

The Images of Water and Their Lasting Indispensability in the 19-th Century Literature

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Abstract. Throughout the ages, Water, in its various forms as salty sea water, fresh river water, or even water-like temporality, has always played an indispensable role in the world of literature. Countless literature works focus on water or uses images of water as a medium of expression. This article aims to uncover the subtle role the images of water play in 19th-century literature and analyze why it prevails as a duplicitous but indispensable image mainly from perspectives of Bioanalysis, religion, and Psychoanalysis.

Keywords: Imageries; 19th-century Literature; Water; Psychology; Bioanalysis.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Significance

Images play a crucial role during the process of literature creation not only because there are rare instances when simple language itself succeeds in giving the fullness of the concept in minds, but also do they exhibit the very aesthetic characteristics of a certain language.

“The essence of poetic language belongs to artistic language, and its highly condensed sentences contain the poet's deep feelings or aspirations.”[1] Because of the linguistic features of these forms, images have a decisive effect on how the language should be arranged.

“In the process of literary creation, especially poetry creation, the choice of image has a significant influence on the expression of emotion in works.”[2] Thanks to the traits and the literary form of poetry and novels, images are widely used among the literature creators regardless of the boundaries of time and space. Ever since ancient times, whether in the East or the West, “literati and poets of all kinds have always consciously or unconsciously applied the technique of image creation in literary creation, which is determined by the characteristics of literature.”[3]

In China, traditional Chinese poets love to apply multiple natural images to the text to bring out the fullness of their sentiments. For example, the images of water and flowers are often utilized in classical Chinese poetry, which shows the very aesthetic characteristics of the Chinese language, therefore putting an emphasis on the profound significance of language. According to a study that centers on these natural images, “The imagery of water and flowers in classical Chinese poetry shows the aesthetic characteristics of the profound significance of language and has become the embodiment of Chinese aesthetic mentality.”[4]

In the West, writers, especially those in the 19th century, also favor those images of nature, amongst those imageries, water appears to be the one which is widely used in poems and novels. In Hölderlin's and Herman Melville's novels, seawater has proven to be an important element. In Hölderlin's late hymns *Mnemosyne*, seawater plays an important role. Also, what the sea means to Melville's novel is like owls to Athens and coals to Newcastle. David Farrel Krell once described Melville as an author exhibiting the features of a sailor-naïf who dabbles in those stories of the sea. To be brief, the tenderness, openness, fluidity, violence, and unpredictability of water may shed light on both ancient and modern writers, providing them with a different way of literature creation. This paper aims to uncover the correlation between the images of water and 19th-century literature and analyze why it prevails as a duplicitous but indispensable image and what are their major functions with examples from some of the representative 19th-century literature creations.

1.2 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into five parts-six parts including introduction and conclusion.

The introduction states the significance and purpose of this essay.

The second chapter makes a brief introduction to images, which includes the definition, classifications, and features of them.

The third chapter will go through some of the 19th-century literature works that focus on water or utilize its images for a better expression, namely Walt Whitman's *Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*, *Out of Cradle Endless Rocking*, and Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, and make a concise analysis of those images applied in the texts.

Then we will present multiple images of "water" used in Herman Melville's early works *Typee*, *Omoo*, and his Middle works *Mardi*, *Benito Cereno*, and *Moby Dick*. We will make an analytic comparison of all these images of water in these works.

The fourth section is divided into six parts, with each one consisting of a brief probe into why water becomes an element with lasting indispensability in 19th-century literature from the perspective of Bioanalysis, a branch of philosophy with naturalist characteristics. Then in the first two subsidiary sections, we will analyze water's importance on a Bioanalytic basis and see how it functions as an indispensable image Bioanalytically in Whitman's, Melville's, and Woolf's works.

The fourth and fifth parts of the fourth section consist of an analysis of why water has been a famous element from the perspective of history and human cultures. Based on this, we will dig further into why and how water became an element with lasting indispensability in 19th-century literature mainly from a view of psychoanalysis, which centers on human sentiments. In the following subsidiary section, we will analyze how these images of water function in Whitman's poems and Woolf's works in a Psychoanalytic way.

The conclusion summarizes the main ideas of this paper, points out the limitations of this paper, and gives some advice for further research.

2. Images

2.1 The Definition of Images

Images are widely used in the realms of psychology, linguistics, literature, and art. In psychology, images refer to something visionary recurring in the human brain, and the one in linguistics is also common to that in psychology.

