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Dialogical voices in Marguerite Duras's *India Song*

My dissertation "Marguerite Duras's India Cycle as Trauma Fiction" analyses Duras's postcolonial aesthetics in narrativising colonial trauma. The series of eight transgeneric works treats the theme of historical trauma by juxtaposing four individual stories of rejection and loss in Cambodia, India and Europe in inter-war colonialism. Being the culmination of the India Cycle created 1963–1976, *India Song* is a cinematographic modification of the three novels of the cycle: *Le ravisement de Lol V. Stein* (1964), *Le Vice-consul* (1966), and *L'amour* (1971). Their story lines were combined with an innovative sound track in the film *La Femme du Gange* (1972), which was developed in the theatre play *India Song* (1973). Finally, the film *India Song* (1974) represents a mature cinematic version of these experiments, echoed by its cinematic parallel *Son nom de Venise dans Calcutta désert* (1976).

India Song describes the stagnated situation in the European society of colonials in Calcutta, the imaginary capital of British India during the 1930s. Its most conspicuous aesthetic device is the systematic detachment of image and sound, which juxtaposes the narratives of the colonialists with the sounds of the colonised country in this long rite of mourning, where the suicide of the wife of the French Ambassador symbolises the end of colonial power. The two elements contrasting the heroine are the voice of a Cambodian beggar woman, and the visual figure of a colonial criminal, the French Vice-consul of Lahore. In the interplay of the visual signs and the absent indigenous material, the dialogue of the timeless voices both imitates and estranges the visual melodrama on screen. The critical point thus depends on the ambiguous position of the spectator, who is obliged to confront a permanent temporal paradox created by the meta-narrative level of anonymous voices in an experiential cinematic present.