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Faustin Linyekula

Postcolonial perspective and heterodoxy in dramaturgy

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to bring to the fore the means through which artistic postcolonial practices could qualitatively impact the evolution of the performance field in the West. Research questions include the problematization of the existence or not of postcolonial aesthetics in praxis.

The work is contained in the double theoretical framework of postcolonialism and of French sociologist Bourdieu's theory of social fields. Postcolonialism constitutes the ideological and critical frame, while the theory of social field is used to analyse the nature of the structuring forces that compose the theatre milieu and the nature of the power relationships that shape it. The main materials that are analysed and commented during the research are videos of live performance. Different methodological tools were used to exploit the material in an interpretative approach, like dramaturgical analysis, theatre semiotics, dance analysis and cultural semiotics.

This essay opens with an introductory discussion that elucidates some problematic key concepts, such as postcolonial performance. Follows a descriptive chapter that studies the Parisian theatre milieu as a social field according to French sociologist Bourdieu's theory, by focussing on the power relations. Focus is set on the application of Bourdieu's concepts of heterodoxy to theatre. The following chapter scrutinizes the concept and practice of postcolonial perspective applied to theatre. The features of postcolonial theatre are highlighted and illustrated through the analysis of two performances by Congolese choreographer Faustin Linyekula's : *The Dialogue Series ii: La création du monde (1923-2012)* and *The Dialogue Series iv: Moya*, in their social and political contexts. The aim is to demonstrate that the dramaturgical frame in which the semiotic signs are articulated in the artist's artefacts, constitutes a paradigm of heterodoxy in the field of Western performing arts.

As a conclusion, this work considers that dramaturgical practices grounded in postcolonial critical perspective, are an opportunity to enrich and open western dramaturgy and theatre studies to the reality of the fast-changing and globalizing world.

Key words: postcolonial studies, heterodoxy, syncreticity, Faustin Linyekula, Bourdieu, theatre.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Research questions and objective

Western theatre is at the crossroads today because of factors such as the development of communication means, the prevalence of the logic of the market, demographic upheavals, the globalization of the cultural space, or the rise of interdisciplinary practices within the field. Therefore, the choices to be made by actors in the theatre and dance sector will be decisive for the future of the field. One possible option would be the integration of postcolonial perspective into artistic practices. Still, questions are raised: is there such a thing as *postcolonial aesthetics* in dramaturgy? if so, what would be its main features? and how could it impact the survival and evolution of performance and theatre studies in the West? In a single question: what is postcolonialism useful for to the western performing arts? Through this interrogation, the purpose of the present work is the exploration of the modalities for an advantageous integration of postcolonial perspective in the dramaturgical creative process by the Western theatre.

For the sake of clarity, delimitations have been assigned to this thesis, which implies that concentration is set on dramaturgy and on a single artist, Faustin Linyekula, a central figure of African contemporary dance and theatre with a clear postcolonial approach. Also, two performances are mainly concerned: *The Dialogue Series ii: La création du monde 1923-2012* (2012) and *The Dialogue Series iv: Moya* (2014). Finally, from a geographical aspect, the Parisian theatre milieu is used as a paradigm through which Western theatre world is discussed, and as for the discussions about colonial and postcolonial experiences, emphasis is set on the French-speaking part of what is commonly known as *the black world*.

2. Theoretical starting point

a. The theory of Social fields

This work starts with the idea that it might be possible to apply to the discipline of the performing arts, the concept of *orthodoxy/heterodoxy* as developed within the theory of the *social fields*. Initiated by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), this theory considers that society is divided into *fields* or *social fields*. The latter are defined as hierarchically organised sectors of human activities, where the members, called *social agents* or *agents*, hold different social positions and are engaged in an “objective power relations” for a dominant

social position inside the field.¹The milieus of journalism, theatre, or literary production are examples of social fields. The objective power relations are the structuring factor of a social field and are capital to the understanding how it functions.² That is why Bourdieu stresses that the social field

“contains people who dominate and others who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which the various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field. All the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies”.³

In the same order of ideas, every field holds on a *doxa*, which is a “set of shared beliefs”⁴ that determines the *modus operandi* and customs of the group. To Norwegian media scholar Jostein Gripsrud, doxa as the common sense of a field.⁵ Let it be noted that doxa is also normative and as such, reinforces the position of the dominant who strive to keep the *statu quo*.⁶ And this is exactly where Bourdieu’s theory becomes even more relevant to the present thesis.

In fact, the theory of social fields focuses on the activities shared by the group’s members, which is an interesting perspective when it comes to considering a professional field like theatre, where people interact, not based on ethnic origins, but rather on the common ground of shared activities, beliefs and goals. Second, Bourdieu’s theory of fields is relevant because it considers the centrality of power relations, both within the social group and between different social groups. This fact echoes the dynamics of the other main theory on which relies this work, namely the postcolonial theory. Power relations inside the theatre field can possibly explicate the forces that have shaped the field and how the latter could be reshaped in the future. Precisely, Bourdieu considers that a social field is challenged -and thus brought to change - when groups of dissidents, called *heretics*, *heterodox* or *heterodoxic* intervene into the field as did the Bohemia movements that remodelled French literary field in the 19th century.⁷

¹ Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television*, trans. Priscilla Ferguson (New York : New York Press,1999), 40.

² Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l’art : Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*, Paris, Seuil,1992, 84-121 .

³ Pierre Bourdieu, *On Television* pp 40-41.

⁴ *Ibid.*,47.

⁵ Jostein Gripsrud *Understanding Media Culture*, trans. Jostein Gripsrud (London: Arnold,2002) 65.

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu , “La production de la croyance : Contribution à une économie des biens symboliques”, *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 13 (02 1977) :12, accessed 04 12 2018.doi :<https://doi.org/10.3406/arss.1977.3493>.

⁷ Pierre Bourdieu ,*Les règles de l’art : Genèse et structure du champ littéraire*,(Paris : Seuil,1992),84-121 .

The concepts of **heterodoxy** and of **orthodoxy**, borrowed from Bourdieu are originally from religion studies. In Bourdieu's assumption, orthodoxy or "the art of reproducing", is conformity with the field's doxa, while heterodoxy or heresy, is the fact of evolving entirely or partly opposite to the doxa.⁸ Therefore, this work's statement is that aesthetic strategies informed by postcolonial theory could possibly be constitutive of heterodoxy in the framework of the Western theatre field and stimulate major changes in the area of dramaturgy and even theatre studies.

b. Postcolonialism

Also called postcolonial perspective, or postcolonial studies when relating to it as an academic discipline, postcolonialism is a critical method and theory that analysis the cultural productions of people from countries involved in the history of colonisation, in order to understand the cultural and economic consequences of colonialism and contest them. *Colonialism* and *imperialism*, although often used one for another, are different. Colonialism is one of the modalities resulting from the ideology of imperialism and characterized by the settlement of the colonisers in the colonised land; while imperialism is a wider ideological project which upholds the legitimacy of the economic and military control of one nation by another.⁹ As for *neo-colonialism*, it is used to stress the continuation of colonial practices after the formal ending of the colonial period. As an intellectual field postcolonialism, begun in the early 80s. It concerns itself with the re-reading of cultural productions that vehiculate(d) colonial discourse.^{10 11} Palestinian scholar Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1978) is seen as the corner stone of the discipline, but also works by Indians Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak or Martinican Frantz Fanon. In this work, postcolonialism is addressed as well as a scholar field and a political engagement against "colonial discourse, power structures and social hierarchies."¹²

First, postcolonial perspective finds its justification in this work, because, following Bhabha Homi,¹³ McLeod and other scholars,¹⁴ it may be reasonably stated that colonialism is the main

⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, *Le production de la croyance* p29

⁹ McLeod pp 7- 8

¹⁰ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London and New York: Routledge,2015), 30-39.

¹¹John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press,2000), 33-37.

¹² Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Postcolonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics* (London: Routledge,1996),2.

¹³ Jonathan Rutherford," The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart,1990) 207-221.

¹⁴ McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, 8.

power that structures today's European society, and that colonialism is therefore a factor not to be neglected while scrutinizing the Western theatre world. Second, the critical approach of postcolonial studies gives the opportunity to break out from the narcissist attitude that consists into studying European culture only from a European perspective. In this respect, postcolonial perspective is a privileged means to the analysis of a space where different cultures are meeting with an intensity that has hardly been experienced before.

3. Structure

The first part of the discussion will concentrate on the analysis of the western theatre through the Parisian milieu from the perspective of Bourdieu's theory of social fields. In so doing, special regard will be given to the power relation as the discussion focusses on the concept of orthodoxy in dramaturgy. In fact, it seems capital that the nature and the functioning of the playground be thoroughly described, and its major actors identified, before introducing the challenges that are at stake. The second chapter will start by digging deeper into the notion and the history of the concept of postcolonial theatre and performance, especially in what is known as the French-speaking "black world". Then it will concentrate on an analytical approach of the work of artist Faustin Linyekula, notably through the analysis of two of his performance, namely, *The Dialogue Series ii: La création du monde (2023-2012)* premiered in 2012 and *The Dialogue Series iv: Moya* (2014). One of the reasons that advocated for the choice of *Moya* is that this piece addresses what Loomba,¹⁵ McLeod,¹⁶ as well as other postcolonial scholars, name *internal colonialism*, that is the reproduction at the scale of an independent country of colonial methods by a social group holding the power against another group, as it is the case of the apartheid system. As for *La création*, this is an interesting object of study in many regards. The principal is that, this work is the most frontal and brutal encounter of Linyekula with a colonial discourse, directly on the stage. Although both pieces are part of a set of four plays designated as *The dialogues series*, they are different in many ways. *Moya* is a solo piece of dance theatre where dramatic theatre and dance are equally displayed, unlike, *La création* involves 17 performers, and has a ballet as its basic structure. The generic name *Dialogue series* is a term used by Linyekula to name four pieces that he considers to be conversations with friends, artists, or writers. They differ in their form and content. So, it is mainly through these two works that the features of postcolonial theatre and Linyekula's dramaturgical strategies will be observed .

¹⁵ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, 3rd ed., (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), 154-55

¹⁶ John McLeod, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, 32, 125.

A concluding part will not only synthesize the findings, it will eventually investigate further possible evolutions of the application of postcolonialism into dramaturgy.

4. Methods

Interpretivist approach and the qualitative methods that it supposes have been chosen to the scrutiny of the materials. In fact, interpretivism considers the world “not as an objective reality, but as a series of interpretations”,¹⁷ while theatre is also considered to be a world of signs, when the meaning is the result of the interpretation of signs. Further, the nature of the object under study makes the chosen method even more relevant: in addition to being at the crossroads of several disciplines, theatre and theatre practices are rooted in their social and cultural contexts. And this work, rather than pretending to explain, targets to understand and then emphasises the meanings that emerge from the material informed by its social context.^{18,19} The following are the major specific methods used here:

a. Theatre semiotics .This concerns how signs (movements, language, scenography etc) combine to make meaning on the stage.²⁰ Besides this, when necessary, it will be resorted to cultural semiotics. This is a method of analysis that considers traditional semiotic system of signs *as cultural texts*. A cultural text here, consists in any carrier of integral meaning, like a song, or a ritual, and is decoded as a symbol referring to a reality in the society where the cultural text is produced. For instance, the use of multilingualism in Wole Soyinka’s *The road*, could be understood as the symbol of a society in transition.²¹ In other words, a semiotic system, when considered as a cultural text, contains information about the specific society or community where it is produced and is considered as such, i.e. not transposable to another cultural context. This approach is particularly useful in the study of indigenous performances.