Although image construction and interpretation in literature is a kind of psychological activity during an author's literature creation and readers' appreciation, and it can also arouse various senses' reactions, images may appear different in literature. They often serve as a medium on which authors put their inner sentiments. According to Lan Chun, a professor in literature, images have been described as a vision derived from specific mental images, image schema is a dynamic and recurring pattern in our perception and bodily operation process, which gives aesthetic functions and coherence to our bodily experience. It means every time the author creates literary works, he or she puts his subjective feelings, emotions, and thoughts on certain objective images selectively, so that those objects turn into "the image of meaning" and vivid artistic images that can be felt, thus making the work more appealing.

Furthermore, the image in psychology can either be aesthetic or non-aesthetic, while the image in literature can only be aesthetic. According to the theory that the English poet C. Day Lewis raised in his *The Poetic Image* in 1947, an image, at its most basic, is made out of a series of "word-pictures". The first and most straightforward word-picture is the image, as English poet C. Day Lewis wrote in *The Poetic Image* (1947), it is a picture made out of words. Shakespeare once depicted an old aging man as a tree standing at the turning point of autumn and winter in *Sonnet 73*, which serves as the word-picture vividly portraying the man's appearance and characteristics.

Let's take *Sonnet 73* as an example. Thomas C. Foster once wrote in his review of this poem, "When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang. Upon those boughs which shake against the cold, Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang. When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang. Now that's a picture in words." [5], therefore, this image has done its first mission--to picture the superficial characteristic of the subject. Furthermore, here comes the second task for it--to perform as a vehicle for metaphors or similes and own its extended meaning. In a word, the image has now surpassed its seeming image and then becomes a reflection of the thesis of a certain literature work. "A bigger job is for that word-picture to act as the vehicle for metaphors or similes." [6] For instance, the extended meaning of this image comes from the term "Deflection of Meanings". Also in Shakespeare's *Sonnet 73*, he aimed to present the image of a man experiencing a certain stage of his life, so the tree in late autumn with few leaves left is only the primary and visionary image. Whenever the image has been presented, it's the time when the deflection of meaning comes into effect. The meanings of the object have deflected toward something else. "Even before the image has been presented, however, its meaning is deflected toward something else. Shakespeare hasn't simply presented a tree or a time of year, but a time of year reflected in a man's time of life." [7]

2.2 The Classifications of Images

From the perspective of diachronic, images are all under the restriction of nationality according to the relationship between them and the cultural accumulation of a certain nation. So, literature images can be categorized into inherited images and innovative images.

2.2.1 The Inherited Images

The inherited images refer to those which were used continuously by authors through generations. These word-pictures appear repeatedly in the literature work through dynasties or ages, and their connotation becomes of stability and consistency in the inheritance. Subject image words often function as the main material medium for poets to express their emotions, and when they are frequently used to express specific thoughts and feelings, they become formulaic image words, the very image words which is an accumulation of national culture and the "reservoir" of it. Those word-pictures not only integrate the authors' own aesthetic taste, experience, and inner sentiments during the process of literature creation but also embody the group consciousness and aesthetic psychology of a nation or ethnic group.

2.2.2 The Innovative Images

The innovative image language refers to those authors choose, process, integrate, and construct to their likings and personal experiences when creating poetry works. The difference between it and the inherited one is that the subject image word which made up its main body does not carry a connotation of stability and convention. On the other hand, the connotation depends on the author's emotional experience and interest in the creative subject, just as Wang Fuzhi said, "mind to mind". Its meaning is exactly the authors' subjective feelings. The innovative image language is also the carrier of authors' personal life experience and their individual aesthetic consciousness.

Still, innovative images can be transformed into inherited images under certain circumstances. When it is constantly reused by other texts, passed down and used by generations of authors, and its meaning is gradually fixed in the cultural integration and enters the semantic system of language, it will be transformed into inherited image words, and then become the symbol and accumulation of national culture.

3. A Brief Catalog of 19th-Century Literature Works that Utilize Images of Water

3.1 The Images of Water in Walt Whitman's Works

To put it straightforwardly, Walt Whitman made water, mainly seawater the main theme in his poem *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking* meanwhile showing his craving for death and some kind of passivity that we experience in the afterlife. In David Farrel Krell's review of this poem, he wrote that when thinking of poetic naturalists, Walt Whitman's *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking* is utterly a poem of the sea.

Through depicting the landscape of himself lying by the seashore as the waves ebb and flow. Whitman succeeded in expressing his yearning for the sea and what lies behind it—death by using epistrophe. "Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves, I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter, Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them. A reminiscence sing." [8] When confronted with those waves, what the sea seems to whisper to the young poet is that low and delicious word "return" repeatedly, be it a return of coming alive or passing away. The waves also remind him of the fleeting nature of the material world.

