The Korean Journal of Dance Studies, Vol.100, No.3(2025), pp. 61-81.
https://doi.org/10.16877/kjds.100.3.202509.61

Water as Psychological Metaphors in 19th Century Romantic Ballet*

– Focusing on C. G. Jung's Concept of the Anima –

Roh, Youngjae**

I. Introduction
II. Understanding the Psychology of Water and the Feminine Archetype
III. Negative Anima: Water and Femininity in Romantic Ballet
IV. Conclusion
References
Abstract

I. Introduction

1. Purpose of the Study

In 2013, American historian John R. Gillis published an essay titled「The Blue Humanities」(2013), in which he proposed a new humanities perspective centered on the sea and called for dismantling narrative structures that have long been oriented toward the land. The essay is regarded as a practical work that expands the theory of the Blue Humanities—pioneered by English literary scholar Steve Mentz(2009)—from an abstract academic concept into a sociocultural sphere of practice. Gillis seeks to reimagine the sea as an aesthetic and imaginative entity in its own right, moving away from the traditional view of it as merely a medium for navigation, trade, and human activity—a shift he terms the "second discovery of the sea." This redefinition presents the sea as a three-dimensional medium with its own history, geography, and vitality, serving as a locus for the expansion of both scientific inquiry and humanistic thought(Gillis, 2013).

This shift in perspective also led to a renewed appreciation for the presence of water in art and literature from the nineteenth century onward. The paintings of William Turner and Winslow Homer, and the novels of Herman Melville and Jules Verne, for example, portray the sea as a mysterious,

* This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea(NRF-2024S1A5B5A16026871)
** Academic Research Professor at the Institute for the Humanities, Silla University, balletyj@gmail.com

sensuous, and metaphor-rich subject, emphasizing the significance of water's aesthetic and imaginative dimensions. This marks a movement away from treating water as a static background element toward embracing it as an active and responsive space of the mind.

Building on this shift, the blue humanities have repositioned the sea and water not merely as backdrops for navigation and trade but as sites of reflection shaping human history, culture, and imagination, thereby broadening their significance. This discursive shift provides a framework for reinterpreting water imagery in Romantic ballet, where water can be examined not merely as a stage device but rather as a symbol that conveys emotional and psychological meaning. Accordingly, analyzing water imagery in ballet both engages with the humanistic meanings of water articulated by the blue humanities, and opens possibilities for uncovering the distinctive psychological dimensions that emerge in dance.

This study aims to explore the expansion of this humanistic engagement with, and metaphorical representation of, water in nineteenth-century art through the medium of classical ballet. In particular, the recurring aquatic backdrops of lakes, seas, and storms in Romantic ballets of the period function as more than ornamental stage scenery; they serve as archetypal elements that shape the drama's emotional and psychological resonance. Of special interest is the persistent negative association between water and femininity in nineteenth-century ballet. Here, water is often intertwined with alluring yet destructive female figures—spirits, ghosts, mermaids, or nymphs—that generate narrative structures in which love is reduced to death and desire to ruin.

These feminine images are profoundly archetypal, exemplified by the *femme fatale*, which in analytical psychology can be interpreted as the "killing anima" or "negative femininity," the shadow aspect of the unconscious feminine archetype. Carl Gustav Jung, the founder of analytical psychology, regarded water as a universal symbol of the human unconscious and conceived it as a medium for probing the individual's most deeply embedded emotions, repressed impulses, and those dimensions of the psyche that lie beyond the boundaries of conscious awareness.

Therefore, in this paper, I explore how water–feminine imagery in nineteenth-century ballets functions as an emotional symbolic system that conveys unconscious fears, desires, and death from the perspective of analytical psychology, while also engaging with the growing scholarly discourse of the Blue Humanities. Specifically, I examine the archetypal feminine qualities of water, using the concept of the collective unconscious—a key concept of analytical psychology—as the theoretical framework for expanding humanistic inquiry. In doing so, I argue that water in ballet is not merely a stage setting or dramatic device, but a symbolic space where primordial psychological archetypes intersect. Ultimately, my aim is to establish a humanities-based foundation for advancing psychological and humanistic thought through art by positioning classical ballet within the scope of the water humanities.

There has been substantial scholarship in the humanities—particularly in religion, literature, and mythology—that has examined artworks and artistic production from the standpoint of analytical psychology, grounded in Jung's view of art as a manifold expression of the collective unconscious. However, only a few scholars have applied this perspective to dance studies, and I draw attention to three pioneering works(Na, 2007; Roh, 2020, 2021). These studies have enriched the psychological understanding of dance by applying the foundational concepts and principal theories of analytical psychology to the analysis of ballet. While these contributions have addressed broad aspects such as overall structural analysis and diachronic interpretations of classical works, this study differentiates itself by deepening the scope of previous research through the exploration of a specific archetypal figure and by seeking to connect this focus with contemporary academic discourse, which is currently experiencing a marked surge of interest in water.

Although blue humanities approaches to art and culture have become increasingly prominent, research directly linking them to dance remains scarce(Roh, 2025, p. 304). This study therefore undertakes a humanistic inquiry that brings water and dance into dialogue. It seeks to illuminate the symbolic meanings of water and the feminine archetype through a Jungian framework and to expand thematic and discursive diversity within contemporary humanities. In particular, interpretations of water imagery in ballet from the perspective of analytical psychology are exceedingly rare, and this research seeks to address that gap. By doing so, it contributes new perspectives and academic value simultaneously to dance studies, blue humanities, and analytical psychology.

2. Research Overview and Methodology

As a theoretical background, I examine various perspectives on the psychology of water, including the concept of the anima, the feminine as an expression of the collective unconscious in analytical psychology, and the feminine principle inherent in the anima archetype. Then, as an example of the conjunction between water and feminine imagery, I expand the Blue Humanities interpretation of classical ballet by analyzing the psychology of the negative anima as represented by Wilis and Ondine, two prominent female figures in nineteenth-century ballet. Although water-associated female characters appear in classical ballet in a variety of forms, this study focuses on Wilis and Ondine to contribute to the broader nineteenth-century artistic discourse on water and to address characters and psychological dimensions that have not been examined in depth in prior scholarship.