Due to the fact that dance is a substantial part of the material under study, this thesis also relies on dance analysis, borrowing concepts and techniques from those suggested in *Dance Analysis*:

¹⁷ Donatella Della Porta, . *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences: A Pluralist Perspective*(Cambridge:Cambridge University Press,2008), 25.

¹⁸ Yves Livian,*Initiation à la méthode de recherche en SHS* (Lyon:HAL,2015),accessed 04 10 2018,<https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01102083/document> ,38-39:

¹⁹ Donatella, *Approaches and Methodologies*, 23-25.

²⁰ Christopher C. Balme, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,2008),79.

²¹ Christopher C. Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage: Theatrical Syncretism and Post-Colonial Drama* (New York: Oxford University Press,1999),112.

Theory and Practice,²² and from Christopher Balme's chapter on dance.²³ In fact, dance analysis has developed concepts to describe movements and patterns of observation that fulfil the analytical perspective of the present work. That is why, for instance, the term *visual settings* will sometimes be used to identify all the theatre signs that are particularly meant to strike the vision such as scenography, light and costumes.

b. Dramaturgical analysis is the analysis that emphasises on how the structuring and the framing of a narrative work contributes to the meaning making. One of its particularities is that it is an analysis that is made in context: taking into account the play or performance itself, but also the relation to the public, the society and the social-political conditions of its production. Tools are borrowed from Gay McAuley's work focusing on space,²⁴ and Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt's joint opus.²⁵

c. Postcolonial perspective. This study considers Linyekula's work as a reaction to the colonial discourse and modes of representation. It also critically analysis the Parisian theatre milieu to the light of (post)colonial history and context.

5. Definition of key concepts

Western theatre here relates to the conventional and mainstream performing arts as theorised and practiced in Europe and exported to other parts of the world as a norm. More specifically, this study refers to the theatre milieu of Paris as a heritage of French classicism and neo-classicism. As for **postcolonial theatre**, it is the theory and practice of theatre informed by the experience of imperialism, and that challenge its system of representation and hegemony.²⁶ Here it refers to groundbreaking practices in performing arts that concern people originally from formerly colonised countries characterised by the mix of both Western and precolonial dramaturgical forms.²⁷ **Syncreticity** is a notion taken from religious studies, equalling the hybridization of a religion with a non-orthodox doctrine. Balme uses it to mean the process by which elements of western theatre are incorporated in the indigenous performance to result to a new form that he names *syncretic theatre*. Balme's concept of syncretism results to "a new

²² Janet Adshead, Valerie A Bringishaw, et al., *Dance Analysis: Theory and Practice*, ed. Janet Adshead (London: Dace Books, 1988)

²³ Christopher Balme, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies*, 161-175.

²⁴ Gay McAuley, *Space and Performance: Making Meaning in Theatre* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), 36-89, 126-168.

²⁵ Cathy Turner and Synne K. Behrndt. (London: Palsgrave, 2008)

²⁶ Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, *Postcolonial Drama: Theory, practice, politics*, p.11.

²⁷ Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage*, 12.

theatrico-cultural system which eclipses and overlies an existing one”²⁸. This work utilises syncreticity and postcoloniality interchangeably, as suggested by Balme’s use.²⁹

6. Material.

The material that this study analysis is made of videos of performances. In total eight videos from Vimeo website, one from the Metropolitan Museum Facebook page and seven performances are concerned, giving an overview of Faustin Linyekula’s work. But only two high-definition videos of live performances from Vimeo website are the object of a closer scrutiny. The video of *Moya* is a one-hour film shot on unspecified date in the KVS performance hall with two cameras offering ensemble and detailed views of the stage, and good sound quality as well.³⁰ It was posted in 2015. The *La création du monde* video is an 81-minute long film recorded on unspecified date inside the Ballet de Lorraine theatre with one camera from the audience. It was posted in 2014. As the camera sometimes zooms on certain details, portions of the stage remain out of sight. The first rows of the audience are seen in the four first minutes.

7. Literature review

From its beginning, postcolonial studies were more interested into literature. Naturally, the entry door to theatre was the theatrical text. Hitherto, relatively few significant studies have focused on the very staged performance from a postcolonial perspective, like Christopher B. Balme’s *Decolonizing the Stage* (1999) and Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins’s *Post-colonial Drama* (1996). Balme’s book thoroughly analyses the mechanism through which indigenous theatre integrates elements from western theatre to portray the realities of a postcolonial world. Gilbert and Tompkins on their side, provide a theoretical basis for the discipline of postcolonial theatre and is a scrutinise the strategies employed in postcolonial theatre to challenge the persisting forms of colonialism in the former British empire.

²⁸ Christopher Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage*, 17.

²⁹ Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage*, 8-12.

³⁰ Produced by Catherine Vervaecke and recorded by Beeldstorm, this video is part of the international selection of recordings by the KVS and the National Theatre of Belgium.

I.THE IDEA OF ORTHODOXY AND PURITY IN WESTERN DRAMATURGY

The idea of purity/impurity is not strange to the theory of social fields. Some scholars suggest that the idea of an orthodox and autonomous body is associated to that of purity, and that heteronomy has something to do with impurity.³¹ The obsession to autonomy and to conformity regarding the norm may easily lead to a state of conservatism, where innovation and alterity are seen as impurities to be fought. In that vein, Paul Harrison affirms that in the Western semiotics, black is “the permanent opposite of white and is related to evil and impurity, while white is purity “. ³²In the domain of theatre studies, Gilbert and Hopkins affirm that postcolonial theatre has been considered as an “impure form” for a long time and has been marginalized precisely because of its mixed forms.³³ Additionally, prominent scholars of which Bhabha Homi share the conviction that “the history of colonialism is the history of the West “. ³⁴All these considerations suggest that a postcolonial survey of the Parisian theatre milieu , like what follows, cannot be avoided.

1.The field of the Parisian theatre

It is known that some characteristics must be filled, that make a social group to be studied as social field *stricto sensu*. Among them, the most important are autonomy, habitus, capital, rules (doxa), stake and specific principles. But, as researcher Vincent Dubois suggests, there is no need, to apply the theory of social fields, that the object of study absolutely responds to all the criteria. The most important aspect to be taken into consideration is whether or not, in a given case, the theory of social fields could possibly help to understand the power relationships and positions.³⁵ This is what this section is about. Bourdieu would rather distinguish smaller fields or sub-fields inside the theatre milieu: the production field that deals with the economic and political aspects, and the artistic field, which is the field of the creators.³⁶ Anyway, for practical reasons, Parisian theatre milieu will be analysed here through its following components: public and private theatres and operas; public and private theatre and dance schools; festivals, and finally the intellectual and commercial sectors.

³¹ John Levi Martin and Forest Greg: “Was Bourdieu a field theorist?” In *Bourdieu’s Theory of Social Fields*, ed. Mathieu Hilgers (London: Routledge ,2015), 51.

³² Paul Harrison, “Performing Africa in America”, *Theatre Journal*, 57, 4, pp. 587-590, accessed May 14, 2018.

³³ Gilbert and Tompkins, 8.

³⁴ Jonathan Rutherford, “The Third Space”, 118.

³⁵ Vincent Dubois, “The fields of public policy”, In *Bourdieu’s Theory of Social Fields: Concepts and applications* ed. Mathieu Hilgers and Eric Mange (London: Routledge,2015),209.

³⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, “La production de la croyance “5 -7,42.

a. Theatres and operas are the main places where the result of the creative process, including the training, can be evaluated, and are the meeting spot of the critics, the creators and the audience. Paris counts about 136 theatres and 3 operas of which about 65 are private. The most prestigious theatres are the four national theatres that are totally owned and financed by the central government (Comédie -Française, Théâtre national de la colline, Théâtre national de l'Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe and Théâtre national de Chaillot), and Théâtre de la Ville , funded by Paris city hall which subsidizes theatre and dance activities with 32 million euros per year of which Theatre de la Ville and Le Centquatre get the lion's share ,that is 18 million of euros while 54 private theatres have to partake only 2,7 million.^{37,38}

b. As for theatre schools, during the 2018/2019 season, 2918 schools were active in the only Paris.³⁹ The far most prestigious of them is the state-owned and highly select Conservatoire de Paris, whose one unit teaches acting and the other is devoted to music and dance. The dominance of the Conservatoire de Paris is evident in such a way the academic cursus even in internationally recognised private schools like Ecole Jacques Lecoq or Cours Florent, are often looked at as preparatory to the Conservatoire.

c. Concerning festivals, let it be mentioned that they became an important structuring force in the field from the 90s.They are part of the field or subfield of production, which is a “system of objective relations between its agents and the institutions, and a battlefield for the monopolisation of the power of consecration”.⁴⁰ They play the role of what Bourdieu names as “ discoverers”⁴¹ of artists, thus they participate in the co-optation of members inside the field or in their effort to climb upper on the hierarchical structure of the field. It's usually through festivals that newcomers get their confirmation as members of the system. Theatre and dance festivals are subsidized with 800 000 euros from the city council. The most influential festivals in performing arts in Paris, despite its poor budget, is *Festival d'automne* that was initiated in 1972, and *Festival Paris l'été*.⁴² .

³⁷ "Théâtre", Paris ,accessed April,15, 2018,https://www.paris.fr/services-et-infos-pratiques/culture-et-patrimoine/spectacle-vivant/le-theatre-2231#les-theatres-soutenus-par-la-ville-de-paris_1

³⁸ "Théâtres ", Syndicat National des Théâtres Privés, accessed April 15, 2018 <http://www.theatresprives.com/nos-adherents/liste-de-nos-adherents/theatres/> .

³⁹ "Liste des cours de théâtre ", Cours.theatre.fr, accessed 0April,12, 2018<http://www.cours-theatre.fr/courstheatreparis/>

⁴⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, " La production de la croyance",7.

⁴¹ Pierre Bourdieu,"La production de la croyance",6.