Also, in his famous poem *Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*, the author built a subtle connection between his self-recognition and the status of being afloat on water. "I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution, I too had receiv'd identity by my body, That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I knew I should be of my body." [9]

This image of "solution" in this excerpt indicates some kind of philosophical feeling of being adrift. Therefore, water succeeded in serving as an impetus for contemplation, which made him reflect on the oneness between his inner self and the world "as though the best of life were floating, being afloat, being a 'float forever held in solution.'" [10]

3.2 The Images of Water in Herman Melville's Early and Middle Works

We will continue the brief analysis with Herman Melville's works, from his early works *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life*, *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas*, and his middle works *Mardi*, *Benito Cereno*, and *Moby Dick*, in which the image of the sea played the key figure. From all these images of water presented in these four works, we can see a gradual transition of the image of water.

In *Typee*, what the ocean appears to be is vast and borderless shelters for the native Polynesians from all the hypocrisy of Puritan American colonists. This has stressed the positive side of the ocean yet somehow lays suspense for the advent of colonizers. "Thrice happy are they who, inhabiting amid the ocean, have never been brought into contaminating contact with the white man." [11]

In *Omoo*, the sequel of *Typee*, the image of the sea has initially shifted to its opposite as it carries a further metaphorical meaning as something paving a road for the whites, the colonizers from Puritan America coming with all their hypocrisies and bigotries. Critics of this book thought this event should be considered a contamination of the indigenous culture by those colonist civilizations as if the natives were dyed like water. The very chapter tells that the islanders were mournfully watching their doom brought by the colonizers who come by the blue sea themselves, and the light brown purity of their indigenous skin complexion had met white contamination. Therefore, the sea has initially shown its two-faced nature as a breeder and exploiter in Melville's fictional universe.

In *Mardi*, his middle work, the sea, to be more precise, the image of the sea has taken up vaguer and more duplicitous forms as a "phenomenon of the sea" and also the "tranced waters". In chapters 2 and 16 of *Mardi*, the author described the sea as deadly silence rubbing the mariners' heads and bones and reminding them of a forest of hidden dangers of the sea. The reviewer Krell once wrote in his review that the second chapter and sixteenth chapter have described the sea as a deadly calm, a calm that makes the mariner's skull a dome full of reverberations and the hollows of his bones the whispering galleries, and also the calm revolutionizes his abdomen and unsettles his mind.

Moreover, in Melville's work *Benito Cereno*, the narrator also described water as that phenomenon of "tranced waters" who was sound asleep but not showing any signs of tranquility, as if it had been made of lead, still but toxic. "The leaden ocean seemed laid out and leaved up, its course finished, soul gone, defunct." [12] This sentence soundly reminds readers of the calm before a storm just as the image of the sea has played its role in *Mardi* in the second and sixteenth chapters.

Now it comes to the famous *Moby Dick*. In *Moby Dick*, the depiction of water has reached its peak with the author presenting its duplicitous image as the protagonist's foster brother and his grim reaper. From Ishmael's encounter with the sea, we can learn his attitude toward it. When he encountered the whale, he realized that the human being is under no circumstances alien to the sea while we are the sea's siblings, so Ishmael exclaimed the instance he encountered the sea, "Then hail, for ever hail, O sea, in whose eternal tossings the wild fowl finds his only rest. Born of the earth, yet suckled by the sea; though hill and valley mothered me, ye billows are my foster-brothers!"

Yet later he tried to gaze into the deep profundity of the sea and knew the fact that it is also a burial ground, a cemetery of drowned mariners who have obeyed the summons of the Thalassic Regressive Undertow and a mother who would even turn against its own offspring. In chapter 111, Ishmael shows how unappeased, how restive, and how ostensibly the Pacific Ocean is in this except, "But not only is the sea such a foe to man who is alien to it, but it is also a fiend to its own offspring...No mercy, no power but its own controls it. Panting and snorting like a mad battle steed that has lost its rider, the masterless ocean overruns the globe." [13]

Scholars tend to think this duplicitous image of the sea in *Moby Dick* not only reflects void or vacuum but also some kind of unspeakable profundity of water. By the end of the novel, Melville presented the plot that Ahab, the protagonist who tried to gaze into the impenetrable profundity eventually sank into the speechless profound ocean. At the end of the novel, Melville wrote a feature about the image of seawater in the protagonist's mind. "Slowly crossing the deck from the scuttle, Ahab leaned over the side, and watched how his shadow in the water sank and sank to his gaze, the more that he strove to pierce the profundity." [14] David Farrel Krell once published a review on this part that the end of *Moby Dick* has marked a peak among the writing of the sea that no one would dare to paraphrase Melville, the author who managed to write in water. Anyone who tries will end up sinking deep into the vortex of mysticism like Ahab, the protagonist, which perfectly reflects the lesser-known perilous side of the water image.