This study employs a qualitative research design that combines literature review with performance analysis. It begins with a comprehensive examination of scholarly sources in mythology, religion, philosophy, and psychology to trace the symbolic and psychological dimensions of water. The psychological analysis is grounded in 『*The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*』(1956, 1966, 1968, 1984) as well as Jung's other major writings, which provide the theoretical framework for interpreting water

in relation to the unconscious, archetypes, and the anima. Drawing on this framework, Jungian concepts are applied directly to the analysis of ballets, focusing on how choreography and character traits articulate and communicate the symbolic nexus between water and the feminine. By linking theoretical inquiry with choreographic interpretation, this methodology enables a rigorous exploration of the psychological depth of water imagery as realized in ballet.

3. Scope and Subjects of the Study

This study analyzes the characters of the Wilis in「*Giselle*」and Ondine in「*Ondine*」. While there are many versions of classical ballets depending on the choreographer, in the case of「*Giselle*」, the choreography of Marius Petipa—based on the nineteenth-century works of Jean Coralli and Jules Perrot—has become the standard. Therefore, this study focuses on the Royal Ballet's 2017 performance of「*Giselle*」(2017), while also discussing the representation and symbolism of the Wilis by referring to comparable scenes from major ballet companies.

In the case of「*Ondine*」, I refer to the version(2010) choreographed by Frederick Ashton in the twentieth century, based on the original nineteenth-century work by Jules Perrot. Ashton's production introduces a modern sensibility by altering the music, costumes, and elements of the original narrative. Perrot's nineteenth-century original was reconstructed by Pierre Lacotte—often referred to as a "ballet archaeologist"(Cappelle, 2023)—and premiered by the Bolshoi Ballet in 2006, but it has not been performed since. Ashton's version, by contrast, remains part of the Royal Ballet's core repertoire to this day and is available in secondary recordings, making it a central reference in this discussion. While Ashton's choreography is regarded as incorporating a distinctly modern, twentieth-century sensibility, this study remains faithful to the archetypal essence of the original work, placing greater emphasis on the enduring psychological symbolism and narrative content that have persisted unchanged through contemporary reinterpretations.

II. Understanding the Psychology of Water and the Feminine Archetype

1. Overview of Water Symbolism and Psychology

Water has held profound symbolic meaning throughout human culture. In ancient mythology and religion, it often appears as both a source of life and a symbol of purification and regeneration. In his analysis of the image of primordial water as representing the initial state of chaos in many world mythologies, religious scholar Mircea Eliade observes: "The waters symbolize the universal sum of virtualities; they are *fons et origo*, 'spring and origin,' the reservoir of all the possibilities of existence;

they precede every form and support every creation"(Eliade, 1987, p. 130).

According to this view, the waters of chaos represent the primordial womb of infinite possibility and potential that precedes all forms. Indeed, in many creation myths, water is depicted as the chaotic or undifferentiated state that precedes creation, serving as the primordial matrix that prepares the birth of order. For example, in creation myths such as the biblical Book of Genesis and the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, deep waters or seas appear at the beginning, symbolizing the chaos and unconscious abyss that existed before the creation of the universe.

At the same time, these primordial waters are also the birthplace of new order and life. The act of submerging signifies the dissolution of the old order or self, while emerging from the water denotes rebirth and renewal. As Eliade notes, "Contact with water always involves regeneration because on the one hand dissolution is followed by a 'new birth,' on the other hand immersion makes life fertile and multiplies the potential"(Eliade, 1996, p. 212).

For this reason, water's role as a symbol of healing has been emphasized across cultures. Since antiquity, it has been employed as a ritual instrument to renew consciousness; immersion or washing rituals—such as bathing in the sacred rivers of Hinduism or the Christian sacrament of baptism—symbolize the washing away of sin or the past and rebirth into a new state. Purification through water is thus not merely a physical cleansing, but a psychological rebirth: a transformative process(metanoia) in which the chaos of the unconscious is traversed to achieve the renewal of consciousness.

In literature and art, water has frequently served as a metaphor for psychological states. Calm lakes and stormy oceans, for instance, mirror emotional states such as serenity and chaos, while the fluidity and depth of water are often portrayed as reflecting the spectrum of human emotions. In the Western cultural imagination, emotions are closely associated with the symbolism of water, exemplified by the "tears of happiness and sorrow"(Crowley, 2008, p. 180). Moreover, the contrast between a still lake and turbulent waves is often employed to symbolize a tranquil mind versus turbulent emotions, and the phrase "a flood of emotions" describes the experience of the unconscious overflowing with repressed feelings.

In this way, water functions both as a vessel and as a mirror for the deepest emotions of the heart, frequently appearing in literature and art as a projection of the human condition. For example, in many of William Shakespeare's plays, the sea serves as "a device for exploring a range of human emotions and experiences"(Royal Museums Greenwich), while in Hermann Hesse's novels, the flow of a river is used as a symbol of life and time.

The philosopher of imagination Gaston Bachelard devotes his book 『*Water and Dreams*』(1942) to examining the psychology of water and tracing the roots of imagination to this elemental source. His study of various literary representations of water—clear water, deep water, feminine water and violent water—led him to formulate a theory of material imagination, in which material elements are endowed

with life. For Bachelard, imagination emerges from the interaction between the dynamic forces of nature—water, fire, earth, and air—and the human psyche. These forces, inherent in nature, can be interpreted in psychological terms as “archetypes,” with the image of water closely aligned with archetypal imagery.

In analytical psychology, water is a central archetypal image symbolizing the world of the unconscious. Jung observed that “water is the commonest symbol for the unconscious”, and even defined it as “spirit that has become unconscious” (Jung, 1968, p. 18). The image of being submerged in a deep lake or ocean represents the abyss of the personal and collective unconscious that lies beneath conscious awareness. In dream analysis, water is often interpreted as a symbol that reveals the hidden contents of the mind. Jung likened the psychological turmoil individuals experience to “stormy waters” and warned that an overwhelming flood of unconscious material can lead to “mental drowning” that threatens the stability of the self.

