



**RESTRUCTURING FEMALE IDENTITY THROUGH THE KRISTEVAN
APPROACH IN ADRIENNE RICH'S SELECTED POETRY**

BY

MOHAMAD FLEIH HASSAN AI-JANABI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctorate of Philosophy**

September 2016

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To my Parents and Family with Love

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in the fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Adrienne Rich (1929-2012), a radical feminist poet in the United States, was credited with her power of using language as a medium to give voice to women who are marginalized by patriarchy. Thereby, female identity became a recurrent theme in her poetry. However, Rich's discourse of female identity has been highly radicalized due to her extreme attitudes towards patriarchal thought. Hence, her poetry has been approached within the confines of the Queer theory. Thus, the first objective of this study is to explore the role played by the signifying system of the symbolic language in depriving women of their own female identities in the light of the patriarchal discourse of identity formation in Rich's early poetry. The second objective is to examine the articulation of the semiotic elements in Rich's poems and their role in disrupting the symbolic signifying system of language, which would lead to the circulation of new meanings that reflect women's needs and desires and help in re-

structuring female identity. The third objective is to explore Rich's discourse of desire in selected poems in light of Kristeva's concept of Abjection in order to resituate the female desire in relation to the dominant heterosexual thought as an active, and transgressive variable in the reconstruction of female identity. The study relies on Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), utilizing the concepts of *The Semiotic and The Symbolic* to explore the power of the semiotic in troubling the symbolic system of signification. Kristeva thinks that the Semiotic and the Symbolic aspects of language are completing each other in the signifying process of the speaking subject. Moreover, the study relies again on Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), to deal with the abject representation of female desire as a transgressive force for the heterosexual thought. Selections of Rich's *A Change of World* (1951), *A Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* (1963), *Necessities of Life* (1966), *Diving into the Wreck* (1973), and *The Dream of Common Language* (1978) are chosen for the study to cover the different stages in Rich's career. The study concludes that the articulation of the semiotic elements 'maternal emotions and drives' into the symbolic system of signification will generate new signifying system that helps in circulating a new discourse of female identity formation. Moreover, it concludes that Rich's re-orientation of female desire was a technique to turn female desire into an active and transgressive variable in the re-construction of female identity.

**Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doctor Falsafa**

**PENSTRUKTURAN SEMULA IDENTITI WANITA MELALUI
PENDEKATAN KRISTEVAN DALAM PUISI TERPILIH ADRIENNE RICH**

Oleh

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Adrienne Rich (1929-2012) sebagai penyair feminis radikal di Amerika Syarikat telah dikreditkan dengan kekuatannya menggunakan bahasa sebagai medium bagi menyuarakan wanita yang diperkecilkan oleh patriarki. Oleh sebab itu, identiti wanita menjadi tema yang berulang dalam puisinya. Walau bagaimanapun, wacana Rich mengenai identiti wanita telah diradikalkan secara melampau disebabkan sikap ekstremnya terhadap pemikiran patriarkal. Oleh itu, puisinya telah didekati dalam lingkungan teori Queer . Jadi, objektif pertama kajian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki peranan yang dimainkan oleh sistem penandaan bagi bahasa simbolik dalam melemahkan wanita terhadap identiti mereka sendiri dari sudut wacana patriarkal mengenai pembentukan identiti dalam puisi awal Rich. Objektif kedua adalah untuk meneliti artikulasi elemen semiotik dalam puisi Rich dan peranan mereka dalam mengendalakan sistem penandaan simbolik bahasa yang membawa kepada penyebaran makna baharu yang memperlihatkan kehendak dan keinginan wanita dan membantu penstrukturan semula identiti wanita. Objektif ketiga adalah untuk

meninjau wacana Rich mengenai keinginan wanita dalam puisi terpilih dari sudut konsep abjek Kristeva supaya dapat diletakkan semula keinginan wanita dalam hubungannya dengan pemikiran heteroseksual dominan sebagai variabel yang aktif, berkuasa dan transgresif dalam mengkonstruksikan semula identiti wanita. Kajian ini mendekati *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984) Kristeva, menggunakan konsep *The Semiotic and The Symbolic* bagi meneroka kuasa semiotik dalam mengganggu kesignifikan sistem simbolik. Kristeva berpendapat bahawa aspek Semiotik dan Simbolik bahasa saling melengkapi dalam proses penandaan subjek berkenaan. Tambahan pula, kajian ini bergantung juga pada *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) Kristeva, bagi menangani representasi abjek keinginan wanita sebagai kuasa transgresif bagi pemikiran heteroseksual. Seleksi *A Change of World* (1951), *A Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* (1963), *Necessities of Life* (1966), *Diving into the Wreck* (1973), and *The Dream of Common Language* (1978) oleh Rich telah dipilih bagi kajian ini bagi merangkumi peringkat yang berbeza dalam kerjaya Rich. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa artikulasi elemen semiotik '*maternal emotions and drives*' ke dalam kesignifikanan sistem simbolik akan menjana sistem penandaan baharu yang dapat membantu penyebaran wacana baharu mengenai pembentukan identiti wanita. Tambahan pula, kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa penstrukturan semula Rich mengenai keinginan wanita merupakan teknik bagi menukarkan keinginan tersebut sebagai variabel yang aktif, berkuasa dan transgresif dalam penstrukturan semula identiti wanita.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All praise and gratitude are due to Allah for granting me the fortitude and patience in this long journey of seeking knowledge. I would like to express my deep gratitude to my supervisory committee: Associate Professor Dr. Rosli bin Talif, Dr. Hardev Kaur and Dr. Manimangai Mani who offered me great opportunities and lent me their experiences to complete this thesis. I thank them for their patience and for their valuable comments and suggestions. Thanks also go to the staff of English Department in the faculty of Modern Languages and Communication for their cooperation and motivation.

My completion of this project could not have been achieved without the support of my friends and colleagues who will not be forgotten for their sharing of ideas and concerns with me.

A heartfelt tribute goes to my wife for the encouragement, care and discussions without which it would be impossible to finish this journey. Thanks also go to my dear kids: Rawan and Abdulrahman who suffered my absence for a long time.

In addition, I would like to send thanks and appreciation to my dear parents and siblings for their continuous love and support.

Finally, the staff of UPM library, UKM, and other Malaysian universities is also included in the acknowledgment for their efforts in making academic sources available.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ARPP: Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose

CW: A Change of World

CEP: Collected Early Poems: 1950-1970

CHLE: Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian existence 1980

DCL: The Dream of a Common Language: Poems 1974-1977

DW: Diving into the Wreck: 1971-1972

LSS: On Lies, Secrets and Silence: 1966-1978

RPL: Revolution in Poetic Language

SD: Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law

WFT: What is Found There

WWDA: When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The movement for change is a changing movement, changing itself, demasculinizing itself, de-Westernizing itself, becoming a critical mass that is saying in so many different voices, languages, gestures, actions: It must change; we ourselves can change it. We who are not the same, we who are many and do not want to be the same.

Rich' *NTPOL*, 1985

The idea of woman as a muted individual has circulated in the literary, social and political canons and in the readers' consciousness for a very long time. Women have been silenced throughout history due to the structure of their identities as weak, passive and powerless in the patriarchal society. They have only been voiced in the twentieth century when they started breaking the conventional boundaries of the dominant patriarchal society. They realized that the only way to express themselves and to talk about their experiences in their writings is to go through these male-oriented ideologies and deconstruct them. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* are among the most famous feminist writings that talked about women's oppression and the strategies of empowering them.

Many women's movements around the world emerged as a kind of revolt against the

social, political and economic inequalities between males and females. Such inequalities seem to be founded on certain social, biological and cultural causes. Among them is the association of women with nature and the reproductive system, which has justified the exclusion of women from the literary, political and social scenes. Another cause is that women are unfit for logical reasoning due to their association with emotion. Thus, women have been domesticized to the extent that they have been deprived of the right to share with the man in managing the social, political and economic lives, or even the right to vote.

Moreover, Western ideology has relied for a long time on the system of binary thought, which entails the necessity of a unified 'subject'. This ideology takes as fact the need for a unified consciousness in order for human beings to recognize and understand their world. Such a unified consciousness makes it obligatory to define the subject in terms of its relationship with a distinct object. Thus, the subject 'man' becomes in dire need for an object 'women' to feel its priority and distinctiveness (Henriques et al. 2001). To maintain this kind of relationship, language turns to be the medium through which the subject recognizes the object. Therefore, the language needed for this subject/object relationship should be orderly and grammatical to have significations approved by this man-made discourse. This language stresses the priority of order and reason, which led to the optimization of patriarchally-oriented ideologies and discourses. As such, the symbolic system of signifying meaning is designed to serve the interests of the subject because he is the major signifier in the Western ideology.

Thus, women's liberation became a key issue for the feminist writers and thinkers. Women's liberation movements emerged worldwide to defend women's rights and to put an end to oppression. Starting with the first-wave feminist movement in the 1920s, it focused its attention on the criticism of liberalism. Within the context of the First-wave feminist movement, women were no more than caretakers, nurturers, and housewives because the neutrality of the liberal thought could not get rid of gender distinction. The re-formation of female identity was not taken into consideration in the agenda of the first wave feminist movement due to their focus on equality and liberty. Their agenda based on the model of women 'rights' did not "aim to challenge the ways in which social roles are gendered" (Hughes 2002, 46).

The advent of the second wave of feminism (1960s-1990s) shifted the emphasis to the politics of reproduction, to sexual difference and to women's female experience. They wanted to celebrate women's 'difference' and 'sexuality' as sources for the empowerment of women (Evans 1995). In this wave, feminists focused on guaranteeing women the rights of sexual difference and reproduction regardless of sex. Therefore, the structure and restructure of female identity became a major concern in the movement's agenda, as in the case of Adrienne Rich who found a fertile ground within the second wave movement to circulate her ideas regarding poetic language and desire.

