

Stacy Lockhart

Nimi Finnigan

English 1302

December 3, 2020

Water and Its Ability to Transform and Heal

Water has been around as long as the earth has existed. The Bible says “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” (New King James Version, Gen. 1.2) Along with water being a huge part of earth, it is also important for our bodies. Sixty percent of the adult body and even more of a child's body is water. “It is an essential nutrient, more important to life than any of the other essential nutrients. Water supports good health.” (Rolfes and Whitney 2019) I believe it is safe to say that water is an important part of many aspects of life. Water can be a means of transformation, a conduit for change to take place, if you will. Water can also heal us from the inside out and the outside in.

In “A Streetcar Named Desire” and “Greasy Lake” we see water being used as a means of transformation for Stanley, Blanche and the unnamed narrator in “Greasy Lake”. The first transformation we see take place is with Stanley. He has his friends over and they have a poker game at his and Stella’s house and Stanley gets drunk. He gets angry with Stella for turning the radio on and he throws the radio out of the window. After he does this, Stella gets upset and wants all of Stanley’s friends to leave. Stanley follows her and hits her. After this, his friends

drag him to the bathroom and put him in the shower, clothes, and all, to sober him up. This is where we see the transformation from water take place with Stanley. The text says, "After a moment, Stanley comes out of the bathroom dripping water and still in his clinging wet polka dot drawers." (Williams 59) He yells for Stella and says that she has left him. "He breaks into sobs. Then he goes to the phone and dials, still shuddering with sobs." (Williams 59) This is where the transformation has taken place for Stanley. He has been thrown in the shower by his friends so that he can come to his senses. He goes from being filled with rage and hits Stella, to having a shower and now he is remorseful of what he did and upset that Stella is gone. The change takes place with the application of the water in the shower. Now we can look at Blanche and the many times, throughout "A Streetcar Named Desire," that we read about her bathing. Why is that? What effect does the water have on Blanche? It seems like a good idea to investigate all the times she takes a bath, and for how long she is in the tub. Blanche has left behind a very sordid past. Her past is filled with sexual encounters with many men. It makes sense to assume that Blanche is trying to clean herself of all those encounters. That she feels dirty and wants to get rid of the feeling that this gives her. In the scene where Stanley fills Stella in on her sister's past, Blanche is in the tub and has been all afternoon. Throughout their conversation, Blanche is heard singing. "In the bathroom, the water goes on loud; little breathless cries and peals of laughter are heard as if a child were frolicking in the tub." (Williams 108) The water causes Blanche to feel like a child again. A transformation from the adult she is, the life she lives and the problems she faces. Later Blanche exits the bathroom finally and tells Stella, "Oh, I feel so good after my long, hot bath, I feel so good and cool and –rested! So, refreshed!" (Williams 113) We also have some insight into what the baths do for her. Blanche says, "I take hot baths for my nerves. Hydrotherapy, they call it." (Williams 118) In the online article "Types and Benefits of Hydrotherapy,"

Wong defines hydrotherapy as the use of water, both internally and externally and at varying temperatures, for health purposes. (2020) In this case the water serves as a way for Blanche to transform herself from one mindset into another calmer and more positive one. In “Greasy Lake” the unnamed narrator finds himself in an unpleasant situation. He is in the dirty lake next to a corpse after him and 2 others almost kill a man and rape a girl. As he is in the lake hiding, he has realizations that being a ‘dangerous character’ is not all its chalked up to be. He realizes that they almost killed someone and that is not the life he wants. The narrator even says, “I contemplated suicide,” the water, even being dirty helps transform his state of mind and to rethink things. (Boyle 1985) This is a transformation from the bad boy he thought he wanted to be. So, looking at “A Streetcar Named Desire” and “Greasy Lake” we can see examples of how water can bring about change. Looking at this from a biblical sense, we see that through baptism with water, a man is made new. Matthew 3:11 says, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (New King James Version Matt. 3.11) Throughout history there are many examples of transformation taking place because of water.