Nevertheless, Jung considered the willingness to take this risk, which involves descending into the “sea” of the unconscious, whether as a deep dive or a “night voyage”, to be central to the individuation process of discovering and integrating the self. In other words, it is only when the boundaries of the ego are lowered, allowing immersion in the waters of the unconscious, that a new confluence of conscious and unconscious can be created(Crowley, 2008, p. 181). Thus, water bridges the unconscious and the conscious, emotion and reason, serving as a potent metaphor for psychological transformation and healing. As Jung analogized, “where there is no water nothing lives; where there is too much of it everything drowns”(Jung, 1984, pp. 704-705); humans must find a balance between engaging with the life-giving and purifying aspects of the unconscious and avoiding total submersion in its depths.

Finally, water is also a symbol deeply intertwined with the feminine, embodying abundance, healing, and mystery. Across cultures, water has been associated with the feminine principle, possessing the qualities of a mother who gives birth to and nurtures life. Jung emphasized this maternal aspect of water, referring to the sea as “the mother of all life”(Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman & Willingham, 2011, p. 227). The soft, enveloping nature of water and the image of the abyss as a gateway to the unconscious are closely related to Jung’s anima archetype. In the next chapter, I explore the concept of the anima as an expression of the collective unconscious and examine the femininity of water as a symbolic manifestation of the anima.

2. Anima and the Water Feminine: Femininity as the Collective Unconscious

One of the most distinctive features of Jungian psychology, one of the depth psychologies concerned with the exploration of the unconscious, is its view that the human unconscious exists on two levels: the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The collective unconscious, an

original concept developed by Jung, is a repository of universal themes and symbols that have existed since the beginning of time. Whereas the content of the personal unconscious derives from an individual's personality and specific life experiences, the collective unconscious contains the shared heritage of the entire human race, transcending individual characteristics. It is composed of various archetypes, which are innate psychological patterns of behavior and perception that tend to form recurring possibilities and images appearing across time, space, and culture. In other words, archetypes are core emotions and recurrent experiences common to all humanity, though the images in which they manifest may take a wide variety of forms, including human figures, objects, and elements of nature.

In Jungian psychology, the feminine principle appears as the anima, an archetype within the collective unconscious. In relative terms, the anima is complemented by its counterpart, the animus, which embodies the archetype of the masculine principle. Both the anima and the animus function as rational personifications within the male and female psyche, respectively, serving as psychological mediators between the ego and the self, a bridge linking the conscious and unconscious, the body and the soul. Jung maintained that every man possesses an anima, or inner feminine element, while every woman possesses an animus, or inner masculine element. The anima comprises the sum of a man's perceptions and feelings about the feminine, initially modeled after the mother; likewise, the animus reflects a woman's experienced image of masculinity, modeled after the father. These archetypes exert a profound influence on how individuals relate to the world and to others, especially to the opposite sex, and when they remain unintegrated, individuals unconsciously project their anima or animus onto others, forming relationships with an inner illusion rather than engaging in genuine encounters.

Jung identified four broad stages of the anima, which he likened to the levels of the Eros cult described in the late classical period, personifying them as "Eve, Helen, Mary, and Sophia" (Jung, 1966, p. 174). Eve represents the instinctive, biological woman, the natural female figure first emerging from the male unconscious. Helen embodies intellect, beauty, and worldly success, possessing an external charm and an enigmatic presence. Mary signifies the virtuous and sacred feminine, embodying moral integrity, compassion, and emotional depth, and serving as a moral compass. The final stage, Sophia, represents the image of the wise and integrated soul, the ideal state in which the anima is fully assimilated into the male psyche, and functions as the spiritual guide and perfected image of the soul (Jung, ed., 1964, p. 195). These four stages symbolize the developmental journey of the human soul, tracing its psychological evolution from physical identification to spiritual integration.

All archetypes possess a dual nature, and the anima is no exception. It does not exist solely in an idealized form but also manifests a shadow aspect. The negative anima, in particular, can evoke in

men emotions such as cynicism, despair, worthlessness, and anxiety, or conversely, arrogance, pride, and anger. These manifestations undermine connections between individuals and things, fostering disconnection and dissociation. At times, she incites resentment and a desire for separation from all beings, including oneself. Her excessive activity and possessiveness can act as a corrosive force that erodes relationships, isolates individuals, breeds ill will, and may even drive them toward hatred and danger. Yet this process of destruction and dissolution can also mark an initiatory turning point, dismantling entrenched belief systems and outdated ego structures, thereby setting one on an inward journey toward renewal. Once overcome, it can lead to integration and self-actualization.

In relation to the femininity of water, Jung used the duality of the mother archetype to explain the archetype's ambivalent nature. In his discussion of maternal imagery, Jung identified deep bodies of water—oceans, seas, and wells—as possessing symbolic maternal attributes. As he noted, "Water, and particularly deep water, usually has a maternal significance, roughly corresponding to 'womb'" (Jung, 1956, p. 267). Similarly, Analytical psychologist Erich Neumann associated water with vessel symbolism, observing that bodies of containing water—groundwater, the ocean, lakes, ponds—represent the "primordial womb of life" (Neumann, 2015, p. 47). Water has long been one of the great mother symbols, with the vast and deep ocean often serving as a metaphor for the womb that holds life. From this perspective, water embodies the positive maternal role, nurturing vitality and creativity. Jung referred to this aspect as the "all-giving and caring good mother," and water conveys this same nurturing quality, sustaining and purifying human life.

However, the femininity of water is not invariably benign. Jung emphasized the dual nature of the mother archetype, conceptualizing it as both "the loving and the terrible mother"(Jung, 1968, p. 82). In parallel, the symbol of water contains both luminous and shadowed aspects. A dark abyss or a raging flood signifies threatening and destructive femininity. In this respect, water can be feared as a moving abyss, an uncontrollable force of the unconscious. Thus, the symbol of water embodies the great feminine principle that encompasses both the individual and collective unconscious, offering both healing and destruction—dual forces integral to the psychological process of transformation. Ultimately, the femininity of water, like the ambivalence of the anima, represents both the creative energies and the destructive impulses within us, suggesting that bringing these forces into consciousness and integrating them is essential for spiritual maturity and self-actualization.