Accordingly, the Freudian and Lacanian theories were re-circulated vehemently within the circles of literary and feminist writers of the second wave movement, especially the *Theory of Subject*. In the modern age, women were more de-territorialized and more dehumanized at the hands of patriarchal thinkers and writers,

partly because of the concepts of Freud and Lacan. Freudian psychology defines the subject as having ‘a knowable content and is measurable against a normative path of development’ (Mansfield 2000, 66). Freud thinks that gender identity and family politics form the context that makes the subject faces the first crisis in the process of formation. Thus, the male and female subjects are left with the Oedipus and Electra complexes, respectively (Gay 1995). From this context emerges the masculine subject that is defined with a clear sense of its needs and purposes, unlike the feminine who is structured as an object defined in terms of its relation to the masculine subject.

It was in the nineteenth century that women writers started to seek definitions appropriate for the description of the female experience. Women writers started a long journey to find proper tools for the definition of female identity, a definition that does not rely on the male subject and on patriarchal thought. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar stated in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1980) that “woman writers in England and America, throughout the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth, have been especially concerned with assaulting and revising, deconstructing and reconstructing those images of women inherited from male literature” (76).

Moreover, Virginia Woolf described the status of woman, especially woman writers within the patriarchal literary tradition in *A Room of One's Own*. She said that women have been signified as lacking the power of reasoning because they do not fit the cultural standards and criteria of the patriarchal symbolic world. The identity of woman is structured according to the rules of the patriarchal society, thus, when they

sit to pen down their stories, they write fabricated stories, not stories of their own. The law of the father creates what is appropriate and inappropriate for women to be accepted in society. Female identities, therefore, have been structured to be inferior, weak, and dependent. Woolf said, “men are hated and feared because they have the power to bar her way to what she wants to do—which is to write” (1929, 49).

In addition, Carolyn Heilbrun in her book, *Reinventing Womanhood* (1979), discussed major issues related to the construction of female identity for twentieth-century American women. She characterized that the failure of women in constructing a sound version of female identity lies in the inappropriateness of past role models. She called for the urgent need to find ways to construct new models for female identity. Thus, it becomes an urgent demand for women to think of substitutes for the male-oriented discourses of woman’s construction of identities.

As a result of the continuous degradation and subjugation of women, the feminist writers have responded to these inequalities by challenging the dominant assumptions of the patriarchal thought system. One of the strategic techniques of challenging these dictating assumptions is the refusal of the essential nature of structuring female identity. The female identity is constructed in the light of the Freudian and Lacanian psychology as passive and inferior because the differentiation between male and female establishes specific gender roles that favour males and suppress females. Freud ascribes to woman the resigned acceptance of the castration complex that leaves them feeling unequal to the man who has the phallus. Lacan, on the other side, states that a woman has to give up her semiotic maternal language and to use man-made language to find a space in his world. This symbolic masculine

language leaves woman unshielded because the signifying system of this gendered language signifies woman as passive, subjective, irrational, and the object of desire.

More importantly, language as a key determinant of subjectivity is an effective symbolic means that links power and control with psychological demands and cultural identity of the individuals. Dale Spender said in *Man Made Language* that, “Women cannot have equal access to discourse and at the same time leave the rules for male access to discourse undisturbed” (1980, 89). Lacan states that power is maintained in the hands of males who give up their association with maternity in the first years of the child’s life in order to be the masters of the patriarchal world. The one who needs to control the world has to control language. Therefore, the politics of power necessarily entails a politics of language as well. The socio-linguist Robin Lakoff (2004) thinks that language used by women contains patterns of weakness and uncertainty, dealing with trivial and unserious issues and focusing on personal experience. On the other hand, male utterances contain strong patterns with an affirmative tone revolving around serious public issues, therefore, women should adopt man’s style of utterance in order to achieve the equality they dream of (Selden et al, 2005). Thus, women were discontent with their position as subsidiary to men because in many patriarchal societies, as Millett in *Sexual Politics* said, “languages, as well as cultural tradition, reserve the human condition for the male” (2000, 54).

Moreover, language’s order and reason have been continuously threatened by the subversive noise of pleasure like music and poetry. Earlier in the Greek time, Plato considered poetry as an imitation and that “imitation itself embodied a step away from the truth since it produced an imperfect copy of the Form or essence of a given

entity” (Habib 2005, 50). Rationalists such as Plato always keep a sharp eye on the dangerous influences of poetry and music because they raise man’s desire. It was only in the late twentieth century that poetry is given a priority as a means of transgressing the grand narratives of the patriarchal thought. Poetic language shows how dominant social and political ideologies can be undermined by the creation of new ‘subject positions’. Accordingly, feminist writers utilize the language of poetry as the means by which they can re-define their identities and liberate women from the bondage to the single-oriented masculine rules and traditions.

Other key determinants of subjectivity are gender and sexuality. Again, gender and sexuality are manipulated by thinkers of the patriarchal society to keep women in an inferior position by categorizing men as the subjects of desire and women as the objects of desire. These thinkers establish the binary opposition system, which frames women as weak, inferior and dependent females while men are framed as strong, superior and independent. Therefore, women want to separate themselves from both the homophobic heterosexual community and the homosexual male community to advocate social, economic, and political empowerment.

Freud and Lacan are severely criticized by the feminists on the ground that their theories are heterosexist and that they have done harm to the feminist agenda. But it is undeniable that Freudian and Lacanian theories of the unconscious and sexual difference made psychoanalysis to be a significant tool in the analysis of ideologies and discourses that cause oppression against women. For example, their concept of sexual difference showed that men manipulated and channelled desire in order to

reproduce patriarchal power relations and to maintain women's subjugation to patriarchal rules and thought.

The feminist writers reject the thesis of Freud and Lacan concerning the construction of female identity based on the sexual difference because they think that both of them were descriptive rather than prescriptive. Feminist theorists consider Freud's theories of the unconscious and sexual difference limited to the role of showing how desire is programmed to reproduce patriarchal power relations and to keep women in a subjected position as the objects of desire for the masculine subjects. Lacan also said that the "female desire is resolved through the full appropriation of femininity, that is, in becoming a pure reflector for male desire, the imaginary site of an absolute satisfaction." (Butler 1987, 203) Thus, the female desire is only defined in terms of its relatedness to the male desire. Accordingly, the female desire has been subjugated and exploited by patriarchy as a tool for suppressing the female identity.

Simone De Beauvoir whose *The Second Sex* distinguished between sex and gender in order to make women aware of the distinction between basic biological differences between the two sexes and those constructed by the metaphysics of gender is an example of these feminists. She rejected the biological determinism of Freud and believed in the interaction between social and natural functions:

Society codified by men decrees that woman is inferior: she can only abolish this inferiority by destroying male superiority. She does her utmost to mutilate, to dominate man, she contradicts him, she denies his truth and values. But in doing that, she is only defending herself; neither immutable essence nor flawed choice has doomed her to immanence and inferiority. They were imposed on her. All oppression creates a state of war (1949, 849).

De Beauvoir ascribed the negative association of women to the systems of interpretation related to biological differences, reproduction system, psychoanalysis, and economics, which define man as subject against woman the object. De Beauvoir posited that women would not be able to destroy patriarchy unless they break out of the frame of 'objectification' (Seldon et al, 2005). The significance of De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* lies in its circulation of key ideas of the second feminist movement in the seventies, which are related to the idea of gender as a social construct rather than an essential one. It opens the gate in front of feminists to think of deconstructing the heterosexual thought as a kind of a reaction against the stereotyping of female desire as passive, dependent and powerless.

Julia Kristeva, as a feminist, linguist and psychoanalyst, has re-worked Lacan's theories regarding the role of language in structuring the conscious. She has proposed in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984) that even the texts of the canon writers contain certain elements that undermine the old fixed meaning of a text. These elements demolish the denotative meanings of a text and imply as well that meaning in large part is made by the poetic and affective aspects of the text. Kristeva has introduced the concept of the Semiotic to reconceptualize "the pre-Oedipal space where bodily pulsations, not yet gathered into a system of drives, will intermittently disrupt symbolic discourse" (Wright 2000, 7).

Significantly, Kristeva discussed the concept of Abjection and its relevance to the re-formation of grand discourses in her *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. She writes of abjection as that which "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not

respect border, positions, rules” (1982, 4). For Kristeva, the abject is always related to matters that traverse the body’s boundaries, ‘polluting objects’ that “always relate to corporeal orifices as to so many landmarks parcelling-constituting the body’s territory” (71).

In one of the studies, Gender and abjection of desire are discussed in Calvin Thomas’ book, *Masculinity, Psychoanalysis, Straight Queer Theory: Essays on Abjection in Literature, Mass Culture, and Film* (2008). He relied on the Lacanian discourse of identity construction to highlight the privileges enjoyed by males, and on George Bataille’s understandings of abjection. Nonetheless, he tried to follow queer discourses that are hostile to the order of masculine thought. The book talks about abjection due to its perverse and pervasive strategy in troubling the subjectivity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Female identity has become the major concern for women writers and feminist thinkers. This topic has been scholarly researched in various fields of literature. Much is written about the oppression and subjugation of the female identity and many propositions have been discussed through various theoretical frameworks to figure out the appropriate means of ending this patriarchal oppression.

One of these feminist writers whose works are credited with bringing woman’s oppression to the forefront of poetic discourse is Adrienne Rich (1929-2012). She dedicated much of her works to the study of female identity and to find the appropriate means of restructuring it away from prejudiced patriarchal ideologies

(Abraham 2007). Moreover, much scholarly research was conducted on Adrienne Rich's poetry, but it followed the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of radical feminism and Queer theory due to the extreme views of this poet (Aktari 2010). However, less attention is paid to the study of the poetics and politics of Adrienne Rich's discourse of identity reformation in the light of Julia Kristeva's *Theory of the Subject*. Kristeva's theory is selected as a framework for the current study in order to free Rich's discourse of identity formation from the labels and frames that stereotype her poetics and politics as 'radical feminist' and 'queer poet'.

