)catastrophes of today.

83 Duras defines: ‘Cette passivité, cette immense force des fous de S. Thala, ce refus organique’
(This passivity, this monumental strength of the mad of S. Thala, this organic refusal; P, 123;
see also P, 56).
V. Crime in the Salon: The French in British India

C'est pas un hasard si c'est l'Inde. C'est le foyer mondial de l'absurdité, le feu central de l'absurdité, cette agglomération insensée, de faim, de famine, illogique.¹

The storyline of the desperate colonial perpetrators, Anne-Marie Stretter and the Vice-consul, repeats one distinctive mark of Duras's oeuvre: erotic passion as a destructive power. As indicated by its title, Le Vice-consul is organised around the person of a French official, and especially, as it appears, his crime against colonial law condensed in a violent attack in Lahore. A striking fictional fact giving this emplotment a specific post-colonial overtone is that the French society is located in British India and not in French Indochina. The colonial life is exposed as a three-day drama in an isolated ‘laboratory’ of a European enclave, set amidst the overwhelming misery of imaginary Calcutta, in which the other world of a Cambodian beggar is embedded as a ten-year temporal extension. As Dorrit Cohn notes, compared to historical narrative, the capacity of fictional narrative to embrace the essentials of life lies in the fact that it is able to ‘make an entire life come to life as a unified whole in a short span of story time, as short as a single day in novels like Joyce’s Ulysses and Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway’ (Cohn 1999, 18). Duras follows this principle by epitomising the European colonists’ typical life with a few carefully selected episodes in an exoticised, phantasmatic, India. The central concern is the Vice-consul’s dubious position in the configuration. It is narrated by a seemingly omniscient diegetic voice in the present tense and combined with the mimetic conversations of the society, both discourses tuned with a slight but palpable irony. The resulting narrative is highly antithetic by nature: while the interaction of the white élite mediates their racialised value system in hygienic palaces in the isolated centre of Calcutta, the afflictions of the indigenous people penetrate into this realm in the form of smells, sounds, and voices under the oppression of a murky pre-monsoon sky. This antagonism culminates in the encounter of the stigmatised French Vice-consul and the admired wife of the French Ambassador during an official reception at the French Embassy.

The main goal of the following three sections is to specify the manner by which Le Vice-consul bears witness to European colonial domination through the drama of the two self-destructive perpetrators. This is to outline the final outcome suggested by the novel’s textual strategies, and to lay a foundation for the interpretation of the film India Song, which brings each plot of the India Cycle to an end. According to

¹ P, 177. ‘It’s not by chance that this is India. It’s the world center of absurdity, the main fire of absurdity, this insane, illogical conglomeration of hunger and famine.’ (Trans. SK)
my reading, Duras’s engenders an incisive post-colonialist tone to Le Vice-consul by virtue of a critical textualisation of those imperceptible ways by which a racist discourse constitutes the colonialists’ non-verbal interaction. To open up the strong stylistism that expresses this feature, in the first section I show how the fictional India is caricatured as a world of foregrounded contrasts, and tailored to the needs of the unfolding drama of the colonial criminal’s exclusion. The rest of the chapter approaches the Vice-consul’s access to the society as a modern rite of purification through the ritual theory of Mary Douglas, accomplished with the social interaction theory of Erving Goffman. The second section analyses those textual devices which design the perpetrator by way of his own calculations and as observed by his peers in the frame of the racial practices. Coming from outside of the society, the stigmatised criminal is seen as an unclean locus of French politics, whereupon his access to the society is carefully controlled. This leads to the third section, where I specify how the main protagonists’ dramatic encounter secretly opposes the official rite and deliberately causes the man’s final exclusion from the administration.

Serving as a base text for the play and the film India Song, Le Vice-consul links together the dramatic episodes of the protagonists with their conversations. These are transformed into some impressive key images and sounds that finally form a serial ‘dysnarrative’ of an ambiguous cinematic retrospective, analysed in the last chapter of this study (Vanoye 1989, 199–202). Common to these art works is that each of them compels the audience to face the position of the colonial perpetrator and the social processing of his traumatic attack that shows him under the controlling eyes and ears of the small European society. To realise this effect, both the novel and the film exercise a fairly similar dual strategy of immersing and distancing. On the one hand, Le Vice-consul absorbs the reader into the drama by mediating the presence of the colonial life with a persistent usage of present tense narration – the dramatic present – which alternates with the dialogues of the characters. Similarly, the film threatens to immerse the viewer by using a peculiar combination of dramatic scenes and mimetic voices. On the other hand, the fictional frame is iteratively broken both by the self-reflexive comments of the novel’s omniscient narrator and the film’s voice-over dialogue which directly address the audience. Such narrative strategies shake the status of the drama as a testimony of what really happens, for, placing the audience in an uncertain position as witness, the strategies restrain one from making an unbiased interpretation of the story. Nevertheless, even if compelling one to oscillate between identification and defamiliarisation, typical of Duras, a specific interpretative pathway is created with the help of the intimate conversation of the principal protagonists while they are dancing together at the ball. These are directly addressed to the audience as if behind the back of other characters, whereby they uncover significant knowledge of the nature of this encounter (Booth 1961, 301–305). As this secret information exceeds the reach of social control exercised by the white society in the fictional
world, it opens the door to the reader/viewer for a postcolonial interpretation.

The critical focus of *Le Vice-consul* is trained upon the everyday colonial practices during the stagnant period prevailing in India and Indochina in the late thirties. As in general in Duras’s later works, the combination of narrative order and metafictionality matters to a significant extent for the understanding of the novel’s postcolonial message. Told first, the embedded story of an imagined Cambodian beggar emphasises the role of the indigenous people as a noteworthy counterpart to the Europeans, and in effect opposes the explicit opinion of the whites (VC, 42). Then the frame story directs a critical gaze towards the colonisers’ everyday life, to which a ‘real’ mendicant’s existence penetrates at some strategic points with her voice. This disposition appears vital when these works are seen on the backdrop of the earlier colonial literature. As Nicola Cooper (2001) indicates, in the beginning of the twentieth century, the tendency of French colonial literature was to propagate a ‘realist’ picture of settlers as constructive civilising agents, who were battling against the physical and psychic debilitation of the climate and the dangers of nature. Between the world wars, many autobiographies and fictions concerning Indochina turn to represent the alienation of the settlers, while the notion of time as wasted or misspent began to come to light. Then the colonial utopia changed to figures of disillusionment and dystopia, while literary works, among others Duras’s novel *Un barrage contre le Pacifique* (1950) and the play *L’Eden Cinéma* (1977) called the value and purpose of France’s *mission civilisatrice* into question. In contrast to former representations, as counter-narrative vis-à-vis the former ideals of the colonial dream, these two works introduce a poor female settler fighting against not only the forces of nature but also the colonial bureaucracy, while the figures of madness, corruption, and death begin to symbolise French colonial failure (Cooper 2001, 117–123).

Seen in such a literary continuum, the stylistics of *Le Vice-consul* submits a constellation of modernist and anti-modernist devices which sets the colonial practices of Europeans in a self-ironic light (Rothberg 2000, 10). While the magnifying centre of attention is kept on the everyday habits of the officials in an antagonistic setting of the colonised and colonialists, a salient self-reflexivity argues for a profound self-criticism in regard to Western racist and sexist thinking and the dualist ideals of mental and physical health. Hence Duras’s novelistic discourse appears to be an example of two parallel aesthetic aspirations: first, it is an attack on the very idea of representationalism as it transfers a dual meaning by producing an exoticised caricature of colonialists’ India, supplemented with self-reflexive comments; second, it explores our implicit interaction by enabling an immediate, mutual mirroring of the protagonists by dramatic textual devices. On the deepest level of meaning, when contrasting control and empathy, this sub-text reveals the helpless solipsism of the self-destructive perpetrators, which in the end works against the demonisation of an individual colonial criminal.
Fictionalising Trauma

Calcutta: Exclusive Spaces

As a paratext, the title *Le Vice-consul* points to its pivot, the perpetrator of a colonial crime. The novel begins with two significations on itself as a fiction, both of which lay bare the artificial nature of the work: the first phrase of the novel, and the announcement of the fictionality of Calcutta. The first phrase states simply that an Englishman called Peter Morgan is writing a novel which then follows. Assigning Morgan the narrator role of the beggar story, the statement divides the fictional world into two parts: that of his embedded fiction, and that of himself, later revealed to be the world of the Vice-consul. As presented in this study, the interstice evoked between two stories is an epistemic hole, which not only cognitively anticipates the emergence of two fictional worlds in a *mise en abyme* structure but also may elicit an affective shift – the ‘felt engagement’ (Kuiken 1995, 142–144) – occurring in the reader's implicit memory. This awareness of a dual colonial universe can make us conscious of the representational absence of trauma (cf. Rothberg 2000, 103–104). A dual scope to alternative universes is iteratively evoked by short intermediate chapters, where the model of Morgan's heroine is seen lying under the balcony of the Vice-consul's residence, thus predicting problems concerning the crime. Signaling the fictionality of Morgan's heroine, each shift alerts one to take notice of the Vice-consul as opposed to the ‘real’ woman of the Ganges. The shifts tend to maintain an ontological uncertainty where an ethical tension of unknown past traumas is made potential, the mendicant symbolising the innocent victim of the white man's violence, and the colonial perpetrator being quite indifferent to the indigenous woman's presence.

Coming soon after this double exposure of the worlds, the second self-commentary underlines the main story's fictionality and the artificial nature of Calcutta:

*Il y a cinq semaines que Jean Marc de H. est arrivé dans une ville du bord du Gange qui sera ici capitale des Indes et nommée Calcutta, don’t le chiffre des habitants reste le même, cinq millions, ainsi que celui, inconnu, des morts de fain qui vient d’entrer aujourd’hui dans la lumière crépusculaire de la mousson d’été.* (VC, 35, emphasis added)

*It is five weeks since Jean-Marc de H. came to a town on the banks of the Ganges which we will here call Calcutta, the principal city of India, whose population remains constant at five million, as does the number – unknown – of those dying of hunger who enter the city daily, a city plunged today in the murky gloom of the summer monsoon.* (V, 23)

As seen in the excerpt, the omniscient narrator of the frame story laconically outlines the stage of the colonial drama by introducing the French Vice-consul of
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Lahore, Jean-Marc de H. Importantly, the performatives ‘sera ici’ (will be here) and ‘nommée Calcutta’ (called Calcutta) refer to the inventive act of the text, which accentuates the imaginative status of the world. With this hardly visible statement, Duras underscores the division of the fictional world into two ontologically contradistinctive parts, the embedded story giving at first a detailed image of Indochina, and the frame story constructing the hidden extremity of the five million Indian people of Calcutta. As a contrast to the psychologically magnified figure of the Cambodian beggar, the frame story erases the cultural identity and rich subcultures and languages of the Indian opposition by producing a Manichean enemy-image of a homogenised mass in the immense chaos of Calcutta, where lepers lie on the ground in groups, the dead are burned in crematoria, and slaves work for Europeans in the factories (VC, 31; IS, 23). This strategy reduces the ‘adversary’ (partie adverse) as a passive ‘state of affairs’ (état de choses), which tellingly is dangerous (only) as a source of intoxication (VC, 42, 30). Depicting the period of the late thirties when a political resolution to the question of India and Indochina did not yet loom ahead, the novel provocatively considers the ‘white Calcutta’ as the only proper Calcutta worthy of attention, while the suffering Calcutta is portrayed merely as experienced from the Orientalistic perspective of the Embassy officials.

A significant feature overlooked in previous research is the national juxtaposition of Indochina/India. Duras realises this idea by locating the white society in British India, the colonial rival of France, and not in Indochina, her own la mère patrie. This displacement has obvious consequences for the semantic content of Le Vice-consul. For one thing, while the strategy builds an imaginative political collaboration of l’Empire Français and the British Commonwealth which sustained European imperialism in Asia, it makes visible the historicist, ‘evolutionary’ presuppositions of a similar racial rule which the Asian collaboration was based on in contrast to the naturalist, biologically grounded racism of Germany, or later, South Africa (Goldberg 2002, 82–84). Hence Duras addresses the impossibility of the colonial project as a whole, and rather avoids considering directly French colonial policy and its idealist project of gallicisation of Indochina. She abstains, for instance, from focusing on the principle of mise en valeur, which implied the economic, moral, and cultural project of the improvement of the colony, generally

2 Regarding the Manichean enemy-image, see JanMohamed 1985.
3 Laurie Vickroy writes about ‘Third World destitution endured by one native character and observed by European colonists living in India’ (Vickroy 2002, 86), but she does not pay attention to the national opposition which distinguishes Duras’s own, painful position as a French colonist in relation to the Cambodians.
4 From the end of the nineteenth century, the political incentive for French immigration to Indochina was economic competition with the British Empire, whose principal goal was national elevation and grandiosity. It was thus imperial devotion that prompted the French people to move to the Far East, and no longer an adventure (Cooper 2001, 11, 115).
used as French justification for colonialism (Cooper 2001, 29–40). For another, as presented earlier in this study, Duras distances herself from French policy by the fictional fact that a British white man writes the story of the Cambodian outcast in India with the cooperation of his colleagues, including a half-French and half-Italian bourgeois woman, Anne-Marie. But what is still more, Duras has Morgan choose as the correlate for his exoticised ‘suffering of India’ an Indochinese female migrant. This emphasises the foreignness and muteness of the anti-heroine on the edge of cultural margins within a coalition of two dominant cultures, Indian and British (ibid., 148).

When Duras ‘transplants’ the European salon from France to India, it is posited in a strongly caricatured metaphorical Calcutta in a visibly exoticised India. At first sight the virtual India seems to be only a hyperbolic version of the historical one, told by an omniscient narrator who refers to the real India by combining a select number of horrifying details taken from history. However, despite seemingly truthful elements, the virtual city only pretends to be real. Whereas the text refers to real colonialism by utilising names of real historical places as their designations, at several points these places do not correspond to the temporal and geographical facts of historical reality (P, 169). Far from trying to create a veracious milieu, the city is constructed as harsh binary oppositions appropriate to the Vice-consul’s ritual exclusion that is to be carried out by the European élite in the reception of the French Embassy (cf. Skutta 1988, 171–172). Placed amidst a huge misery of infective illness and hunger, the hygienic ‘centre of Calcutta’ is separated from the

5 The association with Italian and German fascism in the thirties is not excluded, either. This detail is made more clear in the film India Song.

6 Previous research on the India Cycle deals with this political feature only in passing. The position of the beggar as a foreigner can be compared with Duras’s own feeling of being an unwelcome, though poor, European invader in Indochina, and later an ‘Asiatic’ newcomer in Europe (P, 136).

7 Significantly, Duras chose a huge metropolis for this drama instead of some smaller Indochinese city, such as Vinh Long where she had seen the original of Anne-Marie Stretter at eight years of age. Duras had visited Calcutta once for only one day at nineteen years of age, but it made an indelible impression on her (P,120). She chose the name ‘Calcutta’ on the grounds of the word’s melodic sound. The same melodicity is comparable to ‘Battambang’, the name of the Cambodian girl’s home village, just as with a remarkable number of other Durasian names (on Duras’s multi-potent names, see Guers-Villate 1985, 164–165; as Barthesian ‘amphibologies’, see Murphy 1982, 11).

8 Duras’s exaggerated description of the lepers and starving masses on the banks of the Ganges was a variation that was constructed upon her experience of the Mekong in Pnom Penh. She had seen lepers in the Indochinese forests and on the Singapore customs wharf (P, 120, 207, 230–231).

9 Jean Pierrot makes a list of some of these geographical and historical ‘errors’, but does not elaborate the idea of their narrative or political meanings. Substituting New Delhi which was the capital of India in the thirties, Calcutta displays ‘here’ the capital of one of the most important colonies of the British Empire. Moreover, the Ganges does not flow through the centre of Calcutta but about six kilometres distant from it in the north-east. Neither was it geographically possible to go on a weekend trip to Nepal from there, like the French Ambassador often does. On the Ganges Delta, there is no such hotel as the Prince of Wales, whose original was in Colombo, Ceylon (Pierrot 1986, 217–219, P, 169).
starving masses with iron railings, which often return as tropes indexing the split
colonial universe and the economic hierarchy of its inhabitants (Rothberg 2000,
130–132). This arrangement establishes a glaring contrast between the European
realm and its surroundings, and creates the concentric space of a container
metaphor, which repeats the *mise en abyme* form of the novel itself, and the idea
of pregnancy of the embedded story as well (see Knuuttila 2002).

Whereas the dramatic and visual focus is kept strictly on the opulent
administration palaces, tennis courts, clubs, and parks, the uncanny world of ill
and dying people is constructed as hovering on the margins of this region. The
sharp contradiction of the territories of the colonists and the colonised foregrounds
the exclusive practices of racialised institutions that sustain a caricatured balance of
horror in the political impasse of the fictional time. The structure of the metropolis
is seen through the eyes of the attaché, Charles Rossett, as follows:

*Au loin, des palmes bleues. Le bord du Gange, les lépreux et des chiens emmêlés
font l’enceinte première, large, la première de la ville. Les morts de faim sont plus
loin, dans le grouillement dense du Nord, ils font la dernière enceinte. La lumière
crépusculaire, elle ne ressemble à aucun autre. Dans un peine infinie, unité par
unité, la ville se réveille.*

*Ce qu’on voit avant tout c’est l’enceinte première le long du Gange. (VC, 164–
165)*

*In the distance, blue palm trees. On the banks of the Ganges, lepers and dogs
interdispersed form the first ring, the wide, first ring encircling the city. The
thousands dying of hunger are farther to the north, in the seething bowels, they
form the inner ring of the city. The murky light, it is unlike any other. In an endless
suffering, unit by unit, the city is waking.*

*First, the outer ring all along the banks of the Ganges, the lepers spread about
in rows or in clusters. (V, 131)*

From the perspective of ritual theory, the border zone of the banks of the Ganges
is ideologically and sexually a dangerous place, which adopts here a dual function
as a dividing and combining element (Douglas 1996, 122). In the composition of
concentric circles, the smell and moaning of the lepers from the ‘outside’ signal
as traumatic indices the presence of leprosy and madness as a continuous threat
for the residents of the ‘inside’. This is the stage for the slowly progressing rite of
purification with the stigmatised criminal. In Bakhtin’s terms, the setting of the
inside appears to be a colonial modification of the classical feudal salon chronotope
(Bakhtin 1981, 246–247). Duras skillfully conjoins the chronotope of crime to that
of a French salon, whose private secrets are uncovered as assisted by the observing

10 The people suffering from leprosy do not usually lay in masses within city centres but with-
drew rather into the forests (regarding Duras’s experiences, see P, 207, 230–231).
eyes of the whites themselves (ibid., 122–124). Moreover, because the drama in the Embassy is coordinated according to the lines of the romantic formula, the erotic rivalry around Anne-Marie Stretter’s galvanising figure links the salon chronotope with the courtesan chronotope, where political intrigues are interwoven with boudoir secrets (ibid., 246–247).