⁴²Oscar,G. Brockett and Franclin,J. Hildy, *History of the Theatre*(Boston: Pearson,2003),561.

d. The intellectual and commercial sectors of the field include theatre critiques, cultural medias, scholars, agents of artists, producers, sponsors and academies. It is worth considering that intellectual and literary elitism are traditionally part of the Parisian doxa. In fact, under the 15th century's French classicism, accent was set on the imitation of the roman and Greek antiques and on the display of erudition,⁴³ while the neoclassical period was marked by conservatism with notably the influence of institutions like the French Academy originated in 1629 that works until today as the normative authority for the use of language and practice in literature, the Comédie-Française for the dramatic theatre, and the Academy of Dance and Music for the named disciplines.⁴⁴ These structuring forces contribute to the making and the promotion of the doxa more than theatre practitioners do, because of the monumental *symbolic and cultural capitals* they have accumulated throughout history.⁴⁵

I therefore sustain that the weight of tradition is heavy upon the French and Parisian theatre. It manifests itself through diverse phenomena such as: the preponderance of spoken and literary theatre, an almost religious veneration for the classics, a certain purism regarding the French language and, of course whiteness as the norm on stage and within the administration. Scholars, medias, and critics work as the guardians of the temple, while the academies including awards academies like the Molière Academy, are more clearly working as court judges that every year pay a recognition -or not- to the work of the agents. The intellectual and commercial sectors are almost a merged entity: the intellectual sector holds the power of consecration that gives to the artist a value on the market, and an artist with a high value in the market is often consecrated by the intellectual sector. In so doing, they do not only suggest what is valuable way of doing theatre, they simply create a hierarchy between the agents and between different genres, providing an explanation to why Bourdieu also names them as the “merchants of the arts”.⁴⁶

2.The idea of purity and orthodoxy in to practice

How is the idea of orthodoxy and purity manifested, and how is it challenged?

a.The centre and the periphery

One of the ways into which Parisian theatre milieu manifests the idea of purity and orthodoxy, is the fact of considering itself as the centre, as the result of a long tradition.⁴⁷In fact, Paris was-

⁴³ Ibid., 168ff.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 190-192,207-208.

⁴⁵ Jostein Gripsrud, *Understanding Media Culture*,67.

⁴⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, “La production de la croyance “,6.

⁴⁷ Brockett and Hildy,424.

and still is- the centre of an enormous colonial empire. Before French government brought about the geographical decentralization of theatre institutions by 1945, French theatre was almost synonym to Parisian theatre. In his analyses, Swedish journalist and dramaturg Per Arne Tjäder supports that this idea of centrality resulted from the strict centralisation of theatre in Paris organised under the ruling of Napoleon in the 19th century.⁴⁸ Despite decentralisation, four on the five national theatres are still located in Paris.⁴⁹ The notion of centrality, added to the assimilationist system adopted by France may explain the difficulty to integrate dramaturgical forms originated from the social and geographical periphery.

a. The language factors

French assimilationist model has also succeeded to impose the French language and almost annihilate regional languages. Non-French speaking performances are not common in Paris and are reserved to well-known western artists, while the terms for artists originally from former French empire to tour in France often include that their work be in French. Moreover, there is a standardization of the French language that relegate regional and foreign accents among exotic curiosities. That is why Eva Doumbia considers that the phrasing that is taught in theatre schools creates a separation between theatre world and a certain category of the population, especially those living in the working-class neighbourhoods.⁵⁰ And those neighbourhoods are generally inhabited by people designated as “diversité visible”,⁵¹ whose population was estimated to be of 8 or 9 million over a population of 70 million,⁵² and that is originated from immigration, or colonisation.

b. discrimination/exclusion

Brockett mentions that the first time the four century-old Comédie-Française staged a text by a living foreign playwright was in 1998. He also relates how artistic director Jacques Lasalle was fired from the Comédie-Française in 1993, while being accused of “having subverted the company’s role of preserving French culture”, the fact being that he added recently written

⁴⁸ Per Arne Tjäder, *Uppfostran, underhållning, uppror: En västerländsk teaterhistoria* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2008), 161-62.

⁴⁹ Brockett and Hildy, 471.

⁵⁰ Emanuelle Bouchez, “Théâtre et diversité”, *Telerama*, accessed April, 15, 2018
<http://www.telerama.fr/scenes/le-phrasage-qu-on-enseigne-aux-comediens-les-separe-des-quartiers-populaires,125015.php>

⁵¹ Visible diversity. This is a category of population generally made of people who phenotypically are different from the what is admitted as a typical white French.

⁵² Laurence Méhaiguerie and Yazid Sabeg, *Les oubliés de l'égalité des chances* (Institut Montaigne : Paris, 2004)

plays to the repertory of the company and employed foreign directors.⁵³ Then Paris had to wait until 2016 to see its first non-European artistic director, when Canadian-Lebanese Wajdi Mouawad was appointed at Théâtre national la colline. More recently, the 2017 edition of both *Festival d'Automne* and *Festival Paris l'été* saw no African artist invited in the category “theatre”. The same phenomenon occurred the same time in *Festival d'Avignon*, the most important festival in the French-speaking world, although it was officially announced that the festival would make a special focus on Africa. The only African artists that were invited were listed in categories such as dance, performance or music.⁵⁴

d. Segregation

Special festivals and institutions have been put in place by the authorities that somehow enforce the separation between the *pure* French theatre milieu and that from “diversity”. The most prestigious institutions like Comédie-Française and Odéon generally set performances of white French authors by French white directors and actors obviously for the same kind of public. Le Tarmac, Paris-Villette are known for being open to artists from the so-called *diversité visible*. In libraries, bookshops, school programmes and medias French dramatist from former colonies are categorised as *francophone writers* while the whites are under the category *French writers*.

2. The empire fights back: challenging the idea of purity and orthodoxy

As Salman Rushdie wrote in 1982 an article : *The empire writes back with a vengeance*, to address the emergence of writers from former British empire, it can be said that, to respond the situation introduced earlier, writers and artists with origins from formerly colonised countries, especially African -let us name them *postcolonial artists* - are fighting back, by initiating actions that could assimilate them to what Bourdieu identifies as heretic dissidents trying to challenge the dominant group. This section will briefly tell how.

a. Dieudonné Niangouna is a Paris-based playwright and artist originally from Congo-Brazzaville. He responded to the absence of Africans in the category “theatre” in *Festival d'Avignon* with a virulent open letter:

“We want to speak, Mr Py. We want to speak on the stage after five centuries of silence (...) Would you rather invite us without our French? But heck, why did we learn it, then? After having forced us to learn the language of Molière with much suffering, are we now

⁵³ Brockett and Hildy, 561.

⁵⁴ Clarisse Fabre, » Festival d'Avignon : polémique autour du focus sur l'Afrique subsaharienne », *Le Monde*, accessed April, 14, 2018, https://www.lemonde.fr/culture/article/2017/03/31/le-focus-afrique-du-festival-d-avignon-suscite-une-polemique_5103612_3246.html.

forbidden to utter it on stage? Who are you people kidding? What's the joke? We are a historical operation, and this is a data that should never be ignored. We are not at a fair, where the strongest man raises four hundred kilos, where one enjoys a caged negro, where the genitals of the Venus Hottentot are applauded. We are not at a universal exhibition. (...) And what is written on this programming reveals in many forms what is not said.”^{55, 56}

The hint to human zoos is historically speaking. In fact, historically black sub-Saharanans have been seen mainly as bodies: enslaved bodies or entertaining bodies in human zoos, added to this the stereotypical assumption that sub-Saharanans have “the rhythm in the blood”. As writes African-Caribbean French singer and comedian Yasmine Modestine: “In France, the Black is first of all a body, that of a football player or a model. The Actor's profession is perceived as an intellectual universe where the sensitive opposes the raw body of the sportsman, the disembodied body of the dummy.”⁵⁷ Therefore, structural racism in performing arts is more visible when it comes to spoken theatre and literature; and tends to favour a dance that more reflects a Eurocentric idea of the black body and of Africa.⁵⁸ It can even be said that the system has drawn a hierarchization of the arts, where spoken theatre and its practitioners are located on a higher level of the pyramid than dance or performance art and their practitioners. To fight back, Niangouna has created his own theatre group between Paris and Brazzaville as well as a Festival in Brazzaville. To diversify the funding of his activities, he also works with theatres in European countries other than France.

b. Eva Doumbia is a biracial artistic director and writer with origins from France, Ivory Coast and Mali. She followed a classical cursus, having Jean Lasalle among her mentors. The experience of structural racism and the need to tell a different national narrative led her to found *La part du pauvre*,⁵⁹ a theatre company scattered between Africa and France and that develops since 2000 a postcolonial approach in dramaturgy that Doumbia would hardly work on in a state-owned institution. It can be read on the company's Facebook page that its aim is to “make visible French cultural diversity”. Doumbia has specialized herself

⁵⁵ Dieudonné Niangouna, “Le coup de colère de Dieudonné”, Seneweb, accessed April, 25, 2018, <https://www.sceneweb.fr/le-coup-de-colere-de-dieudonne-niangouna-sur-la-programmation-du-festival-davignon-2017/>.

⁵⁶ All the translations from French if not specified otherwise are from the author of this work.

⁵⁷ Yasmine, Modestine, *Quel dommage que tu ne sois pas plus noire* (Paris :Max Milo, 2015), chap. 6, Kindle.

⁵⁸ Annie Bourdié, “Corps noirs”, enjeux de la création”, *Littera Incognita*, accessed April, 27, 2018, <http://blogs.univ-tlse2.fr/littera-incognita-2/2016/06/19/corps-noirs-enjeux-de-la-creation-choregraphique-contemporaine-dafrique-bourdie/>.

⁵⁹ Litterally : The Poor's Share.

into analysing the condition of the Afropean⁶⁰ females in a situation of postcoloniality. She is also a cofounder of *Décoloniser les arts*⁶¹, an association that fights against the consequences of colonisation in the domain of the arts.

From what has been developed in this chapter, it can be understood that firstly, Parisian theatre field has inherited a certain conservatism and rigidity from its colonial past, that is reflected in its structures and might seriously affect its capacity to change and adapt to new realities. Secondly, a heterodoxic rebellion, that of the postcolonial artists, has constituted itself inside the field, and challenges the ideas and practice of the dominant group. Their opposition takes multiple expressions including creation of structures, aesthetic approaches, initiating public debate and the search for financial autonomy. Therefore, it has been demonstrated that theatre field in Paris is, as Bourdieu named it, “a field of forces, a force field”,⁶² with an undergoing fight between artists, ideas and aesthetics.

⁶⁰ A European with African ancestors.

⁶¹ Literally: Decolonizing the arts.

⁶² Bourdieu, *On Television*, 40.

II. FAUSTIN LINYEKULA AND THE POSTCOLONIAL THEATRE

This chapter will more precisely problematise the concept of postcolonial theatre and performance in dialogue with Faustin Linyekula's work. First will be discussed the contribution of postcolonialism to the theatre studies. Then, a rapid review will situate the notion of postcolonial theatre and performance in the geographical and historical frames that concern this study. The third step, a biographical review, will inscribe Faustin Linyekula's practice of theatre inside that frame. The section will be used as an introduction to the following that will consist in a scrutiny of Linyekula's narrative policies with focus on the two selected pieces, *La création* and *Moya*. All these will lead to a final section where significative features of postcolonial theatre are reviewed and discussed comparatively with Linyekula's aesthetics and where the differences and similarities with Western approach in dramaturgy are outlined. The aim of this chapter is to tell what postcolonial theatre and performance is in practice and to demonstrate how Linyekula's work is inscribed into it.