Moreover, Rich's discourse of *The Female Principle* was not seriously taken into consideration because of the radicalization and queerness characterizing her poetry. Rich thought that she has been betrayed by the absence of the female principle, and the single-mindedness of words and images that were inappropriate to signify the true definitions of the female self. Accordingly, there is hardly any research conducted on the poetry of Adrienne Rich to help to articulate her discourse of the female principle. There was a study done on the self in Rich's poetry by D. W. Lucas (2014). Lucas dealt with the Self and its representation in the literary language of Adrienne Rich, Mark Strand, Derek Walcott, and Charles Wright to understand the kind of relationship between authority and identity in poetry. However, the study discussed the 'Self' in terms of the poets' views and their contexts with no reference to Kristeva's concept of the Subject. Thus, the current study aims, through following Kristeva's *The Semiotic and the Symbolic* to re-circulate Rich's female principle back into the symbolic language in order to help in the articulation of female needs and desires, which consequently re-structure the female identity.

There is hardly any research focusing on Adrienne Rich's poetry in light of Kristeva's Semiotic and its power of subverting the fixed meanings of the Symbolic signifying system. One of the studies done by Petrović under the title "Gender and Difference in the Poetry of Adrienne Rich" showed the failure of the symbolic language in reflecting Rich's needs and desires in her early period of writing. She argued that Rich imitated the styles and techniques of male writers in her early poetry because she was looking for a space among the successful male writers (1997). However, Petrović's study did not find the way of articulating Rich's *The Female Principle* into the masculine language. As such, the current study incorporates *The Semiotic and the Symbolic* in subverting the grand narratives of the symbolic language and in the creation of a re-signifying process for the restructure of female identity.

In addition, Rich's discourse of female desire was the reason for radicalizing her poetics by critics to the extent that it was inaccessible and unapproachable to her readers. Her belief that heterosexuality is compulsory and that it is institutionalized to coerce more oppression on women led to more radicalization and extremity of her ideas. Her discourse of female desire was highly investigated within the frames of the Queer theory (Tsai 2002). Accordingly, Rich's thesis of female desire comes to be the source of still-on-going controversies in the various literary, social, and political scenes. Some critics and even feminist writers rejected Rich's discourse as an appropriate discourse for restructuring female identity, as in the case of Rene Denfeld who launched an indictment against some feminist theorists, including Adrienne Rich in her book, *The New Victorians* (2009). She criticized radical

feminist theorists for their belief that the heterosexual intercourse is ‘inherently invasive and oppressive act’ and that it is the reason behind women’s oppression (1995, 11). Therefore, abjection is selected to unleash Rich’s discourse of desire away from radicalism and the Queer theory.

However, Rich’s discourse of desire was not studied through Kristeva’s *Abjection* and its power of transgression. Instead of going with Denfeld’s harsh criticism of Rich, or reading Rich’s poetry within the framework of Queer theory, the present study will go through the analysis of Rich’s female desire in the light of Kristeva’s concept of *Abjection*. Abjection has the function of deconstructing the patriarchal matrix of woman’s desire as passive, dependent and powerless, in order to help in the creation of new spaces to the circulation of a new signifying system that turns women’s desire into active, independent, and powerful, thereby helping to re-structure the female identity.

More importantly, the issue of restructuring the female identity is not explored in Rich’s poetry through the amalgamation of the two concepts of *The Semiotic and The Symbolic* as well as *Abjection*. The current study follows the *Semiotic* in exploring Rich’s poetry in order to subvert the signifying system of the symbolic language and to regain the female principle back to language, which would signify women’s needs and desires. Simultaneously, it follows the concept of *Abjection* to transgress the patriarchal definition of female desire as passive and powerless. Abjection troubles the borders of female identity through abjecting female desire in hope of transforming it into a positive and active variable in the construction of female identity. The amalgamation of these two concepts will fill the gap of radicalizing and

queering the poetic discourse of Adrienne Rich through bridging her poetics into the public domain without framing them with the patriarchal labels like ‘radical feminist’ and ‘queer poet’.

1.3 Research Objectives

The present study deals with the restructuring of female identity in Adrienne Rich’s selected poetry in the light of Julia Kristeva’s theory of the Subject. Thus, the first objective of this study is to explore the role played by the signifying system of the symbolic language in depriving women of their own female identities via biased discourses and ideologies. In order to achieve this objective, I explore the symbolic representation of female identity in selected poems of Adrienne rich to reveal how the symbolic modality of signification has manipulated language to keep women in an inferior position to men.

The second objective is to examine the articulation of the Semiotic elements in Rich’s poems and their role in subverting the symbolic signifying system of language in order to recirculate new meanings that reflect women’s needs and desires and help re-structuring female identity. This objective is going to be achieved through tracing the semiotic elements inside the poetic texts for they have the power of troubling and transgressing the Symbolic order, which in turn lead to the re-signification of the sign system of language. As a result, the symbolic modality empowered by the semiotic one will be the tools of signification for shaping and re-shaping female subjectivity. Thus, female identity can be restored with the restoration of maternal elements into the Symbolic language.

The third and final objective is to explore Rich's discourse of female desire in selected poems in the light of Kristeva's concept of *Abjection* in order to resituate the female desire in relation to the dominant heterosexual thought as an active, powerful and transgressive variable in the reconstruction of female identity. Rich believed that woman is engendered within the heterosexual thought to be an object of desire, which implies her inferiority and subordination to the subject of desire 'man'. Within heterosexuality, female desire is defined as negative, dependent and powerless, thus, exercises a negative role in structuring female identity. Abjection will transgress the heterosexual definition of female desire, turning it into an active, independent and powerful variable in the construction of female identity.

In order to achieve this objective, I will explore Rich's representation of female desire in the light of *Abjection* in Rich's selected poems to show that this desire is an abjecting desire to the heterosexual thought. I will also show that this abjected desire is a desire to the maternal space as a determinative force in the deconstruction of male-oriented narratives and in the reconstruction of female identity.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the study will seek to answer the following questions:

- 1- How does the signifying process of the symbolic language play a role in creating and circulating meanings that oppress women and victimize them in the light of the patriarchal discourse of identity construction?

2- How can the concept of the Semiotic be a subversive power to the signifying system of the symbolic language? How can it help in the circulation of new meanings that would help in the reconstruction of female identities away from the distortion of the patriarchal signifying process of language?

3- How can the concept of Abjection be fruitful in exploring the representation of female desire within the institutionalized system of heterosexuality? How can a woman, the 'other' of male consciousness and his object of desire, create either the linguistic or social conditions that establish her female identity away from the single-minded discourses of patriarchy?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The subject of woman's identity is widely studied in the various fields of social sciences. In literature, it is also investigated following various theatrical and conceptual frameworks. In this respect, Adrienne Rich as a well-known feminist poet has dedicated much of her writings to the cause of women's emancipation from patriarchal oppression. Rich has been widely researched in literary studies, but her writings have been studied within the frameworks of radical feminism and the Queer theory as in Susan Driver's *Reading "Adrienne Rich's Of Women Born as a Queer Feminist Daughter"* (2006), for example. Out of the framework of the Queer theory, a study is conducted by Nodeh, S., & Pourgiv, F. entitled "Form is the Ultimate Gift: Showalter's Linguistic and Cultural Model of Gynocriticism in Adrienne Rich's *A Change of World*" (2012). The study argued that although Rich was a great imitator of the patriarchal rules of writing in her early stage, she utilized the linguistics and

aesthetics to create a defence mechanism against oppressive patriarchy. It is done in the light of Showalter's gynocriticism to show Rich's revolutionary views, strictly in the first volume only and away from Kristeva's concepts. However, there is no study conducted on Adrienne Rich's poetry in light of Julia Kristeva's *Theory of the Subject*. Thus, the current study aims to unleash the poetics and politics of Adrienne Rich regarding the reconstruction of female identity outside the Queer context, because her poetics and politics have been framed by patriarchal critics as radical and queer. The study intends to show that these frames and labels are patriarchal in their implications and that they have been exploited by male critics to oust Adrienne Rich's discourse from the literary and feminist circles.

Moreover, Rich's poetry has been highly queered to the extent that her critical feminist ideas and perspectives are partly neglected as unfit to the feminist cause. This queering of her discourse of female identity has led even some feminist writers to the rejection of her discourse under the excuse that her ideas create another form of matriarchal prejudice. Thus, the current study comes to deal with the restructuring of female identity in Rich's poetry in the light of Kristeva's theory of the subject. Kristeva's theory of the *Semiotic* and the *Symbolic*, as well as *Abjection*, helps in the articulation of Rich's ideas far from patriarchal frames. Hence, the study emphasizes that the on-going circulation of labels like "queer poet" and "radical feminist" for Adrienne Rich doubles the silence of women and the patriarchal oppression against them.

The current study follows a psychofeminist approach to the study of restructuring the female identity in Adrienne Rich's selected poetry. It explores new techniques of

restructuring the female identity in Adrienne Rich's poetry in the light of Julia Kristeva's theory. Thus, it is significant in the sense that the rebirth of Rich's the female principle via Kristeva's *the Semiotic* would help women to articulate their semiotic drives and emotions into language and reconstruct their own identities without relying on the single-minded masculine discourse.

Significantly, many feminist writers including Rich talked about the necessity of creating a language for women, but it was impossible because in this case, they are creating another single-minded feminine language that will be again in sharp contrast to the patriarchal language. The result will be more conflicting discourses and more enhancement and maintenance to the binary system of thought. Here come the significance and relevance of using Kristeva's theory of the semiotic and the symbolic in the present study. The current study incorporates the articulation of the maternal emotions and drives via Kristeva's the semiotic into the symbolic modality of the patriarchal language in order to signify meanings that serve both man and woman simultaneously. Accordingly, Rich's poetics and politics would be liberated from the frames of radicalism and queerness.