The spacious interior of the reception rooms of the French Embassy is cool and comfortable, arranged for the party of some forty people. The ballroom is an imitation of that in the casino where Lol was rejected in the French countryside. In this context, it is decorated with symbols pointing to the nationalist endeavors of French colonial power. The interior is specifically prepared for rituals intended to increase cultural cohesion among the whites, for example, dancing, talking and drinking, as follows:

Les salles sont vastes. Ce sont celles d’un casino d’été dans un station balnéaire, en France, n’étaient ces ventilateurs très grands qui tournent, ces fins grillages aux fenêtres à travers lesquelles on verrait les jardins comme à travers la brume, personne ne regarde. La salle de bal est octogonale, en marbre vert Empire, à chacun des angles de l’Octogone, fougères fragiles, venues de France. Sur un panneau du mur, un président de la République, sur sa poitrine le ruban rouge, à côté de lui un ministre des Affaires étrangères. (VC, 93)

The reception rooms are vast, like those of a casino in a summer resort, in France. The only differences are the huge, whirring electric fans, and the fine wire netting over the windows, through which the gardens can be seen as through a mist. No one is looking out. The ballroom is octagonal, with walls of green marble in Empire taste. In each corner of an octagon is an arrangement of delicate ferns, ordered from France. On one wall hangs a portrait of a President of the Republic and, next to it one of a Foreign Minister. (V, 70–71)

Completing the national picture, Anne-Marie Stretter acts as an instrumental leader of the multi-national European society, backed up by her British lovers in the middle of the huge metropolitan slum. A slightly ironic image of this ‘exotic object of desire’ is given as a critical metaphor of an exoticised ‘mother India’. It consists of metonymic details that portray Anne-Marie as a colonialist marionette leading the ‘despised’ obligatory formalities of the French nationalist power, yet, with the gaze of an exile:

Elle regarde auteur d’elle : dans un boulevard rectiligne au nom d’un conquérant quand passe la Légion en chantant, étincelante, fourragères rouges au soleil, elle regarderait, de l’estrade officielle, de ce même regard d’exilée de ce soir. Un homme, parmi les autres, le remarque : Charles Rossett, trente-deux ans […] […]
Voici, elle ouvre le bal avec l’ambassadeur, observe le rituel méprisé. (VC, 92–93, emphasis added)

She looks about her: with the same expression of an exile of this night, standing on the straight boulevard named after a conqueror, she watched from the official estrade the detachement of the singing Legion marching past, in their red fourragères glittering in the sunshine. Among all those present, one man notices it, Charles Rossett, aged thirty-two […]

 […]

Now she is opening the ball with the Ambassador, performing the despised ritual. (V, 70–71)

Continuing with this slightly ironic style, the omniscient narrator mediates the decadence of the interior by direct comments on falsity and imitation, such as ‘des faux lustres, du creux, du faux, du faux or’ (the false chandeliers, the hollowness, the sham, the false gold, VC, 93). Repeatedly, in the hotel of the Price of Wales, ‘[i]l tombe des lustres, du creux, du faux or une lumière dorée et douce qui luit dans les yeux clairs d’Anne-Marie Stretter à demi allongée dans un fauteuil bas’. (The false chandeliers shed a soft, gilded light, the hollowness, which glitters in Anne-Marie’s lustrous eyes as she reclines in a deep armchair; VC, 178.) On the basis of these symbols of wealth reflecting the decaying power, the metaphorical Calcutta maintains a permanent referential duality of two fields of reference, the internal and the external one (Harshaw 1988). On the level of knowledge, the historical names and dates designate the ‘external field of reference’ by situating the milieu into the colonised countries in a virtual Asia in the inter-war period, but treating the physical signs of economic power with palpable irony. On the level of sensory and perceptual experience, the reader’s ‘internal field of reference’ is enriched by a multitude of affectively tinged signs, coloured with the Europeans’ negatively assessing comments on the murky light and troublesome health. This juxtaposition is suggestive of an analogical landscape, where the city outside the European district is a projection of the whites’ Orientalist affects following the ambivalent principle of Mimicry of Man (Bhabha 1994, 66–68, 77). Particularly, smells, sounds and voices are utilised as echoing the distressed mood of the central characters. For example, Charles Rossett feels the smothering pressure of the environment after talking about famine and the suicides of the Europeans, and being aware of the lepers: ‘an army of men of straw […] whose heads are stuffed with straw, insensate’ (VC, 165). It reads:

11 See Ch III. In Bhabha’s theory, in colonial condition, subjectification takes place through an affective ambivalence of simultaneous desire and fear felt towards the ethnic Other, whereby negative affects are projected upon the other’s image (Bhabha 1994, 66–68, 77). This idea can be adapted to the experience of the cultural environment as well.
L’air pèse tout à coup sur des épaules. Charles Rosset sort, revient, il s’assied sur les marches du perron. […] Le parc sent la vase, c’est la marée basse sans doute. Le parfum poisseux del lauriers-roses et la fade pestilence de la vase, suivent des mouvements très lents de l’air, se mélangent, se séparent. (VC, 162)

Suddenly, the air is pressing down on the shoulders. Charles Rossett goes out, comes back in, and sits on the steps leading down to the garden […] The smell of river mud drifts in. No doubt the tide has gone out. The resinous scent of the oleanders and the foul scent of the river are borne on the sluggishly circulating air, so that at times they are mingled and at times distinct. (V, 129)

Similarly, evoking the Europeans’ feelings, the life in Calcutta is portrayed from the mixed viewpoint of the Vice-consul and the implicit narrator as follows:

A Calcutta, aujourd’hui, il est sept heures du matin, la lumière est crépusculaire, un himalaya de nuages immobiles recouvre le Népal, dessous une vapeur infecte stagnе, la mousson d’été va commencer dans quelques jours.

Des arroseuses, sur les avenues, tournent. L’eau colle au sol une poussière humide et qui pue l’urine.

(VC, 31–32, emphasis added)

Today in Calcutta, at seven a’clock in the morning, the light is murky, a great mountain of motionless clouds hang over Nepal, below the clouds, infectious vapour stagnates, in a few days, the summer monsoon will begin.

Rotary water-sprinklers spray the streets. The water glues the dust into a damp paste which gives off the stench of urine. (cf. V, 20, modified by SK, emphasis added)

Embedded in a seemingly historical but in fact virtual world, the sensory elements of the Europeans’ life point to phenomena in the real world in a manner which seems to reinforce the reader’s belief in the Orientalist Calcutta as provoking suicidal thoughts and depression. Understood as an analogous landscape of the colonisers’ mental – emotional, cognitive, and ideological – condition, the city appears as a phantasmatic place constructed by individual and collective imaginations of the whites, who unrealistically hold a grip on ‘their’ territory as the illusory centre of the country.

The question then arises as to what might be the value-centre of this chronotope resulting from the reading experience, if the two counterparts of the imagined India are to co-produce the discursive image of the virtual world. As the traditional cognitive metaphor theory explains, cognitive structures originating in bodily experience – kinaesthetic image schemas – the ‘container’, the ‘part-whole’, and ‘source-path-goal’ – have a basic logic that can be projected to give structure to a wide variety of cognitive domains (Lakoff 1987, 370–373). Moreover, our
orientation to spatial directions of up/down, right/left, front/behind, and the relations inside/outside, far/near and present/absent are culturally loaded with values, such as good/bad, weak/strong, woman/man (Bell 1991, 36, 102–103, 106).

This schematics is formed as a gradual development in a specific cultural context where hierarchical values are linked with biological, psychological and cultural aspects of the human Umwelt in a complex manner. Crucially, emotion acts as a catalyst in this imaginative process where metonymical details are loaded with values, giving an affective charge to the metaphoricalisation of objects. Accordingly, the habitual schematic logic of racial thinking would legitimate white superiority by metaphorically placing itself up in the colonial hierarchy on the axis of up/down, thereby locating the good pole near the Christian heaven, which emblematically incarnates purity and innocence as combined with intelligent and right motives.\(^\text{12}\)

As the excerpts indicate, in Duras’s handling, the monsoon climate, sky and earth are foregrounded as horisontal and heavy elements, thus emphasising the stagnancy of the colonial impasse. This is accentuated by portraying the ills lying on the banks of the Ganges, and slaves toiling for the economical growth of the British Empire in the factories and fields (V, 31–32; 176). The description of the slavery is imbricated with the image of the drowsy white circle, watching the picturesque palm trees while the text comments on their mutual feeling of goodwill (l’entente), as if referring to the economic ownership of the country and the men’s shared ownership of the white woman (V, 176). As a result, the vertical hierarchy of racial relations is projected into the horisontal, exclusive structures of a container metaphor, which underscores the clear-cut division of an inside and outside on the social, horisontal axis, as its structural elements ‘interior, boundary, exterior’ and its basic logic ‘inside or outside’ (Varela et al. 1993, 177). Summing up, the ethnic inequality is projected to a metaphorical division of inside − the realm of harmony, extravagance and purity − and outside − the realm of death, hunger and leprosy (see Knuuttila 2002).

Hence, taking racialised economic order as a value centre of Le Vice-consul, the virtual Calcutta can be read as a controversial mixture of pleasure of luxury and anxiety, while the alleged center of the metropolis plays out the deconstructive purposes with the dramatic resources available in this metaphor. In Michael Rothberg’s terms, the divided setting of this self-made prison-like container and its surrounding unveils itself to be a reverse of the Nazi concentrationary universe. As Rothberg shows, in the metaphorical representations of concentration camps and ghettos, the ubiquitous traumatic index of the racial system is the barbed wire, which encloses the suffering mass of racially inferior people to be murdered inside a prison, as separated from the superior perpetrators (Rothberg 2000, 130–132). As an inversion, in Duras’s colonial universe, the colonial perpetrators live in

\(^{12}\) Such a schema is realised ironically in the portrayal of the white district in Un barrage (B, 167).
their self-made prison, separated from the subordinated masses by protective iron railings, which display the role of the central traumatic index of racist exclusion. Inside the railings, in a suffocating ambience, a few monad-like, reserved European individuals move one by one, eavesdropping on each other, while the abject mass lies as excluded outside their clean, organised vacuum. This is how the container metaphor of *Le Vice-consul* is harnessed for ideological meanings based on the ideas of purity of race, ethnicity, and carefully controlled heterosexuality founding the racial rule, so as to provide the context where the social codes of power and solidarity will be played out as a drama of the perpetrators.

In summary, the space of Calcutta can be shaped as a system of container-within-container arranged for the purpose to demonstrate the physical and mental boundaries set up by the practices of the racial rule. The principal indicator of the multi-faceted existence of these boundaries is the Vice-consul, whose firing of a weapon at indigenous people acts as a primus motor for making visible these boundaries which both separate and combine the exclusive parts of the colonial ranking system. In the physical middle of this politically charged realm is the public heart of the centre, the French reception room, ruled by Anne-Marie Stretter. The Vice-consul tries to access this innermost nest of white power from its surrounding area of the European enclave. During the drama, however, he is displaced outside the railings, into the realm of the Cambodian beggar and the lepers. Hence, the spatial system of containers, one within the other, can be seen as a carefully planned arena for a performance which will happen according to the dynamics of a modern rite of purification. As will be indicated in the next two sections, in the course of the slow encounter of the ‘queen of Calcutta’ and the criminal of Lahore, the exclusive boundaries between inside/outside are threatening to break down, whereupon the clear-cut division of coloniser/colonised, victim/perpetrator, and body/mind as a given cognitive presupposition tends to dissolve.

Isolating The Criminal

The slowly unfolding drama of *Le Vice-consul* leads to the official reception in the French Embassy, where two seemingly opposite persons, Anne-Marie Stretter and the French Vice-consul, encounter one another in an alienated cultural atmosphere. Like in Greek tragedies, having occurred outside the novel, the Vice-consul's individual catastrophe is the complication (*hamartia*), while the collective handling of his crime is the resolution which forms the bulk of the novel. During

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13  Aristotle’s *Poetics*, 1996, 29. One can find all elements of Greek tragedy in an inversed order in *Le Vice-consul*. For example, the man’s violent attack is a modification of *hamartia*. In Oedipus’s drama, a newcomer who is rejected as a child arrives from outside in a country where the situation is catastrophical. He must solve the cause but is finally recognised to be guilty himself. In the
the process, the figure of the criminal anti-hero is construed as a prismatic indicator of the racial order that tunes the melancholic everyday of the white upper echelon. To the bored orangery of the Western invaders, the crime comes up as a welcome, scandalous diversion. This is uttered by slowly proceeding patterns of non-verbal and verbal interaction that constitute those ritual practices which maintain and reproduce the illusion of racial and intellectual balance and purity. The Vice-consul’s access to the reception ball is narrated by a discourse which centres on the social control exercised on the interaction of the Ambassador’s wife and her stigmatised compatriot. At first the intimate group of the French hostess observes the criminal’s appearance from a distance, then regulates the progress of the encounter, and finally excludes him from the ceremony. To analyse this process, I treat the Vice-consul’s crime as an unclean locus in French colonial history in terms of Mary Douglas’s ritual theory and Erving Goffman’s theory of modern ritual interaction. The rite of purification of the white society is a two-phased reaction to the disturbance of social balance produced by the Vice-consul’s crime. This section explores the phase of the perpetrator’s isolation, which initiates the reader into the Vice-consul’s private secrets and intricacies, all leading towards the phase of his final exclusion discussed in the last section.

While the novel’s title indicates its real focus, Duras’s text carefully illustrates what kind of character is isolated and how. This is made with the help of the romantic motif, which epitomises how the racist values of the colonial salon are intertwined and reproduced with erotic rivalry and sexism. Mieke Bal insightfully considers suffering to be the main theme of the novel, and the love plot between Anne-Marie and Michael Richardson as a marginal one (Bal 1991). As she observes, the plot concentrates on portraying the attitude of the whites to race relations through the antagonism between the violent man and the indigenous people, whose fictional substitute is the dual figure of the beggar woman. For Bal, during a few contacts between the ethnic parties, the status quo of the colonial society remains unchanged, but the emptiness of life among the Europeans becomes visible (ibid., 183–185). Although I share similar starting points as Bal, I do not, however, consider the love plot as a marginal theme of the novel, but rather hold the melodramatic disposition as an integral part of its critical point. For me, Duras reffigures melodramatic love as a necessary building-block in the textual architectonics of gendered colonialist practices, which underpins the collective fantasy of racial supremacy of the white invaders. While the figure of the heterosexual ‘sugarcandy love’ between Anne-Marie and Michael is the precondition for the white woman’s position as an object of competitive love, it is used to point out the commodified heterosexual presuppositions of the postmodern inversion of Le Vice-consul, the newcomer is known as being guilty of the colonial crime, while the society does not recognise itself as being responsible for the same crime. Finally, like Oedipus, the Vice-consul is excluded from the society.
colонalisng belief system. It also plays a central part in the exclusion of the
criminal from the colonial hierarchy, as he does not fulfill the demands of the
racial order of domination. The figure of possessing love in the end guides the
reader – whether s/he recognises it or not – towards the culmination point of the
story: the Vice-consul’s public howl, the most powerful and conflicting traumatic
index of the novel.

One foregrounding factor tuning the perpetrators’ gradual advance towards
each other is the white society’s commercial thirst for knowledge of their personal
life such as Anne-Marie’s passionate eroticism and suicidal tendency, and the
Vice-consul’s alleged madness and fear of leprosy. Seen within the framework of
Goffman’s theory of modern ritual interaction, the ongoing events consist of two
complementary series of cooperative face-work. The first is a nonverbal interplay
of controlling movements, gestures and gazes which reflect the fearful curiosity
of the Europeans as they crave for sensations. The second consists of numbing
erotic passion and pent-up destructiveness, brought together in the gradual
encounter of the promiscuous heroine and the notoriously virginal anti-hero.
Together, these two processes re-present the schematic, unconscious behaviour
of an alienated, narcissistic mind’s insatiable need of knowing the other person’s
private life – especially, its weaknesses and misfortunes. To reach this goal, the
frame narrative uses the motif of erotic rivalry between the Vice-consul and his
witness, the attaché Charles Rossett. This is displayed as an understated dramatic
discourse of nonverbal signs, to which direct questions of the story’s own reliability
are imbricated. A whole set of non-verbal signifiers signal the modalities of control
and solidarity which declare the place of the criminal in the colonial value system,
while the strategy manages to create a tension which transcends the mere portrayal
of the mood of decayed Western melancholy. A skillful construction of drama-
within-drama reveals the secret conversations of the two perpetrators directly to
the reader while they are dancing. Duras intentionally keeps the society ignorant of
their encounter’s real content, thus creating the dramatic irony of the culmination.14

As Anne-Marie and Jean-Marc recognise each other as similarly desperate persons,
they agree on a symbolic gesture that seals their secret union as colonialists: the
man’s seemingly crazed attack of public cry.15 As an outcome, the drama shakes
the status quo of the fictional society: not in the eyes of the whites themselves, but
in the eyes of an empathic reader.

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14 The culmination can be understood as a postmodern modification of Greek recognition (ana-
gnorisis), which simultaneously marks the reversal (peripeteia) of the drama (Aristotle 1996, 18).
15 Here I prefer mainly to speak of ‘cry’ in order to emphasise Duras’s consistent usage of French
‘crie’ throughout her oeuvre as an multivalent echo of psychic pain. In the Vice-consul’s case, ‘cry’
represents an ambiguous, partly calculated howl which evokes a spectrum of conflicting feelings.
Crime in the Salon

Intrigues of the White Hermit

Being an exceptional male protagonist among Duras’s white heroines, the Vice-consul amounts to a subversive trope illustrating colonial subjectification. The initial setting introduces Jean-Marc de H. as being totally separated from his colleagues while waiting five weeks for punishment, and after living the life of a hermit-like official in Asian colonies for the previous four years. For the closed world of the embassy, the arrival of the Vice-consul poses a problem concerning his final social positioning, whereas the official punishment for his crime is not found to be a noteworthy moral problem. But for the withdrawn and unhappy man, his accident is a resolution since, by transgressing the law, the hitherto asocial official is allowed to assume the role of a social subject, though, that of a blemished, repulsive, even horrifying monster (Goffman 1963, 14). As Judith Butler (1999, 41) notes when interpreting Althusser, when a marginalised person is put under the law after having come from ‘a questionable or impossible mode of existence in an outlying area’, s/he adopts a certain social place as s/he is taken along in the discursive realm of the society. In reference to Gayatry Spivak, Butler (41–42) further explains that when a discredited person adopts the name of an ‘individual’ on the basis of having broken the law, the subjectivity s/he is given will always somehow damage her/him. However, while that subject position enables her/him, it indeed sets certain limits as well. Applying such a twist of life to the Vice-consul, his metamorphosis from a rigid hermit to a social subject after having broken the law establishes a new social status for him. Yet, paradoxically, after being regarded as a social, even political agent, the man is placed in a marginal position, but now at least within the small embassy society. Obtaining the status of a criminal, this ‘non-person’ of Jean-Marc de H. is kept strictly on the margin of the social circle as a stereotype of a stigmatised person, until the unofficial ritual management of his stigma will occur in the reception (Goffman 1963, 69).16

When forging the French official into a multifaceted indicator of colonialist values, the textual strategy intriguingly combines conflicting material. Intertwined with the romantic formula as another organising principle, the motif of crime creates a dynamic tension between the plausible inner state of the criminal and the society’s construction of his person. In Goffman’s terms, two kinds of controversial information is given about the man: first, through the ‘expression he gives off’; and second, the ‘expression he gives’ (Goffman 1959, 2, 4). First, the official papers and his own storytelling offer a crisis-type portrayal of him, involving a

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16 The impression of the Vice-consul as a non-person is emphasised through two devices: by referring to him most often by the title of his profession, and simultaneously revealing his name merely in a truncated form ‘Jean-Marc de H’. The metonymical nature of this designation is accentuated as the name is compared with other, regularly complete, names, as if the French unuttered ‘h’ in the family name of ‘de H.’ would imply the idea of ‘from nowhere’.
few determining episodes of his life, added with some facts of his background. In this way, the criminal act, which constitutes a moment of the man's private life, becomes involuntarily public in the salon (Bakhtin 1981, 115, 122). Second, being more illuminating, before a detailed expression the uptight man will give, Duras colours the picture of her anti-hero with a couple of proleptic metaphors reflecting analogically his withdrawn mental condition. When these metaphors are related both to the man’s own calculative accounts about himself and to the appraisal made of him by the society, the reader is allowed to assess his British colleagues’ non-verbal and verbal regulation which is meant to isolate the criminal.

Typical of Durasian storytelling, the omniscient narrator does not intrude into the psychological world of the man, and saves his mechanical-looking behaviour for other purposes. Rather, the following metaphor substitutes all direct psychologisation of the perpetrator, while its metonymic details justify the interpretation of the metaphor as one of the traumatic images. It is an extended metaphor of a room with significative metonymical elements that refer both to Jean-Marc’s house in France and to a classical archetype of the self as a closed, well organised container:

Inside him is a drawing room, everything is in order, the grand black piano is shut, on the music-stand there is the score, also shut, whose title, “Indiana’s Song”, cannot be read. The padlock on the gate is double locked, no one can get into the garden, not come nearer, one cannot read the title on the score. On the piano stands a Chinese vase converted into a lamp, the shade is of green silk, forty years old? yes. Has it stood here before the birth of him who was born? yes. There is a lull, the shutter is left open, the sun sheds bright light on the green lamp. People stop: something has to be done, or there will be getting no sleep tonight, did you hear that dismal racket all last night? More people stop: there is quite a little crowd gathered: who owns this house which is permanently kept locked up? A single man, about thirty-five years of age.
His name is Jean-Marc de H.
An only son, an orphan now. (emphasis added) 17

While the analogical image characterises the Vice-consul's personality, at the same time it indicates Dura's tendency to repeat the container metaphor and use it towards various goals. Packed in a concise form, the scene gives an indirect judgement of the man's developmental history and mental state. As an analogue of the human mind, the room can be understood as a psychic space projected into a physical space, to which one can draw oneself, but from which one also can come out (Freeman 2000, 256–257). The calm drawing room is stagnated in a forgotten order of the past decades, to which a chain of negative metonymies give a tone of closedness in a crescendo. Everything is shut away in this double-locked place of refuge which nobody can enter. Saliently, whereas ‘nobody can read’ the title of the notebook on the piano, this knowledge is given to the reader. This anticipates the function of Indiana's Song as a traumatic index of the Vice-consul. Then, like concealing secret rage, some disquieting noise of destruction can be heard at night in this paralysed scene, as if the closed mental room hid some dreadful secret of its owner. The ambiguity of the ‘dismal racket’ in the empty room reinforces the idea of its owner’s deranged condition which has violently burst into the open in Lahore. To this information, the text adds another, more enigmatic, hint of the man's mental state with an episode which cannot be ascribed to any known speaker:

Une voix atténuée demande encore, dans le jardin : Lorsque le monsieur est là, entendez-vous de la musique jouée au piano? Des gammes? Un air joué maladroitement, d’un seule main? Un très vieille voix répond qu’autrefois, oui, le soir, oui, avec un doigt, un enfant jouait comme Indiana’s Song. Mais encore? Une très vieille voix répond qu’autrefois, oui, la nuit, c’était il y a moins longtemps, des fracas d’objets qui devaient être des miroirs se produisaient dans la maison habitée par un homme seul celui qui, enfant, jouait Indiana’s Song. Rien d’autre. (VC, 34–35)

In the garden, a voice can still faintly be heard asking: When the gentleman is at home, do you ever hear music played on the piano? Scales? A tune clumsily played with one hand? The voice of someone very old replies that yes, in the evenings, it was long ago, yes, a child used to pick out with one finger a tune that sounded like Indiana's Song. And more recently? A very old voice replies that yes, at night, in the past, more recently, the sound of things being smashed, mirrors most likely, could be heard in the house where the man lived alone, the same man who as a child had played Indiana’s Song. Nothing else. (V, 23)

17 I have translated this passage word for word to emphasise that the original text does not refer to the ‘mind’s eye’ which ‘sees the drawing room’, but states simply: ‘Inside him there is a salon’. Moreover, against the grammar, Duras does not capitalise the answers ‘yes’, so as to highlight that the text imitates an inner dialogue, the speaker of which is, however, left purposefully unclear. For the same reason, she also shifts from a free indirect discourse directly to a direct one (Cf. V, 21–22).
The origin of the ancient voices in the passage is left unclear, as if this locus of uncertainty provided an access to some flashback of an unknown psychic world. In the visuo-spatial container of the room/self, there seems to be another, audible, space, that of speaking voices and smashing glass. While the dialogue breaks the consistency of the narrative, it is left in the air whether the voices are memories of Jean-Marc himself who is walking through the park in Calcutta, or his neighbours’ opinions in France. Mediating some details of his character, the passage creates an image of a temporally stratified psyche, first, a lonely child picking out the (lost) mother’s *Indiana’s Song* on the piano, and then, a desperately raging, adult man. The noise of smashing mirrors at night points to his explosive destructiveness, while as a sign of self-hatred it predicts his identification with Anne-Marie’s widely known suicidality. Evoking uncertainty, the prolepsis foreshadows the coming evidence of Jean-Marc’s lonely career given by his official papers and by the ‘expression he gives’ about himself. Some pages later, the effect of falling in love with Anne-Marie is primed by an image of his house in France. The letter from his aunt relates that a small ventilation window of his house in Neuilly is left open, as if repeating the image of an open shutter through which some fresh air comes in. These tiny metonymies foreshadow the improvement of Jean-Marc’s asthmatic, wheezing breath due to the vitalising experience of love, to be completed with similar physical signs becoming visible at the reception ball (VC, 41–42). Altogether, the metaphorical material evokes the idea of a destructive man longing for rescuing intimacy, while the melody of *Indiana’s Song* is given here the important status of a recurring traumatic index that will absorb into itself contrasting emotional tones during the drama.

