The Poetic Element of Water in Selected Poems: A Bachelardian Study

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Abstract: **The study problematised the applicability of Bachelard's elemental theory of imagination to different literary works. Gaston Bachelard is philosopher of elemental imagination. Bachelard can be described as a philosopher who ushered in a new idea of poetics of imagination in his book 'Water and Dreams' in which he relates the poetic imagination of the poet to water. Thus, this article aimed at analysing the poetic element of 'Water' in poetic works which includes '*River Otter*'. '*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*', '*The Last Laugh*'. The article adopted a qualitative approach and desktop methodology. The paper was underpinned by the theory of imagination. The study shows that Bachelard's theory of imagination deals with poetic elements such as 'Fire', 'Water', 'Air'. 'Earth' and 'Space'. The above elements are not elements of nature but show the poetic inclination of the poets which finds manifestation in their works and are taken in the Pre-Socratic sense. The study also shows that Bachelard's theory of imagination is not only applicable to previously mentioned literary works or texts but also brings to the fore the poetic element of the poet, that is, the poetic element of 'Water'. The study concludes that these poems exhibit imagery of water which is reflected through the lexicon used in the poems and brings out the poetic element of the poet.**

Keywords: **Bachelard, Cultural complexes, elemental imagination, water, different types of waters, poetry.**

I. INTRODUCTION

This article is an attempt to analyse the elemental **imagination** of water in the poems, *River Otter, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *The Last Laugh*. This study is concerned with the poetic imagination **which** focuses on the poetic element of 'Water'. Bachelard authored a book *Water and Dreams an Essay On the Imagination of Matter* in which he postulated that different literary works on careful reading show their poetic elements. It is worth noting that Bachelard applies a different theory of imagination to analyse poetic works (Bachelard).

The study *investigates* the poetic element of water in these previously mentioned poems and the applicability of the Poetics of Water.

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There seems to be insufficient literature in English on the application of Bachelardian Poetics to poetry. Therefore, this article applies the Poetics of Water as propounded by Gaston Bachelard to four selected poems. Stated as a question was the knowledge gap that this study was analysing: What is the applicability of Bachelard's Poetics of 'Water' to poetry? The objectives of this study were: to investigate the poetic imagery of selected poems to find the poetic element of 'Water'; to discover the poetic element of the poet, and **to** explore the applicability of Bachelard's poetics of Water. The paper proceeds as follows: introduction, objectives, literature review, theoretical locale, methodology, results and discussions, and conclusion.

A. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

i) To investigate the poetic imagery of selected poems to find the poetic element of 'water';

ii) To discover the poetic element of the poet;

iii) To explore the applicability of Bachelard's poetics of 'water'.

B. Theoretical Locale and Literature Review

This study is concerned with Bachelardian Poetics and is underpinned by the theory of imagination (Bachelard, 1964; Bachelard, 1969; Bachelard, 1994; Bachelard, 2002; Bachelard, 2006; Bachelard, 2011; Bachelard and Gaudin, 2014). The natural world is predominant in the work of Bachelard. As a proponent of the theory of imagination, Bachelard propounded the theory of material imagination. Others have used linguistic-based models whereas Bachelard propagates a theory of imagination that is related to matter. He connects the poetic elements to a poet's temperament which includes: Fire, Water, Air, and Earth as poetic elements that influence the imagination of the poets. The analysis of the element of water using the theory of imagination is befitting in the present paper.

Bachelard introduces two dimensions of imagination in *Water and Dreams*, namely, the *formal imagination* and the *material imagination* (Bachelard, 2006). This idea of material imagination and recognising poets and novelists by their material poetic element is new in recent times. Bachelard believes that matter is the 'unconscious of form', and is the unseen impulse that imbues a particular image with its poetic power. Hence, the study of culture complexes is meant to provide a method of understanding how the imagination produces certain kinds of images. Bachelard diverted his interests from the philosophy of science to the faculty of imagination. Gilson (1963) observes that he has suddenly turned