Equally important, earlier studies missed the discussion of identity reconstruction within Rich's discourse of female desire. The available research dealt with Rich's discourse of this desire in the light of the Queer theory only. Therefore, using Kristeva's concept of *Abjection* to study Rich's female desire will contribute in the emancipation of female desire from being passive and powerless, and transform it into an active and powerful agent in the reconstruction of female identity.

More importantly, Rich's discourses of the poetic language and the female desire have not been combined simultaneously so far to study the female identity. They have been separated in the previous studies. Thus, the current study uses Kristeva's the semiotic and the symbolic to study Rich's poetic language and uses Abjection to study her discourse of female desire regarding the restructure of female identity. The amalgamation of these two concepts un-radicalizes Rich's discourse of poetic language and to un-queers her discourse of female desire via following Kristeva's concepts.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

Julia Kristeva's theory of Subjectivity is the theoretical framework of this study. The study aims to explore the role of the symbolic modality of signification in depriving women of their female identities in the light of the patriarchal thought. Simultaneously, it examines the role of the articulation of the semiotic elements in subverting the symbolic signifying system of language in order to create new spaces for the circulation of meanings that help in the reconstruction of female identity. Moreover, Kristeva's the semiotic and the symbolic is amalgamated with her concept of Abjection in the study of female desire in order to transgress the stereotyping of female desire as passive, and powerless as well as to transform it into an active variable in the re-structure of female identity in Rich's poetry.

Julia Kristeva's linguistic theory came to be increasingly influenced by psychoanalysis, an influence that resulted in the psycho-linguistic understanding of language proposed in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984). Kristeva is interested in the inherent materiality of language as represented by the speaking subject. She is

not satisfied by the conviction that language is a simple conveyer of meaning. Instead, she is interested in the heterogeneous nature of poetic language that escaped the oppression of strict scientific understanding and symbolic representation. Kristeva thinks that the locus of poetic language could be found within the semiotic, and she developed her notion of 'semanalysis' to act against the determinism of the structural linguistics by focusing on the outside of language. She presents a theory of the processes that constitute language. They are centred on the speaking subject. In order to understand the signifying process, Kristeva transforms Lacan's distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic order into a distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic. She says that the interaction between the semiotic and the symbolic constitutes the signifying process. She thinks that the semiotic divides and explores positive alternative expressions of subjectivity. The semiotic is linked to the pre-Oedipal primary processes, the basic pulsions of which Kristeva sees as predominantly anal and oral. The endless flow of pulsions is gathered up in the chora. Kristeva appropriates and redefines this Platonic concept and concludes that the chora is neither a sign nor a position, but 'an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases... Neither model nor copy, the chora precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to the vocal and kinetic rhythm (Moi 1986).

The chora will be more or less successfully repressed and can be perceived only as pulsational pressure on or within symbolic language: as contradictions, meaninglessness, disruption, silences and absences. The chora, then, is a rhythmic pulsion rather than a new language. It constitutes the heterogeneous, disruptive dimension of language, which can never be caught up in the closure of traditional

linguistic theory. Kristeva thinks that the semiotic disposition will follow deviations from grammatical rules of language, yet prove meaningful and pleasurable. Kristeva focuses on the heterogeneous nature of language in order to shed light on the importance of the materiality of language and to question the predominance of the symbolic. The semiotic as a signifying practice highlights the non-symbolic aspects of subjectivity. These elements remain after the subject enters the symbolic order and create the division between the semiotic and the symbolic.

Kristeva says that the symbolic language of the patriarchal society does not reflect women's needs and desires. Even when women write about themselves, they "operate at the symbolic register of language (i.e., those who do not practice feminine writing) cannot break down the defensively constructed male discourse. Their texts, says Kristeva, display very little difference from those written by males" (McGraw 1984, 145).

In her *Revolution in Poetic Language* (RPL) (1984), Kristeva introduces the concepts of *the Semiotic and the Symbolic*. She transforms Lacan's distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic order into a distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic (Moi 1986). She thinks that language is constituted by two modalities of signification and that the "dialectic between them determines the type of discourse (narrative, metalanguage, theory, poetry, etc.) involved; in other words, so-called "natural" language allows for different modes of articulation of the semiotic and the symbolic" (1984, 24). Moreover, the semiotic and the symbolic modalities seem contradictory, but they actually complete each other in the process of signifying meaning. Therefore, the signifying system produced by "the subject is always both

semiotic and symbolic, no signifying system he produces can be either 'exclusively' semiotic or 'exclusively' symbolic, and is instead necessarily marked by an indebtedness to both" (Moi 1986, 92-93).

Kristeva stresses the significance of the symbolic to have a logical meaningful language, but it should be empowered by the semiotic to have unbiased language. The symbolic should be continuously renewed through following the heterogeneous energy of the unconscious articulated by the semiotic's play of emotions and drives that represent the residue of the pre-Oedipal stage. These drives appear as the pressure inside the language and are expressed in its tone, rhythm, rhymes, imagery and also in the contradiction, meaninglessness, disruption, absence and silence (Petrović 1997).

Kristeva believes in her RPL that art in general and poetry, in particular, are the semiotic aspect of the symbolic and thus represent the flow of jouissance into the language. She adds that through "cracking the socio-symbolic order, splitting it open, changing vocabulary, syntax, the word itself, and releasing from beneath them the drives borne by vocalic or kinetic differences, jouissance works its way into the social and symbolic" (Kristeva 1984, 79-80).

Kristeva has reworked Lacan's emphasis on the centrality of the masculine dominance over the symbolic modes of expression. Unlike Lacan, Kristeva thinks that there is a chance in the subject to subvert the masculine discourse. She uses the word 'Semiotic' to refer to one of the two modalities of the signifying process (refer to Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework). Semiotic refers to the nonverbal part of the

language that can be inferred from the text through non-linguistic features like punctuation, silence, pause or poetic language. Semiotic ‘affect’ are associated with identity-formation, in which it “points to the invisible, drive-oriented psychological forces operative in the formation of identities” (Valk 2015, 2). Unlike semiotic, the symbolic is a way of signifying that depends on language as a sign system complete with its grammar and syntax (Kristeva 1984).

Kristeva conceptualizes a pre-Oedipal space where bodily pulsations, not yet gathered into a system of drives, will intermittently disrupt symbolic discourse; these pulsations Kristeva calls the ‘semiotic’. Kristeva, however, makes it clear that the ‘semiotic’ makes itself felt inflows in constant motion, irrespective of whether their site is a male or female body (Wright 2000). The semiotic can breach the boundaries of the symbolic in privileged moments of social transgression, and subvert its rules and operations (See chapter 2.6 for further elaboration).

Genotext and phenotext are used by Kristeva to refer to two aspects of analyzing literary texts. Genotext is “the motility between the words, the potentially disruptive meaning that is not quite a meaning below the text” while phenotext is “what the syntax and semantics of the text are trying to convey, again, in plain language” (McAfee 2004, 24). A genotext analysis can project the shattered identities of both characters and the author and their reconfiguration through the text. By definition, genotext refers to “release and articulation of drives as constrained by social codes” (Moi 1986, 28). Accordingly, “modern poetic language goes further than any classical mimesis - whether theatrical or novelistic - because it attacks not only

denotation (the positing of the object) but meaning (the positing of the enunciating subject) as well” (Moi 109).

Kristeva stressed that the heterogeneous articulation of the semiotic and symbolic disposition enables the text to signify what representative and connotative speech does not say (Kristeva 1980). She explains the process of meaning’s re-signification saying:

By reproducing signifiers—vocal, gestural, verbal—the subject crosses the border of the symbolic and reaches the semiotic chora, which is on the other side of the social frontier. The re-enacting of the signifying path taken from the symbolic unfolds the symbolic itself and—through the border that sacrifice is about to present or has already presented on stage—opens it up to the motility where all meaning is erased (RPL, 79).

Howsam said in *Reading Through Abjection* that Kristeva’s symbolic modality provides the foundation required for communication, “which allows us to make sense of the semiotic its rhythms, tones and movements (i.e. the rambling, laughter, humming, etc.) which precede, and exist as a necessary precondition for the symbolic” (2003, 3-4).

The second concept is Kristeva’s *Abjection* in her *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (POH) (1982). Abjection is the expulsion of certain parts of the body in order to establish the ‘I’. Kristeva says “The abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to I” (POH, 1). She opines that abject is “something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object” (POH, 4). Abjection is “a process of jettisoning what seems to be

part of oneself. The abject is what one spits out, rejects, almost violently excludes from oneself: sour milk, excrement, even a mother's engulfing embrace. What is abjected is radically excluded but never banished altogether" (McAfee 2004, 46).

Abjection occurs when the child sees himself in the mirror and tries to make a unification with this image to develop an identity, and then he begins to separate himself from others in order to develop the borders between 'I' and other. He learns to do that by abjection, in which he expels everything that is not part of himself. Later, the child rejects his mother because she becomes a prototype of what the drives expel. If the subject's identity derives from the unity of its objects, the abject is the threat of inassimilable non-unity; that is ambiguity. Hence, abjection is what disturbs identity, system and order (Rich 1982).

Moreover, the child feels conflicting emotions as he is longing for the life of plenitude with his mother and the need to renounce this life in order to become a subject. He must renounce part of himself in order to be a subject. It is never ending even when the child gets into the symbolic realm. What distinguishes Kristeva's abjection from Freud's repression is that abjection does not disappear from consciousness. Abjection remains on the periphery of consciousness. After the imposition of the symbolic, abjection tends to remain as a kind of background support for the symbolic. Kristeva says in POH (1982):

The abjection of self would be the culminating form of that experience of the subject to which it is revealed that all its objects are based merely on the inaugural loss that laid the foundations of its own being. There is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all abjection is in fact recognition of the want on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded (5).

From Kristeva's psychoanalytic perspective, abjection is done to the part of ourselves that we exclude: the mother. We must abject the maternal, the object which has created us, in order to construct an identity in the symbolic world. Abjection never entirely recedes so it haunts subjectivity, remaining on the periphery of awareness, threatening to unravel what has been constructed. To keep hold of 'oneself', a subject has to remain vigilant against what may undermine its borders. Kristeva argues that much literary creation is a means of this vigilance, a kind of catharsis of what is deemed other or abject.