From a Jungian psychological perspective, art serves as a manifestation of archetypes of the collective unconscious and as a channel through which the collective unconscious can be experienced and integrated. Many classical ballets, whose central themes revolve around love and the interplay between male and female characters, unfold through fantasy, enabling the recreation and experience of the dual anima archetype in multiple forms. The settings and temporal spaces inhabited by anthropomorphized spirits and feminine principles—such as Eve and Helen—coalesce to evoke the

power of the dual archetype and broaden the horizons of consciousness. In the following chapter, I will examine specific depictions of the negative anima in relation to water in ballet and explore their deeper psychological significance.

III. Negative Anima: Water and Femininity in Romantic Ballet

The premise underlying this discussion is that a work of art constitutes the complete psychological structure of an individual. As evidenced in Jungian analysis of ballets, artworks are regarded as depictions of an individual's inner life or as journeys toward self-actualization(Roh, 2021, p. 36). However, it is essential to note that when approaching a work of art from a psychological perspective, the interpretation and depth of understanding can vary according to the identity of the protagonist. Building on this, this study, which focuses on the theme of the negative anima, proceeds from the premise that ballet may be read as the inner world of the male protagonist, particularly in relation to the anima, the inner feminine personality within men.

As discussed earlier, every archetype embodies both a light and a dark dimension, containing capacities for creation as well as destruction. This raises the following question: How is the negative aspect of an archetype charged with such intense emotional force represented in dance, and what implications does this dark element hold for the development of the human psyche? In this chapter, I analyze the representation of negative femininity emerging from the interplay of water and female figures through the characters of the Wilis and Ondine, and I illuminate the psychological meanings embedded in these portrayals.

1. Wilis in「*Giselle*」

A) Etymology and Archetypal Origins

Fantasy, expressed through unreal characters and settings, is a defining element of nineteenth century Romantic ballet, often drawing upon fairy tales, legends, folk traditions, and Romantic literature. From an analytical psychology perspective, the fantastical device in ballet can be interpreted as an unconscious journey undertaken by the male protagonist. It symbolizes the encounter between the realistic male figure and the idealized yet unreal female figure, who represents the protagonist's unconscious psychic image or inner personality(Roh, 2021, p. 32).

Act II of「*Giselle*」serves as the locus where Albrecht's fantasy is fully realized, revealing "the duality of the anima archetype", in which redemption and revenge coexist. The Wilis in this act, far from being mere ghosts of maidens who died before marriage, are imbued with a complex identity shaped by the artistic imagination of the Romantic era. It is well known that the Wilis were drawn

from the prose of German poet Heinrich Heine, adapted by Théophile Gautier into the ballet's libretto. A further examination of their origins reveals the Wilis' distinctly aqueous nature. Heine's stylized rendering of the Wilis derives from the Slavic mythological water spirit known as the Vila(plural Vili), with closely related variants found throughout the Slavic world. Typically depicted as beautiful maidens, the Vila are said to dwell in forests and mountains, delight in singing and dancing, and often live near bodies of water where they swim, dive, splash, and play.[1)]

A common feature uniting these spirits across regions is their otherworldly presence in nature as dancing maiden-spirits. Their affinity for water appears in nineteenth century woodblock prints portraying them as mermaids with fish-like lower bodies, or in paintings that depict them dancing with their feet in water. Rather than inhabiting grand, barren mountains or open plains, they are situated in lush, watery landscapes—marshes, valleys, wells, pools, and watermills—where they roam with a lighthearted, playful spirit <Figure 1>. Heine's "ghostly bride" motif specifically recalls the Samovili, figures from Bulgarian and Slovak folklore.[2)] The Samovila, or Vila Samodiva, is likewise a forest spirit whose domain lies near rivers and lakes(Angelova-Damyanova, 2003). Another striking trait among these spirits is their inherent dual nature: they are both benevolent and malevolent, and if wronged or mistreated, they retaliate with merciless death. In Serbian mythology, the Vila Ravijojla is explicitly a water spirit, and it is this "warrior" dimension that has drawn comparisons to the Norse Valkyries.

<Figure 1>「Le Villi」(1906) by Giuliano Bartolomeo[3)]

1) Marius Petipa Society(n.d.). "Giselle". ***Marius Petipa Society***. < https://petipasociety.com/giselle/, 2025. 06. 20>.
2) Marius Petipa Society(n.d.). "Giselle". ***Marius Petipa Society***. < https://petipasociety.com/giselle/, 2025. 06. 20>.
3) Bartolomeo, G. B. (1906). "Le Villi [oil on canvas]". ***Gallerie d'Italia –Milano***. <https://gallerieditalia.com/en/online-museums/artworks/le_villi-1671/, 2025. 06. 30>.

B) The Symbolism of the Wilis as a Negative Anima

The Wilis in「*Giselle*」, whose archetypal elements derive from Slavic mythology and folklore, are closely linked to the symbolism of water and can be viewed as figures emerging at the intersection between the imagery of water and the psychological structure of femininity. As discussed in the previous chapter, water has been associated with femininity since antiquity, serving as a symbol of the unconscious and connoting emotion, death, destructiveness, and the origin of life. Romantic art embraced and deepened this ambivalent nature of water, and the Wilis may be understood as one of its crystallizations.

The setting of Act II, located at Giselle's grave, is saturated with symbols that evoke the unconscious, such as woods and ponds. The nocturnal atmosphere—moonlight, watery mist, and the stillness of night—stands in stark contrast to the reality depicted in Act I (Roh, 2021, p. 34). This watery domain, described as a lake or pond, is not merely a backdrop but a metaphorical space: a stagnant, shadowed abyss, explicitly defined as a "damp and shady" forest. Notably, the representation of water in「*Giselle*」is largely implicit. Although the setting is located at the water's edge, in most versions of the ballet its physical characteristics—shape, size, and depth—remain undefined. Yet its wetness is unmistakable.

From a psychological perspective, the water in Act II functions to expand the Wilis' realm, reflecting a diminished state of consciousness in Albrecht, the protagonist in the realm of reality. The "romantic scenery" of dusky early morning moonlight, fog and haze, and moisture-laden aquatic plants and trees blurs vision and dissolves the boundary between reality and fantasy. In the 1863 production of「*Giselle*」(1863), two mirrors were used to create reflections of water(Beaumont, p. 61), thereby amplifying its fantastical quality. This romanticized staging is inherently tied to illusion and operates as a medium through which the boundary between self and unconscious collapses.