1. The relevance of postcolonialism in theatre studies

The concept of postcolonial theatre is a consequence of the extension of the postcolonial critical method to the discipline of theatre studies. The application of postcolonial perspective to theatre studies, and mostly to performance dramaturgy is quite recent. For a long time, postcolonialism concerned itself with literature only. On their side, theatre studies started as part of literary criticism and focused on the study of drama until the 70s, that could be taken as the real beginning of theatre studies.⁶³ Postcolonialism's spectrum also has expanded to areas like cinema and performance. It appears now that applying postcolonialism to theatre studies makes possible the questioning of numbers of preconceptions, including the generally accepted linear and evolutionist presentation of the history of the theatre.⁶⁴ In the same way, it allows the use of tools that can possibly better performance analysis, like cultural semiotics that Balme suggests in his approach of syncretic theatre, inducing that a theatrical event is not only seen as an aesthetic object, but also as a cultural phenomenon. Finally, postcolonial perspective applied to theatre can help theatre studies get rid of the ethnocentricity and the specialisation that according to Balme led it into a semiotic impoverishment. Balme sustains that the use of the concept of *drama* in the past centuries in the West was "both historically restricting and highly ethnocentric" so that the word *drama* which is the spoken theatre has ended by meaning *theatre*.

⁶³ Balme, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies*, 3,11.

⁶⁴ Gilbert and Tompkins, *Post-Colonial Drama*, 54.

Blame reminds for instance that before the 19th century dramatic theatre was separated from music accompaniment.⁶⁵ In sub-Saharan Africa or in India these forms have never been separated. Hence those alternative dramaturgies can qualitatively impact theatre studies.

2. Postcolonial performance in the French-speaking *black world*

As a form of art, postcolonial performance has certainly preceded the formal end of the colonisation. In the French speaking sub-Saharan Africa, some dramaturgical performances that included criticism towards the colonial system, like the west African *kotéba*, an indigenous total theatre from the Bambara.⁶⁶ The Ivorian Bernard Binlin Dadié's *Les villes* staged in 1934 is recorded as the first play written in French in the African region, while his *Assémien Déhylé, roi du Sanwi* (1936) the first to be published, was staged in 1937 and could be considered as the first "postcolonial" play. Its dramaturgical structure is close to the *kotéba* with the mix of tales, songs and dance, while the content addresses the difficult mutation of Africa from the traditional to the colonial order.⁶⁷ Anyway in the French speaking sub-Saharan region and in the French colonies of the Caribbean, the emergence of a systematic criticism of colonialism through theatre had to wait until the dawn of the independences, with Aimé Césaire's *Et les chiens se taisaient* (1958). This play is the re-writing and the re-reading of a French classic, *Le livre de Christophe Colomb* (1927) by Paul Claudel. In his version Césaire glorifies a slave that rebels against colonisation. Nowadays postcolonial performance representatives in France include Niangouna and Doumbia who have been introduced supra, but also Ivorian dramatist Koffi Kwahulé and Haitian Choreographer and dancer Kettly Noël. The themes of their works often are at the intersection of politics, history and private life.

3. Linyekula: Life and work

Faustin Linyekula was born in 1974 in Zaïre, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, under the dictatorship of Mobutu. The dictator's figure and the Congolese history will become a recurrent theme in the artist's work. We find them for instance in *Drums and Digging* (2013), a performance about using the bodily memory/archive as a tool for the rebuilding of a ruined

⁶⁵ Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage*, 3-7.

⁶⁶ Pius Ngandu, *Théâtres et scènes de spectacle : études sur les dramaturgies et les arts gestuels* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 1993), 124.

⁶⁷ Bernard Magnier, "Bernard Dadié, cent ans de négritude," *Le Monde Afrique*, accessed May 12 2018, http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2017/01/11/bernard-dadie-cent-ans-de-negritude_5060725_3212.html.

country. As a teenager, he studies Latin and philosophy in a catholic high school in the town of Kisangani. Much later, he will consider that this immersion in the heart of European culture made him European as well.⁶⁸ During those years he starts practicing poetry and theatre. As he undergoes a theatre training at the French cultural centre in the early 90s, he works notably with French director Allain Mollot and shows interest to the body language. But when the social and political situation becomes chaotic in 1993, Linyekula and a group of friends decide to go to the adventure and try to live from their work. The journey leads them through villages and towns in the eastern Congo, where they perform as they are moving forwards to reach Nairobi in Kenya, but not before Linyekula loses a close friend, member of the troop, in a Congolese village at the border with Uganda. This friend was nicknamed Kabako, a character in one of Dadié's plays.

This event becomes determining to Linyekula, who would later name his company after Kabako, whose story would be told in *The Dialogue Series iii: Dinoxord* (2006), a theatre dance performance conceived as a funeral monument. In Nairobi, Linyekula participates in a workshop with the National *Kotéba* troop of Mali and specialises in dance to found with two other artists Gàara, the first contemporary dance company of Kenya. Their first piece, *Cleansing* (1997) wins a prize at a festival in Luanda. From the same year Linyekula travels to France, Slovenia and Austria for artist's residency and creations. He meets with American director Peter Sellars who will become a work partner. The turning point is 2001, when he decides to end up with exile and founds his company, the *Studios Kabako* in Kinshasa before moving it to Kisangani. As he puts it: "the kind of stories that set me in motion, I understood it fifteen years ago, are not stories from exile".⁶⁹ The first piece of the company is *Spectacularly Empty* in 2002. Then, while sharing his live between Kisangani and Paris, Faustin Linyekula will start a series of work interrogating history such as *Spectacularly Empty II* (2003) and *Le Festival des mensonges* (2005-2006) an all-night performance in the form of funerals, *More, more, more...Future !* (2008-2009), a modern opera about hope in the midst of chaos. The year 2009 is Jean Racine's year: first Linyekula stages *Bérénice* for the Comédie-Française with white and black French artists, before he sets another version with African artists, named *Pour en finir avec Bérénice* in Kisangani. Parallel to this move, Linyekula has directed between 2010 and 2014, a series of four pieces based on his conversations and encounters with artists and writers, be them dead or alive that he named *The Dialogue Series*. One of the last productions

⁶⁸ Faustin Linyekula, "An Artist/Activist", 139.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

to date is *Banataba* (2017). Named after his mother's village, this is a corporeal dialogue with an antique statue originally from the region where Banataba is situated and that the artist found in an American museum. To date, Linyekula has created at least 27 original work and collaborated in 7 others since 2001.

4. Analysing Linyekula's dramaturgy

With focus on dramaturgy, this section discusses the results of combined analysis of *The Dialogue Series ii: La création du monde* and *The Dialogues Series iv : Moya*. The aim is to trace and highlight features of postcoloniality/syncreticity that in the works. Categories in the analysis mixes those common to dramatic theatre like space and characters, and concepts more frequently in use in dance studies, like visual settings and movements. Also, the analysis is merged with the interpretation from hermeneutical and phenomenological perspectives, the "binocular" vision suggested by American theatre critic and playwright Bert States.

*a. The Dialogue Series iv : Moya*⁷⁰



Figure 1: Moya playing with the frogs, courtesy Agathe Poupeney.

⁷⁰ Artistic direction: Faustin Linyekula; performing artist: Moya Michael; music : Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens, Franco Luambo, Abdullah Ibrahim and Joachim Montessuis; costume: Heidi Ehrhart; production: KVS Bruxelles and Virginie Dupray. duration: 60 minutes. Première at the KVS Bruxelles the 16 of October, 2014.

The Dialogues Series iv: Moya is the fourth and was announced as the last of the pieces in the *Dialogue Series*. It originates from the meeting and conversations between Faustin Linyekula and South African female dancer and choreographer Moya Robben Michael in Brussels. Moya Michael was born in Eldorado Park, also known as Eldos, a suburb of Johannesburg during the apartheid regime. As a teenager, she faced racism and she continues to bear the special kind of interior turmoil related to the fact of being what is known there as a *coloured person*, not fitting anywhere. In this piece, Moya Michael's interrogations echoes Linyekula's own thoughts about the identity of his two biracial children. Both artists engage in a distanced dialogue.

i. Synopsis.

Michael Moya starts with introducing herself and Faustin Linyekula who is absent from the stage, then from total stillness she performs a dance fragment with feet on the spot with emphasis on arms and a jerky flow that starts from the fingers and ends up shaking the whole trunk. Then as she recovers her breath in the middle of the stage, a text by Linyekula projected in a screen and addressed to Michael Moya contextualises the performance in the following of Linyekula's creations. Follows an extremely energetic and repetitive sequences of movements that shakes Michael's body for long minutes, as if she attempts to shake out something out from her body, while she keeps her feet on the spot. Sweating and out of breath, facing the audience in the proscenium at the left wing, she narrates the Congolese part of her journey during the pre-production stage of the performance, where she strangely felt isolated among other African artists while she has travelled to "what was supposed to be home". The preproduction team moves to Johannesburg under the sonorities of south African *mbaqanga* music and the story is told through combined aesthetic devices: reading of letters, Linyekula's and her own recorded voices in a studio in Johannesburg as Michael sits down in the centre of the stage to write. Linyekula evokes the existential questions raised by the fact that he has mixed blood children as one of the motives for him to be engaged in this production. She starts playing with frog toys as a languorous Congolese rumba music is by Franco Luambo in Lingala language is played. In standing position, she starts with narrow inwards and discreet movements: the feet are stuck together in an *on the spot* position with unstable state of gravity. The hands horizontally close to the body engage in a delicate undulating flow that progressively lose their fluidity to become jerky. The undulations of the arms go up to the shoulders, shaking them alternatively. At the same time the body trunk is energetically twisted and shaken as animated by an uncontrollable energy. The tension and the body become more and more perceptible until the centre of gravity shifts from the centre of the body to the chest, that makes her move backwards to recover the

balance and start moving in the space. Her dancing follows the rhythm of the slow music as she maximizes the occupation of the space with rapid shifts including some western dance features like pirouettes and little sliding steps forwards and backwards between the dance phrases. From time to time, she briefly performs a dance step that recalls the romantic Congolese rumba dance. She is sweating again and puffs up. When she is recovering in the bottom of the right wing of the stage Linyekula's recorded voice is heard, and words projected on the screen. It is a reflexive text about the utility of his contemporary work to the people he belongs. During that time, Michael plays again with frogs before going to sit on the chair in front of the punching-ball. When she comes to the front of the stage under another Congolese rumba music, she kneels at the wooden frame and performs a dance segment that involves only her arms illuminated by a straight spot of light. Movement's flow is smooth, and the rhythm is slow, characterised by the sliding of both hands on each other and caressing the arms' skin. It ends with the unveiling of a big black tattoo in the interior side of Michael's forearm representing Africa. In that position, with the African map in evidence, Moya Michael relates in a quiet voice and slow pace her experience of apartheid and memories from her white father and her dance lessons under the apartheid regime in South Africa, as she mixes English with South African idiomatic expressions. As major transformations are made on the scenographic device, Michael starts putting boxing gloves while seated on the chair in the back. Linyekula's silent video portrait appears on the new screen while his recorded voice is reflecting on his legacy: "How I hope to be remembered when I die". Michael who has finished putting on the boxing gloves starts punching on the bag under a clarinet-dominated jazz partition by Abdullah Ibrahim. She throws her gloves and plays barefooted and wet with the frogs under the water fountain. As the music stops, she stands up and looks straight forwards as the stage is plunged into the darkness.

ii. Themes

The thematic core of *Moya* is loneliness and apartheid from the perspective of the body of a *coloured* female dancer meeting another artist. The piece also problematises the role of contemporary art in African context. Therefore, the meeting between personal biography and critical reading of historical and social context is at the centre of this piece, in total conformity with the feature of postcolonial theatre.

iii. Basic structure

Moya is explicitly in the category of dance theatre, because this piece uses the principles of dramatic theatre combined with dance elements. This makes it even more subject to analysis

from the perspective of theatre, according to Balme.⁷¹ Features of dramatic theatre in *Moya* include:

- the spoken dialogue: Michael and Faustin engage in an alienated dialogue, through video, pre-recorded voices, or the reading of correspondence. At the same time this dialogue is not a dialogue because Moya Michael is the only one on stage.