his interest to a psychoanalysis of the most unorthodox sort since what then was being psychoanalysed was not even people but an element. This shows that Bachelard moved from the world of reason and science to that of imagination and poetry. Bachelard's works on poetic imagination opened up a different angle of approach.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study applied a qualitative approach, particularly a descriptive research design. The qualitative approach was adopted because it was desktop research. The study used four poetic texts which were sampled purposively. Patton (1990) states that purposive sampling is the most common method of sampling in qualitative research where individuals, groups, and settings are considered for selection if they are 'informant rich'. In the present study, four poetic texts that dealt with the poetic element of 'Water' in poetic works of 'River Otter', '', 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', and 'The Last Laugh' were purposively selected as they were considered as 'informant rich' in the sense that they all have a reverie of fire which points to Bachelardian Poetics. The homogenous purposive sampling was used. The above poetic works were used as secondary sources of data collection to justify the qualitative and descriptive objectives of the desktop research (Chaleunvong, 2009)

III. WATER AND DREAMS (2006)

In *Water and Dreams*, Bachelard moves away from psychoanalysis to deeper psychology and examines the circumstances surrounding the literary expression of images in an attempt to make a contribution to the psychology of literary creation (Bachelard, 2006:161). It can be argued that the poet recognises the significant distinction between psychology and psychoanalysis in poetic images. A psychology of literary creation is used to establish the connection between deep complexes born of repression and certain pre-reflective attitudes that govern the very process of reflection (Bachelard, 2006:17). Bachelard calls these attitudes culture complexes because they are grafted on more profound complexes psychoanalysis has brought to light. The philosopher insists that it is not nature, but culture that he wishes to explore and he insists that both are linked, that like the natural complex of psychoanalysis, the culture complex of his psychology of literary criticism is a means of transforming psychic energy

Although Bachelard mentions psychological literary criticism, he argues that it is not sufficient to be used to analyse the poetic image. Rather than attempting to exorcise them as part of a psychoanalysis of objective knowledge, Bachelard develops the conditions for a rational approach to their manifestation in language. Instead of concentrating on the sources of images as he would do using psychoanalysis, he focuses on the transformation of such sources when an image is put into words. It can be argued that the study of culture complexes is meant to provide a method of understanding how imagination produces certain kinds of images. The above argument fits well with Bachelard's conviction that images are reducible and that they portray one of the four types of imagination. It can further be argued that Bachelard is more of a powerful illustrator of psychological criticism than a practitioner.

In *Water and Dreams*, he introduces different complexes associated with water such as 'cosmic narcissism' which represents serene calm water. The poet shows that water is an element of material imagination. According to Bachelard, water is not only a group of images reflected in momentary reveries, but also a reservoir of images that gradually becomes a contributor to images. The poet ushers in the idea of different types of water such as, 'clear water', 'springtime waters', 'running waters', maternal water', 'feminine water', 'heavy waters', and 'violent waters'. He creates different cultural complexes such as 'narcissism', 'amorous waters', 'Charon complex', 'Ophelia complex' and 'Swinburne complex.'

Bachelard refers to the ambivalence of the swimmer who initially is victorious, but later engulfed by the water and is ultimately defeated. 'Xerxes complex' is equally sadistic because it shows the whipping of Hellespont. He argues that both 'Swinburne' and 'Xerxes' complexes recognise that imagination assigns a value either negative or positive, and occasionally both to an element such as water. Bachelard views a complex as a symptomatic, psychological phenomenon that a single feature is enough to reveal in its entirety (Bachelard, 2006:85). Bachelard indicates that particular images of water in poetry symbolise a particular type of water. Different authors imagine water differently. It is in the tactile 'heavy water' of Edgar Allan Poe that the real power of the imagination of water is revealed.

