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**Representation of Space in Marguerite Duras's Novels**

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**Abstract**

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## Introduction

A prominent place in the history of the twentieth-century literature was occupied by French women writers: Colette, Simone de Beauvoir, Marguerite Yourcenar, Nathalie Sarraute, Marguerite Duras. These are the women novelists whose work has enriched not only French literature but also endowed the world literature with new and exciting visions of eternal themes. In this regard, the role of the works of the author – Marguerite Duras – selected as the subject of our research is truly immeasurable.

Marguerite Duras belongs to an era when twentieth-century novels take on a whole new form and writers are associated with a variety of literary tendencies and trends. Despite numerous attempts by literary critics, Marguerite Duras managed to maintain a distinct individuality and stay beyond all frames and literary schools.

Marguerite Duras's sphere of activities is multifaceted: novel, film, theatre, journalism, politics. As one of the writer's researchers, Marcel Marine says, reading Duras's texts and following them means being under the omnipotent influence that simultaneously shows you the way and turns you off the path. In this respect, Duras's writing has a mystical character, which many writers, philosophers, critics or scholars have struggled to solve.

Duras's works are still of great interest today, distinguished by the plethora of themes, text-related novelties, and an abundance of interpretations. The research topic we have chosen is about the Durasean space, a space that has become one of the principal means of experiencing reality in modern literature. The décor, landscapes, toponyms, relocation, movement and their connection with characters can be considered as one of the most interesting aspects to study in Duras's novels. Duras's biography and works have been studied by a number of scholars, including the most famous among them: Alain Vircondelet, Frederick Labelle, Laure Adler, Madeleine Borgomano, Florence de Chalonge... They offered us their different versions of the writer's life and works. Duras's work is still of great interest today: critics have rallied around conferences, such as the texts of the Duras conference "Duras and Intertexts" ("Duras et l'intertexte") in Lyon in 2002 was published in 2005 as a collection entitled "Marguerite Duras's Lectures" ("Les lectures de Marguerite Duras"), thus combining many interesting analyses for the study of the writer's works and activities. An

important conference was dedicated to Marguerite Duras in 2007 in Gothenburg, Sweden, with subsequent publication of the collection entitled “Marguerite Duras and the Modern Thought” (“Marguerite Duras et la pensée contemporaine”).

“Life defines creativity, creativity defines life” – it is impossible to disagree with Duras’s assessment, especially when it comes to the twentieth century, the century full of contradictions and controversies. The ear of persuasion has finally come to an end in an epoch of economic and political crises, two world wars, psychoanalysis and all the repeatedly asked questions. The rapid evolution of all spheres has intensified man’s sense of the mystery of the universe, so that in the twentieth century, from Proust to Dostoyevsky or from Flaubert to Joyce, the novelists, first and foremost, try to propose enigmas, create a world of ambiguity and doubt or use such literary means that imply close cooperation with the reader. A society that enters into the depths of a massive civilization is gradually losing the taste of individual peculiarities. Consequently, a large place in a new novel is devoted to objects whereas adventures and characters become abolished. Thanks to its boundless flexibility, compared to other literary forms, the genre of the novel proved to be much more capable of depicting the crisis characteristic to a modern man. The modern novel opened the door to the most varied voices, equally voiced standard literary language and argot, assimilated the forms of interior monologue, intimate diary or dialogue. The variability of the form of the novel mainly proceeded in two directions: on the one hand it was the architecture of the novel, on the other hand, it was a completely new vision of details.

Marguerite Duras is considered to be one of the most recognized and studied writers in France, while in Georgia she is still known only to narrow literary circles. Accordingly, the present paper will attempt to fill this gap.

**The aim of our research** is to study the phenomenon of space/setting with Marguerite Duras as a defining vector and the main driving force of narrative intrigue that can change the world or even be a kind of transporter between different worlds. In this regard, the spatial representation is relatively less studied in Georgia, which allows us to turn the proposed research into a scientific novelty for readers or researchers interested in French literature. We chose two of Duras’s most famous and complex novels as research material: “The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein” and “The Vice-Consul”.

“Why these places and not others instead?” – Duras herself asks this question. Our research will try to answer this very question. **The objective of the thesis** is to study the new critical and philosophical approaches that have created a modern vision in this direction and finally to refute the idea that space in literature is a simple décor or else only a method of description.

**The theoretical value of the work:** the concept of “space” encompasses many disciplinary fields in the humanities and social sciences or in pure literature or linguistics, moreover, it can be sought from history to geography. Literary theory has long favored the study of the dimension of time in narrative. It took decades before a kind of reversal of the meaning of the space dimension took place, namely, the studies of the two well-known scholars, Mikhail Bakhtin and Yuri Lotman, have shown that spatial structures of the fictional (created) world are of fundamental importance in the creation of thought. Moreover, for them the fictitious arrangement of space is a reflection of the worldview. The ideas of Bakhtin and Lotman have contributed to new studies by literary critics in this area, highlighting their immeasurable role in the study of space themes.

After all, the representation of space is impossible without the phenomenon of time. The discussion of time and space, their essence, structure and interrelationships has been studied by a number of theorists and researchers in the scholarly circles worldwide. The influential philosophical schools and currents of the twentieth century have contributed to this area, among which existentialism and phenomenology deserve special mention. Through the processing, analysis and synthesis of the literary sources and scholarly literature by various authors, the artistic space of Marguerite Duras’s novels becomes more comprehensible, while the theoretical and practical value of the work becomes more tangible.

**The practical value of the work:** the strangest thing about Marguerite Duras is the fact that despite her popularity, the works of the famous writer are still enigmatic and untouchable. The questions posed by her creative works have been actively heard since her own times are still topical. In the process of studying Durasian space we got acquainted with a fairly extensive material of French and Georgian critical literature, translated into Georgian the texts of the novels under study, which will help specialists of French literature to understand both, Duras’s works and the concept of space in twentieth-century literature, its

role and significance in perception of narrative. The thesis will be of practical value for both literary scholars as well as student and readers interested in French literature.

**General methodology:** in order to achieve the main purpose of the thesis, the comparative-contrast, typological, analysis, interpretation and synthesis methods have been applied. The study is based on the views of Florence de Chalonge, a well-known critic of Duras's works, from the critical essay "Space and Artistic Narrative according to the Indian Cycle of Marguerite Duras" ("Espace et récit de fiction Le cycle indien de Marguerite Duras"), phenomenological approaches of the famous French psychologist and Philosopher Gaston Bachelard from his work "Poetics of Space" ("La poétique de l'espace"), as well as the works and academic articles of such famous theorists and scholars as R. Barthes, M. Blanchot, M. Bujtor, J. Genet, A. Greimas, I. Lottman, A. Mitterrand, J. Lacan, U. Eco, M. Nado, M. Borgomano, J. Ricardo, I. Ratiani, M. Bakradze, G. Lomidze, etc.

**The thematic structure** of the thesis has been determined by the above enumerated aims and objectives. It consists of the introduction, three chapters, fourteen (14) subchapters and conclusion. The work is provided with the list of reference literature and comprises 160 computer-typed pages.

**The introductory** part of the dissertation reviews the topicality of the study, scientific novelty, set aims and objectives, theoretical and practical values, methodology used during the research and theoretical foundations of the work.

**The first chapter** of the thesis is devoted to an overview of Marguerite Duras's life and works, the major trends in the twentieth-century literature, changes in the architectonics of the novel, and the peculiarities of Duras's writing style. The chapter consists of five paragraphs. In terms of theoretical foundations of the research, one of the important subsections is the literary-philosophical aspects of time and space, where we consistently discuss both objectivist and subjectivist approaches to understanding time and space, the interesting connection of space to phenomenology, Bakhtin's theory of chronotope as well as J. Genet's narratological approaches. In the same section, separate subsections are devoted to the study of space variations and the concept of motion in Duras's novels according to the chronotope theory, which brings Duras's language style closer to the cinematic practice. The

specific attitude towards space, as well as the movement of the characters in space, is well seen not only in Marguerite Duras's novels but also in her filmmaking activities.