- a plot: The structure of the plot in *Moya* consists in the succession of events around the question: "How a little girl from Eldos became a dancer". A secondary plot running parallel to the first would be named: "How we made this piece. "In fact, all the events of the dramaturgical line refer to one or both narratives.

-a conflict: *Moya* develops a conflict in two levels. The first level is between "we" (the stage and the audience) and the apartheid system and its survival. Through this, the piece responds to the features of the postcolonial performance, where opposition may be rather between the stage and the audience on one hand, and the external world on the other side, not between antagonists and protagonists. A second level of conflict is the one opposing the *characters* Linyekula and Moya with their interior struggles. Moya has to fight with the idea of being a foreigner wherever she goes and Linyekula struggles on one side with existential questions about the future of his biracial children and on the other side about his legacy as an artist and citizen to the society: "How do I hope to be remembered when I die ". This kind of interior conflict is common with postmodern as in Sara Kane's *4.48 Psychosis*.⁷²

-characters: Of course, Michael Moya is not interpreting the role of a fictional character. But the *ostension* (the fact of showing or putting someone or something on stage) makes her no longer be only herself but a theatre sign, a semiotic device, following Umberto Eco's meaning.⁷³ As she tells the story of "how a coloured girl from Eldos became a dancer", she stops only representing herself but all the "coloured". Obviously, Moya is double. The same with Linyekula, present on a dematerialized form. The dematerialization of his presence reinforces the separation between him as a person and as theatre sign, thus him also is a dramaturgical device, a component of the dramaturgical structure in a rehearsed and reproducible

⁷¹ Balme, The Cambridge Introduction, 161-162

⁷² Sarah Kane, *Psychos 4.48*, trans. Emar Heckscher (Norsbrg: Riksteatern, 2006).

⁷³ Umberto Eco, "Semiotics of Theatrical Performance," *The Drama Review*, 21, 1, (1977), accessed May, 21, 2018, doi:10.2307/1145112.

performance. For all these reasons, it may be more accurate to state that Moya and Linyekula are performers, and characters at a certain level.

In short, *Moya*'s dramaturgical structure drastically breaks out from the Aristotelian dramaturgy. In fact, since chronologically the storyline is far from being linear, and the events, instead of following each another in cause and effect logic, are fragmented in independent segments. The conflict does not engage identifiable protagonists and antagonists nor is there a quest. The border line between the performer as individual and as character is made unclear, because the narratives weavers between the tale, performance, dramatic theatre and of course dance, with a mix of alienation and a certain poetization through dance.

iv. Visual settings, spatial and temporal structure

The physical space used in *Moya* comprises the audience space facing the stage space which the only presentational space, in the form of a proscenium stage without the proscenium arch and covered with black dance floor. This square space is bordered with a large white mark on the floor. At the beginning (and this will not change much until the last minutes of the performance), the composition presents an evident lack of balance, which is common in an intertextual dialogue with the rest of Linyekula's works. It results from this that the spectator's brain, used to symmetry, kept active as it is forced to engage in the search of balance. In fact, almost all the scenographic components are grouped in the half of the left wing. First there is an empty television-like wooden frame is stuck on the floor in the proscenium. Then, a -about- 1,3-meter-high statue representing a male character stands at three-quarters towards the centre of the stage. It is clothed with a red-pink long sleeve shirt, a green scarf thrown on the shoulders and black trousers, which is not far from Linyekula's clothing style. Also, in the mid-way to the back of the stage, an electric neon lamp is posed on the floor perpendicularly to the centre of the stage. It will twinkle in the dark to accompany some dancing segments of the performance. Finally, in the very bottom of this left wing is disposed a chair at the corner and a punching-bag in front of it hangs to the roof and the floor by a chain. The right part of the stage space that is almost three times bigger than the left is a square is contained in a square light spot that separates it from the rest of the presentational space. It contains some properties that are hardly visible unless used: a couple of frog toys, a pen and a note-book. And contrary to the left side, it is more often under the light. As for the use of the stage space, performance never occur in the dividing line: it occurs either on one side or the other. The only major change in the visual setting occurs near the end when the frame is turned to a screen and a water fountain is set on the stage. As for the time of the play that is one hour, it is segmented into eleven

sequences. They are identifiable by the fact that a fragment where spoken language is the dominant sign system is followed with a segment with the body movement as the dominant sign system.

The strict separation of the stage in two spaces, one big and illuminated and the other small and often dark suggests the survival of the racial and economic division in contemporary South Africa. Performance starts from the dark zone before it moves to the light-one, like Moya Michael was born and raised up in Eldos, a suburb close to Soweto before she moves to a “white” universe in Tshwane University of Pretoria. Her repetitive shifting between both spaces would refer to the existential tension resulting from her belonging to two opposite social group. She declares: “In a world that is increasingly polarized, the landscape seems to be restricted to black and white. But what about the shades of grey, that wide range of colours reflected by the skins of a global majority, that’s nevertheless still labelled as a minority?”⁷⁴

There is no effort to represent the fictional space on scenographic device. The fictional space is suggested first by the activity of the body: when Moya Michael is playing with the frogs, the viewer understands that the action happens many years ago when she was a child in South Africa. When she sits writing, it suggests that she is probably in her room working during the preparation of the play. The second way fictional time and place are suggested is through the spoken word like in Shakespeare’s plays. And finally, music is used as indicator of the shift in space: Congolese rumba for the move to Kisangani in Congo and mbaqanga music for Johannesburg.

v. Dance

Dance segments often start with a moment of stillness, slowly followed by a gradual tension that crosses the body. The change of dance dynamics like when the performer travels from from a point to another never happen before the inwards tension is at its fullness. The dominant mode of representation of the kinetic expression during dance segments in *Moya* is generally far from the imitative mode (that of the everyday movement). The movements can be categorised as belonging to the representative *mode* - when movements operate through repetition or different ways of focalization that highlight some features of corporeal signs.⁷⁵ It is the repetition of some patterns that connect the movement to a meaning. Concerning the use of the dance in the performance, let it be said that dancing is not used as an illustration of the dramatic sequences

⁷⁴ <http://www.bureaukot.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Moya-Michael-Coloured-Swan-ENGL.pdf>

⁷⁵ Balme, *The Cambridge Introduction*, p165.

nor is it the corporeal transcription of the spoken language, but dance movements are layers among others of the same dramaturgical structures as the texts projected on a screen, the aural elements, the dramatic segments, or the visual settings. Movements could be viewed as the poetic expression of the impact of the events of external world on the self as corporeity, and an attempt to materially reflect the inner world.

To sum up *Moya* is an existential quest about having mixed blood, thus feeling “not black enough, not white enough” as Michael states during the show, where individual biographies encounter history and politics. The narrative is structured and rhythmized in time by the succession of segments emphasizing either the language system or the body. It’s aesthetics displays syncreticity in the use of different languages including African ones. In the same way *Moya* Michael’s style integrates some forms of movements specific to the western ballet and reminders of Congolese rumba dance as the music goes from electronically produced “sound poetry” by French composer Joachim Montessuis to zulu choirs. The narrative is also rooted in a cultural context so that the cultural texts comprehended in the performance could hardly be understood without a proper contextualisation. From all the preceding, it can be stated that this performance matches the features of postcolonial/syncretic theatre.

b. *The Dialogue Series ii : La création du monde (1923-2012)*⁷⁶



⁷⁶ Artistic direction: Faustin Linyekula; scenography: Jean-Christophe Lanquetin; Costumes : Xuly Bët; music : Fabrizio Cassol; reconstruction : Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer, production: Ballet de Lorraine, duration: 81 minutes, premiered at the KVS the 24th May 2012.

Fig.2: The creation of man and woman. Courtesy Opéra Lorraine.

Linyekula's *La création du monde* is partially a reconstruction but also a "re-vision" or a "recreation", as Klaus-Peter Köpping would name it, of the original 1923 *La création du monde*.⁷⁷ The original version was a 15-minute classic ballet that premiered the 23rd October 1923 in Paris in Théâtre des Champs Elysées. The music was composed by prestigious artist Darius Milhaud for 17 instruments, and the libretto was due to French Blaise Cendrars. The décors were designed by Fernand Léger, and Swede dancer and choreographer Jean Börlin (1893-1930) created the choreography for the *Ballets suédois*. The latter was a famous Swedish ballet company that was active between 1920 and 1925 in Paris under the leadership of Swedish businessman Rolf de Maré (1888-1964).⁷⁸ The context of the original version is that of the end of World War I as Europe is trying to find inspiration for a new life and the general mood in the arts is the rejection of Western tradition and a massive turning to new trends like dada, surrealism, fauvism, or cubism.⁷⁹ The latter two styles clearly appear in both the original and the 2012 scenography. The mood after the war was also to fantasy⁸⁰. That is why Linyekula's website relates that the press called this pay at that time "a negro-cubist fantasy".⁸¹

Linyekula's version is in fact a critical re-creation of a pre-existing ballet, with a straight address to the discourse of the original version. In a video, the Congolese choreographer says that his "idea was to make a counterpoint "to the *Ballets suédois*' production, because he is " not that much in agreement" with the discourse that it develops.⁸² In other words, the reconstruction was made only to make possible the work of deconstruction. That is why, additionally to the dramaturgical analysis, postcolonial perspective will help to uncover the communication strategy of the artist

i. Synopsis

The piece opens with 16 dancers of the Ballet Lorraine all seated on a long bench in the back of the empty stage facing the audience. They are clothed in similar sweater of different colours. Djodjo Kazadi, the only African dancer is facing them, in a grey casual outfit while he stands

⁷⁷ Klaus-Peter Köpping, " Performing 'Africa'", in *Moving (Across) Borders: Performing Translation, Intervention, Participation*, ed. Gabriele Brandstetter (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017), 55-57

⁷⁸ Brockett and Hildy, 440.

⁷⁹ Brockett and Hildy, 439.