If water can cause transformation, then it makes sense to say it can facilitate healing from the inside out. When a baby is growing in its mother's womb, it is surrounded by amniotic fluid. Amniotic fluid is mostly water in the early weeks of pregnancy. In the book “Bodies of Water- Postpartum Feminist Phenomenology,” it says “We are created in water, we gestate in water, we are born into an atmosphere of the same water although more diffuse, we take in water, we harbor it, it sustains and protects us, it leaves us...at the same time as we are always, to some extent, in it.” (Astrida 86) Water is such an important part of us that it is part of our very cells. “Every cell contains fluid of the exact composition that is best for the cell.” (Rolfes and Whitney

2019) Water has many important functions in the body that support life and survival. Some of which are carrying nutrients and waste products throughout the body, participation in metabolic reactions, aiding in the regulation of body temperature and the list goes on and on. In the e-book “The Nature of Water,” it says that “Kidneys weigh 300g in total (less than 1/200 of the whole body) and are composed of cells which filter nearly 200kg of water every day, and then reabsorb it almost completely with only a modest amount of energy.” (De Santo 1) Without water, we would be nothing. Our body would cease to function and could no longer maintain homeostasis. Water is a vital part of life on the inside of our bodies.

Thus, water can also facilitate healing from the outside in. Recently I was diagnosed with interstitial cystitis, which is also known as bladder pain syndrome. Not even pain medicines would help. I was having extreme pain that was landing me in the emergency room. When I was diagnosed with this, I was told by my doctor to only drink water. I wasn’t sent home with any antibiotics or anything to help. Just the orders to only drink water. My bladder needed a break from coffee, sodas and tea. I shared my diagnoses with some friends, and I learned there are other women that I know that have interstitial cystitis. Some that even said they just live with the pain. So, I thought I was doomed to a life of only drinking water or drinking what I wanted and living with the pain. For months I only drank water. And lots of it to flush out my bladder. Sure enough, the symptoms and pain went away. I was scared to drink anything else. One day I finally decided to try some green tea. To my surprise it didn’t cause me pain. So, I say all of that to say that I am intrigued with the fact that water alone helped my body heal. When I put water into my body, my body used the water to heal the problems with my bladder. There were no medications taken, only water. Therefore, I believe that water is powerful and can heal our bodies. The article titled Effects of Hydration Status on Cognitive Performance and Mood suggest that

“Accumulating evidence supports the notion that hydration state affects cognitive ability and mood. Severe dehydration has been shown to cause cognitive deficits such as short-term memory and visual perceptual abilities as well as mood disturbance, whereas water consumption can improve cognitive performance, particularly visual attention and mood.” (Masento 2014) It is said that “People who ingest a sufficient amount of the right kinds of liquids have better health and body functioning and circulation overall, which are most important to Super Health and Long Life.” (Bragg 10)

“A Streetcar Named Desire” and “Greasy Lake” contain some great examples of water's effect on its protagonists. We've seen that water is a means for transformation and that it can heal. That our very being depends on it, down to the cells. Therefore, water is essential for all of life and should not be taken for granted.

"If there is magic on this planet, it is contained in water. ~ Loren Eiseley" (Fontaine)

Works Cited

- Astrida Neimanis. *Bodies of Water : Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. *EBSCOhost*,
search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,sso&db=nlebk&AN=1408767&site=ehost-live.
- Bragg, Paul Chappuis, and Patricia Bragg. *Water : The Shocking Truth That Can Save Your Life!* Vol. Rev. and expanded ed., 30th printing, Bragg Health Science, 2004. *EBSCOhost*,
search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,sso&db=nlebk&AN=122358&site=ehost-live.
- Boyle, T. C. *Greasy Lake*, Viking Press, 1985
- De Santo, R. M., et al. *The Nature of Water*. Nova Science Publishers, Inc, 2013. *EBSCOhost*,
search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,sso&db=nlebk&AN=681318&site=ehost-livMasento, Natalie A., et al. "Effects of Hydration Status on Cognitive Performance and Mood." *British Journal of Nutrition*, vol. 111, no. 10, 2014, pp. 1841–1852., doi:10.1017/S0007114513004455.
- Fontaine, Deyra J. "Eight Quotes That Illustrate Why Water is Life." *Canadian Wildlife Federation*, <http://blog.cwf-fcf.org/index.php/en/8-quotes-that-illustrate-why-water-is-life/>. Accessed 3 December 2020.

Rolfes, Sharon R. and Whitney, Ellie. *Understanding Nutrition*. E-book, Cengage Learning, Inc., 2019.

The Bible. New King James Version, Thomas Nelson, 1997.

Williams, Tennessee. *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Faber, 2019

Wong, Cathy. *Types and Benefits of Hydrotherapy*. Holistic Health, 24 Sept. 2020,

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/different-types-of-hydrotherapy-89993#:~:text=Hydrotherapy%20is%20the%20use%20of,sitz%20baths%2C%20and%20colonic%20cleansing>. Accessed 3 Dec. 2020.