**The second chapter** of the work deals with one of the most complex and important novels of Duras, "The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein", namely, how the complex structure of space was reflected in the novel, its title, toponyms and chronotopes. We studied the letter from the famous psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan to Marguerite Duras, in which the author acknowledges the genius of the writer and the practice of writing based on the subconscious, which independently led Duras perceive what Lacan had taught throughout his life. One of the most important and interesting topics to study in the novel "The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein", is closed and open spaces.

The role space aspect plays in reading the work has been well discussed by the Italian semiologist Umberto Eco. The poetics of closed and open spaces in the novel is especially well studied by him, in particular, their role in the storyline and the relationship with the characters in the context. In this respect the décor, indoor or outdoor spaces are strictly semiotic.

In the novel "The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein" we explore two turning-point chronotopes in the story – "Beach Municipal Casino" and "Rye Meadow", which are characterized by complex symbolic meanings and are closely related to each other. In this section we draw on the opinions of the famous French philosopher Gaston Bachelard, where the author discusses space in relation to the imagination.

**The third chapter** of the dissertation studies the representation of space in another novel by Duras – "The Vice-Consul". We define the defining and driving force of spatial symbols in the narrative of the novel – the sea, the oceans, the river, the cities. We also discuss the historical-geographical context of the novel and the crucial role of the childhood spent in Indochina for the future of the author, the world of Asian landscapes. We have studied with special attention the symbolic toposes: Calcutta and Lahore, the frequent repetition of which gives the space a poetic and mystic dimension. A separate subsection is devoted to the repetitive chronotope of the road, which emphasizes the frequent alternations of time and space, creates simultaneously semantic and stylistic closeness between the novels and, most importantly, is translated as the character's quest for identity. The third chapter of the work

also consists of five paragraphs and includes, in addition to the above topics, part of the representation of Duras's romantic space in cinematography.

At the end of the dissertation, a general summary of the research is presented in the form of the conclusion as well as a bibliography.

### **The Main Content of the Thesis**

“Life defines creativity, creativity defines life” – it is impossible to disagree with Duras's assessment, especially when it comes to the twentieth century, the century full of contradictions and controversies. **The first chapter of the dissertation deals with a general overview of the writer's life and works as well as a new novel in the twentieth-century French literature.**

Raised in Indochina, the girl becomes a law student at the University of Paris in 1933, and then a student of political economy. She becomes acquainted with a number of intellectuals, collaborating with Gallimard Publishing, where she publishes her first book, “L'Empire français”, under the name Marguerite Donnadiéu. She started using pseudonym “Duras” from 1940. Duras is the name of the small town where the writer's father was originally from. During the occupation of Paris, Marguerite Duras fought in the Resistance movement, published novels, was successful in journalism and directed a number of theatrical and film adaptations.

The era of persuasion has finally come to an end in an epoch of economic and political crises, two world wars, psychoanalysis and all the repeatedly asked questions. The rapid evolution of all spheres has intensified man's sense of the mystery of the universe, so that in the twentieth century, from Proust to Dostoyevsky or from Flaubert to Joyce, the novelists, first and foremost, try to propose enigmas, create a world of ambiguity and doubt or use such literary means that imply close cooperation with the reader. Thanks to its boundless flexibility, compared to other literary forms, the genre of the novel proved to be much more capable of depicting the crisis characteristic to a modern man. The modern novel opened the door to the most varied voices, equally voiced standard literary language and argot, assimilated the forms of interior monologue, intimate diary or dialogue. The variability of the

form of the novel mainly proceeded in two directions: on the one hand it was the architecture of the novel, on the other hand, it was a completely new vision of details.

In 1940-70es young novelists in France questioned the connection between the logic action description and chronology. Representatives of the New Novel criticized the traditional so called Balzacian novel thinking that it attaches too much importance to social and psychological descriptions. The New Novel ("Nouveau Roman") rejects relationships between subjects, behaviors, and situations, removing any dominant connection between character development and psychology. Events, descriptions, objective situations disappear and give way to dialogues, conversations, reactions, intrigue is rejected, action is minimized or does not take place at all. The text only offers itself to the reader; the author either "dies" or is the reader's accomplice, stands outside the text and demands direct participation from the reader. He/she has no preconceived ideas. As Alain Robbe-Grillet says, "Today the author needs the active, creative help from the reader. The novelist asks him not to accept blindly the readymade, full, enclosed world, but on the contrary, to participate in the process of creation. The reader, in return, must create the work himself, accordingly, create the world and create his own life" (Robbe-Grillet, 2013:147). Time, which is not uniform, or definite, develops nonlinearly; the novel is presented to the reader in "pure", "purified" form. In the face of such experiments, Marguerite Duras expresses distrust and unwillingness to engage in a movement whose visions she disagrees with. Nevertheless, in 1958, after the publication of the novel "Moderato Cantabile", critiques called her the representative of Nouveau Roman. At that time Marguerite Duras did not protest, on the contrary, was proud to be mentioned alongside writers such as Natalie Sarot and Robbe-Grillet. It took about thirty years to Duras to publicly express her disapproval of the New Novel and to defend herself against any affiliation. "I am me", says she, Marguerite does not belong to anyone and cannot be compared to anyone. According to Duras, rules are of great importance to New Novel, while the only rule for a writer is the absence and rejection of rules. Like the new novelists, Marguerite Duras denies the intrigue of the story, though she attaches more importance to vision, sound, music, minute, space. She frees herself from the stylistic peculiarities of the New Novel, following the Freudian vision as well as the systematic use of the love triangle.



Unlike the “New Novel”, Duras makes no secret of her adoration for existentialism and surrealism. “I lived in an existentialist environment, breathed the air of this philosophy. The same can be said about surrealism” – declares the writer (Duras, Porte, 2012: 78). Many feel this closeness. For example, Raymond Queneau saw much in common between Duras’s “La vie tranquille” and Camus’ “L’étranger”. Even more convincing and credible is the influence of the Surrealists on the works of Marguerite Duras, which the writer herself confirms when she says that they have in common many moments of creative quest, shifting values, rejection of God and all Christian visions, and finally, madness. Duras is also associated with surrealists with a sense of unity between writing and life. For them, novel is a story and not a narrative, life and writing become unified. For Duras, writing is perceived not only in close connection with life, but also with death. She says: “Sometime you feel like you want to kill yourself, but you keep on writing” (Duras, 1995:11). It is no coincidence, then, that one of the writer’s most recent works, “Écrire”, is devoted to the art of writing. She believes that isolation and silence are necessary for writing and quotes Raymond Queneau’s phrase: “Ne faites rien d'autre que ça, écrire”. Duras fully agrees with Queneau and says that

“Écrire, c'était ça la seule chose qui peuplait ma vie et qui l'enchantait. Je l'ai fait. L'écriture ne m'a jamais quittée” (Duras, 1995:14).

Every artist reveals oneself to the world only with his/her own characteristic skills and talents. Creative potential embodied over time becomes framed within the existing literary tradition and is formed as part of this or that school or movement. In this respect Duras’s creative work is a real exception, it is impossible to put it within the boundaries of any literary school. As a Georgian literary critic, Giorgi Ekizashvili says in an article about Duras, “from a classic novel to a new novel – this is the amplitude of the oscillation of Duras’s literary heritage”.

“At any stage of the development of literature, the functional load of the spatial models selected by the author was and is a means of better expression of the problems of the modern era for the writer, the writer’s literary beliefs and worldview” (Ratiani, 2010:223). In this respect, the creativity of Marguerite Duras is truly a sample of postmodern prose, where the process of perceiving time-space offers highly interesting stylistic and structural nuances.

Twentieth-century novels have questioned the art of description. Duras refuses stagnant structures of description. If in “The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein” she avoids the artistic description, in the novel “The Vice-Consul” she uses her own way of description. When working on the editing of the novel the author expresses this approach as follows:

“Je me suis servie de signes très précis : le palmier, le laurier-rose, la lèpre. Je n’ai pas du tout décrit Calcutta minutieusement ; j’ai prélevé certains signes ou objets et ils m’ont révélé la ville...J’appelle cette méthode qu’est la mienne, description par touches de couleur“ (Duras, 2005:72).

