

Liquidité et fluidité dans l'oeuvre de Marguerite Duras
– une approche bachelardienne
Liquidity and Fluidity in Marguerite Duras's work
- a bachelardian approach

Abstract

As an aim of this thesis we have proposed to treat the theme of **the liquidity and the fluidity in Marguerite Duras's work**, following the **phenomenolog** Gaston Bachelard's method. We **chose** this theme because it hadn't been studied before and thinking that I should contribute in this way to the durasian criticism. Perhaps I should mention that I have started to study Duras's and Bachelard's literary productions since 2003/2004 when I wrote a thesis about two of the durasian novels and about four of Bachelard's poetic studies and then, when I presented another study about the durasian concepts referring to the four primordial elements at the end of *Imaginaire et rationalité* master in Dijon. If the theme of the former theses was too large, this time it refers primarily to the liquid element with some mentions, there where it is necessarily, at the notions referring to the other primordial elements. Therefore, from the very introduction we considered the following hypotheses: to find and so to analyse all the concepts concerning the liquidity and fluidity in durasian work.

Thus, we began our study taking into account the thematically critique requirements (represented by Jean Pierre Richard, Michel Collot, Georges Poulet and Jean Starobinski), the bachelardien complexes and also the psychological or philosophical terms used by Jung, Eliade, Gilbert Durand and Marie Bonaparte). **Structured** in eleven chapters, the present thesis is an interpretation of the terms that stand either for the liquidity or for the fluidity. It is essential to mention that, due to the recurrence of the aquatic element in Marguerite Duras's novels which is considered as a liquid, along this study we have found out other notions, that we took as fluids. We have combined two by two, the primordial elements, so that the result could designate the concepts denoting certain fluidity. In this way, we thought about the union of the rainwater with the air, which created the mist, the vapours and the clouds. With the occasion of their study we put the accent on the sky fluidity, especially on the blue one, on the tempest and on the rain. Another association, which we have studied in this work, involves the water and the ground. Mixed, the two elements that the poetical imaginary considers as being feminine, in our thesis created the **moor** thought-out both as the source of nourishment for the poor people, the place of amusement for the

children and as the Indochinese children's grave, children who died of starvation and diseases. We have combined the liquid element with the fire, after what the alcohol, incandescent water, resulted. Moreover, on one hand, the feelings, which suggest the mood of sadness and the melancholy, represented the *warm fluids*, and on the other one, the feelings referring to pleasure and love express the idea of the *fluid warmth*.

We accorded the features of **fluid** and **liquid** both to the concrete notions and to the abstract ones. The spiritual inspiration and the courage that the alcohol provokes were considered as suggesting Prometheus's fire. Similarly, the spaces surrounded by the rivers and the seas, as the isles, the deltas, the sand, the movement of walking and whole the estuaries received the **qualification** of fluid. Identically, we considered the music – the vocal and instrumental one – in all its shapes as a designation of the fluidity. The vomit as well as the intestinal stickiness or the belly are characterized by a certain critical fluidity. In our thesis each element that supposes to express a firm ambivalence, a duality, a changing mood, a spiritual or physical abnormality and even the Eurasian characters' feminism received the epithet of fluid. Being more extensive in its meaning, the term of fluidity contains also that of liquidity. Therefore, the rivers - Magra, Gange, Arno, Mékong, Risle, Loire, Seine, Srung Pursat and Ota -, the Tonlé-sap Lake, the ponds and the sea are both liquid and fluid because all the things and the notions that suggest the idea of flowing become a fluid.

Corresponding to the bachelardien poetics, each element is twofold. In fact, we have taken **the ambivalence**, one of the essential lows of bachelardien works, as a support to our study. In each chapter we have noticed both the valorisation and the negative sense of a concept, a theme or of one feature of the primordial elements.

We have considered radical to search the concepts, the liquidity and the fluidity, resorting at the **complexes** and the myths elaborated by Bachelard in his works about the poetics of the imaginary or undertaken from Gilbert Durand, Jung and Eliade's works. When we have studied the second chapter we have been applying the «Xerxes's complex» and when we have written the third chapter we have been analysing the «Jouvence's well complex» and the «Swinburne's complex». Writing the fourth one, we discussed «Caron's complex». As concerns the fifth chapter we have applied the «complex of the Swan» and the «Narcissi's myth». In the sixth chapter we have studied the Androgine's mythe, subsequently, the two terms of the so called «coincidentia oppositorum»: «animus» and «anima». The seventh chapter included the three complexes regarding the fire: the «Hoffmann's complex», the «Promethe's complex» and the «Novalis's complex». The last two chapters concerned the poetic imagery of the spaces

surrounded by water, of the house as a space of intimacy and the correspondence between the human voice, music and the water.