⁸⁰ Idem.

⁸¹ Studios Kabako, « La création du monde » : <http://www.kabako.org/>, accessed May 22 2018.

⁸² YouTube, " Holland Festival 2012: La création du monde " <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49WYgv12REU&t=14s>

in the opposite side of the stage in the right wing, creating a disequilibrium in the composition of the tableau. The group of the sixteen enters one by one the presentational space as dancers develop solo phrases and progressively get into visual and physical contact with each other. The dynamics and the pace of the dance become more and more tense. The dynamics changes into a succession of acrobatic horizontal jumps with hands laterally extended followed by smooth reception in remarkably correct alignment and gets to its climax with a fast circular running of the 16 Lorraine dancers in the centre of the stage. During that time, Kazadi occupies the edge of the space, continues to face them as he involves in discreet movements inspired from Congolese traditional dance of fertility that focuses on moving hip forwards and backwards in the imitation of sexual act. At the same time, he slides from the left to the right and of the stage and forth. The music, during this segment is made of harmonic violin and piano-dominated partitions.

The second segment of the performance starts with the change of costumes by the 16 Lorraine performers. Djodjo Kazadi clothes one female dancer in a long sleeve transparent-like leotard as she is performing slow inward movements in the proscenium; and brings the same to the other dancers. The group of the sixteen scatters itself in the whole stage in a succession of figures responding to each other in counterpoint: gathering in the left side of the stage, then in the right side, contortion imitating trance started by one dancer who is soon followed by the others, crawling in group in one direction, then in its opposite, running together with very small and rapid steps towards the centre of the stage with the base of the foot touching the floor at once, ending by making a circle, then the opposite... The connotation of this segment refers to negotiations, spiritual rituals and confrontations in a society. The music varies from Western classic music to Congolese guitar rhythms as Kazadi starts changing the décor of the empty stage.

The third segment starts with the change of décor made of high bidimensional cubist and fauvist paintings. The music at its beginning mixes baroque violin and typical Congolese chanting in Lingala language, before it moves into fast-paced percussions inspired from the Anamongo⁸³ indigenous music punctuated with chants. The group of sixteen, wearing masks and colourful outfits figuring animals in the exception of the characters identified as the man and the woman, perform the reconstruction of the original ballet where can be recognised the figuration of the

⁸³ The Anamongo is a vast bantu ethnic group in central Africa.

chaos before the creation of the world, the creation of animals and plants, the birth of man and woman, the sexual desire of man and woman.

The fourth segment, which is more like an epilogue, starts as the Lorraine dancers are taking off their masks and leaving the stage under the applaud of the public, probably convinced that the show is over. That is when Djodjo Kazadi pops in, grabs the microphone and sarcastically goes: “A beautiful show! In the old times, yeah, in the old times, they could really dance! Ha,ha,ha. Magnificent!”. Then his speech methodically deconstructs the whole work done by Fernand Léger and Blaise Cendrars as part of a colonial discourse. Lines from a letter that Léger wrote to a friend in 1922 where he names his piece still in preparation as “the only negro ballet” is uttered and mocked as a “negro ballet without negroes”.

ii. Themes

Africa and the origins are the central themes in both versions of the piece. If in the 1923 version Africa is addressed through the prism of exoticism and by the paradoxical absence of Africans, the new version deconstructs that aspect: the music, the use of Lingala language, the presence of Djodjo Kazadi and his final speech in a sort of “the empire speaks back to the centre”. The theme of colonisation and decolonisation is an innovation compared to the 1923 version. Colonisation is figured out by the occupation of the central space of the stage by the European performers while the only African performer is restrained in the marginal space of the stage, busy installing of decors or clothing the *white* dancers. Then decolonisation is portrayed first by the progressive intrusion of African-inspired music and then by the final hectic speech made by Djodjo Kazadi occupying the centre of the stage space.

iii. Basic structure

The communication strategy of this performance is built upon a certain idea of contrasts or oppositions expressed by all the signifiers. Roughly:

- . The opposition between black and white: the whites occupy the centre of the space, the black occupies the margin, until the end when the shift is operated.
- . Costume: Only Djodjo Kazadi is constantly clothed differently during the whole performance.
- . Number: Djodjo is alone, he others are many, that could relate to the memorisation of the autochthone discourse and the inequality of forces in a colonial context.
- . Day and night: the segment where the original version is performed happens during the night, while Kazadi’s speech starts at the dawn.

. Movement: Compared to Kazadi's jerky movement and hectic speech at the end, the flow of the Ballet de la Lorraine dancers appears globally regular and harmonious and thus opposed to Kazadi's acting style.

As for the conflict in this piece, it is presented through the confrontation of one black body facing 16 white. Köpping considers this as the revelation of the "hidden dimension of racism".⁸⁴

iv Visual settings, spatial and temporal structure

As for the segmentation of the dramaturgical structure, four segments could be identified plus one epilogue. Those segments are signalled by the change of costumes that is also accompanied by an important change in scenography in the middle.

1st segment: the Lorraine dancers are in sweaters, the space is empty, and the prevailing component is the bodily movements characterised by individual dancing, short synchronized movement and acrobatic figures. Music of baroque inspiration.

2nd segment: the Lorraine dancers are in leotard. The acting occupies more the stage space and the dancing is more made of creation of ensemble figures. Ensemble movements and occupation of the space. The dominant element here is again the movement. Mix musical genres.

3rd segment: The costumes are bulky and colourful, change in the scenographic device is observed. Louder sound level, music of African inspiration. The dominant sign is the visual setting: scenography and costume.

4th segment: Djodjo Kazadi puts on the leotard costume and the Lorraine dancers are in sweaters again. The dominant is the spoken language.

v. Dance

In *La création* movements semantic is often in the reflexive mode. This means, according to Susan Leigh Foster's theory of dance semantics referred to by Balme, that movement has itself as the point of reference, and does not relate to the physical world.⁸⁵ This is exactly when the contextualisation is unavoidable to the interpretation of dance, as supports Janet Adshead: "Understanding the individual circumstances of each dance is crucial to its interpretation. Every dance is found in a particular cultural context, just as historically, it exists in a distinctive era

⁸⁴ Köpping, "Performing 'Africa'", 55.

⁸⁵ Balme, *The Cambridge Introduction*, 165.

and is made, performed and watched by specific, identifiable group of people.”⁸⁶The dance style of *La création* is a complex juxtaposition of ballet figures, contemporary style and indigenous Congolese dances. However, the most remarkable in relation to this, is the supposedly African inspired choreography of the original version that dominates the second part of the performance. Jean Börlin created a choreography that was supposed to represent African dancing, that was rather the reflection of his imagination influenced by the epoch’s negrophilia and exoticism.

5. Features of postcolonial theatre and performance

What makes a performance postcolonial? And how much does Faustin Linyekula’s dramaturgical processes fit in the category?

a. A political theatre. Because postcolonial theatre is one of the “textual/cultural expressions of resistance to colonisation” and postcolonialism “an engagement with and contestation of colonialism’s discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies” that aims “to dismantle the effects of colonialism”,⁸⁷ then postcolonial theatre is to be categorized as a *political theatre*, but what makes it different from the rest in the category is its *focus on colonialism* and its consequences. Linyekula reflects: “How can I approach my work today with this idea that it exists as part of the society in general and that I don’t need to say: this is art, and this is activism? Maybe being an artist could be just another way of being a citizen.”⁸⁸

c. A critical approach. Postcolonial performance is characterized by its critical approach on history and on cultural productions, not only those from the colonial era but also from those reproducing renewed forms of domination. This state of mind is the most visible as Postcolonial dramatists and directors proceed by the re-reading or re-working of the western classics⁸⁹. Aimé Césaire wrote *Une tempête* (1958) from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and *Et les chiens se taisaient* from Claudel’s *Le livre de Christophe Colomb*. Faustin Linyekula staged two versions of Jean Racine’s *Bérénice*, the first with the French actors Of Comédie-Francaise, then a second deeply critical with Congolese actors in Kisangani. He directed his version of Milhaud and Cendrars’ *La création du monde* about which Köpping expresses the

⁸⁶ Janet Adshead, “Introduction to dance analysis: its nature and place in the study of dance” in *Dance Analysis: Theory and Practice* ed. Janet Adshead (London: Dance Books, 1988), 13.

⁸⁷ Gilbert and Tompkins, *Post-colonial Drama*, 2-3.

⁸⁸ Faustin Linyekula, “An Artist/Activist Moving (Across) Borders”, in *Moving (Across) Borders: Performing Translation, Intervention, Participation*, ed. Gabriele Brandstetter and Holger Hartung. (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2017), 148.

⁸⁹ Gilbert and Tompkins p16.

wish that the “ re-writings and re-performances, the filling of voids by re-framing the “re-creation” of *La création* will hopefully lead to a new and different way of perceiving the deconstruction of the mythologies surrounding modernism.”⁹⁰

Maybe the most speaking way to summarize what the content of postcolonial theatre is, is to recall the reply of W.E.B Du Bois to the question of what are the fundamental principles of “a real Negro theatre” in 1926: “About us, By us, For us, and Near us”.⁹¹

d. Syncreticity is a central component of the communicative structure of postcolonial performances.⁹² Balme quotes ethnologist David Coplan’s definition of syncretism as the “ acculturative blending of performance materials and practices from two or more cultural traditions, producing qualitatively new forms”.⁹³ In the same vein, Gilbert and Tompkins, post-colonial dramaturgy often includes “post-contact forms”.⁹⁴ This means that its aesthetics can comprehend some characteristics of the western dramaturgy. Linyekula’s version of *La creation du monde*, is in fact based on an original Western ballet, the dominant language in both analysed pieces are French and English and even Michael Moya reproduces some Western ballet steps, as it has been signalled.

Very important, Balme emphasises that, when considering a postcolonial performance from its syncreticity, special attention should be drawn to the” conjunction between aesthetic and cultural codes”,⁹⁵ because in a postcolonial /syncretic performance, everything is meant to mean something about the culture. He affirms that when other approaches like the multiculturalism deal with cultural texts, often the latter “are recoded and semanticized in an entirely Western aesthetic and ideological frame”.⁹⁶

Linyekula’s view on his performance is that of a temporary shelter built from materials recuperated from the pile of ruins by a person who survived an explosion.⁹⁷ This metaphoric description connects to the idea of a do-it-yourself process and assemblage of disparate materials. When he adds: “I came to dancing through the backdoor of theater and writing”,⁹⁸ it

⁹⁰ Köpping, 57.

⁹¹ David Krasner, “What have We Learned?“, *Theatre Journal*, 57, 4, (December 2005), 585, accessed May,02 2018. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25069720>.

⁹² Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage*, 3.

⁹³ *Ibid.*,13-14.

⁹⁴ Gilbert and Tompkins, *Op.Cit.*11.

⁹⁵ Balme,*Decolonizing the Stage*, 5.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*,5.