This technique reminds us of painting. For instance, in the novel “The Vice-Consul” the water space bears a repetitive nature, it is constantly featured in the text. With Duras, India is primarily presented as a country of water, as a fabulous landscape of rice plantations: the rice fields are constantly alternating with each other, to the point of infinity. The landscape is compared to one great flood, even when it comes to metaphysical comparison, again a liquid element, water becomes the main driving force. In one of the dialogues of the novel, the author even tells us through a character: “Vous savez l’Inde est un gouffre d’indifférence dans lequel tout est noyé? (Duras, 1997:950).

## Chapter 1

**In the first chapter of the thesis, we talk in detail about the interpretations of the understanding of time and space.** It turned out that the theory of literature has for a very long time been devoted to the study of the dimension of time in narrative. It took decades to study the importance of the dimension of space, in particular, space and its role attracted the attention of scholars only in the post-World War II literature. It was enriched with objectivist and subjectivist concepts. “Any kind of discussion about the categories of time and space at the level of the artistic-literary text, first of all, implies the determination of the specifics of implantation of the categories of time and space in the literary system, i.e., the theoretical-literary definition of artistic time and artistic space” (Ratiani, 2010:102).

Every author has his/her own form to convey the specificity of space, but

“Chez des auteurs aussi différents que Hölderlin, Baudelaire, Proust lui-même, Claudel, Char, une certaine sensibilité à l’espace, ou pour mieux dire une sorte de fascination du lieu est un des aspects essentiels” (Genette, 1969:44).

According to Gérard Genette, “a certain sensitivity to space” as well as “a kind of glorification of space” are particularly well suited to the works of Marguerite Duras. The spatial boundaries of Duras’s discourse are marked by various literary and linguistic processes:

“On ne parle pas de l’espace : on parle d’autre chose en terme d’espace – on pourrait presque dire que c’est l’espace qui parle : sa présence est implicite, impliquée, à la source ou à la base du message plutôt que dans son contenu, comme dans une phrase celle de la langue ou du locuteur lui-même” (Genette, 1969:102).

This approach of Genette is very characteristic of Duras’s world, a world that evokes a sense of loneliness through this “telling space”, “space-harbor” (a term used by Florence de Chalonge).

When Marguerite Duras talks about the feelings of abandonment and loneliness that women experience, she immediately emphasizes the impact of space:

“C’est comme ça, à partir de la solitude, d’une solitude inimaginable... qu’elles ont commencé à parler aux arbres, aux plantes, aux animaux sauvages, c’est-à-dire à entrer, à inventer l’intelligence avec la nature“ (Duras, Porte, 2012:13).

Along with Gerard Genette, the concept of space is also studied in depth by the French author Maurice Blanchot, for whom the literary space between the author, the reader and the work are a closed, intimate world, where “the worlds are intertwined” (Blanchot, 1955:46). Blanchot’s vision dispels the idea that space is a simple décor, background or even a method of description. Consequently, it is no longer reduced to the function of a harmless scene on which the character’s destiny develops, but is formed as a structural agent or a guiding vector. It becomes the driving force of intrigue, a kind of transmission between worlds. It is noteworthy that Maurice Blanchot and Marguerite Duras, in addition to friendship and a common past, shared common visions on very many literary issues, including the literary space. Like Duras, the “literary space” for Blanchot is

“[...] l’espace imaginaire de l’œuvre d’art » [...] La solitude essentielle – L’interminable, l’incessant” (Blanchot, 1955:23).

It is impossible to talk about space in isolation, the concept of time is always considered with it. As already mentioned, existentialism and the phenomenology of time played a special role in this regard. These schools added significant, individual features to the problem: while existentialists singled out “temporality” as “primordial time” and regarded it as the starting point for “existence”, phenomenologists have established a special notion of “temporal and spatial consciousness” as special phenomenological property, but ultimately, the position of each of them can be defined as subjective: “Neither substantializing of phenomena nor the phenomenology could overcome subjectivism. Thus, in contrast to the philosophical theories of the early-antique period, the philosophical and scientific conceptions of the modern period about time and space were sharply distinguished in terms of objectivist and subjectivist positions in the understanding of time-space” (Ratiani, 2008:101).

The term depicting time and space simultaneously in relation to literature and work of art was first used by a Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin. The most important connotation of the objectivist theory of understanding time and space is Bakhtin’s chronotope theory.

The Bakhtinian concept of chronotope is etymologically derived from Greek: “chronos” means time and “topos” means place. It expresses “time-space intertwined relationships” and “time and space inseparability” (Bakhtin, 1978:237). In the aesthetics and theory of the novel, Mikhail Bakhtin studies in depth the chronotope forms in the novel. The unification of the categories of time and space in one term reveals Bakhtin’s belief in the indivisibility of these elements in artistic structures. For Bakhtin, as for Lottman, space is a reflection in which the vision of the world is reflected. A literary text, if it does not precisely create a spatial model through which reality is formed, changes (transforms) it and renders more poetic nature.

The first chapter of the dissertation presents a separate subchapter on the variations of chronotopes in different novels by Duras; they are simultaneously diverse and repetitive in nature. By re-writing chronotopes, Marguerite Duras creates a new movement each time, reviving the same themes with new options. Characters play a key role in bringing the Durassian space-time into motion. The latter develop in different space-time entrails, both through physical movement and mental (psychological) movements. The characters in these

novels are distinguished by an extremely high degree of movement that influences the Durassian time-space and gives them a hint of variability. With such a style, Duras's writing style seems to remind cinematography. The last subchapter of the first chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the author's connection with cinematography.

Many twentieth-century authors were interested in the notion of movement in literature, which was increasingly associated with cinematic practice. The writers of the New Novel were often the authors of screenplays and sometimes even film directors. Thus, for instance, Robbe-Grillet made a film "The Last Year in Marienbad" ("L'année dernière à Marienbad") in 1961 together with the film-director Alain Resnais. In 1950-60s a cinematic movement "New Wave" develops. The cinema created at this time has a great influence on the writers. Marguerite Duras also belongs to the number of the authors who have been greatly influenced by the practice of cinematography. The creative pursuit that began with the writing of novels, gradually shifted to the cinema. For several years, making films becomes to some extent an alternative to writing. The writer sees an opportunity for innovative expression in this field of art. In 1960, Duras wrote a screenplay for the film "Hiroshima, My Love", which was also directed by Alain Resneis, a New Wave director. Several years later Duras made her own films "Music" (1966), "India Song" (1975) and "A Lorry" (1977).

The practice of cinema had a particular influence on the style of Duras's last novels. Duras is also fascinated by music, she considers each written page as a real score of music. Some of the titles of her novels also remind us of musical terms (Moderato cantabile, music, song of India). Although Duras refrained from filming "The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein", she could easily adapt the novel "The Vice-Consul", albeit with completely different titles: "India Song" and "La femme du Gange". The author deconstructs the texts of the novel and re-writes them for on-screen adaptation.

The subjective time and space that are so palpable in Duras's novels, this time find materialization in the films. Despite successful attempts at that time, most of Duras's films failed to stand the test of time. It is true that they contributed to the evolution of cinema, but today they are already considered to be the technical films following the "New Wave". Like her literary language, Duras impoverishes the screen by doing so with staged footage and the distance between image and sound. Nevertheless, cinema rendered a different touch to

Marguerite Duras's works and gave it a new impetus to continue her literary career with a new vision of literary language and space representation.

## Chapter 2

A kind of end to the search for the literary style of Marguerite Duras is the novel "The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein", dealt with in the second chapter of the thesis. "The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein" remains to this day the most controversial novel among the works of Marguerite Duras. It was included in the list of 100 best books of the twentieth century by the famous edition of "Le Monde".

"The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein" is one of Duras's novels that is impossible to understand at a glance or at one reading. Such texts require specially prepared readers. Therefore, this novel of Duras is often referred to as a psychological novel. The author eventually moved away from the traditional methods of narration that she had still actively used before. Particularly noteworthy and interesting is the complex structure of space in the novel, for the representation of which we have studied the imaginary toponyms of the novel, closed and open spaces loaded with characters, scene-chronotopes of the turning point.