In order to write this thesis we have consulted not only the basic bachelardian and durasian works, but also the registrations of the emissions about Duras's novels, critical studies and few interviews. We also applied the bachelardian method in the durasian works that contain sociocultural information about Marguerite Duras's live because some of them represent a mixture of the real and imaginary durasian live.

The corpus of the durasian works contain the three traditional novels: *L'amant*, *L'amant de la Chine du Nord* and *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, but moreover the modern durasian novels, the pieces of theatre and the film scenarios: *Le Marin de Gibraltar*, *Les Petits Chevaux de Tarquinia*, *Moderato cantabile*, *Dix heures et demie du soir en été*, *Le Ravissement de Lol. V. Stein*, *Le Vice – consul*, *L'Amour*, *India Song*, *L'Homme assis dans le couloir*, *Les yeux bleus les cheveux noirs*, *Une aussi longue absence*, *Nathalie Granger*, *La femme du Gange*, *La vie matérielle*, *La vie tranquille*, *Les imprudents*, *Le boa*, *Emily L.* and *Écrire* etc..

If in the introductory chapter we have explained to the reader the method, the structure and the main terms of our study, in the second chapter, **L'Eau pluviale et diluvienne**, we have made references at the rain theme, whose water was considered as a positive liquid, at the lack of the water rain, at the sunny warmth that we took as a damaging fluid, at the storm and the flood, analysed as some harmful liquids. In the fifth part **L'Orage et le déluge**, we have had as a point of departure the Bachelard's «Xerxès's complex» in *L'Eau et les rêves* and some durasian works: *Le marin de Gibraltar*, *Les petits chevaux de Tarquinia*, *L'Amant*, *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord*, *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, *India Song*, *Le Vice-consul*, și *Dix heures et demie du soir en été*. When we wrote the third chapter, **L'Eau terrestre – douce, calme, pure**, we relied, as there can be noticed in the title, on the investigation of the images of the ground water, of the loneliness and of the attraction hinted by the rivers like: Arno, Magra, Mékong, Risle, Risole, Ota, Loire, Seine, și Gange. In the second part, **Des liquides frais**, we examined all the instants of the shower that we had noticed in *L'amant*, *L'amant de la Chine du Nord*, *Les Petits chevaux de Tarquinia* and *Un barrage contre le Pacifique* and Bachelard's «complex of Jouvence's well». Once we wrote the part whom title is **La Nage**, we explained the «Swinburne's complex» and Suzanne's and Sara's «aquatropisme» mood (the water fear). **La mer salée et violente** is the title of the fourth chapter. Alike the water on the ground, the seawater was characterised by specific features. The destination of the salt was to soil the pure water and to destroy the vegetation and the rice cultures. It is about the water whom crawfish gnawed the dams built by the author's mother together the indochinesees peasants. All along this chapter we cleared up the voyage theme due to Bachelard's «Caron's complex».