Bachelard describes the commitment of affectivity to a phenomenon as a 'valorisation' of the object. Affectivity can be defined as: relating to, arising from, or influencing feelings or emotions which results in expressing emotion (merriam-webster.com). A perception which is experienced as a subjective value is the richness of human experience. The poet adds that affectivity is a commitment to the pleasures of personal imagination. Thus, valorisation asserts the creativity of the individual which is determined by objective evaluation. Bachelard has discussed the concept of 'valorisation' in *Water and Dreams*, *Air and Dreams*, and in *The Poetics of Space*. This valorisation also takes place when a quality, such as purity or impurity, is recognised imaginatively in water. When valorisation happens in traditional philosophical realism, all such qualities are attributed to the element itself, to the substance which in terms of imagination, acts either purely or impurely. In terms of imagination, even a small amount of pure water can purify a far greater amount, while the reverse is also true of a small quantity of impure water. Bachelard calls this action of valorised substance a fundamental law of *material imagination* (Bachelard, 2006:143).

IV. WATER

This sub-section deals with the analysis of the selected works, such as' River Otter' and 'The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner' by S.T. Coleridge a romantic poet from England, 'The Last Laugh' by Cheela Chilala a Zambian poet. The above selected works have the poetic element of water at the centre. This section illustrates how life and death are portrayed through the poetic element of water. Selected works are closely analysed using Bachelard's Poetics of imagination, ecocriticism, and phenomenology.

The main premise of this analysis is drawn from *Water and Dreams* of Gaston Bachelard. Water represents the mystery of creation; birth, death, and resurrection. Jung describes water as the

commonest symbol for the unconscious. The sea is the mother of all life; the symbol of spiritual mystery and infinity, death, and rebirth. Bachelard, in *Water and Dreams,* gives examples of various types of water such as *'clear waters'* which provide objective conditions for '*narcissism*' and '*amorous waters'*. Joachim Gasquet states "The world is an immense Narcissus in the act of thinking about himself" (Water and Dreams, 2006:24). Narcissus is a figure from Greek Mythology who was so handsome that he fell in love with his image reflected in a pool of water. Bachelard brings forth the idea of idealising narcissism which is important for the psychology of imagination. Narcissism does not always produce neuroses. It also plays a positive role in aesthetics and expeditious transportation in literary work. 'Clear Waters, Springtime Waters' is associated with running clear water, Bachelard says about clear water:

To the play of clear waters and springtime waters, all shimmering with images must be added a component part common to the poetry of both: coolness. We shall encounter this quality of water's mass when studying myths of purity and see that coolness is a power of awakening. Psychology of imagination must include all the immediate data of aesthetic consciousness (2006:31).

Clear waters and springtime waters are rejuvenating. These find expression in different poetic works. The coolness of clear waters permeates one's being and provides a basis for new creations. He cites examples such as 'Deep Waters, Dormant Waters, Dead Waters, and Heavy Waters; which show death and decay. Bachelard defines these waters as:

Heavy water never becomes light; murky water never clears. It is always the opposite. The story of water is the human tale of dying water. Reverie sometimes begins in the presence of limpid water filled with vast reflections, bubbling with crystalline music. It ends in the bosom of sad and sombre water, emitting strange and dismal murmurs. As it rediscovers its dead, reverie near the water, like a submerged universe, also dies (2006:47).

The imagery of deep, dead waters gravitates towards images of life drawn toward death or of life wanting to die. Water becomes a melancholy matter. Edgar Alan Poe is a poet of 'deep waters'.

English Romantic poetry is populated with images of the poetic element of water. It can be argued that water is part of nature. In '*Water and Dreams',* Bachelard elucidates:

If a reverie is to be pursued with constancy a written work requires, to be more than simply a way of filling in time, it must discover its matter. A material element must provide its own substance, its particular rules, and poetics. It is not simply coincidental that primitive philosophies often made a decisive choice along these lines. They associated with their formal principles one of the four fundamental elements thus became signs of *philosophic disposition* (2006:3).

The above quote shows that the material elements are related to different poetic dispositions. Water is a fragile element and its reverie is not having the same durability as yielded by the earth. Yet the poems quoted here leave deep imprints on the reader.

A. Analysis of to the River Otter by Coleridge (1803)

The first poet to be discussed is the English Romantic Poet Coleridge. His works such as *to the River Otter*, *The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner,* and *Frost at Midnight* are replete with images of the poetic element of water. Bachelard comments on Coleridge:"Did Coleridge not write to Wedgewood in 1803: "… my whole Being is filled with waves, as it were, that roll &stumble, one this way, & one that way, like things that have no common master" (2006:171).