She says that the writer is highly interested in the abject, thus he imagines its logic, projects himself into it, and consequently perverts language, style, and content.

Kristeva says in POH:

The abject shatters the wall of repression and its judgments. It takes the ego back to its source on the abominable limits from which, in order to be, the ego has broken away—it assigns it a source in the non-ego, drive, and death. Abjection is a resurrection that has gone through death (of the ego). It is an alchemy that transforms death drive into a start of life, of new significance (1982, 15).

Franklin, R. F. stated in his study entitled, *Oates's Stories of Romantic Love and Kristeva's Abject* that the desire for the semiotic accompanies the individual through his life and can be reflected through abjecting the boundaries of the reason of the patriarchal society. He commented on the process of abjection saying:

From the point of view of a baby, between one and one and one-half years of age, there is no Self or Other because of the baby's fusion with its mother. Kristeva calls this the "Semiotic" stage of development, a blissful state that echoes the womb. As development begins, the unity breaks, and upon the acquisition of

language, the now-speaking subject enters the Symbolic where it will remain in the realm of the Law of the Father, but it will always feel "lack" for the loss of the Semiotic unity. For the rest of its life, the subject will feel a profound "desire," which will never be fulfilled. Being "in love", the lover attempts to recover the Semiotic in the romantic relationship (1998, 29).

Kristeva is philosophically interested in the problems of anxiety and nihilism of the modern age. This interest motivates her to think of abjection as a transgression to the narcissistic structure of identity-formation on the individual and the group levels (See chapter 7.2 for further elaboration on abjection as a transgression). She thinks that the semiotic and the symbolic though seemingly opposing each other but they are interrelated cultural registers and modalities of meaning and identity. The semiotic is the world of instincts and drives while the symbolic is the world of authority, rules, and traditions. Kristeva thinks that the nihilistic attitudes of the modern world are caused by the split of the two signifiers; the semiotic and the symbolic. Thus, she believes that the institution's discourse writers need to realize the necessity of connecting these two modalities in the process of signification, so we get a better signifying system that helps the formation of male and female identities away from bias.

Kristeva's thesis is that the reconnection of the symbolic meanings and the semiotic (affective/instinctual) through a theory of identity-formation with the help of abjection will give the space for the circulation of meanings generated by these two modalities altogether. Consequently, they prevent the domination of one modality over the other. As such, Kristeva's theory of abjection is actually an attempt at

restoring the balance between the instinctive and the social aspects of identity-formation (refer to Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework).

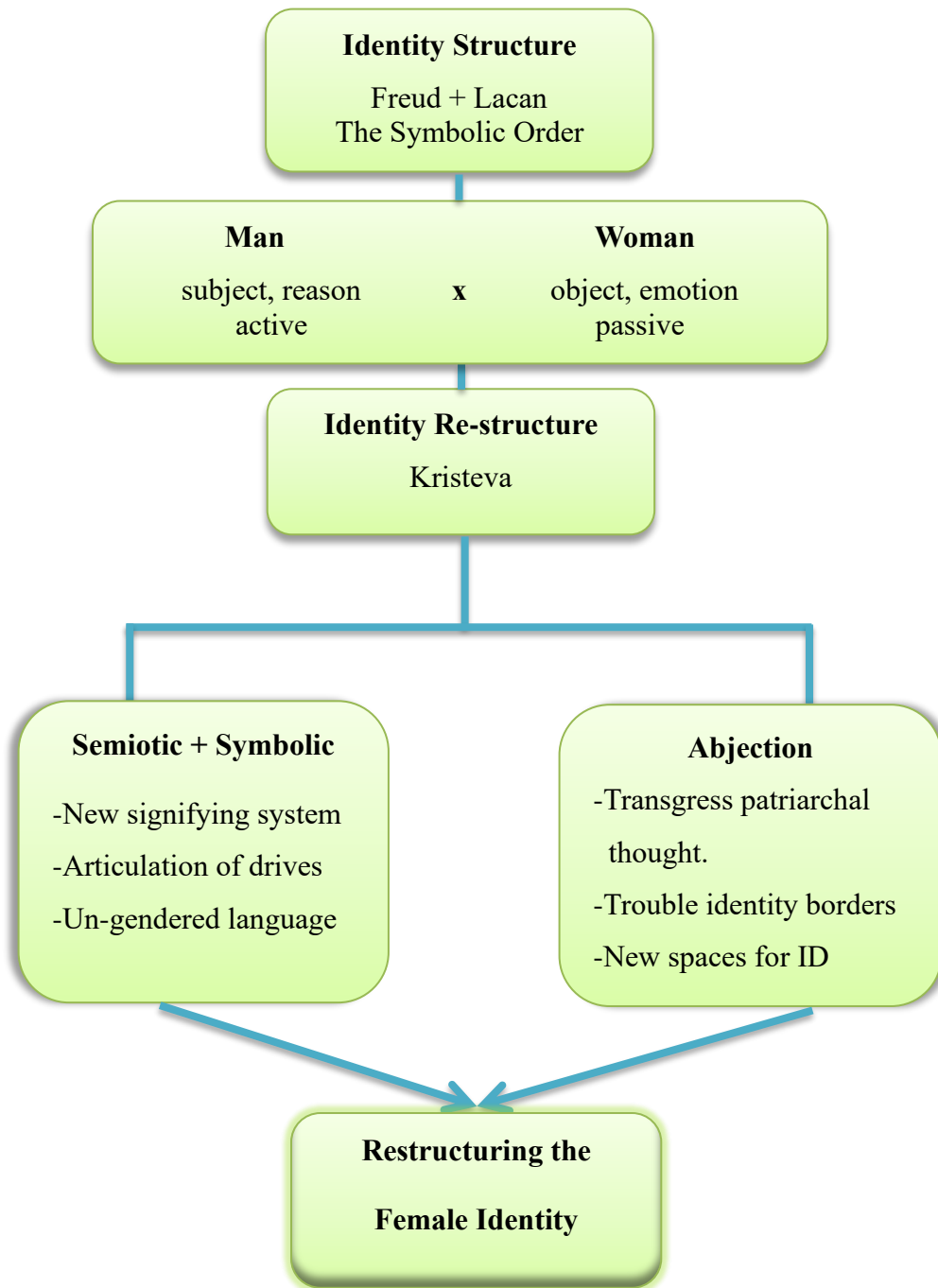


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

1.7 Methodology

The present study attempts to explore Adrienne Rich's feminist discourse of restructuring female identity. The relation between identity and affect (instinct/drive) in literature guided the study to the theoretical work of Julia Kristeva. Two concepts have been selected for the study, namely, the Semiotic and the Symbolic, and Abjection. The semiotic aspect has the power of subverting the static and patriarchal order of the symbolic language. Kristeva thinks that the Semiotic drives and emotions appear as a pulsational pressure inside the language itself and are articulated in Imagery, Rhythm, Symbol, Tone, Contradiction, and Meaninglessness. Thus, these semiotic elements will be textually analyzed to examine their subversive power.

Therefore, a textual analysis is conducted to study semiotic articulation of the sense and sound devices into the structural context to explore their role in subverting and shattering the fixed meanings of the symbolic language, which in turn create a new re-signifying system that helps in the reconstruction of female identity. Some poems of Adrienne Rich are selected to recall the female principle within language via connecting the semiotic with the symbolic as two inter-dependent signifiers of meaning. Thus, the speaking subject can be reconstructed through re-signifying the sign system of language.

Moreover, abjection is used to study the issue of female desire in the selected poems. Abjection troubles the borders of identity leading to the transgression of the patriarchal narratives and definitions of female desire. Abjecting female desire will transform it from a passive and powerless agent into an active and powerful agent in

the reconstruction of female identity. Therefore, the study examines the resurface of female desire in the symbolic order as an abjecting force that is reflected in the characters' poetic language in order to subvert and disrupt the narrative of the symbolic order. Some of Adrienne Rich's critical opinions will be utilized here because of their relevance to the study of female desire, especially opinions reflected in her essay about compulsory heterosexuality.

The study covers five stages in Rich's career. For each stage, a collection of poetry is selected to handle the major issues at this stage. These stages with the texts selected are mentioned below:

- 1- False Unconscious Stage. The text is *A Change of World* (1951).
- 2- Dual Consciousness Stage. The text is *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* (1963).
- 3- Un-naming Stage. The text is *Necessities of Life* (1966).
- 4- Re-naming the Self. The text is *Diving into the wreck* (1973).
- 5- Re-naming the World. The text is *The Dream of Common Language* (1978).

Moreover, the current study utilized many of Rich's essays and prose writings that provide fruitful insights to the understanding of her poetics and politics (refer to Figure 1.2: Methodology).