3.3 The Images of Water in Virginia Woolf's *The Wave*

According to David Farrel Krell, a writer and philosopher's analysis, the image of water is deeply rooted in the theme of Virginia's *The Wave*. There exist many images that are "liquified", which literally means they may not appear in the form of liquids but could share similar characteristics with water.

If we took the overall review of this novel by David Farrel Krell which said it is Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* that suggests this notion of a very slow temporality to him. This temporality is like drops dripping slowly in a hidden cave as ecstatic temporality whirls by on the surface of the earth into account, we will see the subtle and indirect presence of water appear frequently throughout the novel. The novel follows the six protagonists through their lives from early school days to old age, developing solely with their interior monologues and stream of consciousness, like what Bernard, a hero in the book uttered in the beginning, saying that his mind slips along like a pale-grey stream reflecting what passes.

Another example is in the seventh chapter in which the writer lady seems to come to speak with a gentleman. Woolf utilized water drops to imply the chronological order of events.

"'And time,' said Bernard, 'lets fall its drop.' The drop that has formed on the roof of the soul falls. On the roof of my mind time, forming, let fall its drop. Last week, as I stood shaving, the drop fell. I, standing with my razor in my hand, became suddenly aware of the merely habitual nature of my action (this is the drop forming) and congratulated my hands, ironically, for keeping at it. Shave, shave, shave, I said. Go on shaving.'" [15]

These images of water in this excerpt seem to serve as a symbol of the fleeting temporality and make the whole novel take up a fluent and unique narrative rhythm.

4. Water, Why and How It's Become So Duplicitous but Indispensable?

4.1 Water and the Universal Der Zug for Mammals

To study the relation between literature and a certain image is in actual to study the relation between the image and its counterpart or even the ideologies lying behind it. This can increase our understanding of the historical mission and function of those images.

The 19th century was also a period with natural science and psychology thriving. By the time of the 1840s, the years have witnessed the rapid growth of “hard” sciences. Hard science may mark the main theme of science during that time for its being utterly objective without any relevance to human sentiments. However, there exists another less well-known philosophical “Romantic” tendency of science which lays emphasis on the subjective initiative of consciousness. According to Karl Schelling, those hard scientific facts, like the fixed frequency of seawater washing against the shore aren't just a matter of stats and science. It may stand for some human sentimental fluctuation because the influence that nature and humans exert on each other is mutual.

To be more specific, from the aspect of bioanalysis, there exists a term named “the thalassic regressive undertow” which Sandór Ferenczi, an Austrian bioanalytic psychologist, first raised in his bioanalytical work *Thalassa: A Theory of Genitality*. The seventh Chapter of Sandór Ferenczi's research on genitality first offers the term “Thalassic Regressive Tendency.” It means every life entity cherishes the wish for their earlier forms of life. “The bioanalytical conception of developmental processes sees everywhere only wishes for the restoration to earlier states of life.”[16]

Moreover, the regressive tendency is so strong that the word tendency fails to convey the actual meaning. Ferenczi preferred to call it Der Zug. Der Zug is something more like a pull or tug that has the power of an irresistible undertow, exerting a force like a locomotive on all the life forms. All in all, Ferenczi began the seventh chapter by admitting his audacious idea of a universal striving toward an existence in the sea that has been lost in primeval time. By that, he meant the underwater environment in the ocean can be proved as the original living place of humans, for that a surprising resemblance between it and the inner environment of human wombs. Ferenczi learned that the saline solution in which humans spend the very first time of their life can be understood in phylogenetic terms as the need to find an ersatz (substitution) for the sea.

What seems to function as the theoretical support of Sandór Ferenczi's assumption is the 19th-century biologists' point that at a certain point in evolutionary history, there was a disastrous draining of the ancient oceans, forcing several aquatic species out of the seawater environment and forced them on a different path that would culminate in species that form an amnion for their offsprings. It is so fun a fact that science has proved that certain catastrophes have wiped out many generations of species on Earth. Science has proved that each period of earth and life history, as manifested in the stratum, ends in catastrophes, be it a Neptunist or Vulcanist one. This means the species on earth. Therefore, the amniotic fluid can be seen as an “introjected sea”, a substitute for the past underwater environment we've long been apart from.

