

Title : La thématique de l'eau dans l'œuvre de Marguerite Duras

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The aim of this thematic study is to examine how the water motif is used in Marguerite Duras's literary work. The study shows that water has multiple functions in these texts: it is linked to major themes and creates an enigmatic atmosphere by its association with the unknown, the inexplicable and the unconscious.

The strong presence of water in Duras's texts is striking. References to the water element can be found in several titles throughout her career, from early works such as *Un barrage contre le Pacifique* (1950) to *La mer écrite* (1996), published just after her death. Almost all of her fiction take place near water – and the rain or the sound of waves serve as leitmotifs in specific novels. The water motif can play a metonymic as well as a metaphoric role in the texts and it sometimes takes on human or animalistic characteristics (Chapter 4). Several emblematic Durassian characters (e.g. the beggar-woman, Anne-Marie Stretter and Lol V. Stein) have a close relationship to water (Chapter 5). The water motif is linked to many major Durassian themes, and illustrates themes with positive connotations, for example, creation, fecundity, maternity, liberty and desire, as well as themes with negative connotations such as destruction and death (Chapter 6).

A close reading of three novels, *La vie tranquille* (1944), *L'après-midi de Monsieur Andesmas* (1962) and *La maladie de la mort* (1982), shows that the realism of the first novel is replaced by intriguing evocations of the sea and the pond in the second text, motifs which resist straightforward interpretation. The enigmatic feeling persists in the last novel, in which the sea illustrates the overall sombre mood of the story (Chapter 7).

Finally, the role of the water element in psychoanalytic theory is discussed (Chapter 8), and a parallel is drawn between the Jungian concept of the mother archetype and the water motif in Duras's texts. The suggestion is made in this last chapter that water is used to illustrate an oriental influence (Taoist or Buddhist) of some of the female characters in Duras's work.

Keywords : Marguerite Duras, thematic study, water motif, metonymy, metaphor, maternity, liberty, desire, incest, destruction, death, dichotomy, psychoanalytic theory, oriental influence