In "The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein" Marguerite Duras offers a very interesting topology. In the development of the story the facts and actions are entirely space-oriented. In order to better understand the representation of space in the novel, we are including the **summary** of the novel in the thesis: at the center of the novel's narrative is Lola Valerie Stein, who is on the verge of constant escape, a young woman abandoned by her fiancé at the ball in the Town Beach. Her story is told by the man who loves her and who is also the character of the novel along with being a narrator. Jacques Hold is at the same time a lover of Tatiana, Lola's friend. He knows that Lola and Tatiana were great friends in college. He also knows that Lola was engaged to Michael Richardson, and knows of the famous fact how Anne-Marie Stretter appeared on the Town Beach dance floor and charmed Lola's fiancé, stealing her great love away. Jacques Hold begins the novel by Lol Stein's return to her native town of Tahla when she is married to John Bedford and has three children. Returning ten years later, the character gradually remembers the past. She meets her childhood friend Tatiana Karl again, who was with her on the fateful night of the ball. Together with Tatiana, Lol meets her lover

Jacque Hold (who is the narrator at the same time). Lol begins to imagine their relationship in a fantasy, she observes the couple meeting at a hotel from afar, from a rye field, where hidden Lol returns to the past, the Town Beach dance hall, and the novel ends with this repetitive and important scene from the rye meadow. It is remarkable that Lol reminds us of the female characters from other novels by Marguerite Duras. For example, she is very similar to the character from "Moderato Cantabile", Anne Desbaresdes: this is a seductive woman who lives with a permanent desire. The other female characters of Duras are also lonely and reserved. Lol can be said to be a model character in the writer's creative works: she does not belong to herself, as if she is outside her own body and tries to find a way to be able to experience passing and ravish, passion with love and pleasure.

In order to understand the woman you love, you must first discover her past. Narrator Jacque Hold describes situation, asking questions the answers of which are often enigmatic. The novel revolves around three main characters, but the main figure, of course, is Lol W. Stein.

Although the novel is difficult to read, "The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein" was successfully sold as soon as it was published and received mixed reviews. In an article by "Le Monde" magazine, the author Jacqueline Piatie described it as "An artificial and forceful" text, whereas Claude Moriak in "La Figaro" described it as a novel of brilliant "talent". Jerome Landon, the head of "Minuit Publishing", sent a thank you letter to Marguerite Duras for "this most beautiful novel", which he said was "the best and most beautiful" the author had ever written.

In his book "Territoires du féminin", Marcelle Marini, one of the leading critics of Duras, considers the novel "The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein" to be an act of exposing feminine existence, which is especially well illustrated by the language and structure of the novel.

"The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein" contains many themes already met in Duras's novels of earlier period. They are: the pain of abandonment and loneliness, loss, death, love. Although this novel is unlike any other, it still does not fit into any literary currents of that period. At the same time, some critics attribute it to the findings of psychoanalysis. In this novel, too, the cinematography undoubtedly had an impact, which is well seen in the construction of the narrative.

Marguerite Duras manages to describe the state of consciousness of human beings that are unable to find a place in this world. Lol Stein is in search of words and language because she is unable to talk or evaluate in any words what had happened at the Beach ball. The writer tries to find the word that Lol lacks and misses. Marguerite Duras wants to fill the void through language. The famous psychoanalytic Jacques Lacan considered Marguerite Duras to be a writer who reached the unconscious through language and writing.

As it is known, one day, the already famous and recognized French psychiatrist Jacques Lacan called Marguerite Duras and asked for a meeting. They talked about Lol for two hours. Duras admits that she knew independently what Lacan taught her. Later, in December 1965, Lacan devoted a special text to "The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein", which represents a psychoanalytic interpretation of the novel. This letter was a kind of recognition and respect for Duras ("Hommage fait à Marguerite Duras, du ravissement de Lol V. Stein", 1965), where Lacan calls the word "Ravishing" enigmatic, he says it evokes the soul and arouses a sense of beauty.

„C'est précisément ce que je reconnais dans le ravissement de Lol V. Stein, où Marguerite Duras s'avère savoir sans moi ce que j'enseigne. En quoi je ne fais pas tort à son génie d'appuyer ma critique sur la vertu de ses moyens. Que la pratique de la lettre converge avec l'usage de l'inconscient, est tout ce dont je témoignerai en lui rendant hommage“ (Lacan, 1965: 7-15)

Lacan's text paved the way for numerous interpretations of the novel, be it psychoanalytic or feminist. He pays special attention to the main scene and character of the novel:

„Mais justement elle ne peut dire qu'elle souffre.. On pensera à suivre quelque cliché, qu'elle répète l'événement. Mais qu'on y regarde de plus près.. C'est à voir gros qu'il est reconnaissable dans ce guet où Lol désormais maintes fois reviendra, d'un couple d'amants dans lequel elle a retrouvé comme par hasard, une amie qui lui fut proche avant le drame, et l'assistait à son heure même : Tatiana... Ce n'est pas l'événement, mais un nœud qui se refait là..." (Lacan, 1965 :7-15).

Very soon after the publication of the novel, in April 1964, Marguerite Duras spoke at length about Lol's character in an interview with Pierre Dumes, the recording of which can



still be heard on the website of the National Institute of Audio Video Recordings (Ina.fr). the writer names the most difficult period of her life while writing the novel. As she herself says, she was seized with alcoholism and that this was her first book to be written without alcohol. In one of the interviews, she says:

“Lol V. Stein c'est quelqu'un qui réclame qu'on parle pour elle sans fin, puisqu'elle est sans voix. C'est d'elle que j'ai parlé le plus, et c'est elle que je connais le moins. Quand Lol V. Stein a crié, je me suis aperçue que c'était moi qui criais. Je ne peux montrer Lol V. Stein que cachée, comme le chien mort sur la plage” (Duras, Porte, 2012 :78).

If “literature speaks of space along with many other topics” (Genette, 1979:43), as Gerard Genette once remarked, the novel “The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein” tells us quite a lot about this phenomenon. Durasian toponyms sometimes carry certain marks, although there are cases when they are completely devoid of representation and serve only the musical and poetic perceptions. As for the main toponyms of the novel, with their Anglo-Saxon sounding they help to discover rather strange and artistic spaces. They take us far away from France, to American cities: S. Tahla, S. Thala, U. Bridge remind us of the cities in California or Florida. As a matter of fact, one of Duras’s most famous researchers, Madeleine Borgomano, recalls the actual toponym for S. Tahla – Tallahassee, the capital of Florida. She suggested that “Lol’s Stein’s father, a university professor, may have belonged to the Jewish intellectuals who fled Germany and took refuge with his family in the United States” (Borgomano, 1997:27).

The toponym T. Beach, which means “beach”, is even more characteristic to Duras’s literary space inasmuch as the beach is associated with the presence of the sea, and the landscapes of the sea, ocean, beach or river are the places that most often figure in the works of the writer. Although in “The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein”, unlike Duras’s other novels, the sea is not directly visible, still, one of the main locations of the Town Beach municipality casino, where the unforgettable ball took place, is located near the sea. This is what the author says:

“C’est toujours au bord de la mer qu’elle est, et tress longtemps, j’ai vu des villes très blanches, comme ça blanchies par le sel, un peu comme si du sel était dessus.... j’ai compris que c’ étaient des lieux, non seulement marins mais relevant d’une mer du Nord, de cette mer qui est la mer de mon enfance aussi, des mers....illimitées” (Duras, Porte, 2012:84).

One of the main toponyms, S. Tahla, is met in later novels by Duras in slightly altered form as S. Thala (in the novel such as “L’Amour”, “India Song”, “La femme du Gange”). This toponym is of Greek origin and translates as “sea”. Toponyms in the novel ultimately represent the space that plays a certain role in the character’s life. All the toponyms revolve around the scene in casino T. Beach.

The study of the places in the novel showed that space is constantly focused on pain, on the inner world of the character. We can list numerous examples when a toponym is identified with a spiritual state or characters. There are often figurative phrases in the dialogues that Lol Stein utters at dinner and emphasizes that she feels better in S. Tahla than in U. Bridge:

„Elle prononce bien: S.Tahla, U.Bridge” (Duras, 1964:146).

Thus, next to imaginary toponyms, we meet the real ones as well. However, the main proper names of the novel are made up. Real toponyms, such as France, where Jean Belfort spent his vacation, Paris, where Lol Stein’s brother lived, India and Calcutta, where Michael Richardson traveled to meet Anne-Marie Stretter, are mostly the toponyms expressing distance and separation.

