

Water in Anne McCaffrey's *The Rowan*

In *The Rowan* (1990) by Anne McCaffrey, water plays a significant role in the life of the protagonist, the titular Rowan. Water brackets major events of her childhood and teenage years, and I want to examine both the significance of this, but also how water is then echoed in other aspects of the book. As the book takes place in space water is, at times, both a premium, and an artificial construct, thus shifting its use throughout the book from literal to at times metaphorical significance. This is particularly clear because the bulk of the book takes place on one of Jupiter's mostly dry moons, as a result, any mention of water is not casual but links to both technological innovations, and the Rowan's traumatic experiences with water in her past.

Water is rarely discussed in terms of imagery or theme in SF novels, and more often as something SF technology can help with. Thus most of my critical basis will be formed from the part water plays in more mimetic literature. It is also largely discussed, within a scientific arena, in terms of its problems, or solutions, not as a thing in and of itself. This, combined with the fact that there is very little critical work on *The Rowan*, means my examination of how water functions in *The Rowan* is entirely new territory. Taking Veronica Strang's tack and examining water as a physical as well as cultural and historical object I will investigate how water threads through *The Rowan*, and perhaps, a beginning of an investigation into water's use but not as a scientific object in science fiction more generally.

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