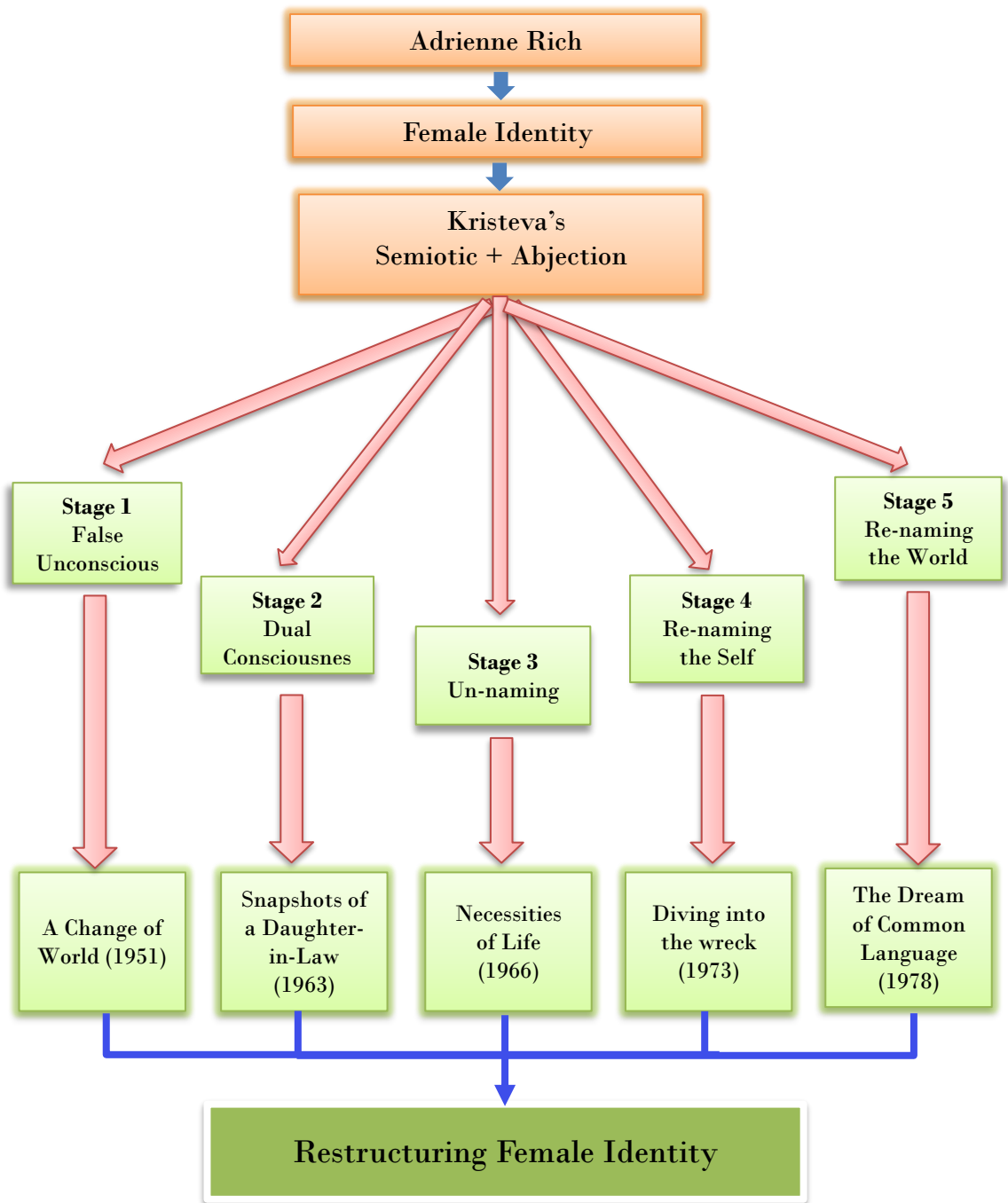


Figure 1.2: Methodology

1.8 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study is conducted within the framework of psycho-feminism, in which psycho-feminist theories have been utilized to study the topic of female identity. The study focuses on the restructuring of female identity in selected poems of Adrienne Rich, with respect to Julia Kristeva's theories of the *Symbolic and the Semiotic*, and *Abjection*. It is done in the light of the Kristeva's poststructuralist views that focus on the role of language as a vital process of signification in the structuring and restructuring of identity. It is conducted with respect to Kristeva's theories in:

- *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984).
- *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982).

The selection of Rich's collections of poetry depends on their liability and relevance to the topic of the study. The selected poems try to cover the various stages in the evolution of Adrienne Rich as a feminist poet regarding the re-structure of female identity. The study is limited to the following texts:

- 1- *A Change of World* (1951).
- 2- *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* (1963).
- 3- *Necessities of Life* (1966).
- 4- *Diving into the wreck* (1973).
- 5- *The Dream of Common Language* (1978).

These texts are selected because each one of them covers certain evolutionary stage in the poetic career of Adrienne Rich. The first text, *A Change of World* is selected because it covers the first stage of Rich's writing when she was still a disciple of great male writers. The second one, *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* is selected because it is the period in which Rich experienced dual consciousness due to the

clash inside her between following the patriarchal rules of writing and the articulation of her personal needs and desires. The dual conscious life is behind Rich's rejection of all the patriarchal definitions given to women and this rejection is reflected in *Necessities of Life*. *Diving into the Wreck* is selected to stand for a significant stage in Rich's career, the stage of Re-Naming the Self, which is crucial to the advent of the next one. The last stage is depicted in *The Dream of Common Language*, which covers the stage of Re-Naming the World.

Ch.	Poetry Collections	Poems Selected
3	A Change of World	1-An Unsaid Word. 2-Aunt Jennifer's Tigers. 3-Storm Warnings.
4	Snapshots of A Daughter-in-Law	1-Snapshots of A Daughter-in-Law. 2-The Roofwalkers. 3-Tear Gas.
5	Necessities of Life	1-The Trees. 2-Necessities of Life. 3-I am in Danger- Sir.
6	Diving into the Wreck	1-Diving into the Wreck. 2-Trying to talk with a Man. 3-Incipient.
7	The Dream of Common Language	1-Twenty-One Love Poems.

Table 1.3 Selected Poems

The study covers the period falls into (1951-1978) as it is the period of Rich's revolutionary and evolutionary poetics. After 1978, Rich was mature enough to go into more universal and humanitarian issues that can be explored with different conceptual frameworks.

The Queer theory is not taken into consideration in the study of female desire and its role in the identity formation as many earlier studies dealt with this topic within this framework as shown in the literature review. More importantly, the present study avoids the Queer theory as a framework in favour of un-framing the poetry of Adrienne Rich from the assumptions of this theory. The researcher realizes through the literature review that critics and theorists of the Queer theory put the poetry of Rich into a frame that was used intentionally or unintentionally to keep the poetics of Rich from the public domain. Thus, the present study follows Krestiva's *Abjection* to explore the role of female desire in the reconstruction of female identity.

1.9 Definitions of Terms

1- The Female Principle: Rich defines the Western society in relation to the ethical relationship between the male principle and female one. The male principle stands for separation and objectivity while the female one stands for relationship and subjectivity. Patriarchy divided these two principles to reduce the importance of woman. This separation ascribes the priority to the male principle and inferiority to the female one (Farwell 1977).

2- The Semiotic and the Symbolic: In Kristeva's theory, the signifying process has two modes: the semiotic and the symbolic. The interaction between these two

modalities regenerates the signifying process. This process re-signifies meanings that help in reconstituting language, which in turn reconstitutes identity (Moi 1986).

3- Abjection: The abject is what does not respect borders. Kristeva associates the abject with “what is jettisoned from the “symbolic system”. It is what escapes that social rationality, that logical order on which a social aggregate is based” (POH, 1982). Abjection is the state of abjecting or rejecting what is other to oneself, and thereby creating borders of an always tenuous “I”. Kristeva thinks that abjection is “a process that can collapse meaning, but which is nevertheless fundamental to the constitution of identity and renewal of meaning (Barrett 2011).

4- The Signifying Process: By the term *Signifying Process*, Kristeva means the various “ways in which bodily drives and energy are expressed, literally discharged through our use of language, and how our signifying practices shape our subjectivity and experience” (McAfee 2004, 14). She rejects the structuralists’ idea that language is a static entity; in contrast, she looks to language as dynamic. For her, the study of the speaking subject is inseparable from the study of language.

5-Subjectivity: It refers to an abstract or general principle that defies our separation into distinct selves and encourages us to understand why our interior lives inevitably seem to involve other people, either as objects of need, desire, and interest or as necessary sharers of common experience. (Mansfield 2000)

6- Identity: It is a set of rules followed by the subject to have a solid and free self. It is achieved through subjectivity and hence becomes an outcome after the process of self-actualization (subjectivity). In this thesis, it is employed as an equivalent to subjectivity (Curti 1998).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to survey the critical views and interpretations related to Adrienne Rich's feminist discourse regarding the structuring and the restructuring of female identity as reflected in the long span of her writing career. Rich has become the source of many debates and much controversy within the feminist and literary circles due to her radical views regarding the female identity politics within the modern society that is governed by the system thought of the patriarchal society. Another source of the controversy over Rich is her discourse of female desire, which caused debates about the validation and invalidation of this thought to the feminist cause. Again, Rich is severely criticized by the writers and thinkers of the patriarchal society, especially when she published her controversial essay about compulsory heterosexuality (1980).

Extensive studies have researched the works of Rich, but the focus will be the literary and feminist criticism related to this study. Thus, the first part of literature review clarifies Rich's feminist attitudes and identity politics in the early period of her life. Her theory of poetry will be investigated to show her revolutionary ideas concerning the politics of location of the female poet and the poetic language. This early period is very important in the shaping of Rich's consciousness as a female poet because in this period she was writing only about public issues and using an artistic masculine style, which made her aware of the prejudice of patriarchy.

Various journals and critical essays are reviewed to show that though Rich was following man-made language with its symbolic implications, she was aware of the inappropriateness and inefficiency of this masculine symbolic language in the expression of personal needs and desires of women. In addition, the first part moves through the various critical views of the role of language as a key determinant of identity in depriving women of their female identities. Language with its biased signifying system played a negative role in the formation of female identity. Thus, language became a point of investigation for Adrienne Rich.

Moreover, it deals with the controversies over Rich's radical attitudes of desire and sexual orientation. Rich's discourse of female desire will be reviewed to explore the role of desire in the restructure of identity. Actually, critics vary about the relevance of this Continuum to the feminist theory of identity formation, which is the reason behind Rich's transformation into a radical feminist.

The second part of literature review deals with Rich's belief in the power of the poetic word in reviewing the current situation of women and changing their awareness. This has led this study to be conducted in light of Julia Kristeva's theory of subject formation. Kristeva's contribution of the significance of language in the formation of one's identity presents new attitudes to the study of female identity in Rich's poetry. Therefore, literature review presents a selection of most recent studies that cover Kristeva's the Semiotic and the Symbolic as two modalities of signification that keep the subject in process and make it possible for the female subject to restructuring itself through language. Moreover, Kristeva's concept of

Abjection and its power of transgressing boundaries is appropriate to the study of female desire in Rich's poetry.