The study of toponyms has shown that they form not only a Durasian space but also a Durasian poetics: “Because they form a strange onomatopoeia in the text, toponyms created by Duras or borrowed from other languages are distinguished by a specific charm” (Chalonge, 2005:87). Indeed, almost all the geographical references in “The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein” are false, which allows us to say that they are introduced into the text primarily for the purpose of musical loading, and render the novel a special poetics.

**The most common representation of space in the novel “The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein” is the interior and exterior décor.** Interior décor or outdoor landscapes are always associated with open and closed spaces. As for metaphors and literary descriptions, their use is minimized. Instead, space, with all its components, becomes the main narrative medium for representation, which is so characteristic of the contemporary novel in general. Moreover, the space for the “New Novel” becomes “the most obsessive among metaphors” (Genette, 1969:43). This is how Gerard Genette sees the modern approach to space: “It is the language

in the game that starts to cover the space around it, to determine its choice, to outline its figures" (Ibid.).

Can we observe the same relation towards space with Duras as well? The space observed with her is less dependent on the observer. The writer chooses another way to create imaginative scenes – this is the subjective approach to the characters: "Durassian characters create space by movement or sight, where their foot leads, where the eye can reach" (Chalonge, 2005 :149).

Thus, the décor of Duras's novels is independent, it consists of a real "world of references" (Genette's term), it exists in diversity: it is either city or village, room or garden, river or ocean, Tahla or Beach. In this sense, Durasian décor becomes a true synonym of space. Durasian décor, whether it is a space used for poetic sensibility or for personal identification, with its "spatial features" of which Genette speaks), "occupies" and "fills" the novels in their entirety.

**One of the most important and interesting subjects to be studied in the novel "The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein" is the movement between open and closed spaces.** We all live in a definite space and often change that space by moving from one place to another. There seems to be nothing strange in this regular and routine process, yet there are always more or less important places in life for us: they are related to personal memories, to our childhood.

The role of the space aspect in reading a work has been well discussed by the famous Italian writer and semiologist Umberto Eco. The poetics of open and closed spaces in the novel is particularly well studied in his articles, in particular, their role in the story line and their relation to characters in context.

For example, the closed space in Umberto Eco's novels can be said to be strictly semiotic. Places, signs dictate actions to the characters, sometimes the same places are separate, independent actors that play a turning role in the transformation of the narrative. Thus, space is no longer a simple refuge but an active element in the architectonics of the novel. How the Italian scholar understands the phenomenon of space is well illustrated in the following quote:

„Le récit est d'abord et avant tout une affaire cosmologique. Pour raconter quelque chose, on commence par jouer le rôle d'une sorte de démiurge qui crée un monde, et ce monde

doit être aussi précis que possible pour qu'on puisse s'y mouvoir en totale confiance“ (Eco, 2013:22).

With Marguerite Duras, who is particularly sensitive to places, nothing happens accidentally, every movement between an open space and a closed space is a sign of inner change, a symbol of the transition from one state to another. The first scene of the novel takes place indoors, at the Beach casino, and the last scene takes place in a completely open space – the rye meadow, which leaves the reader open to the interpreting the continuation of the story. It is this constant shift, frequent replacement of spaces that creates the original text of the novel.

In addition to the often-mentioned boulevards, cities, parks and gardens, closed/locked spaces also play an important role. The closed space at the very beginning of the novel reinforces the heavy feeling of suffocation, which can be clearly seen from this description: *“Lol could no longer watch the dance scene in the Beach municipal hall and she screamed...”*; *“She stays in her room which she does not leave for a few weeks”* (Duras, 1964:14). In this scene, the characters seem to form an interior castle:

„Ils commencèrent à bouger, à marcher vers les murs, cherchent des portes imaginaires.... Ils avaient finalement trouvé la direction de la véritable porte et ils avaient commencé à se diriger très lentement dans ce sens” (Duras, 1964:22).

The spatial and moral closure is also felt in phrases in the novel such as “we are locked”, “my inner *self* is locked”. When the author speaks of Lol, she refers to her as a person who “is not here, in our world, in our space” (Duras, 1964:12). the meeting between Anne-Marie Stretter and Michael Richardson shocked Lol, it can be said that this fact changed her life, as if something had stopped for her forever:

“Lol resta toujours là, où l'événement l'avait trouvée lorsque Anne-Marie Stretter était entrée, derrière les plantes vertes du bar” (Duras, 1964:20).

If for Lol it was the end, for Michael Richardson it was just the beginning:

“Elle commençait déjà, la nouvelle histoire de Michel Richardson, à se faire...qu'il faudrait maintenant être vécue jusqu'au bout” (Duras, 1964:17).

Thus, the main scene, which unfolds in a specific enclosed space, namely, the Beach municipal casino hall, determines the future of the novel characters – Lol and Michael

Richardson. Their connection was severed forever. The ways of the future are different, which is also reflected in the representation of space. Lol, looking at her already distant love, “turned to the bar and the green plants” (Duras, 1964:19). She retreats to find a place (shelter) with the “green plants”, which is already the first sign that she is moving towards closure, towards erasing and forgetting herself. In the dance hall of the Beach, after a fateful dance, Michael Richardson, who was looking for someone with his eyes deep in the hall, can no longer see Lol” (Duras, 1964:20).

Here it is interesting to observe the change of décor and the role of special layout in the development of events. During the event in the Beach casino, the reader not only witnesses the inner transformation of the character, but also the external change of the space that will bring the end:

“L’orchestre cessa de jouer. Le bal apparut presque vide. Il ne resta que quelques couples, dont le leur, et ; derrière les plantes vertes, Lol et cette autre jeune fille, Tatiana Karl. Ils ne s’étaient pas aperçus que l’orchestre avait cessé de jouer...qu’il ny avait plus de musique“ (Duras, 1964 :20).

Beach casino, as a place, becomes a dead space, a symbolic place of death sentence, a castle with its empty stage, walls, doors, to which are added “the violins in wooden boxes” that have stopped performing.

On the other hand, the newly-started history between Michael Richardson and Anne-Marie Stretter, is entirely related to **the open space**. After the dance, they look for the way out of the hall, looking for the way to escape the lockage: “They looked at each other silently, not knowing what to do for a long time, how to escape the night” (Ibid.). Two forever connected character start moving together:

„Ils commencèrent à bouger, marcher vers le murs, cherchant des portes imaginaires. La pénombre de l’aurore était la même au-dehors et au-dedans de la salle“ (Ibid.)

In the described scene, space is clearly divided into indoor and outdoor spaces (au-dehors et au-dedans). We also see the door, which is a kind of transitional space that simultaneously connects and separates them. Eventually Michael Richardson and Anne-Marie Stretter will find the real door whereas Lol will never be able to escape this space: if, at

first, she was only physically locked in the Beach dance hall, then she became already psychologically locked within the event or the place of the event.

Thus, the scene in the Beach casino is the main chronotope of the novel, where the fate of the characters is already determined, as well as the further narration and development of the story. The whole story again and again depends on this scene. In the text the author repeatedly returns to it, which helps to transform it into a kind of turning and repetitive scene. The incident connected Lol forever with the locked and closed space (the end of love), while Michael Richardson, on the contrary, is connected with the open and free space (which should mean the beginning or the future).

No less important for the novel is the chronotope of the rye meadow. It is closely connected with the main space of the work – the Beach dance hall. Had it not been for the Beach night, there would have been no rye meadow. This space is somewhat of a solution to escape from a locked space in which Lol had been for ten years. At the same time, this open space is characterized by a complex symbolic meaning. The study of the meaning and purpose of the wonderful space used in the final part of the novel – the rye meadow – led us to the work of the famous French philosopher Gaston Bachelard “*La poetique de l’espace*”, where the author discusses space in connection with the imagination.

According to Bachelard, space is readable, it is a living being and every person wants to have a space that will awaken a dream in them. Research has shown that Bachelard’s vision is in complete agreement with Marguerite Duras’s vision, and we found Bachelard’s “nest phenomenon” particularly interesting, which seeks the best symbolic explanation and meaning of Duras’s rye meadow. Before the rye meadow appears in the novel, we see Lol silently following her childhood friend and the only witness of the Beach night – Tatiana. Lol’s aspiration already shows the interest she has in her forgotten and lost past.