In addition, Sandor Ferenczi also studied the frequency in which the amnion executes contraction to its fetus inside. He took the chick fetus as an example, the contractions begin at one of the very edges of an egg and then progress to the opposite side, rocking the fetus inside back and forth in a rhythmic fashion. According to his observation, “These movements increase up to the eighth day of incubation and then decrease. in the same way as the volume of amniotic fluid”.[17] Surprisingly similar to the frequency in which sea waves flood and ebb on the shore every day. Ferenczi thus stressed that he would find it surprising if this rhythmic rocking had not been used to exhibit an analogy with the surging of sea because according to the last analysis of his, this (the rhythmic rocking) is more than merely a figure of speech.

Loren Eiseley, a naturalist philosopher of bioanalysis, narrated in his *The Immense Journey* how calcium, mainly from the coral reefs, has made its journey to the human bones; It was so immense a journey for those marine elements like corals, gold, oil and balsam to travel from oceans to our body. “The sea, with its gold, oil, and balsam, has made its way to the human endo- and epidermis.”[18] The ocean was and always will be a part of us.

In these naturalists’ opinion, water may prove to be the origin of mammalian life and even the proof that they are still alive. They hold that the world of flesh and bone would be nothing without water. Only dead bodies will appear dehydrated and be settled in a dry and dark environment. “All that is missing for the fetus-like corpse, crouched in its protective stoneware container, is the amnion and its modified sea water that might restore and sustain the defunct. For a time.” [19]

Additionally, nearly all mammalian life forms have fixed body temperature, Loren believed if not of cold-blooded amphibians— all the species come the warmth that is essential to life. And this stability of temperature still stems from their moisture nature, to be specific, all the breeds of mammals have a moist nature with water being the natural principle of moist things.

4.1.1 The Bioanalytic Functions of Water Images in the 19th-century Literature

Generally, about three characteristics belong to images, respectively the characteristics of realism, metaphor, and nationality.

First, as mentioned in the second section, the images in literature can be categorized into two types which are respectively inherited images and innovative images. However, both these images are national and under the restriction of national cultures, be they inherited or innovative. This is because images are still based on the daily language using it as the carrier and material shell, so the image language has the characteristic of nationality.

Besides, since most images have their corresponding specific objects as their objective counterparts in daily life, these figurative and perceptive nominal words can serve as “word pictures” and become the major carrier of literature image language. “*Most of the nominal words corresponding to images are those that represent certain objects and events in daily language. These figurative and perceptive nominal words become image words, and become the subject of the image language.*”[20] From the perspective of linguistics, since most of the image words that bear the main meaning of an image are nominal words that represent the corresponding object in material world, these language symbols have the ability to depict objective scenes and arousing people's sense of association, for that concepts do not exist in people's minds isolated, they often exist in conjunction with the object concerned. Therefore, we can come to the conclusion that the images have the characteristic of basing themselves on the reality.

Many of the images in 19th-century literature works have shown the very characteristics of naturalism, making them better express their sentiments with those images existing in the natural environment. For example, it is as though Melville’s Ishmael in *Moby Dick*, the “unlettered Ishmael” has absorbed all of Karl Schelling’s theory on hard science, and has contemplated the relation of water and life based on theories of psychoanalysis and bioanalysis. With Ishmael's words, Melville once expressed this thought: “Water, that we see in all rivers and oceans, is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life and nature, and this is the key to it all (of the earthly matters).”[21]

Also, in the part above Sandor Ferenczi has mentioned that amnion fluid represents an “injected and ideal sea” of ours. Then such innate fascination toward water exerted on us is deeply rooted in subconsciousness because the oceans, as well as fresh-water streams, can be defined as flesh of water, and they may exert a “cradling of intimi” which means the inner nurturing on our bodies. This is what Ferenczi once pointed out in his review that he thought “let ourselves be cradled” by the sea would be the cry of all incipient vertebrate life. So, maybe the 19th-century authors are driven by this natural call of return, in pursuit of a sense of belonging and self-awareness it gives us. There’s no wonder why Ahab in Melville’s *Moby Dick* would willingly give up their self-control and give in to the profundity of the sea and recognized the sea as their foster brother “*Ahab wholly given over to the*

family of the sea? He does not claim so much for himself, of course. When he commits himself to the billows, his foster brothers."[22]

4.1.2 The Irresistible Call of Return in the 19th-century Literature

However, compared with their counterparts in daily life, there's a fundamental reason why the language in literature is often called "metaphorical language" is that when authors construct these images, they often sink into an unconscious state, which means their thinking mode and rhetorical means are often metaphorical. The author projects his or her inner emotions and experiences onto objective things and integrates them with objective things through the selection of external things and scenery. That is to say, they materialize the mind or spiritualize the object through metaphorical image language.