The blurring of this boundary signifies the penetration of the unconscious, leading to an experience akin to dreamlike immersion—what Jung described as the lowering of the level of consciousness. Jung(2015) analyzed such romantic fantasies in his discussion of the poet Gérard de Nerval's『*Aurélia*』(1855). Drawing upon Nerval's assertion that "Dream is a second life," Jung explored the ecstatic yet terrifying experience of being overtaken by the collective unconscious as it floods into waking reality. The *ballet blanc* effect achieved by the Wilis in Act II of「*Giselle*」is historically recognized as a hallmark of Romantic ballet. Psychologically, however, the interplay of lighting, costume, and movement evokes multi-layered emotional responses through an aesthetic of hallucination.

The anima is an inherited feminine element in the human psyche with deep historical roots. In men, it often manifests as "mood" and "emotion". Operating within the collective unconscious, the anima encompasses the totality of femininity—the entire experiential reality of being a woman—and thus includes not only loving emotions such as passion, ecstasy, and tenderness, but also darker affects

such as depression, fear, anger, moodiness, and loneliness. Feelings that are consciously "unknown" or perceived as "unmanly" emerge as expressions of the anima in the unconscious. As an archetype, the anima is "not merely an intellectual concept, but has the capacity to release tremendous energy" (이부영, 2016, p. 114). In its negative form, the anima can be likened to a primal violence that overwhelms and neutralizes a man's conscious faculties, seizing control of his mind.

The corps de ballet of the Wilis against Hilarion in「*Giselle*」vividly embodies this dynamic of the negative anima. The destructive and murderous femininity represented by the Wilis is most dramatically apparent in Hilarion's final moments. Cast into a lake to meet a horrific death, Hilarion becomes the personification of this archetypal force. The dance of the Wilis, fully consonant with the essence of Romantic aesthetics, symbolizes the violent discharge of archetypal energy from a psychological perspective. Their sudden appearance from all directions, the relentless whirling of their circles, and the chaos generated as they press in on Hilarion magnify his fear and lead to his loss of consciousness. The collective movement of the Wilis, creating unity through their corps de ballet choreography, invades the stage space with the fluidity of flowing water or surging waves, embodying the primal emotions of water spirits in their ruthless vengeance. Hilarion's disappearance into a dimly perceived watery corner of the stage can thus be interpreted as the symbolic image of a human being overwhelmed and destroyed by the merciless force of the unconscious.

2. Ondine in「*Ondine*」

A) Etymology and Literary Origin

If the nineteenth century Romantic ballet「*La Sylphide*」(1832) is defined by the "spirit of air,"「*Ondine*」is its aquatic counterpart, synonymous with the "spirit of water," and stands as a representative work that integrates the imagery of water into ballet. The etymology and origins of Ondine parallel those of Sylphide. The name "Ondine" (or "Undine") denotes a mythological being associated with water, derived from the Latin *unda*, meaning "wave" or "water," combined with the feminine suffix -ine, producing the meaning "feminine water spirit." The concept of elemental spirits was systematically articulated by the sixteenth century alchemist and physician Paracelsus in his treatise『*A Book on Nymphs, Sylphs, Pygmies, and Salamanders, and on the Other Spirits*』(1566). In this work, Paracelsus divided nature into four elements and assigned a category of spirit to each: the Undines(nymphs) governed water.

Much like the Vila in「*Giselle*」, Ondine appears under various names depending on cultural and geographical context—nereids, limnades, naiads, mermaids, potamides, among others. Contemporary audiences are more familiar with cognate figures such as the Little Mermaid, the Siren, or Lorelei. They are typically depicted in female form, endowed with feminine emotions, and interacting with

humans. As nature spirits, they are portrayed as closest to humanity, possessing a longing to acquire a soul through marriage to a mortal man. Numerous legends recount their arrival in the human world through the aid of fishermen, yet in most narratives they ultimately return to the god of the sea. Paracelsus' animist framework provided two enduring motifs that would shape later literature: "the acquisition of a soul through marriage to a human man" and "the destruction of the marriage due to the man's breach of promise"(최민숙, 이은화, 윤현자, 김미선, 송소민, 2005, p. 149).

Undine first entered the literary canon through the 1811 novella of the same name by German Romantic author Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué. Its plot centers on a flawed hero already betrothed to a human fiancée. In this work, Undine is portrayed as a water nymph who falls in love with a mortal man—a narrative that popularized the trope and ensured its recurrence in artistic genres such as opera and ballet. Tchaikovsky also began composing an opera titled「*Undine*」, but abandoned the project, later reusing portions of its music for the Odette–Siegfried pas de deux in Act II of「*Swan Lake*」(Macaulay, 2009). As for the ballet「*Ondine*」, productions appeared in Vienna and Berlin, with「*Ondine, ou La Naïade*」(1843) premiering in London in 1843. Choreographed by Jules Perrot to music by Cesare Pugni and starring Fanny Cerrito, the work remained in the repertoire until the late nineteenth century, when it was rechoreographed by Marius Petipa.[4] Taking its subtitle from a term for a water nymph, Perrot's「*Ondine*」adapts Fouqué's novella to suit the female-centered ballet aesthetic of the era. The narrative's rivalry between a supernatural being and a mortal fiancée, along with the introduction of a queen who commands the waters, parallels popular Romantic ballets of the time such as「*La Sylphide*」and「*Giselle*」.

The work was revived in the twentieth century by British choreographer Frederick Ashton, whose「*Ondine*」continued the lineage of nineteenth century water-spirit ballets while diverging significantly in both motivation and process. Premiering in 1958 and starring Margot Fonteyn, an icon of British ballet, Ashton's version was inspired by the play「*Ondine*」(1936), first staged in Paris in 1936. Having examined two versions of the nineteenth century ballet's libretto, Ashton ultimately opted to evoke rather than reconstruct the earlier production(Kavanagh, 1996, p. 405). His「*Ondine*」retained the literary foundation of Fouqué's novella but introduced new choreography, contemporary music, and fantastical stage design to visually and musically reinterpret the Romantic narrative.