“Une place est a se prendre, qu’elle n’a pas reussi a avoir a T. Beach, ily a dix ans...Il faudra bien se contenter de celle-ci pour arriver enfin a se frayer un passage, a avancer un peu plus vers cette rive lointaine ou ils habitent, les autres. Vers quoi? Quelle est cette rive?...” (Duras, 1964:61).

In the above example it is possible to find several Bachelard's equivalents of space representation: beach, shore, passage. Along with being a place of memory, the rye meadow is at the same time a place of oblivion:

“Ce champ, à quelque mètres d'elle, plonge,plonge de plus en plus dans une ombre verte et laiteuse” (Duras, 1964:62).

Rye meadow is a place where “some memories of the past are renewed”, from where “the echo of the distant past is heard”, it is the place of the memories of the most beautiful days for Lol, therefore, she

„la chérit, l'apprivoise, la caresse de ses mains sur le seigle” (Ibid).

What stands out in this part of the story is the change born in the characters after the discovery of the rye meadow. We see Lol eagerly following Tatiana and Jacque Hold, she even asks Jacque Hold to continue dating his lover Tatiana, as if beyond this couple and especially, behind Jacque Hold, she wants to discover something that she always missed, which she no longer possessed but others did.

In this way, Lol returns to the rye meadow just as one returns to a place where memories become a dream, and the past becomes one big picture of lost silent feelings. She returns to it, “like a bird returning to its nest” (Bachelard, 2009:2).

The connection of Duras's character with the vision of the famous French psychologist and philosopher is further strengthened by several Bachelard comparisons that Marguerite Duras makes about Lol. She sees in her “the wild bird” (oiseau sauvage), moreover, as a child, her mother called Lol “her little bird, beauty” (Duras,1964:174). And again, Jacque Hold, who is the narrator of the story as well as a character, sees Lol as a creature with her own nest: “She accepted me in her own nest” (Duras, 1964:174). After such comparisons, the rye meadow is perceived not only as a place of evocation of memories, but also as an ephemeral and offhand shelter.

Every human being is searching for a place for solitude (se retirer dans le coin), the nest is just such a place: “A person who feels himself in a shelter, becomes physically stronger, opens up to himself” (Bachelard, 2009:305). Lol W. Stein's character is just such a creature, she seeks her “nest”, and seeks it after the “unforgettable abandonment” (depuis abandon exemplaire). Before she reaches the rye meadow, we see Lol wandering endlessly through the

streets of Tahla, always in a hurry, in search of something. This continuous walk helps her “to think better of the Beach ball”, to better evoke memories “from the door of her house”.

Frequent use of movement verbs in the text – enter, walk, cross, pass, etc. (*entrer, marcher, passer, frémir* etc.) – serves the character’s desire to move in both outdoor and indoor spaces. As soon as Lol finds herself in the rye meadow, immediately all the action, accelerated movement stops and this is where Lol finds rest and peace. Throughout the novel, it’s as if the author is also preparing the reader to come to the rye meadow: Lol is thrown into her past and eventually loses the fear of returning to it.

Nest, as a place of rest, peace and tranquility, is associated with another of Bachelard’s concepts – “the dream house”. After seeing Lol W. Stein sunk in the rye meadow, where she stays at the end of the novel, we realize that this is the place where Lol managed to build “her own gardens”, “build a house”. From this point on, the rye meadow is an open space for the protagonist who remained in the locked space of the Beach casino night:

“Le soir tombait lorsque je suis arrivé à l’Hôtel de Bois. Lol nous avait précédés. Elle dormait dans le champ de seigle, fatiguée, fatiguée par notre voyage” (Duras, 1964:174).

This natural and wonderful image of an open space is the perfect ending for the interpretations. And yet, where does this image come from and what is its preferred sequel? We can easily find the answers with Bachelard: the image of the scene brings to life the dialectic of “hidden” and “visible”, namely, “a person hiding in a shell is preparing to come out” (Bachelard, 2009:308). The question remains: by leaving Lol in the rye meadow, does the author suggest her “recovery” or her eventual destruction?

The answers will be individual, therefore, different, but one thing is certain: the image created by the author by leaving Lol in the rye meadow will remain as the most memorable picture for all the readers of the novel “The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein”.

### Chapter 3

**The third chapter of the thesis is entirely devoted to the all-embracing space in the novel “The Vice-Consul”.** The study of the defining and moving function of spatial symbols in the narration of Duras’s novels has clearly shown that “it is impossible to study the specifics of artistic spatial models without considering the specifics of the work’s artistic time and



artistic chronotope system” (Ratiani 2008:224). In the process of researching the novel “The Vice-Consul”, recognized as one of Duras’s most poetic texts, we came across the translations of the writer’s rather complex literary language, which mainly convey space and symbolic meanings associated with it. The examples of the text translated into Georgian clearly prove the poetic approach of the author to each word, toponym, décor, landscape.

The novel “The Vice-Consul” was published in 1966, when Marguerite Duras was already a famous writer. She had been writing the novel for 20 years. The author’s first novel dates back to 1943, and her first success was in 1950 with “The Dam against the Pacific Ocean” („Le Barrage contre le Pacifique”). It is with this novel by Marguerite Duras that “The Vice-Consul” has the most in common. Both stories unfold in the Asian space.

“The Vice-Consul” is considered to be one of the most complex works of Duras. Marguerite Duras talks about this in numerous interviews and letters. It was a book that was written all her life and that had to convey pain in all its fullness so that it never mentioned the cause or showed the events that caused it.

In the novel “The Vice-Consul” the reader’s attention is first of all a geographical space. The actually existing area has its influence on the development of the work’s history and the lives of the characters. **In this part of the dissertation, along with an analysis of the text of the novel, we present a brief overview of the geographical and historical aspects of Duras’s novels, which further helped us to grasp the symbolic meaning of the novel’s spatial representation.**

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, first by religious, then by diplomatic and military expansion, France managed to exercise complete domination over the territories that at that time were referred to as Indochina. As a result of expansion, despite the development of infrastructure and culture, the dissatisfaction of the local people was great. The colonized society was characterized by a strict hierarchy: at a high level stood wealthy rice-producing families, as well as corrupt officials of the ruling administration. These French lived in luxury, had no contact with the locals, had their lyceums, sports clubs, reserved seats in restaurants. The locals, for the most part, lived in poverty and exploitation. Marguerite Duras was born in such a French colony, Saigon, although her family falls into a completely different category, the so called “little whites”. The mother was a schoolteacher and did not fall short of the locals in poverty. Living in a colonial society still gave little Marguerite a sense of inequality and

injustice. The influence of family and Indochina is often felt with Duras. Later, when she becomes a writer, she condemns colonial politics. Childhood years are the defining factor of her creativity, while Indochina landscapes are the main space where the lives of Duras's characters develop.

The title of the novel "The Vice-Consul" gives the work a historical-political tone. However, this is not the case. Pleasant narratives, dialogues behind which very human feelings are hidden, discourse full of characters, simple gestures, echo-repeated words, poetics of contemplation and observation, rich literary space that dominates the characters – these are the main features of this work.

The narrative in the novel revolves around two main characters: the writer Peter Morgan has just started writing and introduces a character of a begging woman who is kicked out of her house by her parents and starts looking for a new shelter. The reader also begins a journey through the Asian space with the narrator. The condition of the young woman is truly tragic, she is rejected by her own family, carries a child in her womb, and is extremely poor. She is simply called a beggar-woman. She is so abandoned and homeless that she does not even have a name in the novel.

In addition to the painful and hungry world of a young beggar woman, the other world enters the scene of the novel – it is the French Embassy and people close to it: Charles Rossetti, Anne-Marie Stretter, the vice-consul from Lahore, who has just arrived in Calcutta. The latter is a character distinguished by the habits of a lonely man and the sadness of existence.

The name of the vice-consul is linked to the crime in Lahore, which grows more and more intriguing towards him throughout the novel. This crime is mostly talked about by others, trying to understand, explain things that forced the Vice-Consul to go to Shalimar Gardens in Lahore and shoot the dogs and lepers there.