The famous contemporary philosopher David Farrel Krell proved the relation of the image of water with human sentiments further in his travel log. When cradled in water's embrace, Krell was suddenly subjected to an unconscious state of his mind.

The human body—in this case my own body, floating on its back in Balos Bay—seems itself to be that swaying skiff as it drifts weightless in the sea. Although it is no more than a personal experience, one that anyone might have, the passivity of this cradling seems to me to be philosophically important... [23]

As we can see from the excerpt, the seawater will always spread its arms and sustain Krell's body with open arms like the womb in which he was gestated, rendering him completely passive and giving him a sense of existence and self-awareness.

The same theory applies to the famous 19th-century poet Walt Whitman's "*Crossing Brooklyn Ferry*". The author also associated his self-recognition with the utter passivity of being afloat on water. The stanza "*I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution, I too had receiv'd identity by my body, That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I knew I should be of my body*"[24] precisely revealed that Whitman took deep thinkings when he was adrift, holding by water's embrace. In his description, floating on water inspired him of many ideas and life philosophies, just like what Krell said in his review of this poem that as though the best of one's life were floating, being afloat, or forever being in the state of floating held in solution.

Yet in Virginia Woolf's *The Wave*, such cradled feeling of water was interpreted as a feeling of "giving-over" by a major character in the novel. To explain this feeling we have to succumb to the hallucination Neville experienced for an instant when he begs. In chapter one, the sea somehow managed to summon him. It chattered the spell "come closer, closer" with its lapping sounds and lured Neville, reminding him that "letting ourselves be cradled in the embrace of the sea" is as close as close can get.

4.2 Water, Divinity, and its Two-faced Nature

According to the section above, the images derive from the nominal words and natural phenomena in the material world, and Karl Schelling has proved the Romantic tendency of science that hard scientific facts (objective existence) and human sentiments may mutually affect each other. All in all, we have demonstrated the cradling of "intimi" on a biological basis, so if we dig into this phenomenon further, we will discover a connection between religion, mythology, and water. As one of the most famous inherited images, the image of water has found its way into the human heart through both our worship of nature and our fear of natural catastrophes.

In return for the cradling feeling that water gives us, a couple of our oldest collections of myths tended to introduce the world as nothing but a borderless salty ocean, and this notion has proved to be predominant since then. "Ancient myths have always recognized the importance of water to our origins and livelihood, frequently claiming that the world began from a watery expanse." [25]

Greek myths represented seawater as the very source of vitality and divinity. Like Jean Rudhardt, a scholar of some renown, has pointed out in his study named *Le thème de l'eau primordiale dans la*

mythologie grecque that sea-water represents some kind of source of life, fertility, and vitality, and it is a powerful agent of purification.

Water is also considered the origin of deities by the ancient Greeks. Jean Rudhardt has also emphasized the role of the sea in the main Greek cosmogonies. According to him, the primordial seawater flowing in the Oceanus, the cosmic river is even associated with ambrosia, and ambrosia is also a kind of liquid that gestated the gods' immortality. He also proved this theory of water being the origin of divinity by stressing that the sea is the first element from which all gods and creatures spring in these three cosmogonies, namely Homeric, Hesiodic, and Orphic.

The same goes for that of Mesopotamians, in the early versions of Mesopotamian myths, water was also considered as the origin of gods. "Mesopotamian mythology, in its Babylonian form, claimed there was both salty water and sweet water, which mingled to produce the gods." [26]

However, water has also found its way into our religion. The very first part of the Hebrew Bible introduced that the birth of the god was related to water. It tells that the birth was carried out on its surface. It said that in the beginning, the gods created heaven and earth . . . and the spirit of the gods hovered over the water.

Later in the 15th century, the revised version of the Christian Bible, whose amendment was implemented by King James says that in the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth... And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. Hence, water has been associated with major religions in this way, building its sense of identity in human history.

By contrast, since we also found evidence that water has brought numerous catastrophes throughout the history of evolution, the earthly species may play the role of a helpless child in the face of water of natural settings because each period of earth and life histories, as manifested in the stratum, ends in Neptunist catastrophes. This did explain why human cultures across the world would share the same mythological story that at a certain point in history, their race was threatened by a huge flood. For example, the flood myth is found all over Africa, Australia, Eurasia, and the Americas. Moreover, both the southern and northern versions of the myths share a common theme.