Ashton's collaboration with composer Hans Werner Henze was particularly close, drawing comparisons to the partnership of Petipa and Tchaikovsky. The decision to combine modern music with ballet was, at the time, both controversial and groundbreaking. Henze composed an entirely new score, while Italian designer Lila de Nobili created the set and costumes. Notably, Ashton and de Nobili shifted the setting from medieval Germany to the Mediterranean coast, envisioning the

4) Marius Petipa Society(n.d.). "Ondine, or The Naiad and the Fishermanhttps". ***Marius Petipa Society***. <https://petipasociety.com/ondine-or-the-naiad-and-the-fisherman/, 2025. 07. 05>.

production as a Gothic fantasy. de Nobili's designs evoked the aesthetics of nineteenth century Romantic ballets such as「*La Sylphide*」, transposed into an undersea world, with a seaside atmosphere reminiscent of「*Giselle*」. In contrast, Henze's score sought to merge the fantasy of nineteenth century Romantic ballet with twentieth century modernism. Reviewing the premiere, dance critic John Martin observed that Henze's music "reinforces the psychological line of the drama and its characters, with modern overtones of the stormy mysticism of the Gothic revival"(Martin, 1960). While Henze's music has long divided opinion—condemned by some contemporaries as too dark, pensive, and esoteric—it has also been praised by modern critics for its "eerie harp and wind sounds"(Sulcas, 2008), which vividly evoke the mystical qualities of water.

B) Representation and Transformation of the Water Spirit as a Negative Anima

「*Ondine*」, which remains in the Royal Ballet's repertoire today, has been interpreted and critiqued differently across periods, even while preserving Ashton's original text. At the premiere, principal ballerina Margot Fonteyn recalled that Ondine was the perfect character for her as a "pure, shy, loyal, loving creature of the sea"(Fonteyn, 1976, p. 197), an emphasis that foregrounded the romanticized femininity of the water spirit's appearance. The composer's assessment that "*Ondine* was Ashton's 'Fonteyn-concerto,' and she 'his violin'"(Brown, 2012) likewise accords with this view, since Fonteyn's English elegance and grace highlighted the charms of a woman in love. Taken together, these readings suggest a form of femininity that is aesthetically consonant with Romanticism yet relatively undifferentiated in psychological development.

As Sulcas(2008) observes,「*Ondine*」is "an abstract ballet imprisoned in a nineteenth century framework, a poem rather than a tale," and it is most successful when it does not attempt to tell a story but instead evokes mood and emotion. If Fonteyn's「*Ondine*」was suffused with images of "beautiful and pitiful" spirits, the revivals of the 2000s examined more closely the psychological implications of a femininity that seduces and destroys, in conjunction with the archetypal attributes of the Ondine figure. In Ashton's ballet, the male protagonist Palemon is drawn to the illusory image of Ondine and forgets his real-life fiancée, a pattern typical of anima obsession. The anima often appears as irrational moods that resist explanation and can leave men depressed or confused. Although Palemon has a human fiancée and an ordinary, grounded life, his solitary moments onstage reveal a heightened state in which Ondine invariably appears. Emerging from a small fountain among the trees, Ondine is not a corporeal woman but an externalized image of Palemon's "anima mood"; like the Siren and Lorelei, this water spirit seduces men and leads them to their ruin.

In particular, Ondine's "*Pas de l'ombre*(shadow dance)" at the beginning of the ballet intensifies Palemon's psychological turmoil. While Ashton's「*Ondine*」shares little with nineteenth century choreography, he retained the celebrated *Pas de l'ombre* from Perrot's version as an homage to the

Romantic original. This dance survives today in an iconic lithograph, depicting Ondine as performed by Fanny Cerrito, the leading dancer in the nineteenth century premiere <Figure 2>. In Perrot's production, however, the shadow dance appeared in the second act, whereas Ashton relocated it to Ondine's very first appearance.

<Figure 2> Fanny Cerrito in「*Ondine*」(left)[5]and Shadow Dance, Cerrito as「*Ondine*」(right)[6]

In this classic scene, Ondine, having lured Palemon, discovers her shadow by the water's edge and dances with it. The image operates simultaneously as a mythological motif—the "acquisition of the human soul"—and as a psychological symbol of the "differentiation of human consciousness."

In his structure of the psyche, Jung defined the "shadow" as the personal unconscious, the layer of the unconscious closest to human awareness—an alter ego on the hidden side of the ego. He observed that the more brightly self-consciousness is illuminated, the darker the shadow becomes(이부영, 2016, p. 86). From a psychological perspective, when a water spirit steps onto land and acquires a shadow, it symbolizes the attainment of a human ego. In ballet, the shadow dance is filled with playful gestures that convey the surprise and delight of entering the human world, yet the shadow must be ritualized if spiritual maturity is to be achieved. From Palemon's standpoint, this dance is a direct encounter with his anthropomorphized anima, reflecting his mental state as he hovers between fantasy and reality, blurring the distinction between human and spirit. By placing the shadow dance at the center of Palemon's first meeting with Ondine, Ashton emphasizes the expansion of Palemon's volatile inner life rather than the advancement of the narrative.

5) Jerome Robbins Dance Division, The New York Public Library(1948). "The New York Public Library digital collection". **Fanny Cerrito in「*Ondine*」**. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/1674a860-f433-013b-b13c-0242ac110002, 2025. 07. 10>.

6) Unknown author(1843, July 15). Shadow Dance, Cerrito as Ondine. ***Illustrated London News***.

The choreography, music, and sets of「*Ondine*」differ from other classical ballets that use water merely as a painted backdrop; instead, they remain faithful to the theme of the water spirit, placing great emphasis on expressing the mutable qualities of water and the depths of the abyss. This can be interpreted as an extension of the unconscious space inhabited by the water spirits and as a tangible representation of Palemon's psychological state as he descends beneath the surface of consciousness to connect with his anima.