Either real in Indochina, in France, in Italy on the seaside or on a river board, or unreal, the travel supposed the existence of terms that Gilbert Durand called «the intimate immensity»: the car, the boat, the ferry and the liner. In the fifth chapter we studied the feminism common either to the aquatic element or to the Marguerite Duras`s characters. The «complex of the Swan» is their bond. Hence, the first part, *La Féminité de l`élément aquatique*, is about the bachelardian suggestion according to which the river could represent the lover and the sea could evoke the mother. The second part, **Du Narcissisme cosmique au narcissisme individuel** had at its foundation the «Narcissi`s myth» and the notions of «pancalism» and cosmic narcissism. In what regards the sixth chapter, **Féminité et fluidité des personnages durassiens** our interest was directed toward the characters ambivalence, on the conversion of the make-up throughout the novels, on the feminism either of the women or of the men, on the spiritual and physical anomaly that we take as being fluid. «Animus» and «anima», the two concepts undertaken from Jung`s psychology and minutely explained in Bachelard`s *La poétique de la rêverie*, representing the *dual narcissism*, made references to the «Androgyny`s myth». Performing with them, we accomplished a reversal of the durasian character`s feminism with their masculinity and, furthermore, a reversal of the primordial elements; moreover we studied a spiritual and physical fluidity like homosexuality, incest and feminine characters` ethical degradation. *La Féminité des personnages* included the concepts relating to the idea of the fluidity of the body and of Anne-Marie Stretter`s feminism in the novel *Le vice-consul* and Anne Desbaresdes`s one in *Moderato cantabile*. In the contents of this chapter we have explained the symbolism of the blond or black hair, of the blue eyes, of the caresses that we regarded as a kind of *warm humidity*. The seventh and the eight chapters made references to the mixture of the liquid element with other two primordial elements: the fire, respectively the ground. The alcohol, another theme very often detected to Duras, managed the passage from the fire, an incandescent element, toward the water, a fluid element. Although completely opposed, the two elements do not exclude one the other. On the contrary, they competed so well so that the alcohol could become «the swelling water». The seventh chapter, **Le Mariage de l`eau avec le feu: l`alcool** comprised four parts, all, corresponding to four functions of the alcohol. In the first part, *L`Alcool*, we made allusions to the «Hoffmann`s complex» from Gaston Bachelard`s work *La Psychanalyse du feu*. In the part *L`Initiation dans la vie*, we focused our attention on the «Prometheus`s complex» and on the «idealised fire», because Suzanne, «the child» and Joseph proposed their personal hints that they tried to lead to the end. *Source d`inspiration*, on the other side, revealed us the fact that the «spiritual fire» had for Marguerite Duras, as well as she confessed by herself in *L`amant*, the God`s position and

responsibility. The part *Défoulement en amour* revealed the «sexualised fire» which Bachelard wrote about in his book *Psychanalyse du feu* ; we have analysed the wish noticed in the look and in the body language, in fact all what we have denoted as the *humid warmth* and the *psychical fluidity* like sadism and masochism. We have studied all the durasian characters` fervent relationship who, seldom, as in *Moderato cantabile* and *Dix heures du soir en été*, committed even crime in the name of love. *Le Courage de l'alcool* had in centre of our attention the idea that, due to the alcohol the characters-writer in Duras`s works started to write some novels or poems. In consequence, it represented the provoking fire. The eighth chapter, **Le Mariage de l'eau avec la terre: la boue** principally made references to the valorisation of the mud. For the beggar girl`s mother in *Le vice-consul* the mud is eatable. It is in the mire that the beggars and the lepers found fish, birds, rice and fruits. Negative, the mud represented the fluid of the delta and of the marshes. It suggested the sticky matter that stumbled the corporal to work the ground and the red fluid like the clay. In the ninth chapter, **L'Eau létale** we conducted our interest toward the unfavourable water because the liquid element caused the death of the animals and the indochinese children`s one. Once we have studied *La Noyade* we interpreted the mean effects of the water, either it was about the river or about the sea. We have focussed our attention on the young and too sensible characters` drowning, as the eighteen years old young girl in *Savannah Bay* and the young man in *La vie tranquille*. We have also made the distinction between the individual (human) and cosmic (of the plants and animals) drowning. *Le Suicide*, where we applied the «Ophelia`s complex» enounced by Bachelard, contained the studies about the instants of the wished and accepted death in the durasian novels: Anne-Marie`s suicide, the one of Aurélia`s mother, the young man`s one in *L`amant* and Rodrigo Paestra`s suicide, too. In *L'Eau folle* we referred to this water, which entice the lepers, the beggars and the madmen; it became, so, the water that engendered the madness of those who looked at it and who walked along its shores. The last chapters were not so stretched. In the tenth chapter **L'Eau et la rencontre** we have studied the water as the space of the travellers` and the unknown persons` meetings. Our attention focussed there on the fluid space like the beach, the sand, the walking, on the intimate space like the room, the bungalow, and the house and on the intimate immensity like the square, the open place, the tarmac and the wood. In the eleventh chapter, **L'Eau et la musique – féminité et fluidité** we elaborated the hypotheses according to which the music and the dance as well as the water were characterised by a sort of feminism and fluidity. The Diabelli`s sonata, the Schubert`s waltz, the *Desperate Waltz* and the songs *Words of love* and *Ramona*, listened to the pick-up, resembled like the human voice.

Before to conclude, we assert that in the present study we have applied the laws of the poetics of the bachelardien imagery (as the ambivalence, the correspondence, the death in each of the primordial elements and of the composition of elements) and the complexes formulated by Bachelard and Jung, Eliade and Durand about the concepts of the fluidity and the liquidity what we discovered once we had read the Marguerite Duras`s works.

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