In the phase of isolation, the Vice-consul strategically recollects a discussion with the Secretary of the European Club regarding his own fragile health in childhood, abandonment in the boarding school at the age of fifteen, hatred towards the absent father – a banker – the divorce of his parents, loss of the mother and his abstinent ‘virginity’. As if arranged to tempt one to find psychoanalytical reasons for the man’s nervous breakdown, all this material is construed as seemingly resulting from a childhood (Oedipal) trauma in a broken bourgeois family, and causing the repression of early rage as a response to impassivity and rejection. Nevertheless, the point is elsewhere: the text skilfully fuses such a transhistorical trauma evoked by this background knowledge with the historical trauma of the man’s violent attack, thereby underscoring the intertwinements of existential anxiety and destructiveness with a lust for power through possession and dominance. Namely, with help of the drunk Secretary, the Vice-consul misrepresents himself by strategically pressing coloured psychological explanations upon the people in Calcutta, whereby he is shown to profit from these stories for his own hopeful but desperate purposes (Goffman 1959, 62, 142).\(^\text{18}\) Abstaining from reasoning his attack in Lahore, he

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\(^{18}\) The Vice-consul dramatises his memories for public talebearing by manipulating the Secretary: ‘I authorise you to say: “Even as long ago as that, in Neuilly, if you see what I mean.” Say: “He
rather actively circulates the confessions of his childhood via the Secretary, who mixes up the mans' part as a rejected boy in the good-quality boarding school of Montfort with his own life in a large, miserable corrective training establishment in Arras. The society repeats the distorted story as follows:


The people are saying: Every evening, he talks to the Club Secretary, and this man is the only one who ever talks to him. The corrective training school in Arras he talked about makes you think. The north. November. Flies clustering round naked light bulbs, brown linoleum, always in this kind of pensionate, as though one had been there oneself… Those sort of places are all alike. It’s as though one had been there oneself. Denim overalls in the playground. The Pas-de-Calais shrouded in reddish fog all the winter, he says, as though one had been there oneself, poor kids. But maybe he’s just trying to pull the wool over our eyes. (V, 76)

In fact the reason for Jean-Marc’s intrigues is love: he intends to confirm his early psychological symptoms as mitigating circumstances that would allow him to stay in Calcutta near Anne-Marie, a new factor changing his condition which he confesses to the Secretary (VC, 76–80). But the Secretary does not pass on the gloomy ‘virgin’s’ love confession, who avows earlier of having unsuccessfully ‘tried to love different persons’ including himself, which ‘made [him] ugly’ (VC, 77). Being more clear and visible in India Song, Jean-Marc’s nascent feeling of love explains his expression ‘It was Lahore that I wanted’ (IS, 29). During the reception, systematically, the frequently recurring traumatic index, ‘Lahore’, metonymically substitutes for (his) violence. Moreover, his phrase ‘Lahore c’est moi’ (I am Lahore) seals the new but ambiguous social identity established thorough his attack on the locals (IS, 46). As one of Duras’s famous ‘opera lines’, this echo of Louis XIV’s words ‘Nation c’est moi’ boasts ironically both of the man’s isolated career and the abortive French colonial power. Altogether, the colonial perpetrator’s public performance was frozen with horror. A young man in an empty house, smashing light bulbs, asking himself why? why?” (VC, 88).

19 This calculated misinformation recurs in a more muddling form at the end of the novel as if affirming the nature of the Vice-consul’s intricate mind (VC, 83–88, 208–210).

20 Once the suspicion is awakened, it is impossible to decide which of the Vice-consul’s avowals are honest.

21 In Hiroshima mon amour, Duras explains such ‘opera lines’ by saying: Leurs conversations porterons à la fois sur eux-mêmes et sur HIROSHIMA. Et leurs propos seront mélanges, mêlés de
strengthens the impression of a narcissistic, joyless person who reckons on some position among his peers through an impossible route. This is why stigmatisation is an acceptable tag for this socially untalented man: in his extreme inner loneliness, he settles for the definition of the ‘other’ in the midst of the colonial establishment.

The Rite of Purification

To the odd mixture of being deliberately stigmatised and expressing desperate hope, the non-verbal communication of the whites brings another perspective, that of discriminating against the perpetrator. Arriving literally from outside, Lahore – ‘la hors’ – Jean-Marc de H. comes from a focal point of unrest, which politically is known to be one of the most explosive areas in British India. His shooting at random into a crowd of helpless people is a surrealist idea Duras modified to her anti-colonial purposes from André Breton’s provocative suggestion against bourgeois self-satisfaction (P, 172). To be tried for such a senseless attack of violence in the India of the thirties is an awkward situation for the upper echelon in Calcutta, who believes in its own racial justification based on prudent rationality and purity of motivation. Therefore, having exploded after a ‘nervous breakdown’ typical of Europeans in Asiatic horror, the Vice-consul can be understood as a metonymical figure standing for the smoldering violence that lurks under the stagnant surface of the inter-war colonial situation. Indeed, as an ironical prototype of an official, and as a traumatic index of European colonialism, the image of an explosive white man might be interpreted as an antithesis of the widely known metaphor of the powerful Mother India, which, based on the form of the Indian map, has been widely used since the nineteenth century (Ramaswamy 2002, 171–173). However, understood as a simple metonymy of colonial situation, the body...
of a destructive white male would be reduced to a normative and sexist explanation based on binary thinking, similar to the traditional usage of a female body as a symbol for an independent or conquered nation (Spivak 1987, 244). This is why I rather interpret the figure of the Vice-consul more dynamically in the frame of ritual interaction by seeing him as a dangerous element threatening the racial order from within in the guise of the ‘white man’ himself (Knuuttila 2002).

In the light of Douglas’s theory of cultural rites dealing with pollution, the Vice-consul represents an anomalous element, who has intruded into the white ‘container’s’ order of ideal moral and mental health. His stigmatisation is harnessed to illustrate the constructivist nature of colonialist value hierarchies which are to be illuminated in the evolving rite of purification. According to Douglas, with ritual practices, every culture has continually to reconstruct its relation to ambiguous phenomena which do not fit into its established categories. If the order of pure categories of existence is deranged by some exception, a reorganisation of this ‘pollution experience’ is needed. In modern societies, the order is restored through collective rituals as well as in ‘primitive’ ones, yet, with the difference that modern belief systems are not as consistent as those of this latter (Douglas 1996, 36). Defining uncleanness as ‘a matter out of place’, Douglas crystallises: ‘where there is dirt, there is a system’ (ibid.). The anomalous element is therefore to be avoided and controlled physically by approaching the fear of it through the order of some ritual (ibid., 40–41).

In Douglas’s theory, the non-verbal language of Western bodies in the rituals of punishment and negotiation follows the symbolic meanings of habitual perceptual schemas, which we all use and understand rather fluently. Concerning defilement which is experienced as dangerous, our habitual ‘filtering mechanism’ often turns to avoidance or hostility towards the polluting anomaly (Douglas 1996, 37–38). In similar vein, Goffman specifies that non-verbal interaction is an important part of human resources that expresses social rules, and has a ritual function in the regulation of the coherence of the society, with which an individual can either be excluded or included in the group (Goffman 1959). Moreover, non-verbal communication is a more theatrical and contextual method of exclusion than verbal discourse, and presumably unintentional, whether it be purposefully enacted or not (ibid., 4). This idea predicts the theory of an implicit interpersonal simulation of a social self, to which prevailing emotional and cognitive patterns give an individually appropriated structure and form (Hari and Kujala 2009). In my view, Le Vice-consul represents Duras’s exploration of the unconscious dynamics of the European non-verbal tradition inscribed into the white body, and transformed into textual proxemics and kinesics of the characters.

As a sensitive observer of tiny bodily signs, Duras maps Western non-verbal language as an implicit mode of social control. Featuring the filtering mechanisms of the white society, her textual apparatus transcribes the non-verbal exclusion of
the criminal into the Europeans’ attempts to situate the stigmatised perpetrator. Reflecting those ritual practices that maintain and reproduce an illusion of rationalism and mental health as the basis of white supremacy, a subtle, proxemic game of avoidance effectively isolates the Vice-consul. The European face-work treats him as an abnormal person, suspected of madness, thereby stigmatising him on the grounds of what he allegedly has done. He is conspicuously shown as being kept at a distance by the British officials’ and Anne-Marie’s gestures, looks and movements. Portraying alienating spatialisation, a variety of bodily signs are mediated visually from one person to another, especially, those of kinesics: a careful timing of looking, hearing, hiding of looks, or avoidance of listening to this ‘madman’, as if spying him from afar, while this spying is often noticed by another observing person (VC, 35, 37, 45–46, 49–50). The British novices, Charles Rossett and Peter Morgan, evade the Vice-consul when walking in the park; Morgan does not even want to hear his ‘wheezing’ voice carried far from the balcony of the European Club (VC, 49, 73). By keeping the dangerous person further away, these evading practices reveal themselves as a dramatised nonverbal surveillance of what is acceptable, while they simultaneously mark the everyday beliefs regulating the construction of the white ego. In this manner, Duras’s writing operates according to the principle of an embodied mind which understands non-verbal performance as reflecting the evaluative part of emotion in our collective cognitive schemas.

Furthermore, in Douglas’s terms, in order to be classified as a definitive exception from the rule in some social group, the clear-cut boundaries of that group must be specified as to which this element does not conform. To fulfil this demand, the limits of sexuality, purity of body, intellect, and mental health are maintained by mythical public narratives, which strengthen and affirm the beliefs supporting pure categories of the hierarchies of naturalised oppositions, thereby particularising the identity of the members of the society (Douglas 1996, 40–41). The mythical narrative regulating Le Vice-consul is the tradition of racist thinking which supposes the white ‘race’ to be the superior one on the basis of its purity of intellect, rationality, and level of organisation. Any exception from this rule is classified as inappropriate, and has to be located in the system by finding for it a proper definition as a reason for rejection. As outlined in the previous section, being constructed to manifest the racial value system of the European society, the textual spatio-temporal schema of Calcutta is built to reflect the mental schema of racial supremacy in the form of a container. While the superior race is situated within, and the inferior one is excluded to the outside of the container,

25 As Catherine Bell formulates the same phenomenon, as a tool of cultural domination, ritualisation is ‘a cultural sixth sense’ which produces and models the experience of a redemptive hegemony. Moreover, the rite of purification always supposes a common cognitive schema articulating the order of temporal and spatial dimensions to which the evaluative beliefs are linked (Bell 1992, 114–116).
the stigmatised man is like a ‘spot of dirt’ brought in from the outside realm of the inferior race. The function of the rite is thus to find the place for the polluting criminal in the colonial order by using an acceptable definition found in the grand narrative of Western rationalism and intellectualism, dating back to the concepts of the Enlightenment and the Victorian legacy, that is, the dualist concepts of reason, intellect, health, and heterosexuality. In the end, the process of exclusion is enabled by projecting the fear of the anomalous element to a bodily symbol reflecting these most important values of the society (Douglas 1996, 122–124; see also Bhabha 1994, 66-67).

Following an incisive logics, Duras intensifies her textual grip of the mechanistic concept of the binary mind by choosing an apposite, yet implicit bodily symbol for the Western concept of purity: the figure of the brain, made visible by the whites’ fear of neural leprosy. As Douglas explains, as an attempt to maintain the balance of particular assumptions, bodily symbols are chosen in the rite of purification as outer signs onto which inner states can be projected (Douglas 1996, 129). 26 Accordingly, when the Vice-consul is allowed to rejoin the society in French embassy, the agitated small-talk reiterates the calming claim of the criminal’s alleged fear of leprosy as a psychological reason for his irrational attack. But as if justifying their avoidance of contagion, the whites use the figure of the maddening neural leprosy hiding in the indigenous people for racist purposes. While the whites’ fear of madness implicitly points to the (white) human brain as a symbol of intellect and superiority, the leprous brain is chosen as their bodily symbol to which they project their beliefs. The figure of ‘leprosy’ becomes also a traumatic index as it is dispersed throughout the novel as connected with the white criminal. For example, the Europeans’ fear of a shameful loss of mental sanity and balance becomes visible as they call Lahore a ‘martyr city of leprosy’ because of the (‘disgusting’, ‘horrible’) ‘Vice-consul of Lahore’ who has killed there people (VC, 123). Standing together for the dualist concept of ratio, the two affective facets of this traumatic index meet here each other – the horror of mental illness, and the horror of living the life of a numb, insane flesh. Indexing the colonial crime, the figure of leprosy also fulfills the characteristics of a Manichean allegory with its contradictory polarisation of meaning. What is more, when heightened with a new facet of the ‘leprosy of heart’ (IS, 21) – sexual infatuation as a survival device in the ‘misery’ of India – the ‘leprosy of brain’ absorbs into itself the meaning of addictive eroticism. Ultimately, reflecting a combination of the body, intellect and emotion, 26 Any social rite expresses culturally specific themes which concern social forms, values, knowledge, and cosmological conceptions, also in modern cultures where the beliefs often do not form as a consistent system as in the primitive ones. Douglas sums up: ‘[t]he rituals work upon the body politic through the symbolic medium of the physical body’. But since the areas of the body and threat are culturally variable, it is the prominent danger in the culture that indicates its prevailing bodily themes and, accordingly, the central bodily symbols available for choosing (Douglas 1996, 129).
the polytrope of ‘leprosy’ hides three forms of danger; that of being infected with leprosy, that of mental aberration causing violence, and that of mortally numbing love. This symbolism guides the criminal’s awkward positioning in the order of purity, whereupon the vicious circle of the maddening fear of fear is completed.

To conclude the phase of isolation, just as Douglas proposes, the white society projects its fear of ‘dirt’ onto a physical symbol that functions as their pretext in avoiding an embodied contact with the criminal. Submitting purposefully to the negative suppositions projected upon himself, the Vice-consul assumes his isolated position, as if wanting to perform his stigmatised role according to the given hints and stage directions (see Goffman 1959, 72). With the implicit narrator, the reader is taken along to witness the evolving drama from a critical distance and even compelled to identify her/himself with a colonialist, especially when the view is fused with Rossett’s focalisation, as shown in the next section. The dramatic present tense of the narratorial voice heightens the feeling of the reader’s temporal and spatial presence as being one of ‘any passer-by’ (VC, 90–91). The illusion of the simultaneity of the narrative act and the ongoing drama winds the reader into an intriguing play of suspicion and critique. However, at the same time, a skilled free indirect discourse self-reflexively comments on the truthfulness of such descriptions. With fine nuances, numerous sarcastic notes on the physical layout and the atmosphere interfere in this persuasion. This tends to estrange the reader from the adopted status of ‘everyone’, and prompts me to take a more specified perspective on the main protagonists’ encounter.

Between Passion and Destruction: A Male Cry

Wie der andere befinde ich auch mich ausserhalb der Sprache. Das, womit ich der Sprache entgehe, bringt mich ihn näher, er und ich haben etwas gemeinsam: Es sind die gleichen Dinge, die wir nicht sagen können, und damit beginnt Sprache überhaupt.27

The encounter between Anne-Marie and the Vice-consul explores the possibility of communicating the perpetrator trauma through non-verbal interaction that overcomes the obstacles of language and social control. The intimate drama occurs during the official reception which occupies a third of Le Vice-consul. The following reading of the episode opens up this occasion which leads to a secret agreement made by the couple on the Vice-consul’s public cry, and provokes a scandal in the salon. The agreement results from Anne-Marie’s empathic involvement, in which

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27 ‘Like the other, I also am outside language. What escapes me in language brings me close to the other; s/he and I have something in common: it is the same things that we cannot say out loud, and there begins language after all.’ Goldschmidt, 1994, 27.
she shares the Vice-consul's experience of his perpetration beyond an insufficient verbal exchange. My purpose is to show the signification of the encounter for both of the counterparts and, eventually, for the reader. The ultimate goal is to interpret the Vice-consul's cry as a perpetrator's traumatic index which is symbolically juxtaposed with the indigenous beggar-woman's voice in *Le Vice-consul* and, more clearly, in the film *India Song*. To these aims, the first section explores those narrative strategies that prepare this invisible culmination, especially, the sexist and racist reification of the colonial subject exposed in the small-talk of the society. These evaluations demonstrate the schematic, objectifying seeing of the 'other', which underpins the exclusionary practices of the colonial system as a part of the binary thinking conducive to Western subjectification. The latter section focuses on the main protagonists' encounter as a textual dramatisation of an empathic understanding of the perpetrator's traumatised condition. This subtle yet decisive turn gives rise to the Vice-consul's public cry, with all its subversive meanings.

According to Jane Bradley Winston, Duras's purpose in the India Cycle was to destroy French colonial ideology, which Duras had laid out in 1950 in the realistic novel *Un barrage contre Le Pacifique*. In the novels of the sixties, Duras refigures French colonial desire for an exoticised and Westernised Asia in the guise of an erotic feminine object of desire, Anne-Marie Stretter, and then allows her to die by drowning in *India Song* in 1974 (Winston 2001, 61). In my reading, elucidating the experience of perpetrator trauma, the interaction between the Vice-consul and Anne-Marie creates a dual figure of the colonialist, which transgresses an essentialising sexual representation of Man. As a chimera of narcissistic desire, destruction and loss, this dual figure represents a variation of the theme of Tristan and Isolde by designing the male counterpart as subordinated to the political status of the woman, and compelled by her erotic attraction which is intertwined with political power. With this disposition, Duras strives for a more nuanced analysis of the white colonial subject, which fractures the representation of patriarchy and its totalising cross-cultural, transhistorical male system (cf. Rattansi 1994, 35).

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28 While the encounter of the perpetrators has been analysed several times before, their secret agreement on the Vice-consul’s crying performance has not been made visible. For me, the agreement is crucial for a pertinent interpretation of the postcolonial meanings of the drama.

29 Like a number of Duras interpreters, Winston does not examine the narrative representation of the white male coloniser.

30 Winston claims that Duras portrays Anne-Marie psychoanalytically, but to be precise, this view seems to be anachronistic for it is based on the results of psychoanalytical studies on Duras. As Winston states, in her own words, Duras imagined and represented Anne-Marie's figure as an object of desire in relation to the knowledge that she shaped her writing in the thirties Colonial Ministry (Winston 2001, 61). Lucy McNeece (1996, 60) sees Anne-Marie as a representation of the moral decay of colonial power, but also as a mythical female figure of the bourgeois culture. On Duras’s increasing critical tendency towards the order of the French bourgeois society, see Cerasi 1993, 64–97; Crowley 2000, 159. On the role of Anne-Marie in the film *India Song* (1974) as an exoticised female stereotype of Western colonialism, see Ch VI.
The sting of Duras’s postcolonial criticism is unveiled when the white society’s iconising evaluations of the Vice-consul are seen as contrasted with his and Anne-Marie’s mutual recognition as desperate partners. Therefore, my reading ‘listens’ to the epistemological tension created between the colonialisit discourse and the non-verbal interaction of the protagonists. This is to demonstrate how the implicit liaison of the couple threatens the normative (Oedipal) romance between Anne-Marie and Michael, and disturbs Rossett’s rivalry in the symmetric configuration of the British men around Anne-Marie.