In Act I, Scene 2, Ondine leads Palemon into a mystical forest, where he encounters the water spirits and is swept away in a fantastical flood. With the Lord of the Sea watching from above and spirits like Ondine cascading downward to join Palemon, the dark lighting and layered dimensionality of the scene create an illusory space that is severed from reality. The choreography for the water spirits suggests improvisation, incorporating quick, buoyant steps, repetitive upper-body gestures, and sudden changes of direction that mimic the ebb and flow of the tide. These movements prevent humans and spirits from establishing sustained focus on one another, thereby obstructing any deep connection. Much of the work is a serious consideration of water, as Ashton struggled to express the different qualities of large and small bodies of water in nature, the fluidity of water, and "the surge and swell of waves"(Liber, 2008) in the language of ballet, while Henze's repetitive music also focuses on capturing all the moods of the sea(Brown, 2012). de Nobili's staging visualizes the aquatic backdrop with three-dimensional illusionism: layers of silk create the sensation of water in motion, heightening the viewer's awareness of the dangers of a stormy sea and the hidden depths where spirits dwell, evoking the elusive forces of nature.

In the final scene, the image of water is explicitly tied to Palemon's destruction. Having forgotten Ondine, who has been dragged back into the sea by the Lord of the Sea, Palemon prepares to wed his earthly fiancée. Yet his inner grief is projected onto the stage design: under a full moon at night, with waves in the foreground, Ondine appears in the distance, beckoning and seducing him. Initially a dreamlike vision, she soon emerges before him with her hair loosened and wet, delivering a fatal kiss before pulling him beneath the sea. The scene closes with Ondine cradling the lifeless Palemon at the bottom of the deep waters, the same setting as in Act I. Palemon has returned to the "illusory space" where he was first swept away by the water spirits, but now he exists in a state of complete submersion in the unconscious, stripped of all conscious agency. This "romantic tragedy," depicted as a woman's fatal beauty and kiss of death, soon leads to the man's "psychological collapse," which, in reality, is akin to "suicide."

IV. Conclusion

This study examined the psychological representation of the combined image of water and femininity in classical ballet, situating the analysis within the growing discourse of the Blue Humanities, which promotes expanded ways of thinking about water. Using analytical psychology as the theoretical framework, it explored in depth the archetypal negative images of the femininity of water through the characters of the Wilis and Ondine. These figures personify the symbolism of water, its invasive and destructive capacities, while embodying the Romantic era's active engagement with the ambivalent interplay of good and evil. Psychologically, they are grounded in the duality of archetypes, underscoring the opposites inherent in human psychology.

The anima, the feminine aspect of the male personality, is characterized by intense emotionality, while its negative form manifests as moodiness, depression, sadness, and lethargy. It is an archetype of the collective unconscious, a latent source ready to be experienced, exerting influence on the deepest levels of the male psychological structure. Classical ballet often draws on motifs from mythology and folklore, and dance extends the experiential encounter with archetypes through the artistic imagination's multifaceted embodiments of these symbols. The Wilis and Ondine, the focal figures of this study, exemplify the negative anima associated with water. Their representation in ballet offers a means to broaden the scope of humanistic thought and to enrich the imaginative engagement with water through the medium of dance.

From an analytical psychology perspective, love is understood as a matter of psychic integration, a longing for wholeness in which the conscious and unconscious are brought into unity. In ballet, tragic love is interpreted not as the lived experience of romantic attachment between a man and a woman, but as a psychological symbol of the protagonist's failure to integrate the anima. Within this framework, water itself represents the unconscious and carries connotations of descent and destruction, often materialized in physical depictions such as drowning.

While death in heroic mythological motifs is frequently portrayed as a symbolic and meaningful process, signifying stages of psychological development, water in ballet is more often associated with negative dimensions, leading the protagonist toward a tragic fate. Although classical ballet tends to emphasize the luminous and beautiful aspects of its female characters, the dramatization of the negative anima also plays a crucial role in these narratives. This study demonstrates that psychological symbols personified through the femininity of water should not be viewed simply as villainous forces; rather, they constitute a vital element in understanding both the deeper narrative structure of the ballet and the psychological complexity of its characters.

Finally, engaging with dance through the lens of analytical psychology is not an inquiry into the inherent nature of dance itself. The exploration of the essence of classical ballet belongs to the domain

of aesthetics, and its intrinsic value remains unchanged. The analytical psychology of dance instead concerns the emotional and symbolic phenomena of embodiment, focusing on the artist's creative process and the underlying power of the archetypes the artist draws upon. Furthermore, the ultimate aim of such inquiry is to achieve a deeper understanding of the human being through artistic experience and to facilitate the holistic development of the unconscious into consciousness.

This study extends previous research by exploring in depth a specific area of investigation, while incorporating contemporary humanistic thought to illuminate the psychology embedded in artworks. I hope that this study will diversify the interpretation of dance symbols and offer a broad spectrum of humanistic perspectives on dance, recognizing that varied interpretations are possible depending on the central focus of psychological analysis. However, the imagery of water can be interpreted differently across cultural contexts, and this study remains limited by its exclusive focus on Western ballet. Future research could examine and compare the symbolism of water across diverse cultural traditions and dance genres, thus contributing to a more multifaceted and broadly applicable psychological understanding.

■ References

이부영(2016). **분석심리학: C. G. 융의 인간심성론**. 일조각.

최민숙, 이은화, 윤현자, 김미선, 송소민(2005). **물의 요정을 찾아서: 세이렌에서 라우텐델라인까지**. 이화여자대학교출판부.

Bachelard, G.(2021). ***Water and Dreams: An Essay On the Imagination of Matter***. Dallas Institute Publication. (Original work publised 1942).

Beaumont, C.(2011). ***The Ballet Called Giselle***. Dance Books. (Original work published 1944).

Crowley, V.(2008). The Mystery of Waters. In S. Shaw & A. Francis (Eds.), ***Deep Blue: Critical Reflections on Nature, Religion, and Water*** (pp. 179-194). Routledge.

Eliade, M.(1987). ***The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion*** (W. R. Trask, Trans.). Harcourt. (Original work published 1957).

Eliade, M.(1996). ***Patterns in Comparative Religion*** (R. Sheed, Trans.). Bison Books. (Original work published 1958).

Fonteyn, M.(1976). ***Margot Fonteyn: Autobiography***. Alfred A. Knopf.

Guerin, W. L., Labor, E., Morgan, L., Reesman, J. C., Willingham, J. R.(2011). ***A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature***. Oxford University Press.

Jung, C. G.(1956). ***Symbol of Transformation: An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia*** (2nd ed., Bollingen Series XX). Princeton University Press.