The above quote by Bachelard establishes Coleridge as the poet of the poetic element of water. His poems are a testimony to this fact. 'To the River Otter*'* is dominated by the images of water and the title itself is indicative of the poetic element of water. All symbols and imageries point towards the reverie by water. Bachelard posits: "For the material images that most attract us rend to correspond to those elements that vie for predominance in our psyches, often governing the passions and ideals of an entire life" (Bachelard, 2006:3-5).

It is significant to note that the above aspect is apparent in Coleridge's works. Coleridge's works are a tapestry of images of water for example: a brook, the frost, or the sea. He creates a web of imagery of water. The following poem is a testimony to Coleridge's (1793) elemental preference:

To the River Otter
Dear native Brook! Wild streamlet of the West!
How many various-fated years have passed?
What happy and what mournful hours since last
I skimmed the smooth thin stone along thy breast,
Numbering its light leaps! Yet so deep imprest
Sink the sweet scenes of childhood, that mine eyes
I never shut amid the sunny ray,
But straight with all their tints thy waters rise,
Thy crossing plank, thy marge with willows grey,
And bedded sand that veined with various dyes
Gleamed through bright transparence! On my way,
Visions of Childhood! Oft have ye beguiled
Lone manhood's cares, yet waking fondest sighs:
Ah! That once more I were a careless Child!
(To the River Otter, Coleridge)

Water and humanity are related in this poem where memory plays an important role. He never shut his eyes as a child and now, in the present, all the small details come 'flooding' back to fill out the scene, including the sand at the bottom of the shallow stream. Just like Wordsworth after visiting the river Wye after a gap of five years in the poem '*Tintern Abbey'*. Personification is used to bestow life to this stream or the brook which retains the memories of the past. The poet goes back to them in the presence of this water body. A sense of melancholy pervades this sonnet; there is a sense of beguilement too. There are sad memories of the past associated with it. Coupe says: "Coleridge was an ally of William Wordsworth, even if his laudable attempt to formulate a theory of Imagination that would accommodate both the human mind and the natural world" (2004:19).

The above quote shows that Coleridge too believed in the power of 'nature'. Memories take him back to a natural scene. The Romantics paved the way for a new environmentalism. Significantly, the poet says:

Dear native Brook! Wild streamlet of the West!

How many various fated years have passed?
What happy and what mournful hours since last.
(to the River Otter)

It can be argued that the poet is nostalgic about the river Otter, and calls it '*Dear native brook*' and *'Wild streamlet of the* West'; such endearing terms he uses. The above description shows his love of nature and that nature is the prima donna in this poem. Coleridge's focus here is to show the dynamic transformations of the poetic element of water; at one moment it is a calm 'native brook', whereas, at the other moment, it transforms into a 'wild streamlet'. A careful reading of this poem shows different facets of water. At one moment it is calm, at another it is wild. Further analysis shows another aspect of water. Similarly, Bachelard's phenomenology emphasises the readers' participation in the transformations that elemental reveries can evoke, rather than capturing the visual forms they adopt along the way. Bachelard in *Water and Dreams* and argues:

Hence the urgency to work through such images – weighing them in our hearts to resolve their ambivalences within ourselves- rather than simply describing their patterns from an aesthetic distance. As an offspring of participation in the substance of inspiration or divine radiance that gives life to ideas and things (2017:137).

The imagery of water in this poem emerges from the matter itself, that is, from the material element of water. There is a paradox when the persona says in line 2 as he is both happy and mournful. He goes back to his childhood and remembers that as a child, careless and free, the child is wild like the streamlet. Through the element of water, the ambivalence of being happy and sad is portrayed. Bachelard gives the image the highest importance. Higonnet in her article "Bachelard and the Romantic Imagination" argues :

While his terms change (image, metaphor symbol, and archetype acquire different relative significance as his work progresses), the ontological value attached to the image parallels that attributed to the imagination. Poetic images are the miniatures of élan vital. Hence whether the subject is fire, water, air, earth, space, or reverie itself, the focus of Bachelard's literary interpretation is always the image (1981:26)

The above quote shows that Coleridge's poetic images correspond to the poetic element of water. A careful reading of this poem indicates that there are predominant images of 'clear waters' and 'springtime waters'. The song of the river is quite evident in this poem. Bachelard states "Happy is he who is awakened by the cool song of the stream, by the real voice of living nature" (2006:32-33).