The question that is most often asked in Calcutta – is shooting lepers and dogs an act of murder? On the one hand, they are trying to justify the Vice-Consul, and, on the other hand, it is clear that one group of people dominates the other. It also shows the act of self-loathing, the intolerance of being, in which crime is easily seen, though behind it lies one of the greatest words of Durasian Indochina (one might say of general existence) – indifference.

Read “The Vice-Consul” definitely means to pay attention to the thematic landscapes of the novel. It is not an easy task to distinguish places from landscapes. The world of “the Vice-Consul” is the world of Indian landscapes: cities, rivers, oceans, deltas. Their distribution is large-scale, the boundaries go beyond the horizons of the reader. They are constantly in the field of vision and their dominant and symbolic image follows the novel as a leitmotif. This is the case when “many types of chronotopes are observed within one work or one author as well as their complex relationships specific to a given work or the author’s creative style generally. However, one of the chronotopic models out of many always appears dominant or all-embracing” (Bakhtin, 1986:284).

The space of “The Vice-Consul” landscapes is quite wide. It is not only a natural décor, but also elements that are inseparable from the Indian landscapes: mountain, forest, sky, rice, palm and mango trees, oleanders ... “The Vice-Consul” landscapes also include water space – rivers, lakes, seas, deltas, the Indian Ocean:

“A travers les palmes on voit le ciel. La lune est toujours derrière l’Himalaya des nuages. [...] on voit les îles les plus proches. [...] Un vent du sud, très léger, commence à dissiper la brume violette” (Duras, 1997 :949).

Such landscapes are introduced into a real Durasian space, they are devoid of descriptive adjectives and metaphors, but are impressive with the created image. They are always perceived in connection with the characters. Indochina landscapes, lakes and rivers dominate throughout the novel. Such a space actually becomes a separate character that exists indirectly without words. Indochina, cities, heat ... However, there are not just areas, these are places where human existence, poverty and life itself are an unbearable pain. It can be said that this is a novel depicting extreme poverty, from which also comes a feeling of extreme sadness, a sadness that includes a sense of guilt. It is in this context that the writer’s choice of space offers many different aspects. These spaces can symbolize closure, sorrow, suffering. They express the spiritual condition of the characters.

It is sufficient to take a look at the text of the novel, that geographical places, real toponyms are immediately visible to us (only in the first chapter Lake Tonlé Sap is mentioned eighteen times). Let us follow the analysis of the text in the footsteps of the central figure – a young beggar woman (*mendiant*e): “She goes, writes Peter Morgan” (“Elle marche, écrit Peter

Morgan”) – this is the first sentence that begins the novel. The phrase is short and simple and informs us that “Elle” (the third person feminine pronoun) is given in another plane of the narrative, in the meta-narrative, as Janet would say. Peter Morgan writes a book the main character of which is an anonymous woman, devoid of any description at the beginning.

Marguerite Duras suddenly asks a question in the following phrase: „Comment ne pas revenir? il faut se perdre. Je ne sais pas. Tu apprendras....” As we can see, the second sentence is very different from the first. The narrator Peter Morgan is no longer seen here, there is already a kind of dialogue between the personal pronouns: “I do not know”. “You will understand”. The text does not tell us who is “Je” and who is “Tu”, it is up to the reader to guess.

“She goes”, “She is heading towards horizon” – everything that happens next belongs to the semantic field of movement, walking, relocation. The author Peter Morgan says:

„Je voudrais une indication pour se perdre” (Duras, 1997:849).

It is a strange request, one might say paradoxical, because it would be more normal to look for a way that would lose neither the character nor the reader. The character himself or “she” (*elle*) is turn is paradoxical, because the purpose of this search is to get lost. The search for getting lost follows the novel to the end, leaving us with the impression that Duras is in search of lost space, much like Proust in search of lost time. The endless walk of a woman along Lake Tonlé Sap is to some extent connected to her own search, personal identification.

Identifying the characters and the narrator in the text later, gradually becomes possible. It says a minimum, devoid of explanations. Duras’s text, as one of the author’s most famous biographers and critics, Madeleine Bergomono, puts it, is the writing of silence, a minimal number of adjectives and metaphors, complex and long sentences, plain text behind which there is always something hidden.

In all the paragraphs of the first chapter of the novel we find one and the same place continuously - Lake Tonlé Sap.

„Faim et marches s’incrument dans la terre du Tonlé Sap.[...]Le grand lac grossit. Jonques avançant dans le lac du Tonlé Sap. [...] Les eaux du Tonlé Sap sont étales, leur courant est invisible, elle sont terreuses, elle font peur...” (Duras, 1997: 849-850).

Why do we need so many repetitions? What does it serve? Lake Tonlé Sap, as we have already mentioned, becomes a space-character that has its past, present and future. Along with the beggar woman, the reader will feel the desire to leave their native places as soon as possible, to escape the past, to find a new space, to hurry to another, more beautiful world:

„Elle continue à suivre le fleuve... elle repart, regarde : les buffles de l'autre rive ne sont-ils pas plus trapus qu'ailleurs?" (Duras, 1997: 851).

The main character escapes the present, is desperate and seeks the "other side" (l'autre rive). "The other bank" in its symbolic meaning can be equated with another, better life:

"Son père a dit un jour que si on suivait le Tonlé-Sap, on ne se perdait jamais...que si les enfants sont en vie dans ce pays c'est grâce aux eaux poissonneuses du Tonlé-Sap" (Duras, 1997 : 851).

Thus, the toponym of Lake Tonlé Sap is a symbolic space of fear and loss, as well as the search for a solution. Therefore, it can be said that the moving space around Tonlé Sap is the search for identification of a person, the search for a lost family, the search for a lost native place returning to which is a sacred task. This is why the narrator Peter Morgan is constrained to use indefinite and repetitive verbs in the semantic plane: to walk, to return, to lose, to take a step, to turn (marcher-revenir-se perdre-diriger ses pas-tourner).

Even reading three pages of a novel is enough to make the writer's goal seem achievable – the reader feels lost in space. The movement, the procession, which is connected to the main character, has a dual nature: external and internal, personal and impersonal, as if two overlapping processes are taking place, which are closely connected with each other. Inner space is expressed in the desire to escape far away, while outer space is written in a real geographical environment and almost never changes. Here, too, if we rely on the Bachelard's philosophical view of space, "it seems that their 'immeasurability' two spaces – the personal space and the space of the external world coincide with each other" (Bachelard, 2009 :17).

Such "coincidental spaces" abound in Marguerite Duras's texts, especially in the novel "The Vice-Consul", where Marguerite Duras does not hide her desire to show the pain that is limited to a specific space. Peter Morgan, the writer who writes the novel and tells the story, for Duras is "a young man who wants to take the pain of Calcutta, to sink completely into it" (Duras, 1997: 851).

In the novel we often encounter rhythmically distributed short phrases, which make the narration even more poetic:

“Après, en route pour dix ans vers Calcutta. Calcutta où elle restera. Ella restera là, elle reste, reste là, dans les moussons. Là, à Calcutta, endormie dans la lèpre sous les buissons le long du Gange” (Duras, 1997 : 851).

The principle of repetition in the above translation is strong, with a total of four short phrases, each sentence containing a spatial toponym of a place adverb (Là). Frequent repetition of places (Calcutta, Ganges), endless sense of articulation, the sound of toponyms creates the poetics of the space characteristic of Duras.

There is so much space in the narrative that the reader often even goes to the point of indifference. The reader is forced to lose orientation and enter a labyrinth. The main character of the novel, who follows Lake Tonlé Sap from the beginning, loses geographical, social or time markers and at the end of the novel seems completely disoriented, as the author wanted it from the beginning.

Marguerite Duras paid special attention to the **city of Calcutta** in “The Vice-Consul”. The narrator Peter Morgan compares Calcutta to a “noisy nest of ants”, referring to it as “ugly”, “unbearable”, “abandoned by God” and “full of pain”. The rhythm of life here is full of great suffering. Calcutta “cries” („crie”), „squeaks” („grince”), though associated with suffering, this topos is always associated with a special light – „la lumière crépusculaire”, which becomes the main metaphorical description of Calcutta.