Another historical material is that there are several fragments in which Empedocles instructs young Pausanias, the king of Sparta concerning The Greek myth of nature and its four "roots," with one of which water is one. The nature of water can be defined as "twofold," "duplex," and perhaps even "duplicitous," presumably because the birth of Nestis brought the whirling confusion of Love (from water) and Strife (of water). And he then adds, "And she waters mortal springs with her tears, a saline solution."

In the 19th century, Sigmund Freud took these theories of confusion further. According to Freud, this phenomenon of religion is based on fear of nature. What is one of Freud's most famous theories is that "religion believers often regress to the condition of a helpless child who is afraid of the forces of nature". [27]

So human fear has a significant role to play in the "etiology of religious belief", causing believers' automatic seek for the love of a heavenly father who might exempt them from misfortune.

On the other hand, in Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Romain Rolland pointed out the reason why water somehow took the role of the unconscious heavenly father and be seen as sacred because the water was often seen as the counterpart of the saline environment from which we've long been apart, giving us an utter sense of losing control. In this book, there's an interview between Freud and Romain. Freud's friend Romain Rolland reasserted that water can be considered as the origin of religion because people can declare their piety to religion by having an oceanic feeling. "Even after all the dogmas and liturgies of institutionalized religions have been expunged, says Romain Rolland, one may still call oneself religious based on this oceanic feeling alone" [28]. He developed this theory by intensively opposing Freud's theory of the "oceanic feeling". In Freud's thoroughgoing critique of religion, he referred to the source of religion as "a feeling—an oceanic feeling" that nearly every one of us has experienced, which is also the very religious feeling Rolland nevertheless mentioned, saying Freud has ignored the source of religious feeling. The source would be, in Freud's

understanding of Rolland's words, a special feeling that never abandons him (Rolland). To be more precise, it is a feeling like something without a boundary—the oceanic feeling.

In this case, because of its uncertainty and power of being dominant, water succeeded in fascinating people with the “oceanic feeling” by unconsciously giving them a sweet but anxious feeling of oblivion as if they had always been cradling in their mother's womb with the fear that they might be abandoned someday. Water has now taken the form of an unconscious wish for a heavenly father in humans' minds, making them see it more religiously.

4.2.1 Water, Fear, and Our Own Thoughts

In previous parts, we have discussed the close relationship between water and human sentiments, and such relationships have captured the imagination of literature creators for centuries. Literature is based on emotion. Without the author's subjective emotional experience of the objective world, literature does not exist, even emotion is some kind of liquified activity according to Empedocles. He held that both our blood and water share the same trait of liquidity, so the deed of thinking derives from the liquidity of blood which is also a saline solution running up and down in our body, transpiring not in the brain but in the heart, “Thinking, which dwells in the sea of blood surging forth and back, / Where is especially what human beings call thought. / For the blood that flows about the human heart—this is thought.”[29]

Apart from this, we've talked about the subtle connection between water and divinity. Multiple myths and religions recognized water as divine and formidable for its two-sided nature of being both fertile and dangerous, so it has built emotional connections with humans in other ways. To dig into this phenomenon further, we'll see how images become a material medium through which the author's emotion can be conveyed and expressed.

As we all know, literature comes from emotions. It couldn't exist without the author's subjective emotional experience from the outside world. The creation of image language is based on the author's strong emotional experience of the external objective world. Image language is not only the language that carries the author's emotion but also the existing form of emotional materialization. Triggered by the objective world and real life, the author produces subjective feelings and then expresses them through the image description of concrete objective things.

Therefore, the essence of poetic image language is lyrical language art. When the author describes the image of the objective things as the subject, he adds personal subjective experience, which is not only the communication between the subject and the object but also the re-creation of both. The image description of objective things in poetic image language is the image description that permeates the poet's subjective emotion. Emotion penetrates the object image, and the object image directly reflects the emotion. It is not only the portrayal of real life but also the reflection of the author's aesthetic creation and the carrier of emotional ideas.

4.2.2 The Water That Breeds us and Devours Us

Thus, water, as Thales says, is hidden in all things, above all in water. And like those gods, they are never pacified, not even in the “Pacific.” This makes water (mainly salty water) something two-faced, duplicitous, or even deceitful, and this is also the answer to Karl Schelling's question on water, which says that are not tears, these salty substances manifestly the children of terror, anxiety, discouragement, despair?

As mentioned before, a group of image language is in essence made up of a group of nominal words; It can also be a fixed idiom; But at the same time, it can also be a non-nominal phrase or sentence with image words as the main body. In these phrases or sentences, image words are the core and subject of image language, while other adjectives and verbs are the modification, explanation, and description of the subject image words. Through the choice of concrete words and the use of adjectives and verbs, the poetic image language seems to make people see a vivid picture. This is what readers call “word picture”, so images are able to depict a certain landscape.