The poet is in a similar state of mind; he is extremely happy in the proximity of the river and nature. The 'clear waters' and 'springtime waters' become a receptacle for memory. The poem is an amalgamation of current events and memories; which are *'Yet so deep imprest'*.

The persona amused himself by skimming smooth thin stones which leapt lightly on the breast of the water. One might have thought this act was frivolous, but on the contrary, it left – 'yet so deep imprest'. It has left a deep impression on the psyche of the persona. The memories are both happy and sad. The persona must have lost a dear one. He compares his childhood memories with the tinted waters of the stream. Coleridge's imagination has vested special effects in this scene. The 'various-fated years' are like the 'various dyes' that vein the sand of the river bed. The poet uses personification to present the imagery of water. The descriptive details of the sonnet gleam brightly, because Coleridge has bestowed great significance. Bachelard says: "If a reverie is to be pursued with the constancy a written work requires, to be more than simply a way of filling in time, it must discover its matter. A material element must provide its own substance, its particular rules, and poetics" (2006:3).

It is significant to note that two major themes of the ecocritical approach find expression in this poem which is 'nature' and 'animism'. Throughout the poem, one can find images of nature in its pristine form, such as clear water and springtime water. The above-mentioned images suggest a positive attitude towards the well-being of the environment and portray a picture of enlightened anthropocentrism. Enlightened anthropocentrism refers to man being at the centre of the ecosystem, yet showing great care toward the environment. During Coleridge's times, there were no such issues, but the marring of the countryside by industrialization has impacted the English Romantic poetry a great deal. Therefore, one finds images of pristine nature, and unsoiled nature in the poetry of Coleridge, such as:

Thy crossing plank, thy marge with willows grey,
And bedded sand that veined with various dyes
Gleamed through thy bright transparence! …
(To the River Otter)

The River Otter is so clear that one can see the flow of the river and the colourful stones at the bottom on which the sun shines through the water with a rainbow effect. This is reminiscent of Wordsworth's poem 'My Heart Leaps Up'; in this poem, the poet looks up to the sky. The uncontaminated water is a depiction of untarnished nature before the environmental catastrophe. These lines are quite uplifting; the colourful hues represent various beautiful memories imbedded in the flow of this river. The childhood memories are suddenly resurrected, beautiful and full of serenity; on the other hand, few sad ones. The river or the poetic element of water becomes a reservoir of ambivalent memories of the poet. The sonnet is sublime because it has such deep symbolism and the beauty of imagery and emotions. Water too represents the unconscious; that connection can be seen in the poem. For Coleridge, such experiences are at sometimes religious. The purity of this scene is just a memory of unspoiled nature; these images show an affinity towards enlightened environmentalism.

'*The crossing plank'* symbolises something surreal, a sad memory. The persona is affected by the death of a dear one. There is a depiction of contradictory emotions in this poem. In view of Bachelard, there is an amalgamation of two poetic elements of water and earth in this poem based on the images of water, sand, and stones. Of course, water symbolises the poetic element of water, and stones and sand are part of the poetic element of earth. However, the emphasis of the poem is on the element of water. One can say there is a presence of the third poetic element of air as the 'plank' which is part of a tree. According to Bachelard, a tree is a symbol of the poetic element of air. Bachelard in his book '*Air* and *Dreams'* says: "..I have already shown that for the dynamic imagination, the pine tree is a true axis of dynamic reverie. The upright tree is an obvious force that carries terrestrial life in the blue sky" (2011:204).