„A Calcutta, aujourd’hui, il est sept heures du matin, la lumière est crépusculaire“ (Duras, 1997: 861).

“The city of infinite human fatigue” („Ville infinie de la lassitude d’être”) – this is what Marguerite Duras calls Calcutta. And she admits that she invented the city as a whole, with its heat, its fans, or “the noise of frightened birds”.

In a famous interview with Michelle Port, Duras finds an interesting explanation for the death of Anne-Marie Stretter, the protagonist of “The Vice-Consul”. Asked if she committed a suicide and why it happens at sea, Marguerite replies that she could not have done otherwise: “I think this suicide is completely logical, and there is nothing tragic in it. She is unable to live anywhere else, and she lives here in despair, which is brought by

Calcutta, India, every day, and from this she dies, as if poisoned from India. She could have killed herself differently, but no, she kills herself in the water, yes, in the Indian sea” (Duras, Porte, 1977: 78).

As we can see, the writer uses all means to make the toponym as expressive and interesting as possible. She achieves this both by the principle of repetition and by using a meaning different from the real toponym. For this, Marguerite Duras does not shy away from violating grammatical norms, and after naming the city she often puts a full stop: “Calcutta.” Similar approach to the noun denoting a place gives the space an additional poetic and emotional dimension.

The second important **space in the novel is the city of Lahore**. In the novel, the author herself asks a question about it:

„...et Lahore,... Lahore, qu’est-ce que ça veut dire ?“ (Duras, 1997:967).

This question is asked directly or indirectly throughout the novel. We cannot find the exact answer but we can clearly see that it is related to the mysterious incident that took place in the city. What is the mystery, after all?

The toponym Lahore is directly related to the central figure of the novel, the vice-consul. Contrary to the title, in the text he is often referred to as “The Vice-Consul from Lahore”. Everyone in Calcutta knows about the Lahore incident, though no one knows the details. This mysterious case appears gradually in the text, albeit in an incomplete and mystical form. They talk about him, ask questions: what did the vice-consul do there after all? – he fired bullets at Shalimar Gardens at night, where mostly lepers and dogs took refuge. The whole story ends here, the rest is the quest for the answer.

As we have mentioned, in the text the author constantly mentions the Vice-Consul with a diplomatic rank and accompanied by the toponym “Lahore”. This can be explained by two reasons: first – the character was nominated for this position in the city of Lahore, and the second reason should be sought in the fact that this city has completely changed the life of the character:

“S’il avait eu quelque chose à perdre, c’est sûr que ce serait à Lahore qu’il l’aurait perdu” (Duras, 1997 : 932).

Using a toponym with similar frequency when referring to a character serves again and again to create a poetic effect in the text. However, along with poetry, like Calcutta, the possibility of interpretations of this toponym is no less interesting and rich. Lahore can be equated with love, death, expectation, hope. It is often perceived as an unexplained word:

- C'est à ce point repoussant, Lahore, qu'on ne voit rien d'autre qui puisse lui être comparé?
- On ne peut pas s'en empêcher...je m'excuse de vous dire ça, mais on ne peut pas comprendre Lahore, de quelques façon qu'on s'y prenne (Duras, 1997: 904).

In this passage the author speaks of Lahore in the same way that love can be spoken of by people. This feeling is reinforced by other dialogues in the text. The Vice-Consul from Lahore and Anne-Marie Stretter often revolve around this toponym, which has become a kind of key word and makes the reader think that it is equated with love:

- Pourquoi me parlez-vous de la lèpre ?
- Parce que j'ai l'impression que si j'essayais de vous dire ce que j'aimerais arriver à vous dire, tout s'en irait en poussière... - il tremble-, les mots pour vous dire, à vous, les mots...de moi...pour vous dire à vous, il n'existent pas. Je me tromperais, j'emploierais ceux...pour dire autre chose...une chose arrivé à un autre...
- Sur vous ou sur Lahore ?
- Elle ne fait pas comme l'autre femme, elle n'écarte pas la tête pour voir le visage. Elle ne demande pas, ne reprend pas, n'invite pas à continuer.
- Sur Lahore. (Duras, 1997: 915)

The analysis of the text of the dialogues once again assures us that the toponym Lahore is associated with a mysterious feeling, it is at once something that has happened or that can happen. It is also a feeling, the inner state of the vice-consul as a personality, his identification.

It is noteworthy that in French the words *Lahore* and *love* sound similar (l'amour et Lahore). This toponym, like love, raises a lot of questions, but the answer is never complete. It is noteworthy, that the author asks a rhetorical question about this city in the text: „et Lahore, qu'est ce qu'est ça veut dire Lahore?“ such a formulation clearly echoes the question most often asked about love: “et, l'amour, qu'est ce qu'est ça veut dire l'amour?“



The toponym Lahore is especially often heard during one of the most intimate scenes in the novel, when the vice-consul dances with Anne-Marie Stretter: “Je vous en supplie, d’apercevoir Lahore”. Discovering Lahore means understanding the cause of the crime associated with the pain and boredom of living without love:

“On dit : il s’ennuyait à Lahore.

- L’ennui, ici, c’est un sentiment d’abandon colossal“ (Duras, 1997: 910)

By these interpretations, Lahore appears to be a topos containing various meanings and symbols, it is as much a symbol of pain, sorrow, death and madness as love. There are many examples of this:

„Lahore fait peur [...]“, „Qu’est-ce qu’on dit ? Que le pire, c’est quoi? – Lahore. [...]“, „Lahore avant de la voir il a appelé la mort sur Lahore [...]“ (Duras, 1997: 910-915).

This, if Calcutta is a topos expressing suffering, Lahore is more of a symbol of mysticism, a mystery that encompasses all other meanings, including the pains of Calcutta.

## Conclusion

In the presented research we have tried to show Marguerite Durasian space which is distinguished by special symbolism and poetry in the authors creative works. Based on the study of narrative elements and text analysis, we have found that Marguerite Duras offers a completely new version of the narrative, where the story is necessarily related to space, the relocation of characters in space, movement. If the chronotope according to Bakhtin’s concept, expresses relations intertwined with time and space and are inseparable elements, the Durasian chronotope is mostly spatial and its polyphony is due to the characters’ conflicts in space, the spatial determination of their inner world. Marguerite Duras often mixes the concepts of time and space to create a unique chronotope characteristic only to herself, that does not interrupt movement. The concept of movement is a separate topic of study in this research and brings us closer to the cinematic practice, which is one of the characteristic aspects of many twentieth-century authors, including Marguerite Duras.

The analysis of toponyms carrying the conceptual loading turned out to be extremely interesting in Duras’s artistic discourse. Toponyms are sometimes real geographical places,

sometimes fictional names and often reflect the spiritual condition of the characters. Invented or borrowed from another language, the Durasian toponyms create a special onomatopoeia and make the texts poetic. The writer experiences the influence of the Eastern and Asian spaces, which are related to her childhood years. If in the novel “The Ravishing of Lol W. Stein” most fictional toponyms are of English sounding, “the Vice-Consul” depicts the real geographical space of Indochina. The water space is also real, which is one of the dominant in Durasian texts.

Research has shown that some chronotopes cover essentially the same topics in several novels. These variations chronotopes create an outward movement that simultaneously emphasizes the unity between the novels and the author’s process of constantly rewriting the text. The concept of movement is a separate topic of study in this research and brings us closer to the cinematic practice, which is one of the characteristic aspects of many twentieth-century authors, including Marguerite Duras. Moreover, the cinematic experience not only influences the writer, but herself becomes the author of the famous screenplay for the film “Hiroshima, My Love” by Allen René, and then the film director of “Music”, “India Song” and “Lorry”.

Short phrases that enhance a fragmented view of the world, a space that loses its orientation, that is everywhere, a constant movement that sometimes makes us find and sometimes lose the geographical and temporal signs, a repetitive chronotope of the road as a search for identity, water-space represented by the sea and oceans as an expression of freedom and infinity, foreign-sounding toponyms that make the text poetic, the décor loaded with symbols – such is the panorama of Marguerite Duras’s works, the study of which we have tried with the analysis of the space representation in two of her main novels.

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