Therefore, that general impression of water was also given by Walt Whitman's *Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking*. In Stanza 1 he depicted a landscape of the author himself lying on the beach

listening to the lapping sounds of waves that were coming ashore repeatedly. “Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves, I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter, Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them.” [30]

Through this, Whitman succeeded in emphasizing his yearning for the return to the sea and our universal destination lying underwater—death. When confronted with those waves, what the sea seems to whisper to the young poet is that low and delicious word “return” repeatedly, be it a return of coming alive or passing away. The waves also remind him of the fleeting nature of the material world. Like Heidegger’s existentialist opinion on the world and species, Whitman thought it was clear that beings can be only for the time being. Every being must obey the imperious summons that has always been chanting to them, saying go back where you came from, go jump in the ocean.

In Melville’s *Omoo: A Narrative of Adventures in the South Seas*, the impression of water being an exploiter was fulfilled by it carrying a metaphorical meaning as a medium of the colonizers from Puritan America coming with all their hypocrisies and bigotries, bringing the indigenous great sufferings. This event has been considered a contamination of the indigenous community by the whites’ so-called civilization,

“The islanders themselves, are mournfully watching their doom brought by the colonizers who come by sea...Light brown voluptuousness meets white contamination: the dye is cast. When the inhabitants of some sequestered island first descry the “big canoe” of the Europeans rolling through the blue waters towards their shores, they rush down to the beach in crowds, and with open arms stand ready to embrace the strangers. Fatal embrace!” [31]

From this excerpt, we can infer that the blue ocean was something of a holder to the colonizers’ canoes as the natives were contaminated by the colonizers as if they got dyed like water. Through this, the sea has perfectly shown its two-faced nature as an exploiter.

Also in *Moby Dick*, from the course of Ishmael’s encounter with the sea, we can see this changing of the role of the image of seawater. In chapter 111, The moment Ishmael sails onto the vast sea, he learns that the human being is by no means “alien” to the sea. We too are the sea’s offsprings. While the sea is also a burial ground, a cemetery of drowned mariners who have obeyed the summons of the thalassic regressive undertow (The power of *Der zug* mentioned before) and a mother who turns against its own offsprings. Ishmael shows this fact about how unappeased, how restive, how selfish this Pacific Ocean is by saying, “But not only is the sea such a foe to man who is alien to it, but it is also a fiend to its own offspring...No mercy, no power but its own controls it.”[32]

In *The Wave*, Virginia Woolf also demonstrated the hostile and antagonistic side of the water by “liquifying” one of the six major character’s words and deeds. On page 10, “I dance,” says Jinny, “I ripple. I am thrown over you like a net of light. I lie quivering flung over you.” These depictions of Jinny’s actions which include “ripple” and “quivering” have been interpreted as the strife power of water which stems from Empedocles’ theory of “four roots”. This power prevailed during its confusion with Jinny’s love for Louis. By interpreting Louis’ reply to Jinny, we can see that she is happy in her “osculations” with Louis while the first recipient, young Louis, is not. He replied, “She has found me. I am struck on the nape of the neck. She has kissed me. All is shattered”. It’s like the walls of his mind had been washed away.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary

Images play an important part during the process of literature creation by appearing as the medium of the author’s thoughts and sentiments. Through making a comparative analysis of Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, and Virginia Woolf’s works we discovered water shows a duplicitous and subtle image in 19th-century literature works.

The multitude of factors mentioned above contribute to the indispensability of water in literature and philosophy. From the perspective of bioanalysis, water was proved to be the former site in which humans have lived by Ferenczi, giving similar caresses that humans feel in wombs. In the aspect of

history, religion, and psychoanalysis, due to the caresses water gives to humans, water renders them utterly passive. Multiple authors' sentimental and philosophical feelings are aroused. In the last part, due to the sense of belonging or fear water has exerted on them, writers tend to show their insecurity by presenting the uncertain and antagonistic sides of water.

Nowadays, water is still a prevalent imagery used in written works, helping the authors for a better expression of their thoughts.

5.2 Limitations and Suggestions

Confucius once said: "Language does not give the fullness of the concept in our mind." Since the author is just a college student with limited academic knowledge, and, some analysis and examples may not be so precise or appropriate for a want of his. On the other hand, there may not seem to be adequate supporting evidence provided. Owing to the importance of image and literature, it is really necessary to conduct some further research about the subtle relationship between 19th-century literature and the image of water by acquiring an adequate number of materials and references.

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