A plank is a part of a tree and it has a special meaning in the context of this poem. 'Plank or wood' is always connected with death, whether a funeral pyre or a coffin. The moment of '*the crossing plank'* is a quite significant image since it changes the happy mood of the poem to a sombre tone. The sadness is evident in the poem. It is pertinent to mention the culture complex 'Charon complex' mentioned by Bachelard by which to gain immortality, one must board *Charon's boat*. Bachelard says:

Moreover, how could funeral poetry still be attached to images so far removed from our civilisation. The persistence of a poetic and dramatic attraction to such an image, in rational terms so false and exhausted, can serve to show us that natural dreams and learned traditions come together in a culture complex. With this in mind we can put forward a Charon complex (2006:76).

The 'plank' is a symbol of a 'casket' as well as the 'boat' carrying the 'dead' across. This is the image that makes this poem sad and melancholy. Gazdac & Gazdac observe that: "The culture complex of Charon is related to the well-known myth of Charon, the ferryman, who transported souls from this life to the underworld" (2014:241).

The metaphor of the 'crossing plank' is extremely important as it provides great depth to this poem. The colour of the '*willows grey*' points towards the tragedy. According to the ancient civilisations, water is the place of eternal rest.

There is a sense of reverence towards nature in this poem. In a letter to Sotheby of 1802, Coleridge expressed his views emphatically. Wimsatt comments: "The poet's heart and intellect should be combined, intimately combined and unified with the great appearances of nature, and not merely held in solution and loose mixture with them" (Wimsatt, 1970:107).

Coleridge practices what he says, which is evident in this poem. Nature is omnipresent in his poetry and different hues of it have been presented in the Ode.

Naturally, Coleridge's poem shows another element of the ecocritical approach; that is 'Animism', apart from 'Nature'. The poet bestows a persona on *The River Otter* through personification. The river is a place of reverence, memories, and burial. At first, he addresses the river as '*Dear native Brook'*; further, many other qualities are bestowed to the same; which are human attributes. Not only in the first line but many more such as '*thy breast*', and '*thy bright* transparence', the river is depicted as a mother. Jung views 'water' as the maternal element; that is what is portrayed in the poem. These images establish the animistic attitude of the poet. The descriptive details of the sonnet shine brightly because Coleridge has vested them with significance.

B. Analysis of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by S.T. Coleridge

'The Rime of the Ancient' Mariner is one of the most famous poems written by Coleridge. The present work undertakes an analysis of only one stanza which is pertinent to this study. The poem takes the form of a voyage of discovery, both literally and figuratively. The Mariner is a conflicted figure. 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' depicts pain and suffering through which universal harmony is restored. The following lines show a cry of suffering,

Water, water everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Not any drop to drink.
(The Rime of the Ancient Mariner by S. T. Coleridge)

The ocean or nature was disturbed by the killing of the Albatross the sacred bird. In these lines, the killing of the Albatross is avenged. The Albatross represents the spiritual world. The persona's suffering is great; the biggest trauma is when you are surrounded by water and *'And all the boards shrink'*; the days are devoid of moisture.

'Water, water everywhere,
Not a drop to drink.'

These two lines are so poignant, the persona is surrounded by water but he is dying of thirst.

He is surrounded by 'deep deadly waters' which cannot quench his thirst. Bachelard says "Now, in dynamic poetry, things are not what they are, but what they are becoming. They become in images just what they become in reverie, in our interminable day dreams. To contemplate water is to slip away, dissolve, and die" (2006:47).

Coleridge's imagery in these lines guides one's thoughts toward death. Death seems to be immanent. The element of water symbolises death.

C. Analysis of The Last Laugh by Cheela Chilala (2006)

Cheela Chilala is a poet from Zambia. His poem *The Last Laugh* is quite rich in imagery and symbolism. The main oeuvre of Chilala's poetic engagement reflects him as a poet committed to condemning ills and decadence in his society. This poem is a combination of four poetic elements, namely, 'Fire', 'Water', 'Air', and 'Earth'. The last stanza of his poem is quite pertinent to this study. The poem is about resilient spirit, resurrection, and immortality. The indestructible human spirit is depicted in the poem through vivid imagery. The analysis is done according to the elements of the poem which align with the poetic element of the chapter. A brief analysis of the poem is included for the sake of clarity.