Jung, C. G.(1964). ***Man and His Symbols***. Dell.

Jung, C. G.(1966). ***The Practice of Psychotherapy: Essays on the Psychology of the Transference and Other Subjects*** (2nd ed., Bollingen Series XX). Princeton University Press.

Jung, C. G.(1968). ***Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*** (2nd ed., Bollingen Series XX). Princeton University Press.

Jung, C. G.(1984). ***The Symbolic Life*** (Collected Works Vol. 18). Princeton University Press.

Jung, C. G.(2015). ***On Psychological and Visionary Art: Notes from C. G. Jung's Lecture on Gerard de Nerval's "Aurélia"*** (C. E. Stepheson, Ed.). Princeton University Press.

Kavanagh, J.(1996). ***Secret Muses: The Life of Frederick Ashton***. Pantheon Books.

Neumann, E.(2015). ***The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype***. Princeton University Press. (Original work published 1955).

Gillis, J. R.(2013). The Blue Humanities: In Studying the sea, we are returning to our beginnings. ***Humanities, 34***(3). <https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2013/mayjune/feature/the-blue-humanities, 2025. 06. 15>.

Mentz, S.(2009). Toward a Blue Cultural Studies: The Sea, Maritime, Culture, and Early Modern English Literature. ***Literature Compass, 6***(5), 997-1013.

Na, I.(2007). A Study on Dramatic Structure of Dance from the Psychoanalytic Perspective of C. G.

Jung: Focus on Giselle. ***The Korean Journal of Dance Studies, 20***(1), 119-144.

Roh, Y.(2020).A Jungian Perspective on the Symbols and Archetypes in Swan Lake. ***The Korean Journal of Dance Studies,*** *77*(1), 1-20.

Roh, Y.(2021).A Jungian Interpretation of Fantasy in Romantic Ballet. ***The Korean Journal of Dance Studies, 81***(1), 23-39.

Roh, Y.(2025). Envisioning New Spaces for Dance Humanities in the Posthuman Era: A Blue Humanities Perspective. ***Dance Research Journal of Korea, 83***(3), 303-318.

Angelova-Damyanova, S.(2003). "SAMODIVATA". ***liternet***. <https://liternet.bg/publish8/sangelova-damianova/prostranstvoto/samodivata.htm, 2025. 06. 24>.

Brown, I.(2012, Octoboer 31). "The Composer and the Water-Nymph: Hans Werner Henze's Ondine". ***the arts desk***. <https://theartsdesk.com/classical-music/composer-and-water-nymph-hans-werner-henzes-ondine, 2025. 07. 01>.

Cappelle, L.(2023, April 22). "Pierre Lacotte, ballet archaeologist, 1932-2023". ***Financial Times***. <https://www.ft.com/content/126d4a4d-9e90-4a2f-89ef-f60b92132c4f, 2025. 06. 12>.

Liber, V.(2008). "Ondine". ***British Theatre Guide***. <https://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/RBondine-rev, 2025. 06. 24>.

Macaulay, A.(2009. February 25). "What Do Aquawomen Want?". ***The New York Times***. <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/01/arts/music/01alas.html?_r=1, 2025. 07. 03>.

Martin, J.(1960. September 18). "The Dance: 'Ondine'; Second Ashton Ballet In Local Premiere". ***The New York Times***. <https://www.nytimes.com/1960/09/18/archives/the-dance-ondine-second-ashton-ballet-in-local-premiere.html, 2025. 07. 10>.

Royal Museums Greenwich(n.d.). "Shakespeare's language of the sea". ***Royal museums greenwich***. <https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/art-culture/water-sea-shakespeares-plays, 2025. 06. 10>

Sulcas, R.(2008. December 5). "An Elusive Water Sprite Flits By, Skirting the Depths". ***The New York Times***. <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/06/arts/dance/06ondi.html, 2025. 07. 04>.

The Marius Petipa Society(n.d.). "Giselle". ***The Marius Petipa Society***. <https://petipasociety.com/giselle/, 2025. 06. 20>.

The Marius Petipa Society(n.d.). "Ondine, or The Naiad and the Fisherman". ***The Marius Petipa Society***. <https://petipasociety.com/ondine-or-the-naiad-and-the-fisherman/, 2025. 07. 05>.

The Royal Ballet(2010). ***Ondine***. Opus Arte. [DVD, 1 hour 34 minutes].

The Royal Ballet(2017). ***Giselle***. Opus Arte. [DVD, 1 hour 55 minutes].

논문투고일 2025. 08. 14.
심 사 일 2025. 08. 21.
심사완료일 2025. 09. 03.

Abstract

19세기 낭만주의 발레에 나타난 심리적 은유로서의 물

- C. G. 융의 아니마 개념을 중심으로 -

노영재

신라대학교 인문과학연구소 학술연구교수

본 연구는 물에 대한 사유를 촉구하는 블루 휴머니티즈 담론의 확산에 주목하여 클래식 발레에 나타난 물의 이미지를 심층적으로 탐구한다. 특히 19세기 발레 속 '물-여성' 이미지는 심층심리학적 관점에서 무의식적 공포, 욕망, 죽음을 내포한 감정적 상징 체계로 기능한다. 구체적인 연구 대상은 '빌리'와 '온딘'으로, 이들을 통해 남성의 내적 인격이자 여성성인 아니마 원형의 부정적 이미지를 고찰한다. 군무 형태의 빌리는 물가라는 장소성과 연계해 의식과 무의식의 경계를 함축하며 복수와 파멸의 원형적 에너지를 드러낸다. 온딘은 물의 정령 서사를 바탕으로 남성 내면의 부정적인 '아니마 기분'을 다채롭게 묘사하며 물의 심연과도 같은 무의식에 완전히 잠식되는 과정을 극적으로 구현한다. 이를 통해 본 연구는 물의 부정적 여성성이 인간 심리 이해의 핵심 요소임을 밝히고, 나아가 춤 상징 해석의 새로운 가능성을 제시하여 인문학적 사유를 확장한다.

Keywords: 물(Water), 분석심리학(Analytical Psychology), 아니마(Anima), 빌리(Wilis), 온딘(Ondine)