⁹⁷ Faustin Linyekula, “An Artist/Activist Moving (Across) Borders”, 145.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*,142.

makes clear that his approach of the art is basically eclectic. To finish, Linyekula affirms to a European audience after evoking that he's studied Latin literature and practices French language more than any other: "I am just as European as you are".⁹⁹ Indeed Linyekula's background predisposed him to the practice of syncretism as he permanently mixes dramatic theatre and dance, France-produced electronic music or baroque music with African modern sonorities as demonstrated in *La création* and *Moya*, where classical ballet steps go along with indigenous(pre-colonial) dance .

e. Divergence in the substance. Like any new artistic movement, postcolonial theatre tends to diverge as much as necessary from the mainstream. This step equals Bourdieu's notion of the heretic rebellion that was referred to supra.¹⁰⁰ In fact, syncretism and other deviations from the normative dramaturgy are to be assimilated with a rebellion against the attempt of the homogenization and the strain for *purity*.¹⁰¹

Postcolonial theatre uses schemes such as the fragmentation of the dramaturgical line and of alienating effects, like postmodernism and epic theatre. But in this case, maybe more than in all other theatrical practices, divergence from the aesthetic codes is the vehicle of an ideological signified. Linyekula considers his *La création* as a *counterpoint* to the initial version. But the difference between the two versions is beyond aesthetics, the difference of form here conveys the message of being "not that much in agreement" with the ideological statement of Cendrars' and Milhaud's work.¹⁰² In this respect, while Aristotelian dramaturgy does privilege conflict between antagonists and protagonists on the stage, syncretic practices often escape from this canon. In *Moya*, the opponent is the external world and in *La création* Blaise Cendrars is the target of Kazadi's diatribes.

As we are discussing diverging from the mainstream dramaturgy, let us glance to two schemes that according to me are characteristic of Linyekula's creative process from a postcolonial perspective.

i. Making the creative process become a bearer of meaning

What is meant here is that some parts of the creative process that are unseen on stage are made to become meaningful through the artist's communication about the production, so that it

⁹⁹ Ibid.,139.

¹⁰⁰ Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art* ,84-121.

¹⁰¹ Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage*, 7-8.

¹⁰² YouTube," *Holland Festival 2012:La création du monde* "<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49WYgv12REU&t=14s>

becomes almost impossible to the spectator not to have this meaning in mind while experiencing or remembering the performance. This communication strategy frames the production in a certain manner and impacts the audience's interpretation by bringing closer the artist's horizon of the *text* and the horizon of the expectations of the spectator. More clearly, as the artist exposes about the contextual, and the intertextual aspects of his work, the spectator's pre-knowledge and presuppositions about the artefact are being modified and tend to meet the artist's intention. This strategy seems particularly useful when analysis is made from the perspective cultural semiotics, because it provides hints to the meaning of the cultural text. It can therefore be supported that Linyekula treats semiotic system of signs as cultural texts, because he takes so seriously their cultural context to carefully communicate on them. I acknowledge that it could be reasonably argued that, since this process cannot be experienced during the performance, it does not integrate the dramaturgical or aesthetic category. Nevertheless, I consider that once a communication strategy impacts on the spectator's theatre experience, it becomes constitutive of the dramaturgical device.

One example of making the creative process become meaningful ,is when Linyekula and the production team visit the ruins of Mobutu's palace as a preproduction step for *Drums and Digging* and communicate about it. Another example is when the artist tells that during the creative process of *Banataba* in the US, he travelled to perform the play in his mother's village as a way of symbolically bringing back the statue to its people. Although the spectator cannot see this part of the creative process on the stage, they naturally integrate them in their making of the meaning. For instance, they might reflect about the restitution by Western museums of African antiques, though to topic is not directly addressed on stage. Communication about the creative process of *La création du monde* raises the issue of the mode of representation in the colonial discourse, so that the viewer has it in mind well before the topic is addressed at the end of the performance.

ii. Strategies of alienation

It is known that alienation that consists in creating a critical distance between the narration and the spectator, has among its ways of operating the unveiling of the mechanism of the fabrication process of the performance¹⁰³. To achieve this, Linyekula integrates the creative process as a part of the body of the very performance. This consists in the fact of bringing on the stage elements from the fabrication process. For example, in *Moya*, almost one third of the

¹⁰³ Bertolt Brecht, *Petit organon pour le théâtre* (Paris: L'Arche, 2013),36-49.

performance is about the process that led to the production: Michael reading a letter that Linyekula wrote to him during the preproduction period, Linyekula's voice reading his own part and the letters, portions of their conversation projected on a screen, the displaying of the sound of a radio programme where the two artists are discussing about the project etc. As for *La création*, Fernand Léger's letter that Kazadi reads on the stage was part of the pre-production process before it becomes part of the performance as well.

Another alienating strategy used by Linyekula, consists in developing a reflexive mode, a metatheatrical discourse. In *Moya*, his voice coupled with a transcription on screen develops in the first person a reflection about the practice of contemporary performance.

What could be named as *the tale strategy* is also another device used by Linyekula to create an alienating effect. It consists in adapting a performance to the form of a traditional tale. This method is attested by Balme as being common among postcolonial creators like Wole Soyinka.¹⁰⁴ Bernard Magnier acknowledges the same about the *kotéba*.¹⁰⁵ Linyekula often introduces himself as a story teller,¹⁰⁶ and his dramaturgy borrows from the tale. Indeed, there is one storyteller, in *Moya*, Linyekula, but he is not on stage. His presence/absence although is suggested from the very first words of the play, as Michael Moya starts: "Faustin is not here tonight. So, this piece would not begin with this (...) greeting, which goes like this: 'Good evening to you all, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Kabako, I am Kabako, again Kabako, once Kabako, forever Kabako, Kabako is my name', and bla, bla-bla-bla..." I could as well mention as a signifier of the presence of the storyteller the Linyekula-looking statue that faces the stage throughout all the performance. Additionally, there is Linyekula's voice that at a certain moment utters the consecrated formula "Once upon a time...". The same utterance is made in *Sur les traces de Dinozord* by Linyekula; and in *La création* by Djodjo Kazadi, not before he has said: "I am Djodjo Kazadi, but you may call me Faustin Linyekula as well". Actually, as soon as what is named here as the tale strategy is set, fictionalisation and alienation are mixed at a very complex level. In fact, the performers are still themselves as storytellers, but at the same time they become characters in the story they are enacting. The staging of reality transforms that reality into a semiotic sign for the reality it refers to, and to even other similar realities, as suggested by Umberto Eco.¹⁰⁷ Now, complexity reaches its paroxysm when

¹⁰⁴ Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage*, 80ff.

¹⁰⁵ Bernard Magnier, "Bernard Dadié, cent ans de négritude".

¹⁰⁶ Faustin Linyekula, "An Artist/Activist", 135.

¹⁰⁷ Umberto Eco, "Semiotics of Theatrical Performance",

enactment of reality speaks of itself as a fiction by this utterance: “Once upon a time!” This is how the tale strategy works.

f. The issue of representation: Postcolonial performance also distinguishes itself in how it deals with the questions about *whom* to be represented and *how* to represent them. Representation of the *minorités visibles* on stage and constructing narratives from the perspective of the (formerly) *colonised* is frequently advocated by postcolonial artists, like Eva Doumbia.¹⁰⁸ This is what both Linyekula’s *La création* and *Moya* are about. Even in a minority position, Cendrars’ and Milhaud’s ballet turned to become a speech by the colonised people and from their perspective. In *Moya*, it is even the ultra-minority of the *coloured people* that has their say. This mode of representation that breaks through the colonial discourse, naturally excludes practices like black-facing, and the use of phenotypically European performers to interpret non-white characters.

Additionally, an aspect worthy to be mentioned as we deal with the issue of representation, is the so-called *return of the gaze*. Postcolonial critical narratives address the cultural and literary productions of colonialism by returning to the system its own gaze in a deconstructive approach. Scholar Paula Amad of the University of Iowa has discussed the return-of-the-gaze phenomenon in cinema. She understands it as a scheme that aims “at recovering resistance or at least a trace of agency of the nameless masses” and thinks that “the returned gaze can be associated with subversion, defiance, or rebuke”.¹⁰⁹ The return of the colonial gaze is exactly what *La création* is all about. The exotifying gaze through which the Western has regarded Africa is displayed on a Western stage by an African and is being questioned through the utilisation of certain deconstructing strategies.

g. Dialogue between biographies and the History. Critical approach to history has always been a concern for postcolonial theatre and political theatre in general.¹¹⁰ With the influence of performance art and probably of postmodernism, (auto)biographical component has been added into the frame. This fact is reflected in Linyekula’s dramaturgy that could be described as a triptych, a productive encounter of the History, biographies of ordinary people and the body. In his analysis of *La création du monde (1923-2012)*, social anthropologist Klaus-Peter Köpping emphasises the complex interplay

¹⁰⁸ Emanuelle Bouchez, “Théâtre et diversité”.

¹⁰⁹ Paula Amad, “Visual Riposte: Looking Back at the Return of the Gaze as Postcolonial Theory’s Gift to Film Studies”, *Cinema Journal*, 52, 3, (2013), 53.

¹¹⁰ For instance Brecht’s *Mother Courage* of Aimé Césaire’s *Et les chiens se taisaient*.

between individual biography and collective history with the body as “remembrancer” in Linyekula’s work .¹¹¹ And the choreographer in his own words:

“My dance is an attempt to discover another archive. I’m obsessed with History, with a big “H.” (...) If you are interested in history in a conventional sense – what archives do you turn to? To European archives. (...) And again, European archives are biased in essence. It’s how they view us. So, what am I left with? Maybe I could ask a few questions to my body, because I’m relatively young, I’m forty-one now, but I’m also ancient, it’s in my genes. There are things that connect me to generations from a thousand years ago. So, if dancing can become that space where I ask a few questions to the body. . .”¹¹²

A distinctive aspect in the way postcolonial theatre deals with history is to be found in how the material to be treated is taken from chosen. If the early African postcolonial performances glorified precolonial heroes like the Zulu Chaka, then the heroes of the decolonisation fight. Today the stories of ordinary people, contemporary leaders and autobiographies seem to take an important place. *Moya* is an example of a work build from the ruins of apartheid, featuring an ordinary person. Another example is Linyekula’s *Drums and Digging* whose starting point is the story of an actress who happened to be a relative to the dictator Mobutu. Sometimes the destiny of common people shed merciless light History to unveil the share of human joys, sufferings and hopes behind the insensitive numbers and dates.

¹¹¹ Köpping ,72-73.

¹¹² Faustin Linyekula, “An Artist/Activist”,138.