Finally, the study deals with the formation of female identity, thus, it is located within the Freudian, Lacanian and Kristevan frameworks that are also reviewed in this chapter. Earlier studies conducted in the light of these two frameworks are reviewed to highlight the problem statement of the present study.

2.2 Adrienne Rich's Feminist Attitudes

Adrienne Rich, as a radical feminist, made the point that she needs not address the exclusive and educated readers, but must address those who are defined as excluded from the patriarchal tradition. She was looking for the types of readers who share the same concerns, desires, and burdens. Her strategy was not directed to the educated women who are aware of their situation and capable of expressing themselves, instead, she aimed at addressing people who are deprived of these opportunities. Therefore, she attempted to write poetry free from the lies and chains of the masculine and heterosexual thought. Accordingly, the language was Rich's medium of articulating her poetics of change. She raised a question crucial to her project: If women's voices have been buried by the patriarchal norms and conventions, can a rejection of these norms help the women writer to articulate their needs and desires with a language that can restore their stolen identities?

Rich wrote in her essay, "When we dead awaken: Writing as re-vision" (1972), that she wrote poems in the early period in order to please a particular man because her poetry was shaped by male writers. She started writing poems using man's language

with its biased signifying system, so her poems in this stage did not reflect her female experience because of the absence of the female principle in this language. Thus, Rich aimed to reconsider language through the violation of the styles and traditions of poetic writing. She stressed the importance of re-visioning the past saying that “Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival” (18). Rich was handcuffed by language when she came to talk about herself. She said in her “Poetry and Experience”:

the poem itself engenders new sensations, new awareness in me as it progresses. Without for one moment turning my back on conscious choice and selection, I have been increasingly willing to let the unconscious offer its materials, to listen to more than the one voice of a single idea. Perhaps a simple way of putting it would be to say that instead of poems about experiences I am getting poems that are experiences, that contribute to my knowledge and my emotional life even while they reflect and assimilate it (Rich et al 1993, 165).

Rich “describes the long process of integrating the two as a political coming-to-consciousness, a moving beyond the conceptual barriers that separated her personal struggles as a young wife and mother from aesthetic and political concerns” (Forbes & Forbes 2009, 16). She followed a new strategy of merging the public and the personal believing that they are one. She started reflecting her voice in her poetry as a step to the re-birth of the buried voices of women around the world. She realized that she needs to be fully equipped with the appropriate tools of language if she wants a re-formation of female identity.

Rich stated in her essay, "Vesuvius at Home: The Power of Emily Dickenson" (1975) that the relationship between the poet and her poetry has twofold nature.

Poetic language-the poem on paper- is a concretization of the poetry of the world at large, the self, and the forces within the self; and those forces are rescued from formlessness, lucidified, and integrated in the act of writing poems. But there is a more ancient concept of the poet, which is that she is endowed to speak for those who do not have the gift of language, or to see for those who-for whatever reasons- are less conscious of what they are living through. It is as though the risks of the poet's existence can be put to some use beyond her own survival (Rich et al, 194).

Nodeh, S., & Pourgiv, F., *'Form is the Ultimate Gift': Showalter's Linguistic and Cultural Model of Gynocriticism in Adrienne Rich's A Change of World* (2012), dealt with Rich's double-voiced discourse circulated in Rich's *A Change of World*. They argued that although Rich was a great imitator of the patriarchal rules of writing in her early stage, she utilized the linguistics and aesthetics to create a defense mechanism that helped to protect her from oppressive patriarchy. Conducting the study in the light of Showalter's gynocriticism, it concluded that Rich did not submit to patriarchal rules, and succeeded in articulating her revolutionary views.

In an extensive study entitled, "The End of a Century": Feminist Millennial Vision in Adrienne Rich's *Dark Fields of the Republic*" (1996), Mary K. Deshazer explored the feminist attitudes towards the world while approaching the end of the century. She discussed Rich's feminist vision in the light of her on-going calls to resist capitalist thinking, patriarchal ideology and conventional literary discourse that try to fetter poetry of its role in the public life.

Deshazer focused on the role of Rich's feminist revolutionary poetics in the provoking of resistance and fight for the sake of creating an awareness of the necessity of change and transformation. She concluded that the poems in this volume assert their own historical agency and keep calling to reject normative thinking and struggle for revolutionary transformation. Rich's poems prefigure the twenty-first century for they stand for meaningful political interventions that must be utilized to reconstruct the world. The study did not go through the discussion of Rich's feminist and poetic techniques of fulfilling such a reconstruction.

Betsy Erkkila addressed the precursors who exercised an influence on the poetic consciousness of Adrienne. In her essay, "Rich Dickinson and Rich: Toward a Theory of Female Poetic Influence" (1984), she tried to find an approach to the study of female literary tradition based on female patterns of interactions because the Freudian model was not fit for the study of female experience. Thus, some feminist writers argued that it is important for them to have female precursor if they want to have their female poetic tradition. Accordingly, Rich found an aid in the process of giving birth to herself through renewing contact with Dickinson who turned to be her precursor. In turn, it showed that Rich worked as a kind of poetic mother to Dickinson; a mother who gives birth to new conceptions of Dickinson's poetry.

More importantly, Rich thinks that women's search for self-knowledge is not only a search for identity but a refusal of the self-destructive system of patriarchal culture. She calls for a radical feminist critique of literature that would take the first step to figuring out how we live and how we think about ourselves. This critique should explore the role of language in liberating and oppressing us and look forward

towards a better situation. A change is needed in the concept of sexual identity in order not to relive the old political order and oppressive ideologies. Being familiar with the writings of the past is not enough, but we should question the truth that we have been handed in order to break the firm hold of old traditions over our thought system (Rich 1972).

To address the issue of the female subject is to ask what role is played by the symbolic in the structuring of subjectivity. The symbolic is what mediates between private experience and the general forms in which individual experience is inscribed. For the male subject, a means of mediating between personal experience and the universal symbolic order is already given. Patriarchal culture mediates, for men, between the individual experience of one's subjectivity and the general forms in which it is set. What seems to be natural and universal is nothing but a generalization of male subjectivity. These generalizations enable individuals who are male to be inscribed into the symbolic category of Man. The narrative is significant in the construction of male subjectivity because it enables men to objectivize themselves and their own experience in what they represent (Bock & James 2005).

Rich re-valued women who are suppressed under the control of patriarchy. She argued that the intellectual system under patriarchy deliberately neglected and buried the female intellectuality and consciousness, and the only means to regain such intellectuality is to change the way of thinking itself. Such a change can be done through the reintegration of the unconscious, the subjective, the maternal (the semiotic) with the structural, the logical, and the intellectual (the symbolic). Such kind of integration will lead to the annihilation of the patriarchal binary system. She

argued that the structures of patriarchal society and knowledge system marginalized feminine thought and values (Gerhard, 2001).

The promotion of a democracy that gives women the chance to express their voices was discussed in Riley's article, "The Voice of Poetry is Calling: Adrienne Rich's democratic Impulse" (2009). She argued that poetry as a language gives voice to the unsayable and unspeakable in our lives. Thus, she dealt with Rich's "What is Found There" to identify poetry's ability to create the revolutionary presence. She stated that Rich's poetry documents her continuous search for self-identity and understanding, accompanied by her search for a place within the history of her country. As a conclusion to her study, she revealed that Rich wrote poetry that shows the drawbacks of patriarchy, and influenced the readers, who in turn reinvigorated democracy by salvaging history, reimagining themselves and rebuilding the ruins of democracy.

Against the colonial discourse of patriarchy, Herzog reconsidered Rich's politics of decolonization in her article, "Adrienne Rich and the Discourse of Decolonization" (1989). She was guided by the presumption that Rich's politics are a great strength of her poetry. She argued that Rich has been considered by critics as being exclusively concerned with feminist politics, which led to the delimitation of her readers. In addition, Herzog said that this labelling contributed to the misperception that Rich is solely a woman poet talking about women issues. Instead, the study approached the poetics of Rich differently. Herzog utilized two concepts: 'history' and 'language' to prove the relevance of the colonial frame to study Rich's poetry. Rich said that women suffered 'erasure of history' and obliged to use 'the colonizer's language'

(262). Thus, Herzog argued that reading the poetics of Rich in the light of the theories of colonialism would be very informative and fruitful in the understanding of Rich's poetry. She believed that without the colonial context, no one can appreciate the extent to which Rich's concerns extend beyond the feminist contexts to include universal and cultural issues. Actually, the article introduced an enriching study to the understanding of the discourse of decolonization as an important strategy in the poetry of Adrienne Rich.

Mary Slowik conducted a study to examine the early poetry of Adrienne Rich in, "The Friction of the Mind: The Early Poetry of Adrienne Rich" (1984). Her purpose was to examine Rich's early works to study how Rich overcame anger and began to mold it into a creative rather than destructive emotion. She argued that Rich was aware of the oppression and violence women face, but she did not advocate angry outbursts. Instead, Rich stressed the need for women to change their stereotypic images, and to transform into conscious human beings. Slowik argued that Rich's anger of women's oppression has been transformed into a power that goes on in her later works. Her study was more of a focus on the study of anger as a transformative energy rather than on the study of anger as a feminist poetic that helped in the shaping of her own poetics.

Rich in "Blood, Bread, and Poetry: The Location of the Poet" (1984) needs women to 'write directly and overtly as a woman, out of a woman's body and experience, to take women's existence seriously as theme and source for art'. Rich realizes that women understand the necessity of having an art of their own, to recall their own history and look forward to the true future of humanity. They are conscious of the

need to break the barriers of silence and to raise their voices against patriarchal codes. They feel the responsibility of building political and cultural movements out of the feminist cause to rehabilitate the world they live in (Rich 1993).