The Last Laugh (Chilala, 2006):
If you drown me in the river
You will not have seen the last of me
I will fatten the fish in the river
And a thousand pieces of me
Will live in a thousand bellies
Of a thousand fish
I will kick through their tails
I will swim through their fins
And someday I will return to shore,
Hiding in the fisherman's net
And then I will re-emerge at your dinner table
And have the last laugh
(Last Stanza, Chilala)

The Last Laugh is a poem of great human will and strength. The poet weaves a tapestry of rich imagery through which he conveys his emotions. The poem is written in the run-on-line form. The use of repetition and assonance gives an oral quality to the poem. Continuous use of *'I'* is like a battle cry. The indestructible human spirit is the core of this poem. The poet emphasizes the African spirit which cannot be subdued. Like the legend of Phoenix, the African spirit will survive.

Ecocriticism can be applied to analyse this poem since 'nature' and 'animism' are manifested in this poem. There is a plethora of natural imagery such as '*And cause the hidden seed to germinate*' and '*I will reach out again through their branches*'; where both lines show natural acts. Animism is evident in the second example which says *'reach out again through their branches'.* The human attributes are bestowed to a plant hence animism is present. 'Animism' is one of the themes of ecocriticism hence this poem points towards sustainability. *The Last Laugh* contains a potpourri of dilating differing experiences, but which are knitted under the metaphor of different poetic elements.

The last stanza shows its element as water, which is the element of burial and resurrection. Therefore, the last stanza is devoted to the poetic element of water. 'Deep-Water' is the material element of this stanza of *The Last Laugh. 'I'* is the vitality of this poem, it is the life force. Even after immersion into the deep waters, the persona survives in the bellies '*Of a thousand fish*'. At first, the persona survives through the branches and the seed, then through the belly of the fish. This is the perfect example of the Charon Complex which is established by Gaston Bachelard who says:

The Celts used strange and diverse means regarding the disposal of human remains. In one country, they were burned, and the native tree furnished the wood for the pyre; in another, the Todtenbaum (tree of death), hollowed out with a hatchet, served as a casket for its owner. The casket was buried in the ground unless it was abandoned to the river's current, which was to carry it heaven knows where (2006:72).

The Last Laugh completes the Charon Complex which was set by Bachelard. At first, the persona is buried in the manure heap. Then it germinates into a thousand pods and creates a forest, which is teeming with ferocious lions. These fearsome lions are a threat to the oppressor. Whatever ways the oppressor tries he cannot banish the persona. The imagery is so powerful. One becomes a thousand attacking flying fins and tails. The persona re-emerges at the dinner table of the oppressor which shows the indomitable spirit of the persona or the whole of Africa. These images complete the Charon complex. Immortal human spirit and endeavour are shown through this poem. The persona remains immortal.

Animism is present throughout the poem such as 'resurrect through the plants'; 'And the forest will teem with lions, And I will haunt you through the lions', and 'I will swim through their fins'. One can decipher that non-humans are given a human status which points towards 'animism' which is a prominent element of ecocriticism. Animism has become inextricably associated with humanity. 'The Last Laugh' is a depiction of the persona's ordeal by fire and the indefatigable spirit of Africa.

In this chapter, the researcher has analysed several poems that belong to the poetic elements of *Fire* and *Water*. This analysis shows how different poets show their poetic elements which reflect their literary works. The analysis also reveals that Bachelard's Poetics can be applied to literary works. In this case, the poetics of Gaston Bachelard are viable to be studied. Cultural complexes can also be deciphered in the analysed poems. On the other hand, the ecocritical approach brought out different tenets which include 'nature' 'apocalypse', and 'animism'.

V. CONCLUSION

From the findings, it is obvious that Gaston Bachelard is truly distinct and unique and continues to be a relevant object of study in his own right. Bachelard's theory of material imagination of water emerges from the amalgamation of ideas that involved a more a more protracted more complex network of material images, and ecological awareness. This study showed the poetic element of the different poets; during the analysis it was established as the element of 'Water'. Bachelard is a proto-environmentalist like Thoreau and in today's world he is quite relevant.

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