As an effective trope that Duras utilises for her textual political purposes is the crime – the image of the white man firing at ill and starving people. The crime aims directly at the numb core of the stagnated political situation in the colonised India of the time. But while the startling incident signifies the transgression of the colonial law, it also symbolises an attack against those colonialist values that precondition French and British economic invasion. According to the racial hierarchy, the coloniser is traditionally supposed to act as a paternalistic authority taking care of the education and assimilation of the ‘historically underdeveloped’ people and the ‘backwardness’ of their cultural condition (Cooper 2001, 29–34; Goldberg 2002, 83–84; Rattansi 1994, 25). As presented in the previous section, the crime threatens to destroy the rational ideal of colonial subjectivity by staining it with violent madness that may lurk under the well-behaved surface of any European invader. Therefore, the stigmatised criminal adopts the place of an anomalous element to which the whites project their fear of uncontrolled behaviour in a rite of purification. In the small-talks the fear is implicitly shifted to neural leprosy which takes over the role of a danger that would threaten mental sanity by infecting the central nervous system. Thus the figure of leprosy indirectly refers to an incomparable intellect and rational balance, the most highly valued characteristics of the white ‘race’. Furthermore, as the colonial aggressor’s violence points to those laws which do not let him in the innermost center of the white power as a legally competent subject, the system offers him the position of a criminal under persistent suspicion regulated by Western definitions of mental normality. In this context, the encounter of the criminal with the hostess is a necessary expiating gesture bringing into balance the disturbed social order. Illuminating the microstructure of colonial practices, the crime acts as an apposite narrative vehicle that tries to make the European reader face the mirror.

An important non-verbal device coming into play at the reception is proxemics: posture and position of the body in a space in relation to oneself and others (Hall 1979, 293–294). According to Fernando Poyatos (1981), proxemics is the

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31 See also Hall 1969. Besides paralanguage, kinesics and proxemics (usage of space, distance, and positioning) to non-verbal signs belong physical symptoms, such as changes in skin colour and voice; the size and form of the body characterising age, sex, gender, and ethnicity and their cultural modifications; smells, hairstyles, clothing, and other very detailed, extremely tiny signals (Fabbri 1968; Nöth 1995).
Crime in the Salon

most rare device in literature. However, being aware that proxemics is mediated principally via visual signs, this thought may point to our insufficient understanding of how schematic emotions are expressed, that is, to a weakly developed emotional literacy (see Damasio 2000, 286).32 As Toni Morrison points out in her Playing in the Dark (1992), white people tend to ignore the habitual racialised schemas reproduced by literary representations, which determine the erasure of blacks from white American history. From this perspective, permeating Le Vice-consul, the proxemic strength of the whites which Goffman (1959) terms ‘poise’, can be read as Duras’s discursive structuration of cultural space and dominating values, effectively used to illuminate the habit with which the white society makes sense of its environment and relationships with the other (Fabbri 1968, 65–68).33 In Duras’s usage, proxemics and kinesics amount to a consistent performance of embodied parole, which dramatises the social orientation of the society. At the same time, proxemic performance is a ‘front’ which defines the situation for the reader who observes the drama as a witness (Goffman 1959, 22, 30). When close reading through the textual scale of Durasian non-verbal signs, gradually, the bodily interaction of the whites creates a paranoiac system of controlling the purity of their system, while it simultaneously expresses their attitude toward the ‘spot of dirt’. Thus Le Vice-consul invites the reader to follow the testing of the limits of colonialist presuppositions through a combination of verbal and body language, which together uncover the public narratives constituting European identity and its conception of self, including sexual, physical and mental health.

Emotional Illiteracy and Stigmatisation

Anne-Marie’s invitation to the reception allows the Vice-consul to be taken into the social circle by means of an official ceremony, which shifts him from his isolation under the immediate control of the society. The intimate encounter of the heroine and the anti-hero will take place in the cliquish multinational atmosphere of the French Embassy.34

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32 As Antonio Damasio (2000, 286) notes, background emotions such as fatigue, energy, tension, relaxation, balance, imbalance, harmony, discord, among others, are ‘observable to others in body postures, the speed and design of our movements and the prosody of our speech as we communicate thoughts that may have little to do with the background emotion’.

33 Fabbri (1968, 65–68) states that, situated in the social unconscious as a protosemiotic resource, the rules of Western proxemics is a translinguistic act which has its own particular coherence. For him in 1968, it is a secret dimension of our habits which should be made transparent. But in 2000, Damasio explains how the background emotions unconsciously map the proxemic dimension of non-verbal language besides the kinaesthetically expressed ‘core emotions’ such as fear, happiness, hatred, sorrow, and surprise. Following a ‘cognitive partiture’, proxemic body language tells the individual’s fundamental alertness with its tensions and moods, pains and enjoyments (Damasio 2000, 54–56).

34 The name of the French Ambassador, Stretter, may be of German origin, while being half-
As if reflecting the political logic of a ‘gardening’ control of European nation-states, under the protection of the old Ambassador, Anne-Marie’s intimate circle of four suitors all having British names occupies an unofficial role in controlling the French criminal’s behaviour during the ball. The group which consists of Anne-Marie’s lover Michael Richard, the old expert of India, George Crawn, the new, handsome attaché, Charles Rossett, and the young writer, Peter Morgan, forms around her a symmetrical, barely shakeable configuration of selected relationships. By overhearing and -looking the criminal, the British men regulate the criminal’s movements in the vicinity of the hostess, thus taking care of his special position as an anxiety-provoking lawbreaker who has come pointedly ‘from outside’: from British Lahore (Marini 1977, 101).

A consistent dramatic present tends to immerse the reader as one of the guests, but also compels one to be aware of oneself as the experiencer of the evolving events. The drama proceeds as a perfectly timed interplay of the characters’ movements, gazes, and avoidance of gazes. The criminal’s appearance and motivation is evaluated with numerous quoted speculations representing the whites’ general opinion, a strategy accentuated with numerous anonymous expressions such as ‘on dit’, ‘on (se) demande’, ‘on pense’, ‘on songe’, and ‘on attend’. Placed imperceptibly against these speculations are the suspicious perceptions and thoughts of Rossett, who as the Vice-consul’s erotic rival notices with sharpened eyes all the gestures and movements of the man and the lady of the house. By making temporary invasions into Rossett’s mind, the narratorial voice gives him the primary role of an intradiegetic witness of the couple’s encounter. As an exception among his countrymen, Rossett is shown as an emotionally sensitive person who strives after finding the truth about the love between the criminal and the ‘queen of Calcutta’. Though, a number of fearful questions remain in the air from Rossett’s and the invisible narrator’s common discourse, by which the reader is entangled in a network of perceptual uncertainty, while the everyday discourse of the society is brought to the subject of deconstruction.

Peculiar to Duras, this overlapping focalisation exposes the whites’ objectifying iconisation of the other person’s visual and audial appearance, which is translated into – often ironical – linguistic statements. Being a central part of the cultural

Italian, Anne-Marie is originally ‘Anna-Maria Guardi’ as the film India Song unveils. The guests are mainly British diplomats, officials, journalists and writers, but also the Spanish diplomat is mentioned. Tellingly, the only genuine French character seems to be the criminal, Jean-Marc de H.

On the social and intellectual order of a modern society and its three modern projects – the nation-state, the ‘gardening’ state, and the disciplinary society – see Rattansi 1994, 25.

The symmetrical pattern is visually foregrounded in the film India Song. See Ch VI.

The name ‘Lahore’ evokes a multivalent series of connotations. As inverted from là-hors to hors-là it can allude to Guy de Maupassant’s short story ‘La Horla’ of a suicidal count, whose name points to the Freudian ‘uncanny’ as well as to the idea of being outside the practices, standards, and rules of the society.

These looks/non-looks have been mostly interpreted as an erotic play.
construction of the colonial subject, the iconising way of seeing the ‘other’ reflects an automatised habit of schematic thinking, which is prone to equal the seen and heard with racialised and sexist beliefs, without a personal exchange with the other person.\textsuperscript{39} As I distinguish between different kinds of social mirroring, I define this objectifying seeing a mode of emotional illiteracy, termed henceforth as ‘iconic seeing’, as a semiotic alternative to ‘indexical’, empathic resonance with the ‘other’.\textsuperscript{40} Iconic seeing is based on a biased ranking of the ‘other’, and draws on an immediate, unreflected, non-verbal mirroring which supposes psychological and social capacities of a human being to be biologically determined and in a direct causal connection with outer properties, such as the skin colour, the form of the skull and facial details, the structure and relations of the body, and outer sexual characteristics. In the form of racist xenophobia and sexual subordination, this unscientific conception has prepared a fertile ground for political discrimination through the ages (Miles & Brown 2003, 39, 41). More specifically, if the cultural beliefs concerning outer differences are interpreted as properties of the object, and not as properties given to the object – and often appropriated by the object – by beliefs arising from automatic affective appraisals, a socially restrictive and inadequate interpretation will occur, while the image of the ‘other’ is reduced to a stereotype. An iconic seeing thus neglects the human innate faculty of approaching empathically the other person’s intentions, motivations and feelings, which, as a basis for our social identity, takes care of our adequate and intelligible social interaction (Hari and Kujala 2009; Keen 2006, 211). In this theoretical frame, Duras’s text distinguishes clearly between the whites’ iconic (mechanised and schematic) seeing and the indexical (Anne-Marie’s empathic and compassionate) seeing of the criminal. And making this difference more visible, Rossett is designed as wavering on the border of feeling or not-feeling with the Vice-consul, thereby alerting the reader to reflect on her/his own feelings.

The idealised, though worn-out, love relationship of Anne-Marie and Michael Richard acts as a self-evident background for the erotic rivalry of the Vice-consul and Rossett, whose mutual competition flows as a sub-plot beneath the surface of the white rite of purification. The portrayal of Anne-Marie iterates the same iconising attributes from which the whole India Cycle starts in \textit{Le ravissement}: the structure of her bones covered by the black tulle costume, her pale eyes and evading gaze. But now the emphasis is shifted onto her symbolic value as a competent national hostess who is greeting the guests in accordance with the Western ritual involving an international reception:

\textsuperscript{39} Such a habit can be termed a racist orientation schema, based on a narcissistic belief system that takes superiority for granted and accounts for feelings of grandiosity (cf. Young et al. 2003, 15).\textsuperscript{40} This division is to draw attention to the issue that human neuropsychological simulation of the ‘other’ is not only an innate capacity but also a culturally constructed phenomenon (see Hari and Kujala 2009, 454–455; Grodal 2009, 186–190).
Tonight, in Calcutta, the Ambassador’s wife, Anne-Marie Stretter, is standing near the buffet, she is smiling, she is wearing black, her dress has a double overskirt of black tulle, she is handing someone a glass of champagne. Having got rid of it, she looks about her. She has grown thin with the years, and now, on the threshold of old age, the refinement of her features and her tall bony figure show to advantage. Her eyes, too light for her colouring, are sculpted like the eyes of a statue, and her eyelids are transparent. (V, 70)

However, seeing through this charm, Rossett imagines Anne-Marie as ‘captured and pinioned in the middle of her dancing’ like an insect (VC, 108), and sees her ‘with a sense of shock […] seated in the middle of Venice, with eyes, like holes in a corpse […] profoundly acquainted with suffering’ (VC, 191). Paralleled with the Vice-consul’s fresh feelings towards Anne-Marie as a gentle, motherly woman playing piano, the iconised image of this ‘exotic object of desire’ and ‘prostitute of Calcutta’ as a substitute of India appears as a mixture of conventional female stereotypes.

Rossett’s thoughts and perceptions give a rhythm to the onrolling drama by alternating with the small-talk of the gossiping Europeans who evaluate Anne-Marie’s and the Vice-consul’s outer characteristics. As Bal (1991, 189) states, what the white society speaks about tells more about the speakers themselves than about their topics. The anonymous discourse takes a visible role as manipulative power in the social control system, and indicates the role of general opinion as a coherence producing practice within the group of peers. Reflecting a binary system of values and standards, the stylised small talk reveals the Europeans’ own construction as a white ‘race’. It consists of a mixture of fearful and excited gossips that indicate the noise around the criminal to be a welcome entertainment amidst the idle and boring life of the enclave. Both the heroine and the anti-hero are given the role of a stigmatised public puppet because of their mental troubles and extreme sexual behaviour, respectively. The gossips parallel Anne-Marie’s voluntary promiscuity with the Vice-consul’s sexual abstinence, and her outward ‘irreproachability’ as the mother of two daughters with his alleged insanity in causal relation to his violence (VC, 100). The criminal’s deed is questioned in a horrified tone: ‘On dit, on demande: Mais qu’a-t-il fait au juste? […] — Il a fait le pire, mais comment le dire? — Le pire? tuer?’ (VC, 94; Someone says, someone asks: But what exactly did he do? […] — He did the very worst thing […] — The very worst thing? Did he kill someone? V, 72). Losing control of consciousness is a dangerous sign pointing
to the loss of reason: ‘On se demande: Avec quel mots le dire? — Perdait-il le
conscience quand il faisait ces choses? Perdait-il le contrôle de lui-même?’ (VC, 96;
The people are saying: It is beyond words! — Did he do those things because he had
a blackout? Did he lose all self-control? (cf. V, 73). The questions seem earnestly to
cornern the truth of the events in Lahore, but the lyrical rhythm and assonance of
the French language gives the lines an ironic tone. The idea of a sudden shooting
even excites the women erotically, yet as entangled with maternal emotions of
pity. Appalled by the man’s abstinence from sexual affairs, they link it with the
numbness of lepers: — He told the Club Secretary he was a virgin. […] — Could
that be it? Total abstinence? It’s horrible… (VC, 114). Beyond the face value of the
narrative, the style raises the clichés of the general opinion to the principal topic
of narration, thus unveiling the racialised and sexist premises which reason the
criminal’s exclusion.

Like Bhabha’s postcolonial thesis of the racist identity formation explains, what
the colonial subject does not want to see in her/himself, s/he projects on the Other
(Bhabha 1994, 80). This thought is pertinent for all parameters of identification and
difference, such as sexual orientation, gender, age, and social or economic class,
also within the same ethnic group. But when mediating the white society’s iconic
seeing of the other, Duras discloses the gender rules that typify the heterosexual
matrix of the society itself. She lets the implicit narrator lay bare the normative
determinants of sexual behaviour that are cherished in the white upper class as
combined with ‘pure’ ethnicity. The women are portrayed as ‘pure’ visual objects,
constructed as opposites to the ‘dirty’ aboriginal women: ‘Most of the women
have pale complexions, like the nuns of an enclosed order. They spend their lives
in shuttered rooms, sheltering from the deadly rays of the sun. In India they do
dually nothing. They are rested. They are regarded’ (VC, 100). And when the
criminal’s masculinity is objectified by these same women, it is evaluated negatively
on the ground of his bodily size, quality of voice and gaze, gestures, and miming,
for example, his smiling signifying an improper feeling of happiness. His is ‘too
thin’ and ‘too tall’ (VC, 90), and the face is hard to define (VC, 98). The people say:

*Mais lui? Qu’il nous a fait du tort. Je ne l’avais jamais vu. Il est grand, brun
comme un bel homme le serait si… et jeune… hélas! On voit mal ses yeux, son
visage n’est pas expressif. Il est un peu mort, le vice-consul de Lahore… vous ne
trouvez pas qu’il est un peu mort? (VC, 100)*

*But what on him? He’s done us a lot of harm. I’d never set eyes on him until
tonight, so tall and dark, well set-up you could almost say, if… and so young…. It’s a shame. I can’t quite see his eyes… his face gives nothing away. The Vice-
Consul of Lahore is a bit of a death’s head. Wouldn’t you agree that he’s a bit of
a death’s head? (V, 77)*
Just as the whites themselves act as if transplanted directly from their European palaces into the centre of Calcutta, their small talk define the Vice-consul’s appearance as being unnatural. His gaze is qualified as ‘dead,’ ‘arrogant’ or ‘fearful’ (VC, 118), while his wheezing voice is unpleasant, like ‘surgically grafted’, evoking suspicion (VC, 131). Such a monotonous voice is unfamiliar in this place: ‘Do they call it toneless (blanche) voice? You never know whether he asks or answers.’ VC, 112) As these somatic signs are taken as the man’s original attributes, they seem to testify to the man’s mental disorder, whereby he is demonised as a lawbreaker. Without noticing it, the white people are mirroring their own ‘false’ self-portrait as members of the decaying colonial elite. That is, whereas the biased interpretation of the criminal’s figure attests his legal impropriety in the colonial hierarchy, it affirms the speakers’ own fear of ‘losing face,’ but also uncovers the ideal of how to ‘maintain face’. As typical parts of racial thinking, these thoughts arise from the binary system of purity of reputation, appearance and conduct, characteristic of social ranking system in modernity (Goffman 1967, 8–9).

One more facet of an iconic seeing is that the people talk about Anne-Marie’s suicidal tendency under wraps, whereas nobody seems to suspect the Vice-consul’s nocturnal attack as a failed suicide attempt. Rather, while the people anxiously come back to their hidden fear of leprosy, the fear of contagion is inflicted on him insistently as a reason for his probable nervous breakdown. Here the traumatic index of a leprous brain does not only point to the Europeans’ colonial trauma but also presents an unwished self-portrait of the whites’ emotional illiteracy, which creatively changes the original emotional and cognitive content of the image.

Unobtrusively, the free indirect discourse exposes Rossett’s accentuated repulsion of Jean-Marc, his potential yet impossible rival. However, the common status of the men as European invaders is established when Rossett is designed as a male stereotype of a colonial official. Similarly to the Vice-consul, Rossett conducts himself with irritation towards his servant (VC, 33, 47).41 From the height of the royal ‘we’, Rossett sees the indigenous servant as a hardly bearable, servile, creature:


41 Narration is mixed with Rossett’s thoughts in a free indirect style: ‘Yes, bring tea. And open the shutters. There. The shutters open with a grating sound. They will never learn how to handle them’ (V, 33). ‘The electric fan is switched on. The servant has gone back to get the tea. […] We are imprisoned together in the Consular Residence for three more years’ (V, 34). The English translation, however, cannot reach the level of the French passive expression.
Monsieur est-il malade? Nous avons rêvé qu’après de cette femme rose liseuse rose nous éprouvions un certain ennui d’autre chose qui se trouve dans ces parages-ici, dans la lumière sombre, un forme en femme en short blanc traversant chaque matin, d’un pas tranquille, les tennis désertés par la mousson d’été. (VC, 47)

An Indian servant wakes Charles Rossett. A face with a sly expression peers cautiously through the open door. It is time for the master to wake up. He opens his eyes. As always in the afternoon, he had forgotten Calcutta. This room is dark. Does the master wish for tea? We have been dreaming of a rosy-cheeked woman, a rosy, rosy-cheeked rose who reads Proust in the bitter gales of a far-off Channel port. Does the master wish for tea? Is the master unwell? We dreamt that, in the presence of this rosy-cheeked rosy woman who reads, we experienced a degree of confusion somehow relating to this world here, to the shadowy form of a woman in white shorts, walking with tranquil step every day in the dusky light of morning, past the tennis courts, which are deserted because of the summer monsoon. (V, 33)

With slight sarcasm, Duras shows both the male rivals dreaming of a ‘rosy’ bourgeois women reading Proust in bed. But whereas Rossett associates his ‘rose rose liseuse rose’ with Anne-Marie, Jean-Marc de H. imagines his future French wife, and mockingly calls her a white ‘goose’ as he says: ‘During her confinements, this rosy reader with rosy cheeks will read Proust, [...] she will be afraid, she is pale’ (VC, 211).

Finally, based on this stereotypical similarity, Duras’s uses Rossett to recognise the Vice-consul’s traumatic indices, especially, the melody of *Indiana’s Song*. As a traumatic index of the Vice-consul’s attack, *Indiana’s Song* becomes multidimensional, while its content is emotionally coloured according to the experiencing person. When whistled repeatedly by Jean-Marc himself in the park, the melody points to his longing for the lost mother of early life and his unfortunate exile to colonised countries. But since he has found a maternal figure in Calcutta, the former pianist Anne-Marie who fulfills his phantasms in an unexpected fashion, the melody adopts for the man a refreshed, more positive meaning. In contrast, for Rossett, *Indiana’s Song* points to the Vice-consul’s crime: ‘The Vice-consul, still smiling, looks around the octagonal ballroom. The tune, *Indiana’s Song*, evokes the memory of that lonely, dark, abominable act’ (VC, 103). Moreover, for Rossett, the figure of the shooting fixes upon the melody a sense of masculine competition for the woman. After the Vice-consul’s expulsion from the ball, Rossett’s fear is repeated ambiguously: ‘Someone [Rossett] recalls: He [the Vice-consul] whistles *Indiana’s Song* in the grounds. The last of the guests [Rossett] remembers *Indiana’s Song*. *Indiana’s Song* was all he [the Vice-consul/ Rossett] knew about India, until he came here’ (147). 42 Seen from this antithetic viewpoint,

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42 A similar traumatic index of the Vice-consul is Anne-Marie’s bicycle. As Rossett has realised Jean-Marc’s fetishistic viewing and touching of the bicycle in the park, for him, this behaviour
the melody creatively expresses a mixture of desire, fear, and aggression in relation to colonial India, similar to the Vice-consul’s multivalent cry, the meanings of which I now turn to explore.