CONCLUSION

It appeared from the discussions and analysis in the preceding pages that the western theatre, analysed through the Parisian theatre milieu, includes some characteristics of conservatism and considers itself from a normative point of view as the result of a long tradition of purism, elitism and colonisation. It also appeared that in Paris there is an alternative move in theatre that is constituted by creators whose works are informed by the experience of colonial or imperialist domination, and their will to challenge it. They generally originate from formerly French-colonised countries. Identified as a heterodox component of the Parisian theatre field, they were named here as *postcolonial artist* or *the postcolonial camp*; and their work has been designated in this thesis as postcolonial or syncretic theatre and performance. Through the scrutiny of two Linyekula's performances, key features of the postcolonial theatre and performance have been discussed, and syncretism has shown itself to be the dominant characteristic of this theatrical practice. But other practices are not less significative, like the focus on political issue, the use of what I named the tale strategy, the integration of the creative process in the performance or the return-of-the-gaze phenomenon. Moreover, syncreticity along the other practices has been considered as constitutive of heterodoxy, i.e. deviation from the norm. That is where the opposition between the conservative and the postcolonial camp is situated. Along with demonstrating that Faustin Linyekula's aesthetics matches the features of postcolonial theatre and performance; the Congolese choreographer was introduced as representative for the postcolonial heretic rebellion.

If the possible qualitative impact of dramaturgical practices informed by postcolonialism were to be stated in very few words, it would be said that it would broaden the capacity of artistic expression and update western practice to the changing world. Western dramaturgy would be relieved from the burden of the idea of centrality and purity through the widening of its cultural horizon, with as an immediate consequence more freedom in the use and association of different aesthetic tools that offer cultural texts fetched from syncretic experiences. In fact the use of space, the come-and-go movement between fiction and reality, the blurring of the border between the performer and the character, acting and performing and between genres seems to be advantages not to be neglected. Second, postcolonial perspective applied to dramaturgy may allow theatre to be even more efficient in its social function as a place of meeting, and social debate. This would be made possible because the expressive mode of syncretic theatre tends

to fit all the components of the changing Western societies. For instance, the interest postcolonial theatre has manifested to the stories of ordinary people would possibly rouse the interest of a new audience, essentially the younger generations and the *visible diversities* who do not necessarily recognise themselves in a national narrative that in France for instance still struggles with the questions about slavery, colonisation or Islam. If pushed beyond, this practice might lead to the fact that more and more ordinary people get on the stage -in a way or another- to have their say. The consequence would be of a society that really gets into dialogue with itself according to how it really *is*, and not as it fantasises. To that regard postcolonialism inscribes Western theatre to the realities of the present time.

One may reasonably argue that technically, many of the features of postcolonial or indigenous theatres have already been experimented in the western theatre. Rituals, alienation, stylisation of the acting, have been displayed on western stages through postmodernism, Brecht's epic theatre, Grotowski's the poor theatre, Artaud's theatre of cruelty and even recently Peter Brook with his experience of the *Mahabharata*. Indeed, it is not as if those techniques have never been introduced on Western stages. But the fact is that, they are central and meaningful in the indigenous and postcolonial performances, while in the Western dramaturgy they often occupy a marginal space. The fact is also that these dramaturgical means of expression are often taken out of their context, they are "recoded and semanticized in an entirely Western aesthetic and ideological frame"¹¹³, the double consequence being on one hand a loss of meaning and on other hand the fact that non-western audience and practitioners find themselves excluded. So, taking into consideration the features of postcolonial performance would mean a shift of paradigm from the assimilationism in France to -why not- what Bhabha Homi names cultural difference.¹¹⁴

In fact, Postcolonial theatre and performance is an art that emerges from the painful and fertile encounter and negotiation of indigenous and colonial realms. Postcolonial performance is the kind of performance that fits the best our epoch, a period of tense cultural encounters and confrontations, a time of great demographical changes and a time of increased speed into communication. In such a world it becomes erroneous to cling on a certain idea of purity or homogeneity of a cultural or artistic expression. With the increased awareness of the equality of human beings and cultures the idea of the superiority or centrality of one culture over the

¹¹³ Balme, *Decolonizing the Stage*, 5.

¹¹⁴ Bhabha, K. Homi, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences"

others has also revealed itself to be erroneous. Postcolonial theatre, by acknowledging what Bhabha Homi names cultural differences is the best factor for the emergence of a new theatrical form, because of its dominant characteristic that is syncreticity or hybridity. Cultural difference is, the way culture is actually *enunciated* to construct systems of cultural identification.¹¹⁵ It is no longer sustainable to continue with a theatre practice and theatre studies of another age, if theatre is to survive. It seems to me useful here to stress that this syncreticity or hybridity in theatre has nothing to do with multiculturalism, cultural diversity nor worse cultural appropriation. While the notion of cultural difference considers that every culture is the result of a process of hybridization, the previously named approaches essentialize cultures to some extent, and they operate from the perspective of on culture – the Western-that is taken as central, to integrate elements of other cultures in its corpus. This is what has happened with artistic practices like epic theatre, cubism or transnational theatre. One illustration has been given in this work through Blaise Cendrars' *La création du monde* (1923), where African cultural features were used as a decoration, totally out from its cultural context. On the opposite, postcolonial perspective in aesthetics goes from the "third space", that means the liminal space where a culture meets another in a process of producing a new meaning.¹¹⁶ Therefore, the main difference between the other dramaturgical processes that integrate alterity is in *how* alterity is integrated into dramaturgy: postcolonial perspective brings a critical, unstable and equalitarian experience of the theatrical event. Quoting and commenting on Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, Bhabha Homi advocates the introduction of "ambivalence in the act of interpretation" that can be found in the cultural production of a people liberated from the colonisation, because the national art will then be a "fluctuating movement" and a "zone of occult instability where the people dwell".¹¹⁷

After discussing the possible impacts of the introduction of postcolonial perspective into western dramaturgy maybe is it time to review some of the conditions that would make possible the emergence of postcolonial practices in a country like France. First, let it be said that phenomena like immigration, the increased population mobility, naturalizations are playing as an

¹¹⁵ Bhabha, K. Homi, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences", *Atlas of Transformation*, accessed 05 14 2018 <http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/c/cultural-diversity/cultural-diversity-and-cultural-differences-homi-k-bhabha.html>

¹¹⁶ Jonathan Rutherford, "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990) 207-221.

¹¹⁷ Bhabha Homi, "Cultural Diversity and Cultural Differences". <http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/c/cultural-diversity/cultural-diversity-and-cultural-differences-homi-k-bhabha.html>

accelerating factor for the introduction and advancement of heterodoxy in the field of Western theatre by introducing heterodoxy in this field. Moreover, the changing landscape of demography might provide the rebellion with extra popular support in terms of potential market, since postcolonial performances portray narrative from the perspective of people originally from former colonial empires.

But beyond those unavoidable developments of the society, it should be operated a shift of paradigms in both theatre studies and French society. Also it is important that postcolonial artists get the possibility to attend the best training, because one of the conditions for the heterodox rebellion to change of influence the doxa is that they first of all be fully recognised as members of the field with all the capacities and skills required for the practice of the discipline.

Theatre studies would also greatly benefit from applying postcolonial perspective. American scholar Naomi L. Gunnels studied the Ikhernofret Stella, a play from the ancient Egypt. The Ikhernofret text was written almost two centuries before the beginning of Greek theatre, and some scholars view it as an “elaborate dramatic spectacle ever staged”¹¹⁸ yet generally theatre historians and scholars like Balme categorise it as pre-theatrical practice.¹¹⁹ Through a cross-cultural comparison with medieval plays of the so called the Cycle Plays, Gunnels come to result that this text actually is a piece of theatre. To get there, it necessitated two major operations: a new translation of the text, and a re-definition of the term “ theatre” relying on Plato, Aristotle and Victor Turner and Richard Schechner.¹²⁰ She chose dominant characteristic of theatre stressed by the named rhetoricians: imitation for Aristotle and Plato, sacred and mythical aspects according to Turner and the ritual element from Schechner , to find that the same characteristics are found in those plays as well as in the Ikhrenofret Stell. Gunnel sustains: “if one can consider the individual Cycle Plays theatre, they must also consider the Ikhrenofret stela theatre as well. “¹²¹ Her final conclusion is more nuanced, where she considers that according to the definitions used, some parts of the Stella are theatrical, and some are not. This shows that the how much the shift to alternative ways of reading -of which postcolonialism belongs- can enrich Western theatre and theatre studies by enlarging their object of study and positively impact theatre practice. But beyond that, I consider that the effort to be made should

¹¹⁸ Brockett, 8th edition, 9.

¹¹⁹ Balme, *The Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Studies*, 127.

¹²⁰ Naomi Gunnells, p.4-6

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

not consist into trying to demonstrate that indigenous or precolonial performances fit the categories of western dramaturgy, but simply come along with a new definition of theatre that fits today's stage practices and social realities. Once this shift is made, postcolonial perspective in theatre would irrigate western dramaturgy with its difference. Anyway, a postcolonial perspective in theatre studies would make possible the inclusion of texts like those of ancient Egypt, the dramaturgies of the *kotéba* and rituals in theatre, not simply as aesthetic categories but as cultural texts. The result will be theatre studies that are able to deal with the diversity of theatrical forms.

One last question will stay unanswered, though: is there such a thing as postcolonial aesthetics? Anyone would agree today with the fact that the terms *postcolonial aesthetics*, is problematic because, if postcolonialism is known as a critical intellectual field of study on one hand and on the other as an activism, the demonstration of a conscious aesthetic strategy linked to it and being clearly distinct from other genres is still to be made. In a nutshell: artists have not identified their creative process style as postcolonial and it seems postcolonial theatre just utilises the aesthetic schemes that have already been used by other genres. In fact, be it the alienating effects, critical perspective, the return of the gaze etc are strategies shared with other theatrical genres. Features of postcolonial theatre and performance have been introduced, but maybe are they not enough to assert the existence of postcolonialism as an aesthetic category in the same way as epic theatre or symbolism.

This being posed, it is worth to push the discussion a bit further, by applying a critical thinking to the matter. A close scrutiny of the most significant revolutions in theatre since the beginning of the twentieth century would reveal that those patented aesthetics such as the epic theatre, Brecht's epic theatre, Grotowski's the poor theatre, Artaud's theatre of cruelty, the use of cubism and fauvism in scenography, have greatly borrowed aesthetic codes from colonised or formerly colonised countries without a clear acknowledgement of the source, and then they have recoded them within a Western semantics. What precedes shows that before we ask the question of the existence of such an aesthetics like postcolonial, we should first submit the history of theatre and theories to a post-colonial re-reading. This re-reading might reveal that epic, fauvism, cubism etc are to a certain extent the result of a cultural appropriation, thus a colonial process. Only after that, it may be possible to say for instance that *verfremdung* is not a revolution brought by Brecht and that total theatre pre-existed the invention of opera and similar endeavour in the western. Anyway, the affirmation of the existence of a post-colonial aesthetics is impossible within the narrow frame of the *theatron*, the dramatic theatre inherited

from the ancient Greek, because of its subordination to the Western patterns. This is exactly why an increased heterodoxy in the field of theatre studies is needed. Maybe the condition for the recognition of a postcolonial aesthetics is waiting for practitioners of postcolonial theatre and performance to be enough well positioned in the pyramidal structure of Parisian -and western- theatre field, which is more that ever a “field of forces”.¹²²

¹²² Bourdieu, *On Television*,40.

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Photos

Figure 1 : Agathe Poupenay

Figure 2: Opéra Lorraine