**Recognition and Reversal**

After recurring speculations of the criminal’s probable fear of leprosy, the focus turns subtly to Anne-Marie’s mirroring of the desperate man. This narrative gesture prepares the couple’s secret consensus on his performance of crying, which amounts to a strong and conflicting metonymy of colonial disillusionment. Under the people’s surveillance, the Vice-consul dances twice with Anne-Marie and then bursts into a terrible howl, whereupon he is expelled from the ball as a drunken lout. The narrative focus shifts from the Europeans’ observation to the hostess’s emotional mirroring of the criminal, during which the mutual recognition of the couple will occur. In the light of current theories of empathy, I view the encounter as an example of the human innate faculty of anticipating the other person’s emotions, motivations and intentions with a reciprocal embodied resonance. In so reading, Anne-Marie’s act of empathic listening to Jean-Marc’s traumatic experience is a precondition for the climax of the ceremony: the white man’s unrestrained cry. While this episode exemplifies an alternative to the racial and sexist practices that result from an iconic seeing, it opposes the demonisation of the alienated perpetrator. A few studies of *Le Vice-consul* provide a fertile ground for this interpretation (Bal 1991; McNeece 1996). However, these studies overlook the protagonists’ secret agreement, whereas I hold the secret consensus of the counterparts as a decisive act preparing for their common, yet double-edged, protest against the colonial condition. Ultimately, the intimate contact between the perpetrators allows one to interpret the cry as a radical, multivalent sign of the notorious ‘burden’ of a white man who, devoid of compassion and care, has lost and spoiled any personal meaning of life.43

Indeed, Duras dramatises an act of mirroring the other person’s traumatic memory as a precondition for a dialogically produced relief. In terms of the emotion-focused cognitive theory which leans on the study of the mirror neuron system, sharing an internal visualisation of the other’s experience is an interpersonal emotional occurrence, which reveals the other’s intentions and motivations to the listener/onlooker through a multisensory bodily response (Hari and Kujala 2009).

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43 In this light, the Vice-consul’s cry is not simply a sign of a disappointed lover, as some studies propose.
Read through this theory, one central passage appears to portray Anne-Marie’s effort to touch upon the unspeakable experience of the Vice-consul’s traumatic act of violence (VC, 121–129). The dramatic significance of this episode resides in that no one in this closed society can hear the couple’s words while they dance, while their conversation is mediated directly to the reader, a device that Duras uses also in Le ravissement and India Song. The secret exchange between the protagonists is enacted within the public ceremony, in a drama-within-drama structure, whereby their empathic interaction is contrasted with the commodifying gaze of the society. If understood with empathic accuracy, this antithesis acts as a critique of iconic seeing, which challenges the automatic usage of a negatively defined cultural image of the other as constructive for one’s identity (Keen 2006, 222). What is more, by juxtaposing the perpetrators’ implicit encounter with iconic seeing, Duras’s text allows for some kind of catharsis on the metanarrative level behind the back of the fictional society (Booth 1961, 304).

The perpetrators’ intimate encounter also exemplifies Caruth’s idea of the effort to open up the ‘crisis of truth’ by ‘listening’ to the traumatised person’s verbal lines, ruptures of speech, silences, and gestures as a departure from trauma (Caruth 1995, 6, 10). When ‘listening’ to the textualised visual material, during Anne-Marie’s and the Vice-consul’s conversation, a dialectic tension between two modes of cognition is created: that of verbal, propositional, reflection and that of embodied memory. The scene begins with the objectifying gaze which arrives at a ‘knowing’ of ‘us’ (the whites):

*Ils sont parti sur la piste, elle et l’homme de Lahore.*
*Alors toute l’Inde blanche les regarde.*
*On attend. Ils se taisent.*
*On attend. Ils se taisent encore. On regarde moins.*
*[…] On dit: Regardez quelle audace. On dit: Non seulement elle danse avec le vice-consul de Lahore, mais elle va même lui parler. On dit […]*
*[…] C’est elle qui parle la première.*
*On le sait bien, nous.*  
*(VC, 121–122, emphasis added)*

They move on to the dance floor, Anne-Marie Stretter and the man from Lahore. The whole of white India looks at them.
*The people wait. They remain silent.*
*The people wait. They still remain silent. The people look less at them.*
*[…] People say: Look at that. People say: Not only is she dancing with the Vice-consul of Lahore, she is actually going to speak to him. People say […]*
It is she who speaks first.
One knows it well, we. (cf. V, 95, emphasis added)45

After Anne-Marie’s normative words on the man’s probable fear of leprosy, which he firmly repudiates, a skilful interplay of verbal and non-verbal communication about his violent attack begins. Anne-Marie’s reflections on the empty opinions of the European small talk all around the colonial world propels the Vice-consul to tell about his experience with a rambling language. To Anne-Marie’s question, as to why he talks about the fear of leprosy (that he in fact despises), he stammers:

— Parce que j’ai l’impression que si j’essayais de vous dire ce que j’aimerais arriver à vous dire, tout s’en irait en poussière— il tremble—, les mots pour vous dire, à vous, les mots… de moi… pour vous dire à vous, ils n’existent pas. Je me tromperais, j’emploierais ceux… pour dire autre chose… une chose arrivée à un autre… (VC, 125, emphasis added)

— Because I have the feeling that if I tried to say what I really want to say to you, everything would crumble into dust – he is trembling – for what I want to say to you, the words … the words… from me… to say to you, there are no words. I should fumble… I should say something different from what I intended… one thing leads to another. (V, 98, emphasis added)

As the texts reads, Anne-Marie ‘does not, like the other woman, throw back her head to look into his face. She does not press her point. She neither asks nor encourages him to go on’ (VC, 125). Her unflirtatious position expresses attentive listening to what he is trying to say about Lahore, whereas the man’s missing words point to the failure of symbolic representation of trauma. The act repeats Duras’s statement in the script of Hiroshima mon amour, which claims that it is not possible to speak of the catastrophe, but only of the impossibility of speaking of it (H, 10, 22–23).46 In the following passage, Jean-Marc’s loss of words points to the split nature of the traumatic experience: the uncommunicable knowledge of trauma and the embodied memory of it, both of which are in disjunction to the narrative memory (cf. Baer 2000, 10; Brewin 2005).47 This split unveils the crisis

45 I have translated this excerpt word for word, to emphasise Duras’s laconic, progressive repetition.
46 Cf. Caruth’s (1996, 4–5) interpretation of the film Hiroshima mon amour, where two people are bound in and around their respective catastrophic experiences. The main emphasis is on mutual listening and knowing, and of reproducing that which emerges from the actual experience of crisis.
47 When discussing the structural disjunction between an experience of trauma and its integration to narrative memory, Ulrich Baer believes trauma to be residing somewhere ‘outside memory’. But according to current trauma theory, the experience is stored in the embodied memory in a raw sensory form parallel with narrative memory (Brewin 2005; Ogden et al. 2006). As presented in this study, the embodied memory seeks its way out as catalysed by emotion until it is attached to an utterable figure.
of an integrated social self, which is pointed by Jean-Marc’s emphasis of himself in the official status of the Vice-consul of Lahore:

— Ensuite, c’est cela que je voudrais essayer de vous dire, après, on sait que c’est moi que était à Lahore dans l’impossibilité d’y être. C’est moi qui… celui qui vous parle en ce moment… c’est lui. Je voulais que vous entendiez le vice-consul de Lahore, j’est sui celui-là.
— Que dit-il?
— Ou’il ne peut rien dire sur Lahore, rien, et que vous devez le comprendre. (VC, 126, emphasis added)

— What I want to try to explain, then, is that afterwards, although one knows that it was oneself who was in Lahore, it seems impossible, unreal. It is I who… I who am talking to you now… who am that man. I would like you to listen to the Vice-Consul of Lahore, I am he.
— What has he to say to me?
— That there is nothing he can say about Lahore, nothing. And that you must understand why. (V, 98, emphasis added)

The words ‘and you must understand why’ put the responsibility of understanding ‘Lahore’ also on the reader. The man’s shift from the first person to that of the third, the official, signals the catastrophe of Lahore to be the experience of a frustrated colonial official. While this division questions the idea of a homogenous rationality, it crystallises one’s subjectification as a process in a dialogue with an ‘other’. It also shows that at the core of the official’s personal crisis is the threatening breakdown of (his) Western solipsism which results in his (self-)destructive tendency, the all-too-present ‘nothing’ he asks recognition for. Jean-Marc repeatedly demands that Anne-Marie notice (apercevoir) his condition at the moment of the attack, that is, not to grasp the literal truth of the historical incident, but to understand empathically his experiential truth as historical.

— […] Mais essuyez quand même, je vous en supplie, d’apercevoir Lahore.
   On dit: Mais que se passe-t-il entre eux? […]
— C’est très difficile de l’apercevoir tout à fait – elle sourit –, je suis une femme…
   Ce que je vois seulement c’est une possibilité dans le sommeil…
— Essayez dans la lumière. Il est huit heures du matin, les jardins de Shalimar sont déserts. Je ne sais pas que vous existiez vous aussi.
— Je vois un peu, un peu seulement.
   Ils se taisent. On remarque dans leurs yeux à tous deux une expression commune, une même attention peut-être?
— Aidez-vous de l’idée qu’on est un clown qui se réveille.
   Elle s’écarte de nouveau un peu de lui mais elle ne regarde pas, elle cherche.
— C’est-à-dire, dit-elle, je ne pense rien.
— C’est ça. (VC, 127, emphasis added)

— [...] All the same, I do beg you to try and see Lahore.
    People are saying: ‘What is going on? [...]’
— It’s very difficult for me to see it entirely – she smiles – I’m a woman... All I can see is a glimmer in the dark, as in a dream.
— Try and see it in the light of day. It is eight o’clock in the morning. The Shalimar Gardens are deserted. I do not yet know of your existence, that the world holds you as well as me.
— I am beginning to see, but only a little, a very little.

    Silence falls between them. It is noticed that there is the same expression in her eyes and his, an expression of concentration, perhaps.
— It may help you if you see the man who is waking up as a clown.
    Once more, she draws away from him a little, but she does not look at him.
She is concentrating.
— In other words, she says, I am not to think [anything at all].
— That’s it. (V, 99, emphasis added)

The couple is shown to complete their allusive talk through an embodied resonance expressing their emotional contact. Whereas the bodily signs reflect indexically the counterparts’ corporeal interaction, their meanings are, however, misinterpreted by all the fictional onlookers. Anne-Marie’s psychic effort is seen in her inward sight and in the avoidance of direct looking. This sensitive moment represents a postrational variation of anagnorisis: a concentrated feeling of the other’s feelings, marked by the ‘same expression in their eyes’. Next, the Vice-consul transcribes the unsayable feeling of his desertion into the metaphor of a ‘clown waking in the dawn’, which reproduces his meaningless existence outside human contacts, experienced more painfully after raging violently at night with a gun. In the bright light of the dawn, this midnight ‘show’ feels horrible and ridiculous. By saying: ‘I am not to think [anything at all]’, Anne-Marie may take the imagined position as a desperate clown in her embodied mind, and mimick the deserted psyche of a depressed person playing a meaningless role of a national marionette. As a traumatic index, the empty mind of the clown is capable of mediating the suffocated embodied memory of the man’s traumatic breakdown, and integrating

48 The encounter involves a disguised variation of Aristotelian recognition (anagnorisis), where the real quality of the protagonist’s fate is uncovered by another person’s inner sight. Hence Anne-Marie adopts the role of blind Tiresias, who sees with his inner eye Oedipus’s crime in Sophocles’s Oedipus Rex. This is understandable in the light of the theory of an embodied mind, which distinguishes between two types of knowing, that of seeing the other person with an unreflected, schematic manner, and that of an experiential understanding of the other’s state of suffering by way of non-verbal cognition in an empathic simulation.
49 Cf. the Vice-consul’s earlier speeches of the sound of the breaking glass and crying at night, which refer to his self-destructive impulses, and can also allude to the same symptoms of de Maupassant’s hero, ‘Horla’.
it with cognition in the act of an interpersonal mirroring, which helps him feel relieving emotions such as rage, disappointment, even happiness.

Going more deeply, the trembling couple shares also their experience of an imminent suicide. As the man repeats his plea for the recognition of the ‘inevitable’ side of ‘Lahore’, it may point to his attempted suicide instead of killing other people. This phrase makes the woman concede: ‘I search with you. […] I see the inevitable side of Lahore. […] I saw it already yesterday but I did not know it’ (VC 128). However, she does not reveal the content of Jean-Marc’s confession to her intimate friends, but rather lies that the reason for his attack was the fear of leprosy. When Jean-Marc learns of the woman’s confidence, his hands are glowing from happiness and his voice sounds ‘beautiful’. As Anne-Marie says: ‘I was happy to lie for you’ (VC, 142), he feels, eventually, that he is understood as a social subject and is no longer classified as a mere object. The woman says: ‘I am close to you’, and repeats: ‘I am completely with you, more than with anybody else here, in India, tonight’ (VC 144). This compassion leads to the agreement concerning Jean-Marc’s public demand for an invitation to join Anne-Marie’s intimate circle, whereafter he will cry loudly in order to be impressively excluded:

— Je vais faire comme s’il était possible de rester avec vous ce soir ici, dit le vice-consul de Lahore.
— Vous n’avez aucune chance.
— Aucune?
— Aucune. Vous pouvez quand même faire comme si vous en aviez une.
— Que vont-ils faire?
— Vous chasser.
[...]
— Dans la rue criez fort.
— Oui. (VC, 144, emphasis added)

— I shall proceed as though it were possible for me to stay on here with you tonight, says the Vice-Consul of Lahore.
— There is no hope of that.
— No hope at all?
— None. But there is no reason why you shouldn’t pretend there is.
— What will they do?
— Drive you out.
[...]
— When you are outside in the street, shout at the top of your voice.
— Yes. (V, 113–114, emphasis added)

The scene accentuates the perpetrators’ sense of community and their inevitable

50 I have translated this sentence word for word to emphasise how Duras’s text echoes the solemn words of Christ when he spoke to his disciples when leaving the earth.
separation, while the conversations raise their humanity far beyond the common schematic behaviour of the colonials. As if wanting to highlight the criminal’s exclusion as a sign of the structural violence of the dominating order, Anne-Marie demands that he should cry loudly on the street. This plan is succesful, and the Vice-consul’s shocking cry interrupts the ball: ’Take care of me! I shall stay here tonight, with you! (VC, 145). Witnessing the fateful turning point of the drama, Rossett observes: ’The time of the Vice-Consul has come. He cries.’ (VC, 146). The society simply interprets the cry as a ‘mad fit of rage’ and ‘wild bursts of fury’ (VC, 146). After the purposeful repetition of his demand, being violently expulsed from the palace, the man howls long and loudly on the streets.

Being a peculiar example of Diderot’s paradox of acting, this half pretended, half genuine performance appears to be extremely ambiguous. On the one hand, Jean-Marc’s cry manages to affirm his madness as a stigmatised lawbreaker in the eyes of the society. On the other, on the basis of the couple’s agreement, his cry of utmost frustration makes visible, resists, and deconstructs the violent and exclusive colonial order. What is more revealing, seen as a two-dimensional traumatic index, the prolonged, wordless cry is comparable to Lol V. Stein’s ‘hole-word’. Being a reversal of his earlier numbed mutism, the brutal howling realises the man’s liberation from an emotionless condition, thus pointing to Duras’s creative manner to elaborate traumatic indices for emancipatory purposes. Moreover, the way the cry is received by the Europeans unveils the normative ideals of their self-made psycho-social prison. The theatrical voice points also to the perpetrator’s restricted position in the colonial hierarchy which, impeding love, compels them to remain in the realm of ‘la mort dans un vie en cours’ (death in life), similarly to their indigenous counterpart, the Cambodian beggar woman (VC, 174).

As a conclusion, Duras’s drama-in-drama evokes subtle, subversive meanings, again. Changing the formal ceremony into a farce, the perpetrators’ interaction allows the Vice-consul to lay down the dramaturgy of the reception. With his unrestricted cry, he takes up psychological and political agency as a subject in a public space among his peers. The figure of the cry points to the order that expels the man from the centre of political power, established on the narrow concept of rationality that is based on racial and sexist iconising of the other, and played out as pretended decency. As an outcome from an empathic encounter, the cry defends, even declares, the notion of a sensing subject. Moreover, as a counterpart of Anne-Marie, the figure of the Vice-consul challenges a woman’s role in the romantic formula as loved merely by handsome, law-abiding young men. Simultaneously, Anne-Marie’s figure paves the way to the sexual liberty of Western women. And finally, because the Vice-consul of Lahore is concretely displaced outside, ‘la-hors’,

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51 In the film India Song the words ‘Gardez-moi’ (Take care of me) are transformed to Anne-Marie’s Italian name ’Anna-Maria Guardi’, which reflect more clearly the man’s hopeless appeal to her.
52 Cf. Diderot 1959.
to the benches of the Ganges, he eventually must share the status of a pariah, together with the objects of his violence, the lepers and beggars. With this turn, the problem of whether colonialist values are preserved or not when the criminal is rejected from the society is subjected to critical questioning. The whole episode leading to the perpetrator’s cry in public in Calcutta exposes European narcissism as a part of modern melancholy, a psychic cul-de-sac which demands an alternative. But the ultimate meaning of the cry as a sign of this white man’s trauma can only be reached as interpreted with the singing of the other pariah of the story, the Cambodian beggar, a contrast which is made more clear in the film *India Song*. 
VI. Icons of Mourning: *India Song*

Resulting from a long aesthetic development, *India Song* (1974) represents a full-blooded avant-garde film, where all the storylines of the India Cycle are tied together into the stratified cinematic world of a fictional India. It is a slow-paced rite of mourning that consists of a stylised ‘revival’ of Anne-Marie Stretter’s life after her drowning in the Indian Ocean. The principal effect of the film relies on its visual seriality and palimpsestic soundtrack, which together reproduce the drama of the white colonialists of Calcutta in an entangled world of temporal and spatial duality. As Duras notes in a number of interviews, *India Song* would never have been created without its prior text of *Le Vice-consul*, which nurtured the film’s interfigural material. What provides an exceptional semiotic structure to its melodramatic form is the meta-layer of timeless narrative voices, originally discovered in *La Femme du Gange* (1973). But while the multiplicity of such voices recall all the individual trauma stories in *India Song*, the device does not only support its diegetic structure but also enriches the effect of a systematic desynchronisation of image and sound typical of French *nouvelle vague* (Deleuze 1985). However, the Durasian version of the disjunction is not clear-cut and exclusive, but rather represents a peculiar audio-visual synergy. I begin my analysis of this synergy with Renate Günther’s (2002, 23) claim that Duras’s image and sound act as ‘metaphors to reveal a hidden, inner world’. In terms of trauma fiction, I see this hidden world to point to the unsymbolisability of colonial trauma that the film circumvents with its anti-illusionist devices. This last chapter is thus devoted to the analysis of the interplay of voices, sound effects, silences, and images of *India Song*, which brings the India Cycle to an end as an elegiac farewell to European colonialism.

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1  L, 77–78, ‘I found the place so as to give expression to the end of the world. Here colonialism is a detail, like leprosy and hunger. I think that here both leprosy and hunger have spread more widely. Hunger is also coming, you see, in *India Song*, it comes. Death is everywhere in *India Song* […]’ (Trans. SK)

2  Gilles Deleuze’s interpretation of *India Song* provides a good starting point for my postcolonial and feminist perspective to Duras’s usage of female voice-over dialogue.

3  As a completion of *India Song*, it is in fact *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert* that concludes the India Cycle. Knowing that it is Duras’s most radical cinematic attainment, I have to leave *Son nom de Venise* outside this study, for further examination (see the insightful analysis of...
To logically follow my exploration of the cycle, I will approach the stylisation of *India Song* from the viewpoint of cognitive film theory, so as to make visible some of its postcolonial meanings. This chapter is divided into two sections, of which the first considers from a cognitive perspective how the stratified soundtrack positions and activates the spectator (Grodal 2002, Smith 1995, Messaris 1994). The second section specifies the postcolonial meanings of certain audio-visual metaphors of mourning (Whittock 1990). I start from the basic thesis of Teresa de Lauretis, who considers the activity of reading/viewing films not in terms of the effectivity of a system of representation, but rather as a textual and social signifying practice, which problematises and (re)produces the spectator by offering her/him heterogeneous gendered positions (de Lauretis 1987, 118, 134–135). In *India Song*, the primary device guiding the spectator’s experience of the passive melodrama is the dialogue of anonymous narrative voices. Throughout the film, the variations of these draw attention to the filmic representation itself, thus supplying *India Song* with a foregrounded self-reflexivity on its own communication on colonialism, and evoking feminist and postcolonial meanings. This audial innovation splits the fictional universe into two ontologically separate worlds: the virtual Calcutta where Anne-Marie Stretter replays the old drama with the Vice-consul, and the unknown realm of the timeless narrative voices. Thus the first section exemplifies how the soundtrack constructs the spectator as a subject of vision by modifying her/his position between these two possible worlds. Concerning the second section, as supposed by theories concerning the cinematic avant-garde, if the film draws attention to a given cinematic form by declaring itself to be ‘poetic’ (Whittock 1990, 58), or ‘lyrical’ in genre or style (Grodal 2002, 209), it paves the way for metaphorical readings. Following this principle, the latter section goes into some audio-visual episodes in which *India Song*’s ceremony of mourning occasionally culminates. The main purpose is to illuminate how the figural meanings of *India Song*’s ceremony of mourning occasionally culminates. The main purpose is to illuminate how the figural meanings of

Günther 2002, 36–41). Here it suffices to say that this ‘aesthetic decomposition’ continues Duras’s experimentations by mirroring *India Song* (Royer 1997, 87; quoted in Günther 2002, 36). With a visual emptiness of decayed palaces, it re-emphasises the destruction of white colonial splendour presented in *India Song*, while the same soundtrack creates renewed, purely figurative and metaphorical, audio-visual effects (ibid., 37–38).

4 For the theoretical basis of this analysis, I owe a debt of thanks to Henry Bacon’s lecture ‘Starting points for a neo-formalist film theory’, and other lectures on cognitive film theory which he arranged at the University of Helsinki in spring 2006.

5 See also Jacques Aumont’s discussion of the role of the spectator (Aumont 1997, 53–98, esp. on knowledge and belief, 80–81, and the spectator as a desiring subject, 81–95. Regarding the problem of the spectator’s position in feminist theory, see Johnston 1992.

6 In his study on reflexivity in film and literature, Robert Stam (1992, xiii) defines reflexivity broadly as a process by which literary and filmic texts foreground their own production, authorship, intertextual influences, reception and enunciation. Moreover, cinematic self-reflexivity includes self-referentiality, which points to the ways in which a film refers to itself as an artistic text, especially in modernism and post-modernism but also in media-specific formalism and dialectic materialism (ibid., xiv–xvi).
temporal duality emerge from the interstices between the almost immobile images and various sounds during viewing (Deleuze 1989, 180).

Generally, the reviews introducing India Song classify it as an avant-gardist melodrama of passion, where the exoticised India of white colonialists is displayed in a charming, intoxicating fashion. Indeed, as the rhythmic alternation of slow pans and stills of luxury and beauty is combined with a prominent usage of sounds, they together elicit strong multisensory and emotional impressions in the audience, which tends to become absorbed in the symphonic harmony of the spectacle (Grodal 2002, 177). Nevertheless, already the stylised beginning of the film declares that all what follows shall flagrantly oppose the predictable realist world of the mainstream Hollywood schema. Accordingly, in the framework of cyclic reading, I argue that the juxtaposition of image and sound fallaciously conceals Duras’s critical attitude to European colonialism. This thought can be condensed into two features used ubiquitously in the film. First, as Leslie Hill broadly shows, meaningful tensions between shots and cooperative mirroring relationships between stories are produced (Hill 1993, 94–95, 172–173). Second, knowing that for Duras the mainstream realism was suffocating, her use of long silences, systematically signifying the absence of the female voice in society, function not only as rhythmic elements but also as signs of social protest that work far beyond any reductive feminist stand (Günther 2002, 16; P, 87). What is more important, as a contrast to silence, voices from several levels create in India Song a metafictional structure, which tends to break the spell of the fictional world of Calcutta by creating a reflective distance from the face value of the fragmentary spectacle (Smith 1995, 44; Grodal 2002, 177, 180). However, this gesture of defamiliarisation is blurred by two foregrounded human voices creating contrasting emotional nuances: the beggar woman’s singing and the Vice-consul’s

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7 For a precise definition of ‘melodrama of passion’ and the mood of this genre, see Grodal 2002, 180.
8 Until the sixties, Duras had developed her own modernist dramaturgy of the traditional Greek tragedy, where the actors stand motionless on the stage, while speech and silence take the principal role in inducing a mental drama in the audience (Miller 1996, 239–242). This aesthetic principle also dominates the visual style of her films.
9 Duras learned this technique – a ‘kabbalistic rhythm’ of light and dark – in collaboration with Marin Karmitz when preparing the script for his film Nuit noir, Calcutta (1964), of which the first version later became the novel Le Vice-consul. Already the first script had the form of a mise en abyme structure, where the relationship of the two fictional spaces is metaphorical and ironical (Hill 1993, 93–95; 172–173).
10 Since the fifties, Duras had several disappointing experiences with traditional adaptations made of her works by famous male directors such as René Clément, Peter Brooks, Jules Dassin and Tony Richardson (Günther 2002, 19; Hill 1993, 86).
11 The feminist usage of silence is highlighted especially in the film Nathalie Granger (1972), where radio news and the speech of a vacuum-cleaner merchant are contrasted with women’s total silence. For a detailed analysis of this film, see Kaplan 1983, 91–103; on Duras’s own critique of this ‘too didactic’ feminist ‘lesson’, see Günther 2002, 17.
howling, both pervading the audial texture of conversations and musical pieces.\textsuperscript{12} As a result, cooperating with the exaggerated visual immobility, the audial material not only challenges the normative cognitive schemas of cinematic expression but also tests the limits of our biology-based cultural conventions of seeing the Umwelt (Grodal 2002, 21).\textsuperscript{13}

Hence, since the timeless narrative voices produce a cinematic metastructure in relation to the ongoing drama on the screen, they transform the melodrama of passion into anti-illusionist lyricism, thereby challenging the values of the Orientalist spectacle. As Torben Grodal defines, cinematic lyricism is characterised by ‘perceptual, non-linear time, networks of associations, fusion of world and mind, intensities or saturations by proximal focus of attention, no telic [voluntary] enaction, and possibly paratelic or autonomic motion’ (Grodal 2002, 180, 126). But although \textit{India Song} is in many respects similar to the lyricism of French male New Wave, the roots of Duras’s avant-gardism can be rather traced to her manuscript of \textit{Hiroshima mon amour} (1960), especially to the ambiguous audio-visual form of its prologue. To express the overall impossibility of representing historical catastrophes, here Duras already utilises the anonymity of the voices, and the estranging nature of their ‘opera lines’.\textsuperscript{14} In her own words, the film represents a ‘false documentary’ instead of a ‘romanticised documentary made to order’, a statement that reveals her devotion to speaking of overwhelming historical events using anti-illusionistic devices (H, 12). Taking \textit{Hiroshima} as an early predecessor of the audial meta-structure and metaphorical blendings of \textit{India Song}, Duras’s audio-visual experiments can be seen as opposing the male code of the French New Wave. For, seemingly detaching the image from the soundtrack in a manner

\textsuperscript{12} The cyclic frame presented in this study makes clear that all the transgeneric modifications made in the course of the India Cycle contribute to the emergence of the masterpiece of \textit{India Song}. Essential for Duras’s maturation into an original film director were the two years after May 1968, when she repeatedly displaced the same material from novel into film. Important experiments are the novel and film \textit{Détruire dit-elle} (1969) and the enigmatic novel \textit{Abahn, Sabana David} (1970) with its transposition into the film \textit{Jaune de Soleil} (1971), which, however, was never released. For this transition period and Duras’s criticism of male domination during May 1968, see Günther 2002, 11–12.

\textsuperscript{13} On the distinction between cultural and biological schemas, see Grodal 2002, 21. Between realism and constructionism, Torben Grodal posits a mediating instance of ecological convention-alism, which refer to our innate perceptual mechanisms which, as products of evolution, function transculturally but not as ‘transcendental truths’.

\textsuperscript{14} Already in the fifties Duras was devoted to non-narrative but history-bound films. Most decisive is her collaboration with Alain Resnais and Gérard Jarlot in producing \textit{Hiroshima mon amour} (1960). In the prologue of this film, she uses the stratified disjunction of sound and image that was intensified to the extreme in \textit{India Song}: the dialogue of two unknown voices speaking about Hiroshima’s disaster combined with a close-up of hands caressing skin under glistening ash, and a long visual cavalcade of documentaries representing the Japanese calamity. Called Duras’s ‘aesthetic jiu-jitsu’, this juxtaposition evokes a dual connotation of destruction and passion, with which the dialogue of the male and female voices creates a continually reversible figure (Monaco 1978, 35; 38).
similar to that of many French New Wave films, Duras raises the distinguished power of sound to a level equal with, or even above, the visual images, for feminist postcolonial purposes.\textsuperscript{15}

The most influential audial discovery towards this goal was the invention of the layer of metanarrative voices in \textit{La Femme du Gange}, Duras’s first effort at unifying the material of \textit{Le Vice-consul} and \textit{Le ravissement} into an integrated whole. The breakthrough was an ‘external’ dialogue between two unknown young women added to the shot material.\textsuperscript{16} These women ‘speak from outside the film, from the same place where the shooting occurs but not the same place upon which the camera focuses,’ as stated in the script (FG, 103–104).\textsuperscript{17} The aesthetic consequences of the otherwise immature \textit{La Femme du Gange} are multifarious in terms of cinematic expression.\textsuperscript{18} First, used as a systematic device of estrangement in the \textit{India Song}, the metatextual voices change markedly the normative order according to which the sound had always been subordinated to the image. Becoming equal, sound and image deepen the handling of cinematic time and space by challenging the binarity of the traditional concept of ‘on-screen’ and ‘off-screen’ space that defines the sound merely in terms of the diegetic universe created by the image, whereby the new audial meta-level provides an alienating view of the audio-visual drama (Chion 1983, 32; Glassman 1991, 73).\textsuperscript{19} Second, the usage of female dialogue

\textsuperscript{15} Guy Austin (1996, 84) claims of \textit{India Song} that ‘in the fundamental and sustained disjuncture between sound and image tracks, the two do not illustrate each other, but are autonomous’. In contrast, for Lucy McNece (1985, 148), the image is subordinate to the soundtrack as a ‘field of echoes and traces’, which is ‘sealed in a world of its own’. Instead, I explore the entangled world and the audio-visual figures emerging in the spectator’s consciousness during the viewing process, which impart a non-representational, embodied signification of the film. Regarding the difference between ‘embodied’ and causal reasoning, see also Grodal 2009, 13, 147, Fig II.1.

\textsuperscript{16} Duras herself calls the speakers ‘external’. Gregory Currie (1995, 263) claims that the category of ‘external narrators’ is redundant in film, because any external or extradiadic narrator outside the fictional world fuses with the implied narrator. However, for these individual speakers, ‘external’ is pertinent in terms of possible world theory, since their voices can be seen (heard) belonging to another, though unknown fictional world different from that of Calcutta.

\textsuperscript{17} According to the script, the timeless voices of \textit{La Femme du Gange} speak to each other in an indifferent space, and ignore the presence of the spectator of the film. They ‘do not belong to the film that is shot, they are outside the world of the film’ (FG, 103–104). Duras rightly claims that they are not ‘off-screen’ voices, since sound is never ‘on-’ or ‘off-screen’. But they neither comment upon the film like in a traditional voice-over, nor ‘facilitate the unfolding of the film, on the contrary, they create obstacles for it’ (ibid.; cf. Deleuze 1989, 328, n61). This characterisation pertains also to the narrative voices of \textit{India Song}, of which Hill (1993, 101) notes that they have ‘lost the extradiegetic authority’ usually given to a voice-over.

\textsuperscript{18} As Leslie Hill states, rather than a mimetic representation, Duras preferred a posthumous rite of mourning by employing a radical disjunction of sound and image for diegetic reasons, so as to systematise the new narrative technique found in \textit{La Femme du Gange} (Hill 1993, 100).

According to classical film theory, corresponding to the representational ideal of realistic film narrative, ‘on-screen’ sounds refer to those diegetic sounds whose source is seen on the screen, whereas ‘off-screen’ sounds refer to sounds whose source is not visible, but which also belong to the story while they amplify the diegetic world beyond the edge of the screen, that is, outside the frame (Aumont 1997, 166; on the concept of the frame producing the cinematic ‘field’ as a producer
as a voice-over violates the long tradition according to which women did not act as voice-over narrators in general, and breaks the illusion of a compact narrative centre created by a traditional, monological male voice-over.\(^{20}\) Third, and most importantly, the self-commenting cinematic technique – the voices discussing the same world they occupy – produces a system of two fictional worlds, ontologically separated by a permanently fluid common border over which metaleptic operations become possible (Ryan 2003, 1–3; McHale 1987, 119–201).\(^{21}\) It follows that the spectator cannot entirely be immersed in the audio-visual scenes, but is compelled to reflect on her/his own position as a knowing subject, a feature I now turn to explore.

### The Power of Voice: Entangled Worlds

With regard to the rhetorics of the whole India Cycle, the aesthetic circle seems to close for Duras in *India Song*. From the novelistic metanarrations of the sixties – the blurred self-narration of *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein*, and the *mise en abyme* of *Le Vice-consul* – she moves through the direct authorial word of *L’amour* to cinematic metafiction by adding, step by step, more narrative voices to the dramatic versions of *India Song*, until a complex audial stratification is reached. Thus the perpetrators’ story line ends with a memorial ceremony of the colonial heroine’s life and death, which draws attention in two ways to the European colonialism. On the one hand, the strategy prevents the spectator’s identification with the characters with a clear-cut divorce of image and sound; on the other, the film questions itself as a representation by way of commenting upon itself with unknown dialogues. Hence *India Song’s* aesthetics surpasses the basic idea of its prior text, *Le Vice-consul*, as it assumes a lyricist distance from the representation of the colonial condition with recurrent narrative dialogues and quotations of the old ‘opera lines’\(^{22}\). In the end, the embryonic voices of *La Femme du Gange* involve the fundamental idea for two groundbreaking cinematic achievements: the multi-layered soundtrack of *India Song* conveying an unrivaled system of entangled fictional worlds, and an entirely new image combined with the same soundtrack in *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta*.

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\(^{20}\) For example, in his script for Resnais’s *L’année derniere à Marienbad* (1961), Alain Robbe-Grillet wanted to use the male voice for the purpose of dominating the female figure increasingly towards the end of his permutatively proceeding game of representation (Armes 1994, 108–109; Morrissette 1985, 157, 163). Cf. Jean-Luc Godard’s own voice as an omniscient off-screen narrator in his *Bande à part* (1964) and *2-3 choses que je sais d’elle* (1967) (Stam 1992, 150).

\(^{21}\) In *La Femme du Gange*, Duras realises such a metalepsis, as the girl’s voices are once heard by the characters of the drama, whereafter the ‘film of the image’ comes to an end (see FG, 182–184).

\(^{22}\) Duras states in the scenario for *India Song* that even if some episode of *Le Vice-consul* is reproduced in its ‘quasi-totality’ in the film, its enchainment in the new discourse changes its reading and viewing (Marguerite Duras, ‘Remarques Generales’, scenario for *India Song*, 1973, 9, Paris: Gallimard, quoted in McNeece 1985, 145).
désert – a novelty without any parallel in film history.

By offering the audience an interior duplication, the privileged usage of narrative voices partakes in dis/orienting the spectator to/from the fictional worlds of _India Song_. As Murray Smith (1995, 44) states, ‘[f]iction films […] offer us a set of perceptions and sensations which form the basis of an imagined, fictional world’. Emphasising this, at the very outset of _India Song_, the oral voice-over evokes two simultaneous possible worlds: that of the singing Indochinese beggar and that of the voices themselves. This operation divides the diegetic space similarly as _La Femme du Gange_ where, as the script maintains, two autonomous parts are tied together by a ‘material concomitance’: the ‘film of the image’ (le film de l’image), and the ‘film of the voices’ (le film des voix) (FG, 103–104). Duras’s description is reminiscent of Gilles Deleuze’s definition in _Cinema 2: the Time-image_ (1989, 251), according to which the most salient feature of an avant-garde film is a systematic desynchronisation of image and sound. But rather than evoking an idea of modality-dissociation, Duras’s use of oral narrators modifies such a disjunction in a fashion which instead builds links between sensory modalities. This thought arises from her statement that le film de l’image refers to a ‘normal’ film consisting of visual and auditive material, whereas le film des voix is reserved entirely for the timeless voices and the virtual space they produce (P, 87–88).

Despite this difference, Deleuze’s idea of the interstice between the disjuncted image and sound is applicable in that the paradox of the interior duplication of _India Song_ evokes a more detailed concept of the imagined ‘out-of-field’ space, from where the signs of colonial trauma may appear during viewing. For, as the separated sound material obviously works on two ontological levels, it compels one to distinguish between the evolving spectacle of Calcutta and that of the timeless narrators, thus compelling one to find figurative explanations in a subjectively felt interstice of alienation and immersion.

To demonstrate this oscillation between estrangement and absorption, I divide _India Song_ into three parts according to Marie-Claire Ropars-Wuilleumier (1979, 8–9), who convincingly bases this structure on the changing qualities of the timeless dialogues. This approach shows how the creative interstice between frames and the combination of narrative voices varies in every part, whereupon

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23 At first, Duras added two more timeless voices to the stage play of _India Song_ (1973), the script of which is very similar to the script of the film _India Song_. Subsequently, she greatly increased the number of voices (see Noguez 2001, 88–89).

24 As Grodal (2002, 31) states, the reality-status of mental phenomena is linked to our innate modality synthesis, which modernist film techniques often try to break for estranging purposes.

25 In Deleuze’s view, in the mimetic illusion of classical cinema, typically a source external to the visual image is possible, whereupon a voice or a piece of music working behind or beyond the visual image can change the whole. There the notion of ‘voice-off’ (‘off-screen voice’) has a relevant meaning. But in modern cinema, when the image is detached from the world, and the voices and noises from the image, the notion of ‘out-of-field’ goes through a transformation, whereby it ‘tends to disappear in favour of a difference between what is seen and what is heard’ (Deleuze 1989, 180).
a diversity of paradoxical moments between image and sound are created, either within one frame or between shots. The three parts of *India Song* (110 minutes) relate temporally to each other as 1:2:1 (ibid., 6). The first is a dispersed exposition (shots 1–28, 28 minutes), during which two young female voices relate the legends of all the main protagonists of the cycle, while Anne-Marie Stretter with her suitors appear entirely silent on the screen. The middle part (shots 29–59, 50 minutes) depicts the ball in the French Embassy as a permutative series of similar episodes, where Anne-Marie is dancing with the men in turn. The main principle is that the speaking characters are never seen on screen, or, if they are visible, they never move their lips when their voices are heard from the 'off' space. Here new narrative voices of women and men come into play, but they soon get mixed into the chattering murmur of the European guests. During this phase, excerpts from the old conversations are heard, the most prominent being the exchange between Anne-Marie and the Vice-consul, which leads to his unconstrained cry and expulsion from the palace. Finally, the epilogue-like sequence (the shots 59–74, 30 minutes) displays a few tableau-like images of Anne-Marie and her four suitors in the palaces of the Ganges delta. Again, two faceless voices appear while the characters remain mute, which reiterates the simple audial structure of the prologue. Here the voices belong to a woman and a man who recount the last moments of the heroine. Through the employment of this tripartite structure, the usage of voices, silences, and various sounds compels the audience to either distance itself from or immerse itself in the elliptic spectacle of the whites.

As can be seen from the account above, everything in *India Song* revolves around the image of the dying heroine, Anne-Marie Stretter. From a general audio-visual viewpoint, the most prominent contrast is built between several female figures: the visible white woman, the invisible Indochinese beggar and the two anonymous young women who narrate these opposite women’s trauma stories. The prologue begins with the Laotian song of the beggar, who is identified by the female voices who describe her exile from Indochina to Calcutta, and Anne-

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26 Deleuze (1989, 181) sees the cuts and the breaks as the power of the continuum in cinema. He understands the ‘interstice’ as a method that can proliferate gaps everywhere in the visual image, in the sound image and between the two. For him, the sound image of *India Song* becomes a ‘pure speech act’, while the visual image becomes ‘readable’ or ‘stratigraphic’ (ibid. 258; 328, n60, n61). Instead of this clear-cut divorce, I see Duras’s carefully timed interplay of the visual and audial signs as creating a viewer’s position which oral narration and sound effects together modify by co-directing one’s audio-visual signification which is both embodied and reflective (see Grodal 2009, 186–187, 196–197).


28 As Christian Metz explains, cinematic sound is defined as being ‘off’ when the source of the sound is off the screen. However, he states that sound in fact is never ‘off’ since it is either audible or does not exist at all (Christian Metz: ‘Aural Objects’, *Yale French Studies* 1980/60, 29), quoted in Glassman 1991, 73, 132 n12). Similarly, Michel Chion’s delineation of the three spaces of ‘off’, ‘off-screen’ and ‘in’ show that cinematic sound is regularly defined in relation to the image, because ‘there is no other criteria’ (Chion 1983, 32; quoted in Glassman 1991, 73, 133 n15).
Marie’s life and death in India. This invokes two diegetic worlds: the common fictional Calcutta of the beggar and Anne-Marie, and the unknown universe of the anonymous narrators. A strong antagonism is created between what is presents and what is absent – seen and not seen, known and not known, and even smelled and not smelled. During the dialogue, the camera pans across glamorously shimmering objects in the European palace – crystals, golden clocks and Anne-Marie’s isolated attributes: her clothing, jewels and wig. The most intriguing object is the huge mirror which deceitfully expands the interior of the palace to beyond the frame. When an indigenous servant turns on the lights, the grand piano appears to serve the role of a memorial altar for Anne-Marie. Hence the prologue gives women a central position in both the oral narration and thematic structure, and creates a mirroring relationship between the beggar’s voice and Anne-Marie’s image, thus symbolising their ethnic and economic juxtaposition in the colonial condition.

In this composition, far from being a monological voice-over or implicit narrator, the role of the oral dialogue is to formulate the questions of what is seen and heard, and also to tell what the young females observe in their unknown world. In doing so, the voices define the absent realm of indigenous Calcutta as a contrast to the visual European simulacrum. That milieu is supported by a careful rhythm of mimetic sounds coming from the background in the form of crying birds, barking dogs, crashing waves as well as sounds of sirens and fishermen. Afflicted with fear, wonder and sorrow, the voices convey information about the place as follows: ‘− Cette poussière? − Calcutta central. − Il y a comme l’odeur de fleur ? − La lepre. − Cette rumeur? − La Gange. (IS, 17 ; − This dust? − The centre of Calcutta. − This smell of a flower? − The leprosy. − This noise? − The Ganges.)’ The voices also specify the nature of some remote lights: ‘− Ces lueurs, là? − Les crématoires. − On brûle les morts de la faim? − Oui …le jour vient. (IS, 23 − These gleams, here? − The crematories. − They burn the dead bodies of the starved? − Yes… the day comes.) As it evokes the colonial disaster outside the visible European milieu, the content of the dialogue accentuates the antithesis of visual presence and absence, whereby two separated realities of the same colonial India

29 For McNeece (1985), Anne-Marie and her love story with Michael – and not her drama with the Vice-consul – is the centre of the film, whereas the Cambodian beggar is given only a side role when being present merely through her voice. Notably, McNeece characterises the beggar as a ‘harbinger of difference’ who ‘prefigures the dissociation’ dramatised throughout the film. In my view, the beggar’s singing is purposefully foregrounded as a subversive indexical sign that penetrates intermittently the hermetic realm of the whites, similar to that of the Vice-consul’s cry.

30 Intriguingly, Duras identifies the similar female speakers of La Femme du Gange as forgotten 17- to 18-year-old girls in white rags seated on the balcony of a hotel. They are talking about their mutual love and the drama taking place on the shore in the distance. In this indifferent space, they are completely ignorant of the presence of all the possible spectators in the actual or fictional worlds, even though they are ‘seen by everyone’, as if they were ‘coming from another film’ (P, 89–90). As Duras lyrically says, their voices inhabit the whole space of the film ‘like birds, like the sighing of wings’ (comme un bruit d’ailes; ibid, 89).
are summoned, the essential reverse of the European opulence being the invisible misery of the locals mediated by the oral dialogue and the mimetic sound effects.31

According to the theory of embodied mind, both cinematic and linguistic signs are capable of eliciting an automated, non-conscious process of sensory connotations and emotional arousal (Grodal 2002, 32–35; Keen 2006).32 Here such reactions are provoked by the contrast which is created between the pleasurable presence of European-style luxury and the absent indigenous disaster. When the voices gradually relate the other two trauma stories – the legends of Lol V. Stein’s rejection in Europe and the Vice-consul’s firing at the indigenous people in Lahore – the most foregrounded audial sign appears to be the Laotian babbling of the beggar which, representing the colonised people as a traumatic index, intermittently penetrates the iconised world of the Europeans, so as to be later juxtaposed with the cry of the Vice-consul.33

In this manner, the timeless voices complicate one’s position and disturb the access to the evolving drama. In Michel Chion’s terms, far from binding the spectator to one stable viewing position, Duras uses sounds to produce heterogeneous, conflicting, ‘acousmatic’ listening positions (Chion 1983, 32; Glassman 1991, 73, 132–133, n11, n12). Creating a spectrum of points of view, Duras’s cultivation of sound provides a larger orchestration of an ‘acoustic suture’ suggestive of a metaphorical interpretation of India Song.34 With respect to the problem of re-presenting colonialism, the audial regulation produces several results concerning the spectator as an active perceptual and empathic object-actant (Grodal 2002, 170). First, as with metanarrative operations in general, Duras’s self-reflexive voices distantiate the audience from the face value of the colonial (melodrama) – a ‘false documentary’. Second, since various sensations are outside the reach of the spectator, the timeless voices are located in an indefinable place between fictional Calcutta and the actual world, which thus remains temporally unclear in relation to the world they are observing, as they are eternally hovering between past and present (McNeece 1985, 149). By Marie-Laure Ryan’s definition, when belonging

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31 Concerning the novelistic devices separating these two worlds in Le Vice-consul, see Ch V.1.
32 As Suzanne Keen (2006, ) notes, the mirroring system of the human brain is not only activated by what is seen but also by language. See also Laura U. Marks’s study of spectatorship and bodily resonance during viewing, which accords with the cognitive theory of embodied mind. Citing Vivian Sobchack (1992), Marks emphasises that in the act of [embodied] seeing, the intellect works with all senses: ‘The lived body has not [codified] senses. It is, rather, sensible’ (Marks 2000, 150–151; Sobchack 1992, 8–9). Understood as such a multisensory phenomenon, Marks’s term ‘haptic seeing’ corresponds to my term ‘indexical seeing’ which, however, focuses on emotion (see Ch. V).
33 On the concept of the traumatic index, see Ch. II. Together, these two traumatic indices speak of the representational absence of the colonial trauma, the beggar’s foreign language being as strong an index as the Vice-consul’s wordless cry.
34 Seemingly similar to the classical ‘visual suture’ of the mainstream film (Stam 2000,137–138), such an ‘auditive suture’ does not aim to involve the viewer in an illusory, realistic sense of wholeness.
simultaneously to two fictional worlds, the objects (here the voices) exist in an entangled world where the spatial counterparts are in constant danger of collapsing into each other (Ryan 2003, 3). Therefore being a necessary prerequisite for access to any possible world, Duras’s mode of narration offers a purposively obscure route to fictional white Calcutta (Ryan 1991, 22). Complicating this idea further, as it turns out that the speaking women are involved in a loving relationship with each other, they seem to imitate the deadly passion of Anne-Marie and Michael whose love they simultaneously are watching (shot 9, IS, 18). This discovery forces one to be left out of the heard She–She -relationship, and become an object of the film as an eavesdropper. As a result, the spectator remains in a state of alienation in an interstice between two fictional frames: the visual colonial India, and the heard drama of the timeless voices.

In this manner, one is prepared for an estranged viewing of the spectacular ball performed by the serial permutations of the middle part. But there the narrating voices abruptly disappear, whereby the audio-visual strategy tends to absorb the spectator into the celebrating white society as one of the European colonialists. This is due to the soundscape which becomes more complex with numerous voices, while the atmosphere rests heavily upon a constant conflation of the past and present. At first, the dialogical narration continues with a couple of new voices commenting on the events in the European enclave, but they are soon fused with the general murmur of the guests while the official reception is unfolding on the screen. This nostalgic romanticism is accentuated by five musical pieces which recur iteratively as dance music, expressed in the form of the blues (‘India Song’), rumba, tango, charleston, and waltz. The immobile image consists of a dual space created by a huge mirror from an intentionally misleading angle of view, which enlarges the imaginative space to off-screen. Combined with visual reflections based on this arrangement, the audial multiplicity contributes to the spectator’s sensation of being at a big party. However, the continuous divorce of sound and image does not let one become immersed in the melodrama, but rather the visual alternation of gazes and movements turns the focus on the mimetic gestural expression of social relationships which the oddly disjuncted ‘opera lines’ underscore. Thus the normative behaviour of the European upper class in the thirties is brought to

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35 With regard to La Femme du Gange, Duras calls such a threatening collapse of separate worlds a ‘constant risk’ (un risque constant). In La Femme du Gange, due to the ‘mortal shock’ (un choc mortel) of a metalectic transgression, one voice is heard once in the mimetic world in a momentary intersection between the two worlds. At that moment, the voices disappear completely and the girls’ vague fictional space vanishes forever (FG, 183–184; P, 88). Interpreted according to Ryan, in this variation of the metalectic collapse, a rhetorical metalepsis breaks the boundary between the two fictional worlds in challenging their hierarchy, thereby leading the reader astray (Ryan 2003, 3; McHale 1987, 119–201).

36 In Ryan’s view, the reader needs some narrative strategy which draws her/him from the actual to the textual/fictional world, and from that world into another (Ryan 1991, 22).
attention, which evokes a network of historical associations concerning colonial condition in Asia. This persistent conflict between sound and image acts as a Brechtian effect of Verfremdung, which does not support dwelling in nostalgic pleasure (Grodal 2002, 216). Rather, performed in a Brechtian freeze frame, the radical distanciation keeps a de-psychologising attention focused on the stagnated social condition (Stam 2000, 147), where the European’s idle lack of activity is substituted in an erotic rivalry for the love of the suicidal white heroine, so as to culminate in the Vice-consul’s scandalous cry and expulsion from the reception.

The title melody of ‘India Song’ contributes to this rite of purification as the most multi-potent index of colonial decadence. As a realisation of the Vice-consul’s metonymy Indiana’s Song, the musical piece creatively binds two emotional positions together. While it points to the colonial criminal’s hopeless love for the maternal figure, Anne-Marie, is also accompanied by Anne-Marie’s desperate drowning of herself in erotic relationships amidst the economic catastrophe and, finally, in the Indian Ocean. In this elegiac atmosphere, the ‘opera lines’ of these perpetrators’ old drama are heard at intervals from nearby, all ‘off-screen’, thus reverberating the echoes of the past. During these faceless deliveries, the movements of the characters in and out of the visuo-spatial system give rise to the metaphorical picture of a dual temporal event; one representing the actual presence, the other pointing to its memory where a persistent appearing and vanishing mimicks the revival of dead figures (Lyon 1989). The outcome of the serial micronarratives is that, despite the present tense of the conversations, the multi-potent space of temporal simultaneity maintains the feeling that all the events have already occurred. This confounds the normal relationships between time and place with memories, while the resultant experience becomes a Bergsonian duration (la durée) in the presence of viewing and hearing. As a result of the middle part, when the voices from different temporal and spatial levels overlap with the mimetic deliveries of the Indian spectacle, they produce the ways in which the soundtrack of India Song ‘works with, and against, the [melodramatic] aura of the image’ when modelling the spectator’s metaphorical meanings (Bann 1995, 101).

In the epilogue, again, the oral dialogue of timeless voices returns and distantiates the spectator from the blurred, timeless space. Heard after the bewildering cry of the Vice-consul, the new narrative voices take the spectator from immersion in the ball to a critical metaposition. This time it is a dialogue between an unknown woman and a man who recollect the fictional facts of Anne-Marie’s last moments in a matter-of-fact style, combined with some historical events of the late thirties. Meanwhile, several tableau-like images display the heroine surrounded

37 Elisabeth Lyon (1989) presents a detailed psychoanalytic analysis of this device. She insightfully discusses the space-time categories of ‘here now’ versus ‘here then’, and ‘being there’ versus ‘having been there’. To this aim, she employs the concept of Freudian ‘hysteria’ as decisive for the interplay of past/present, absence/presence and identification/substitution (see esp. 154–156).
by her four lovers; at first in the palace, and then in the Prince of Wales Hotel on the Ganges delta. The audial symmetry with the prologue is the conscious choice of Duras, who herself represents the female voice, while Dionys Mascolo performs the part of the male voice (Ropars-Wuilleumier 1979, 9). Here the immobile shots of the segment heighten the feelings of loss by connecting Anne-Marie’s mythical drowning with some prolonged episodes depicting a farewell to worn-out colonial power. Once the spectator has returned to this estranged viewpoint, s/he is compelled to understand the dying white heroine as a reversal of the living Indochinese beggar, since the latter is brought back in focus by retracing in reverse her long wanderings from Calcutta to Savannakhet on the map seen on the screen. Thus the global expressive strategy of India Song is to move one from self-reflexivity through disturbed immersion in fictional Calcutta to another form of self-reflexivity. This activation has persuaded me to formulate the following audio-visual metaphors.

Chiasms of Life and Death: Key Images

Several impressive segments of India Song illuminate the co-operative employment of visual and audial elements which, combined with significant ‘irrational’ cuts, produce some highly iconic key images having the pregnancy of a metaphorical expression. The meanings of these concentrated images are set in motion by metonymical sound effects which, penetrating the visual immobility, tend to shake the iconic stability of the images. With the selection of a few central episodes, I will demonstrate the way in which the co-presence of cinematic ‘being there’ and ‘having been there’ is produced by virtue of audio-visual material, either within the same shot or as an interplay of two sequential or remote shots. In my view, as they do not follow a linear cause-effect logic, the Durasian audio-visual blendings operate on an analogical principle on the paradigmatic axis of similarity, as suggested by Roman Jakobson’s theory of poetic function (Jakobson 1988). The analogical key images are consistent in introducing first Anne-Marie and then juxtaposing her with the criminal, the French Vice-consul. Extrapolating from the plot of Le Vice-consul, such contrasting images prepare in a crescendo the encounter of the protagonists and the scandal of the man’s public cry. After the

38 The audial presence of the film-director herself can be understood as a metaleptic collapse between the actual and fictional worlds.
39 For Deleuze (1989, 181), ‘the cut sometimes becomes interstice’ in modern cinema, thereby becoming ‘irrational’, and at the same time forming ‘false continuity’.
40 This temporal double structure corresponds to that of the photograph, eloquently analysed by Roland Barthes in his La Chambre claire (1980). For more on this topic with regard to viewing/emotion, see Knuuttila 2008b.
41 See the interpretation of the novelistic version of the episode in Ch. V.
criminal’s expulsion, the epilogue offers several scenes which together emphasise
the symmetrical configuration of the four British suitors gathered around their
French heroine before her death.

The undeniable thematic focus of India Song is the glamorous but secretly
suffering figure of Anne-Marie Stretter. The conversations depict her as a desirous
and desperate woman, whose role as the instructive leader of the colonial elite
represents an admired but self-destructive icon of the stagnant political order. She
has collapsed earlier having experienced Indochinese misery, and tried to commit
suicide, to which the memorising voices repeatedly point with the phrase ‘non
supporte pas’ ([she] does not endure). In Les Lieux de Marguerite Duras (1977),
Duras speaks of Anne-Marie’s voluntary, passive death:

Oui, mais c’est, je ne sais pas si c’est un suicide. Elle rejoint […] comme un sorte
de mer matricielle. Quelque chose se boucle avec sa mort. Elle ne peut pas faire
autrement. Je pense que c’est une suicide complètement logique, qui n’a rien de
tragique. […] Elle pourrait se tuer autrement, mais non, elle se tue dans l’eau, oui,
dans la mer indienne (L, 78).

Yes, but I don’t know if it is a suicide. She returns like […] to a kind of maternal sea.
Something ends with her death. She cannot do anything else. I think that it is an
entirely logical suicide, there is nothing tragic in it. She could kill herself in another
fashion, but no, she kills herself in the water, in the Indian Ocean (trans. SK).

From the prologue onwards, the fictional fact of Anne-Marie’s drowning builds
a persistent vacillation between past and present. This is realised within and
between audio-visual segments maintaining a double temporal structure that both
memorises and replays her life, illustrating the fragile boundary between memory
and imagination. When a close-up pan reveals her metonymical remnants – a
wine-coloured dress, paillettes, jewels and a reddish wig – these isolated indices of
femaleness and opulence are accompanied by the sensual piano melody of ‘India
Song’. This gives rise to an ambiguous feeling of nostalgic longing for the colonial
perpetrator. Likewise, when the altar-like grand piano, roses, a young woman’s
photo, and wafting incense are shown in a close-up, a female voice comments on
Anne-Marie’s suicide by saying: ‘Of what are you afraid?’ After a long pause, the
other voice replies, fearfully: ‘… Anne-Marie Stretter’ (shot 9; IS, 18). Much later,

42 One has to remember that, while this elegant thematic focus is produced by a skilful selection
and stylisation, its melodramatic or escapist attunement is broken by the self-reflexive devices
which the timeless voices use so as to bring into being the invisible world of the other side of
 colonialism.

43 Duras once confirmed that the voices emerge from the realm of memory, which Maurice
Blanchot called ‘la mémoire de l’oubli’ (the memory of forgetting) (Ropars-Wuilleumier 1979,
9, n10). For me this points to an implicit (embodied and emotional) memory.
as if commenting on this longing with pathetic irony, the ‘revived’ Anne-Marie bends across the piano and lays upon it as if mourning her own death, while the Vice-consul repeats her name from off-screen.

As a rule, such a subtle interplay of phrases, images and sounds conveys mental processes imitating memory, dreams or imagery (Stam 2000, 261). Typically, when rearranging audio-visual signs into metaphorical blendings, Duras relies on the spectator’s imagination. Such an attitude is supported by the cognitive idea of an embodied mind, which supposes that narration occurs in our consciousness on the basis of implicit visualisation and the work of association, which are primary modes of our spatial problem-solving alongside linguistic processing (Grodal 2009, 187; 2002, 22, 72; Damasio 2000, 107–108, 188–189). In Grodal’s Damasian theory, human mental models have their origin in non-arbitrary visuo-motor and multisensory schemas, which exist ‘on the level at which enaction in the “natural” world takes place and on which central narrative structures develop’ (ibid., 73). Relying on such an implicit processing, Duras combines linguistic components with overlapping perceptual (visual and auditory) signs when producing cinematic metaphors. This can be epitomised by her flexible displacement from the past tense to the present within one slow pan, which changes memorising the past into an actual, revived spectacle. For example, when the younger voice asks ‘Ils dansaient? (Did they dance?; shot 9; IS, 18), the camera pans over a pensive young attaché leaning on the huge mirror and seemingly watching the (empty) off-screen space. But when the other voice replies in the present: ‘Ils dansent’ (They are dancing; ibid.), Anne-Marie is shown to dance with Michael through the mirror, while it appears that the attaché is in fact watching them in the room. Consequently the image shifts into the present and fuses with the duration of viewing and hearing, as if imitating the embodied enactment of a memory in mind. This is the analogical principle by which India Song overlaps similar, slightly different images so as to convey an emotionally multipotent metaphor of memory.

As a colonial lawbreaker, the figure of the Vice-consul represents the broken hierarchical values of white power. By modified shot/reverse-shot strategies, he is repeatedly shown as contrasted with the hermetic group of Anne-Marie and her suitors. The first example highlights the group identification of the whites by showing them in light gray clothing descending the stairs of the palace, while

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44 Also Paul Messaris anticipates this Damasian idea when he elaborates Howard Gardner’s (1983) concept of ‘spatial intelligence’ (Messaris 1994, 27–28, 125–129).
45 As presented in Ch. I. and II., our cognitive faculty develops in an organic continuity with our body from early childhood on, according to the symphonic process of perceptual and sensory-motoric orienting in temporally ordered three-dimensional space. This bodily intelligence is formed by the brain in a metaphoric way both on the linguistic and sensational level, while our sensory-motor relationship to our perceptual surroundings is represented mentally as visuo-spatial images having a virtual character (see Lakoff 1987, 370–373; Damasio 2000, 156–163; Grodal 2009, 196).
raptorial birds croak in the background, symbolising colonial invasion (shot 14; IS 19; Noguez 2001, 89). The smoothly swaying walk of the persons who obliquely gaze off-screen is a glance shot which is contrasted with a reverse-shot: the Vice-consul standing alone on the bank of the river in a white jacket and black pants, while the faceless voices identify him by saying: ‘− Le vice-consul de France à Lahore. – Oui, en disgrâce à Calcutta.’ (shot 15; IS, 19. The Vice-consul of Lahore. Yes, in disgrace in Calcutta). The British men, who in Le Vice-consul have names and personalities, are here stylised into a uniform group of clone-like protectors gathered around the ‘queen of Calcutta’. Another clear shot/reverse-shot structure contrasts the two protagonists by creating an erotic tension between them (shots 23 and 24, IS, 23; cf. Lyon 1989, 164). At first, Anne-Marie is shown looking up directly at the Vice-consul who is seen from the back, whereafter the reverse-shot shows him from the front, with tears on his cheeks, watching the woman. Meanwhile, a young woman’s voice pronounces Anne-Marie's Italian name ‘An-na Ma-ri-a Guar-di’, thus predicting the criminal’s climactic cry in the ball.

To this introductory episode also belongs an image anticipating Anne-Marie’s death. She is lying on the floor in a black negligee in a position reminiscent of a dead body (shot 19; IS, 20). At the same time, her musical index, Beethoven’s fateful Diabelli Variation No. 14, refers to both her truncated career as a young pianist in Venice and her suffocated life in Asia. Then an ambiguous metaphor of her life is created by a close-up shot of her bare, sweating breast, the silhouette of which refers to her sexual promiscuity, but is also not unlike a landscape reflecting her lifelong travels in Asian countries (shot 22; IS 23). Increasing this visual symbolism, the female voices repeat all the colonial posts in Asia where she has lived. This image forms a metaphorical connection with the initial image of the sinking sun (shot 2; IS, 13), and the last image before Anne-Marie’s drowning on the Islands, dressed in black and accompanied by the Diabelli Variation (shot 71; IS, 62; Lyon 1989, 169). Eventually, the trajectory of the Cambodian beggar is paralleled with that of Anne-Marie, when the camera pans across the map from India to Indochina (shot 72; IS 63). In the end, these audio-visual structures contrast female subjugation with male aggression by conjoining with the Vice-consul the two ethnic female counterparts: the mad beggar who is physically alive and the white queen who, after suffocating herself, has died by her own hand.

Anne-Marie’s and the Vice-consul’s encounter is the most touching episode of India Song. Like Le Vice-consul, the film underscores their shared fates as suffering colonial perpetrators at the expense of the sugar-candy love story between the heroine and Michael. While Anne-Marie and the Vice-consul are dancing on the screen, he confesses that his violent attack in Lahore was suicidal. While the voice

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46 Lyon’s (1989, 167) essay on India Song is rare in that it considers this encounter as a crucial moment of the story, yet, with the reservation that for her, the film focuses primarily on Anne-Marie Stretter and Michael Richardson (ibid., 148).
and the facial expressions of the protagonists are not synchronised, the telepathic effect of shut lips becomes almost ghostly (Chion, 1983, 40–41.) But unlike the novel where his speech is stuttering and uncertain, his filmic voice is rigid but firm, as he says:

**VOIX DU VICE-CONSUL.** [...] J’ai tiré sur moi à Lahore sans en mourir. Les autres me séparent de Lahore. Je ne m’en sépare pas. Lahore c’est moi. Vous comprenez aussi ? (India Song toujours.)

**VOIX DU ANNE-MARIE STRETTER.** (basse). Oui... Ne criez pas...

**VOIX DU VICE-CONSUL.** Oui... Vous êtes avec moi devant Lahore. Je le sais... Vous êtes en moi... Je vous emmènerai en moi, et vous tirerez avec moi sur les lépreux de Shalimar, qu’y pouvez-vous ? (India Song, fort). Je n’avais pas besoin de vous inviter à danser pour vous connaître. Et vous le savez. (IS, 46)

**THE VOICE OF THE VICE-CONSUL.** [...] I shot towards myself in Lahore without dying. The others separate me from Lahore. I don’t do it myself. I am Lahore. Do you understand it too? (India Song goes on.)

**THE VOICE OF ANNE-MARIE STRETTER.** (low). Yes, don’t shout...

**THE VOICE OF THE VICE-CONSUL.** Yes... You are with me in the face of Lahore. I know it... You are in me... I carry you with me, and you will shoot with me at the lepers of Shalimar, what can you do against it? (India Song, loud). I must not invite you to dance in order to know you. And you know it... (trans. SK)

As Elisabeth Lyon (1989, 167) states, the minor common denominator between the protagonists is ‘death’, for their part as narcissistic perpetrators is to bring death to others. Anne-Marie does no longer appear as a mere ‘criminal of love’; rather, the colonial lawbreaker identifies her as a self-destructive aggressor, while the woman’s consent asserts this recognition. But again, by repeating the opera lines of a French autocrat: ‘Lahore c’est moi’, the lawbreaker evokes the European imperialist invasion of Asian countries. After the agreement concerning his cry, a remarkably long silence highlights the force of his crying out of the Italian name ‘An-na-Ma-ri-a Guar-di’. This name can connote European nationalism in the thirties: by substituting the German ‘Stretter’ with the Italian ‘Guardi’, it draws an analogy between the growing fascism and European colonial invasion. At the climax, a telling audio-visual antithesis is created between the frustrated cry and the symbol of eroticised heterosexual domination underpinning the colonial

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47 The Italian name ‘Guardi’ adds a new facet to Anne-Marie’s personality, since it appears neither in *Le Vice-consul* nor in the play of *India Song.*
system. For, when the groans are heard from outside, as a complement to them appears a still medium-shot of the lovers Anne-Marie and Michael so near each other, the intra-pictorial montage referring to melodramatic, ever-lasting love between rich and decadent people (shot 57; IS, 51). The counterforce of the wild cry from the ‘off-screen’ space penetrating this erotic icon subsumes several emotions: the frustration of exclusion based on the colonial value hierarchy, the grievous transhistorical trauma of separation, and even the existential ‘thrownness’ of man (LaCapra 2000, 178–179, 195).

Finally, three highly symbolic tableau-like shots point to the colonial and nationalist status of the governing white circle. In these images, Anne-Marie’s four suitors are postured like guards around the deliberately imprisoned heroine. In the first immobile composition (shot 59; IS, 52–55), Anne-Marie rests in the centre in her red evening dress, leaning against Michael Richardson. Stretters’ young guest stands like Napoleon with his hand in his jacket, the young envoy kneels into an adoring position, while an older man stands in the background like a paternal figure. This cyclically illuminated view is accompanied by the Vice-consul’s crying of Anne-Marie’s name and the 14th Diabelli Variation, while the dialogue of two timeless voices gives a realistic matter-of-fact account of the group’s journey to the Islands. This is a purposeful icon of decadence full of signs of wealth, pleasure and solipsism. Another version of this encapsulated, narcissistic self-portrait of the whites is presented in the Prince of Wales Hotel (shot 61; IS, 56–58). Here the shimmer of the nocturnal celebration has changed into one of opulent leisure, dominated by an antisepic cleanliness that shines in the bright daylight. The persons are dressed in white as they slowly walk through a large restaurant towards the audience. The white tablecloths on both sides iterate the symbolic meaning of the clean and fresh icons of the white ‘race’, while India Song’s melancholic melody accompanies their rhythmic approach. As a contrast, when this symmetrical configuration, with Anne-Marie in the centre, has disappeared to the left, the French vice-consul comes alone along the same long corridor, turning eventually to the right. The theme of purity is highlighted by the gesture of the ‘dirty’ criminal’s separation from the decent upper echelon, a detail which repeats the result of the rite of purification presented in the novel Le Vice-consul. The third meaning of this polytrope is the approaching death of Anne-Marie which is augured by the colour white, the Hindi index of sorrow, as already foreshadowed in the clothing of the servants in the palace.

Completing the series of similar polytropes portraying racialised, economic affinity, the last long still deepens the theme of death in willed historical exile. Anne-Marie’s pale face is shown in a very much overexposed close-up, looking out of the window, while only the surges of the ocean are heard in the distance.

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49 See Ch. V.
From the dialogue of the timeless voices, one can infer that she is looking out at the Indian Ocean while recalling her youth in Venice. These signs are predictive of her imminent drowning, but also connote her birth out of the foam of the Mediterranean in a reference to the ancient myth of Aphrodite’s birth.\textsuperscript{50} During this view, the narrating female and male voices, contributed to by a new female voice, identify some important political events that take place in 1937 in Europe and Asia, heralding new times, as follows:

\textit{VOIX DE FEMME. C'était un soir de septembre... pendant la mousson d'été... ...aux Iles... ...en 1937... ...En Chine, la guerre continuait. Shanghai, venait d'être bombardé. Les Japonais avançaient toujours. Dans les Asturies, la bataille faisait rage. On se battait encore.}

\textit{LA 1ère VOIX DE FEMME (grave, nette). La République est égorgée. En Russie, la Révolution est trahie...}

\textit{LA 2ème VOIX DE FEMME (jeune). Le... Congrès de Nüremberg venait avoir lieu... (shot 62; IS, 58–60)}

\textit{THE VOICE OF THE NEW WOMAN. It was September evening during the summer monsoon on the Islands in 1937. In China the war was continuing. Shanghai had just been bombed. The Japanese were still advancing. In the Asturias the battle was raging, they were still fighting.}

\textit{THE VOICE OF THE WOMAN (serious, clear). The throat of the Republic has been cut. In Russia, the revolution is betrayed.}

\textit{THE VOICE OF THE NEW WOMAN (young). The Nuremberg Congress had just taken place. (Trans. E. Lyon)\textsuperscript{51}}

This information fixes the historical moment of the heroine’s death to several violent events foretelling the end of colonialism and the beginning of World War II, and seals Anne-Marie’s death as a metaphor of an end. Finally, she is revealed as sitting at a table with the four expressionlessly smoking men, who are poised as if waiting for something.

\textsuperscript{50} The figure of drowning as the female suicide of choice is frequently used in women’s literature. Interpreted as a reverse to the myth of Aphrodite, drowning can symbolise a rite of personal rebirth, a return to Nature as well as freedom, pride and joy (Pratt 1981, 171–172).

\textsuperscript{51} The Nuremberg Congress refers to the last Rally of the Third Reich in September 1937, which was held during Stalin’s year of terror and the Spanish Civil War. The ‘voice of the woman’ is Duras herself.
To conclude, being in glaring opposition to the dark pictures where Anne-Marie prepares herself for drowning, the collection of overexposed images leaves a critical impression of the whites’ imagined racial supremacy. Moreover, as a contrast to the Europeans’ prominent visual presence, the Cambodian mendicant’s frequent vocal interventions keep her lonely figure hovering in the consciousness of the audience. For, what keeps the postcolonial meanings of the iconic images in motion is the conflict of two human voices: the mendicant’s foreign language that forms an ethnic counter-discourse to the small-talk of the white colony, and the French Vice-consul’s wordless howling that, also as a counter-discourse, laments the European rejection of the ‘other’ and Western alienated life. The complementary nature of the criminal’s violent howling and the woman’s innocent babbling can also be understood in the light of Cathy Caruth’s (1996, 6) analysis, according to which the traumatised person – whether victim or aggressor – may become conscious of suffering only by hearing repetitively the voice of the wounded ‘other’. Representing a fictional testimony of the historical trauma of colonialism, these two voices reveal the suffering of both sides of the ethnic and economic catastrophe brought about by the Western lust of power. From between these voices, Anne-Marie’s silence appears as a protest against the structural violence of the aborted colonial project, from which she, as a smothered heroine, voluntarily disappears through her own death. But ultimately, as expressed in Anne-Marie’s words of ‘Yes, but you see, she lives’ (IS, 41), the last word is given to the beggar woman. Signifying a much more optimistic image of the future than the white man’s desperate groans ever can, the indigenous woman’s spontaneous exclamations bring the India Cycle to a promising and open end, obstinately proclaiming liberation for subjugated women.
Conclusion

As a subject of academic research, Marguerite Duras's complete India Cycle (1964–1976) has been studied several times during the last three decades. From among the seven works of the cycle, these examinations focus mainly on the first two novels, *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein* (1964) and *Le Vice-consul* (1966) as well as the film *India Song* (1974), whereas the small but important text *L'amour* (1971), the play *India Song*, and the films *La Femme du Gange* (1973) and *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert* (1976) have attracted minor attention. In general, the theoretical spectrum of this tradition spans from reviews outlining the basic structure of the cycle to more thorough analyses. At first these examined the female figures of Lol V. Stein, the Cambodian beggar, and Anne-Marie Stretter in terms of Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis as adapted to the emancipatory purposes of Western women. As a response to this study line, some feminist articles on female subjectivity presented important critiques, while the figure of the Vice-consul as a male prototype of a colonialist still remained unexplored. What was more stimulating, at the beginning of the nineties some narratological and intertextual explorations gave a welcome boost to the automatised psychoanalytic exegesis. However, despite the high quality of the intertextual approach, the contribution to the postcolonial problematics that the cycle openly addresses remained only suggestive. And when some studies of the cycle openly claimed to be postcolonial, they still leaned on previous Lacanian research with a few postcolonial remarks, thereby offering an only partial, yet painfully needed, answer to some subversive features of the cycle.

For these reasons, my study has approached the India Cycle from a postcolonial viewpoint in terms of narratology, to which an emotion-focused cognitive theory serves as an essential background. Since I find Western psychonanalytic feminisms (until now) too reductive with regard to the postcolonial issues of ‘race’, sex, gender and social class, I have chosen as my theoretical lens the concept of trauma, specifically the trauma of colonialism. With this choice, I hope to have made visible the unfounded beliefs of European racism and sexism that Duras so prominently portrays with the non-verbal rituals of the white society. I have hopefully also demonstrated the stylistic particulars of her counter discourse, especially the traumatic indices which she establishes for the central emblems of colonial trauma with a creative repetition variation. To reach this goal, I started from the assumption that Duras transposes into the fictional universe of the cycle her implicit knowledge of several issues: the colonial trauma originating from the French Indochina of her childhood (1914–1932), her shocking experiences in France during the rise of fascism in the thirties, and World War II including
the painful post-war years. Treating Duras’s writing as a figural reprocessing of traumatic experiences, I have specified her aesthetics as consisting of stylised repetition of narrative analogues, metafictional strategies, and highly ambiguous tropes, all pointing to the historical trauma of colonialism. Like earlier studies, I focused mainly on the novels *Le ravissement de Lol V. Stein* and *Le Vice-consul*, but also explored the meanings of the enigmatic text of *Lamour* with the help of the script of *La Femme du Gange*. Finally, to complete my thematic exploration, I investigated the interplay of sound and image in the film *India Song*, and left *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert* for further cinematic investigations.

Several historical factors have supported my choice of trauma theory as an analytic tool with which I have reorganised the stylistics of the India Cycle. When multidisciplinary trauma theory rapidly began to develop during the nineties, the most intriguing, persistent dilemma offered for literary research was the unsymbolisability of traumatic experience. On the basis of clinical evidence given by traumatised people, it has long been known that an overwhelming event can block the victim’s verbal ability, while the strong but undifferentiated feeling of horror is simultaneously stored in the body. As prompted by World War II, following the legacy of Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud, a number of researchers have tried to theorise the phenomenon of trauma and its unaccountability. An incomparable landmark that indirectly precipitated the study of the experience of major trauma was the Holocaust. As its aftermath, the bitter self-criticism of European rational thinking was most poignantly formulated in Theodor Adorno’s and Max Horkheimer’s works such as *Negative Dialektik* (1947). Laying the foundation for all the coming explorations of man-made atrocities, these works, among others, conceptualised the silenced speech of a traumatised victim, thereby revealing the emotional illiteracy residing under the well-organised surface of our civilised cultures. A further reason for my choice of trauma is the increasing number of terrorist acts and natural catastrophes in our everyday life, which necessitates a more specific knowledge of human adaptive responses to trauma. While trauma’s narrativisation in the realm of therapeutic practices represents a continual problem, the same difficulty is seen as urgently in literary and media research as a call for pertinent analytic tools. For, as autobiographical and fictional narratives of trauma are published more than ever today, the boundary between fact and fiction becomes all the more blurred. Popular trauma fiction in particular tends to exploit the known symptoms of severe trauma in an automatised and sentimental manner for commercial purposes.

In these circumstances, the goal of this study has been to offer a renewed perspective on the postcolonial question of racism and sexism that Duras presents in her India Cycle. At the same time, the study attempts to refigure the question of trauma’s unrepresentability with the help of knowledge currently available in emotion-focused cognitive theory. With this aim in mind, I have read the India
Cycle keeping an empathetic eye on those creative modes that a genuine process of working-through may employ when the embodied memory of trauma searches its way to the narrative memory of the writer, as to be converted into language or other symbolic codes. Therefore, the study at first examines Duras’s working method – an ‘intentional affection’ propelling her rapid writing in the dark on the verge of ‘madness’. The literary result is compared to that of the early modernists such as Virginia Woolf, so as to clarify how an insistent repetition variation of metonymies can elicit emotion in specific textual contexts. One outcome of this study is that Durasian method creates a route into the source of an embodied memory where, according to emotion-focused cognitive trauma theory, the emotional narrative of an overwhelming experience is implicitly stored. It also appears that repetition in Durasian meaning is not tautological, but works for an emotional change during the slow progression towards the denouements of the two storylines of the cycle. Further results follow my explorations of the aesthetic devices that emerge when Duras reprocesses, refigures and rescribes trauma during a prolonged artistic process lasting twelve years.

The fundamental concept serving my analysis of Duras’s aesthetics is Dominick LaCapra’s (2004) idea of literature and art as a form of critical working-through of historical trauma, understood as a mode of individual and collective mourning. In LaCapra’s (2000) vein, I have defined the concept of historical trauma as a historically locatable, overwhelming event and its immediate experience. It is distinguished from the concept of transhistorical trauma that refers to ever-present existential dilemmas such as death, sexuality, separation from the m/other, and the animal nature of humans. According to my analysis, each of the four protagonists of the India Cycle go through an individual historical trauma, either in colonised India and Indochina like the Cambodian beggar, Anne-Marie Stretter and the Vice-consul, or in a small coastal town of Europe like Lol V. Stein. Representing a major man-made historical trauma, Asiatic colonialism gives these dramatic events a ubiquitous backdrop. Furthermore, in my reading, the concept of historical trauma reorganises the roles and positions of the four protagonists in relation to each other; two of them, Lol V. Stein and the Cambodian beggar being rejected survivors, and the two others, Anne-Marie Stretter and the French Vice-consul, being colonial perpetrators. This tentative casting permits one to discern the two storylines of the parties as meandering throughout the whole cycle as overlapping structures, connected from time to time with a number of interfigural references. Complementing these two roles, each of the two Western male narrators, Jacques Hold and Peter Morgan, epitomises the role of a surrogate witness who try to convey a literary testimony of the experience of each survivor’s traumatic rejection. Finally, on the basis of this thematic structure, three topics manifest themselves for a detailed analysis: the problem of witnessing, the trope of madwoman, and the figure of destructive passion.
Primarily, my reading has followed the narratological lines presented in the recent studies of trauma narratives by Michael Rothberg (2000) and Anne Whitehead (2004). Together, Rothberg and Whitehead agree on two major theses concerning the narrativisation of trauma. The first principle states that trauma cannot be mediated merely by mimicking its symptoms by realistic representation, but rather its symbolisation must also make use of some anti-mimetic narrative techniques for self-reflective and distancing purposes. The devices needed for dismantling realist illusion are, for example, modernist stylisation and post-modernist self-reflexity combined with multiplication and circulation. The second thesis claims that a trauma narrative – whether memory or fiction – always has something in common with postcolonialism, which implies to some extent historical referentiality. According to my reading, Durasian trauma fiction reinforces Rothberg’s and Whitehead’s formal ideas, for the complex structure of the India Cycle is produced by several mimetic and self-reflexive narrative techniques, which persuade the reader/viewer to oscillate between immersion and distancing throughout the cycle. This is the case not only in the two first novels but also in the films, where the timeless voices function as estranging elements by which the disjuncted soundtrack prevents the viewers from being absorbed in fascinating audio-visual worlds. Moreover, to demonstrate Duras’s creative working-through, I have developed Rothberg’s traumatic index as an analytical tool. The traumatic index refers to a metonymical figure which, by virtue of its changing emotional content, manages to break down the literality of the traumatic image as it is modified in and by new textual contexts. This figurative progress unveils the creative power of metaphorical thought for a critical fictionalisation of trauma.

My reading also shows how the India Cycle indirectly attacks the biased representations and self-inflicted atrocities of the European historical past by its multitude of discourses. Duras’s combination of mimetic and anti-mimetic devices creates a constellation of several alternative possible worlds. This strategy enhances the reader’s awareness of different discourses, whereby the exclusive binary oppositions found in racial and sexist thinking tend to dissolve, including the contradiction of victim and perpetrator typical of our habitual understanding. Regarding witnessing, the parallelism of the two narrator/narratee structures in *Le ravissement* and *Le Vice-consul* foregrounds their constructive nature, and breaks with the conventional Western hierarchies of sex, gender, social class, and ethnicity. The result is that the Durasian parallel contrast lays bare three frames: the relationship of the Western realist representation to reality; the mechanisms of sexual control of women, irrespective of the cultural quality of genderisation; and racialisation based on ethnic difference and exercised in the form of European racism under French and British dominance in East Asia. With these devices, Duras penetrates deep into the notion of the Western individualist subjectivity and its representation.
As representing different aspects of historical trauma, Duras’s strategies of madness and destructive passion lead to the metaphysical questions of transhistorical trauma, thereby challenging the blurred line between mourning and melancholy. Historical trauma cannot entirely be distinguished from transhistorical trauma, since any historical trauma may evoke transhistorical dilemmas in a wounded person. This fusion is epitomised in all Duras’s protagonists’ lives, for at some point each individual historical trauma is amalgamated with the transhistorical one. For example, the rejected Cambodian beggar who struggles for her life in pregnancies that follow her prostitution, encounters an unavoidable intertwining of sexuality and death while starving and letting her newborns die in the desert. As a contrast, but similarly, after her search for sexual identity in bourgeois society when Lol V. Stein becomes a forgetful madwoman in _L’amour_, she surrenders herself to an existential thrownness that ensues from her emptied memory. And whereas the alienated Vice-consul confronts the impossibility of killing himself, Anne-Marie Stretter faces directly the mystery of death as she ends her wasted suffering over colonialism by drowning herself. This combination evokes the problem of the division between mourning and melancholy as mutually exclusive human reactions to overwhelming loss. In my view, mourning and melancholy are not exclusive and contradictory. Rather, they can be treated as phenomena appearing on a continuum where they may intermingle in multiple ways during the temporal process of the experience of trauma. But as I have presented in this study, the only way out of eternal mourning is to take a more powerful emotional position in relation to the traumatising agent, as Duras takes for her heroes and heroines in the India Cycle, even though in the guise of fictional forgetting and dying.

Finally, for the highlighted ambivalence of her rhetorics, any reader or viewer of the India Cycle will confront the dilemma of the literal and metaphorical nature of Duras’s recurring metonymies. Known as an artist who loved paradox, her intention to explore this semiotic simultaneity provided an impressive series of reversible figures in the works of the cycle. Treated here as traumatic indices, Duras’s metonymies go through a gradual process of metaphoricalisation in new narrative and dramatic contexts, and eventually begin to function as emblems of some definable phenomena arising from unsymbolisable experiences. However, these emblems do not lose their historical referentiality. Rather they maintain a perceptual and emotional reference to reality by virtue of potential affectivity which may elicit one’s embodied memory and empathic faculty. Interestingly, the problematic duality of literal and metaphorical meanings, which originally resides as potential in all symbolic codes, persists also as the central subject in the contemporary debate on the literary signs of trauma narratives. Here one can ponder over three things. First, we can ask whether it was the prolonged period of postmodernist self-reflexivity, especially post-modern irony, which
matured Western humanist research to the extent that we can reapproach the problem of literality in terms of historical referentiality, again. Second, as current trauma theories indicate, the theory of an embodied mind promisingly suggests a renewed perspective on the insistent literality arising from trauma: that created in an emotional resonance with an ‘other’. Third, if Nature in our shrinking world sets the limits for human life, it demands an empathic interaction between people over cultural boundaries, which also the India Cycle promulgates. Hence, as Duras’s ambivalent figures call for an embodied seeing and hearing of the ‘other’ instead of emotional illiteracy, the problem that Durasian trauma fiction leaves for the future is the unknown extent of the culturally constructed nature of emotions that unavoidably regulate our perceptions.
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