In this concern, the empowerment of women was one of the major concerns of Rich's poetry. Thus, Walkington did a comparative study on Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* and Rich's selected poems of *A Dream of Common Language* entitled, "Women and Power in Henrik Ibsen and Adrienne Rich" (1991). The study examined the relationship between power and women within these two settings different in time and place. The difference between the two settings was that Ibsen created an extraordinary protagonist who thinks of her personal fulfillment, unlike Rich who denounced the extraordinary woman who single-handedly gains power. Instead, Rich proposed communality as a solution to women's oppression. As a conclusion, the researcher realized through the discussion that the powerless woman is not a natural creation, but a product of patriarchal oppression. The research helped in the realization that patriarchy creates barriers to stop women from developing their talents and finding meaningful vocations.

Moreover, Diehl discussed Rich's concept of the 'common language' in his study, "Cartographies of Silence: Rich's "Common Language" and the Woman Poet" (1980). She commented on Rich's stressing of the urgent need to find a way of transgressing the traditional discourse in order to extend her dialogue with the predominant culture. One of these transgressive techniques was the search for a shared mythology to be a means of reclaiming a common experience for women, an experience that takes her into history to look for appropriate metaphor. She

concluded her essay with Rich's poetics that if the poet needs to establish a new world, she has to be very close to her natural sources and to rely on her personal experience. In the view of poetics, a woman would be a central part of a world ruled by her language and her experience, hence, she could grow and write about it. The study was nutritive to the feminist mind in understanding Rich's poetics of the common language, with no reference to Kristeva's theories of the subject.

In "Power and Danger: Works of a Common Woman" (1977), Rich said that poetry is a criticism of language because "In setting words together in new configurations, in the mere, immense shift from male to female pronouns, in the relationship between words created through echo, repetition, rhythm, rhyme, it lets us hear and see words in a new dimension (Rich 1980).

Wendy Martin focused on Rich's message of women's empowerment in his article, "To Study Our Lives': Consciousness and Community in Adrienne Rich's *The Dream of a Common Language*" (1979) on the lyrical aspect of Rich's volume in order to show that these poems are up-to-date to the everyday life through their representation of ordinary details, which make the future possible. He discussed selections of Rich's poems to convey Rich's message of celebrating the power and energy of women.

Harris dealt with Rich's ethos in his article, "The Emergence of a Feminizing Ethos in Adrienne Rich's Poetry" (1988). He argued that Rich ethos exercises a feminizing effect on the readers' awareness. He stated that the feminizing ethos of Rich addresses a central issue, which is the oppressive nature of patriarchy. He elaborated that her ethos exhorts women to right the patriarchal wrongs in order to create a new

world that relies on female virtues and experiences. He concluded that Rich's ethos is not a waste of time or a radical feminist dialectic but the combative and moral ethos that calls the American nation to admit its sins and correct them.

Rich's concern over a linguistic means to the expression of female needs and desires turned to be a serious issue for most of the feminist writers around the world. One of the studies that dealt with the importance of language in establishing a 'feminine writing' was done by Tokdemir who relied on Cixous's concept of "L'écriture féminine" to analyze works of art in the thesis entitled, *From Feminine Writing to Feminine Painting* (2006). The scope of the study was the second-wave feminist movement in which Women's Liberation Movement was examined to see the feminist understanding of equality of sexes. The study discussed the artworks of Marina Abramovic and Tracey Emin under Cixous's concept of feminine writing. The study introduced painting as one of the means of expressing women's needs and desires. Thus, women can express themselves better in their own language. Commenting on the status of women in the second-wave movement in America, Tokdemir said that women "fought vigorously for reproductive and political rights. They also fought against being symbolized as beauty and sex objects. With the women liberation movement and fights, women started to gain equality" (10).

2.3 Rich's The Female Principle

Rich spent the early period of her literary career following and imitating the craftsmanship of major literary writers in the canon. In addition, she imitated their themes and ideas regarding what is fit and unfit for women to write about. She copied their style and subject matter to write poems about public matters because the

writing about personal issues was regarded against the norms and inappropriate. Her familiarity with the modes of expression of the symbolic patriarchal language helped her much to diagnose the defects within the sign system of the masculine language. Thus, she dedicated her writings to talk about public experiences at the expense of her personal needs. In her essay WWDA (1972), she wrote:

No male writer has written primarily or even largely for women, or with the sense of women's criticism as a consideration when he chooses his materials, his theme, his language. But to a lesser or greater extent, every woman writer has written for men even when, like Virginia Woolf, she was supposed to be addressing women. If we have come to the point when this balance might begin to change, when women can stop being haunted, not only by "convention and propriety" but by internalized fears of being and saying themselves, then it is an extraordinary moment for the woman writer-and reader (Rich 20).

A study was conducted by Babu K. T. on Rich's poetics under the title *Aesthetics and politics of Language in Adrienne Rich*. The study explored the interconnectedness of language and related cultural issues and women's subjectivity.

The researcher commented on Rich's conception of language saying:

Rich emphasizes the creative capacity of language, its ability to help shape our conceptions of self and of the world. Language is influential in shaping the way we organize and understand reality. If categories of language do indeed shape our experience, then perhaps by changing the perceptions on language we could ultimately change social structures. She argues that language, rather than being a neutral vehicle that communicates already-formed ideas, works instead to shape our ideas about the world (Babu 2013).

Therefore, Rich tried to analyze society in relation to the ethical relationship between the male principle and female one. She defines these two principles according to the traditional Western thought in which the male principle stands for separation and

objectivity while the female one stands for relationship and subjectivity. Rich distances herself from the traditional Western definition of these two qualities and their interrelationship. She thinks that the patriarchal society divided these two principles, which caused what she calls a 'terrifying dissociation of sensibility'. This kind of dissociation means that society reduces the importance of woman and the female principle to the masculine notions of what is fit and unfit to them. Therefore, these two principles are kept separate. This separation ascribes the priority to the male principle and the dislike for everything related to the female principles. The patriarchal thought defines masculinity as the right to dominate and control femininity. This thought objectifies the female and causes the suppression of the female principle whether in the self, the natural environment, or the artistic world. Rich thinks that men and women try to keep themselves aloof and untouched by the female principle of subjectivity and relationship, and this kind of separation of the two sides of human existence is unethical and unsatisfactory. She believes that with no mutual and communal relationship of the male and female principles, culture, nature and language are forced into a situation of manipulation and use (Farwell 1977).

Mary Eagleton in her article, "Adrienne Rich, Location and the Body" (2000) introduces a new reading of Rich's essay, "Notes toward a Politics of Location" (1984). Rich's essay discusses the politics of location writing in relation to the specific location of the body. The concept of locatedness and the problem of the subject come to be one of the central issues in the writings of Adrienne Rich. Rich was concerned with the relation between the pronouns, the individual, and the collective. Mary explored the significance of interconnectedness as an aesthetic and

political impulse in the poetry of Rich. She investigates Rich's situation of her body both on the personal and public levels. The study is closely conducted to show Rich's exploration of the problem of pronouns in relation to certain specific location—the body. It is conducted in the light of Rich's views with reference to some of Virginia Woolf's and George Steiner's views. Mary concludes that working across the pronouns 'I' and 'we' is the problem of every location and the body as an elaborate sign system because it is subjected continuously to reinterpretation.

Rich believes that women should teach themselves to avoid conformity to conventions of patriarchal society. She calls women to realize that these conventions are a social construct, profitable to some people and detrimental to others. She asks them to ban these social constructs, criticize and alter them. She realized the value of the unconscious for the imaginative poet because the unconscious offers raw materials for the poet and gives him more than one voice for a single idea.

2.4 Rich's Identity Politics

Adrienne Rich wrote her very controversial essay, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (CHLE) in 1980, and in 1986 published her book *Blood, Bread, and Poetry*. The essay became part of the radical feminism movement. This essay founded her concept of 'Continuum of female desire'. This continuum was constituted in order to include women who are not usually considered female-identified, specifically those women who identify themselves as heterosexuals. The objective was to look for points of similarities among heterosexually identified feminists and female-identified feminists in order to create women-centred society. This concept is used first in the fields of feminist studies, especially within the queer

studies. This continuum tries to conceptualize female-identified relationship as more than a desire for certain kinds of sexual intimacies and relationships. Sexual orientation is closely examined by the feminist theorist, believing that the personal is the political. In addition, intimate relationships are not restricted in definition to sexual intimacy but it is more than that (Ryersbach 2005).

Rich thinks that heterosexual thought is an aggressive political system that is institutionalized by males to give them the "right of physical, economical, and emotional access" to women. She suggests that heterosexuality should be studied as a patriarchal political institution. She invites women to reorient their powers and desires from men to other women in order to demolish the thesis that women are only objects of desire, which implies their inferiority and subordination. She thinks that female-identified thinking can do a favour to the feminist thought. Rich's concept of the female desire challenges many traditional notions of women's weakness and their social and economic dependence on the independent powerful men. As well, she questioned adult sexuality and psychological completion that keep men and women in a binary position. She calls for an urgent need to the understanding of female-identified experience, believing that this understanding will widen the boundaries, and give women the opportunity for a new experience.

Distiller approached the issue of female desire in her article, "Another Story: the (im) Possibility of Lesbian Desire" (2005), which offered a psychoanalytic study of the possibilities and impossibilities of representing female desire. The study argued that there are many implications that identity is constructed within a patriarchal economy. It followed the feminist and queer psychoanalytic theory to deal with female desire.

These frames stated that female-identified relationship is positioned as doubly perverse. Although this desire is denied a position within the psychoanalytic theory, female-identified women have used both psychoanalysis and language to talk about themselves and their experiences. She revealed that some women can represent their female desire through a reclaimed language.

Accordingly, Rich demoted heterosexuality and promoted a discourse free of the chains of patriarchy. She talked about the implications of the female experience in her essay CHLE saying that this experience:

comprises both the breaking of a taboo and the rejection of a compulsory way of life. It is also a direct or indirect attack on male right of access to women. But it is more than these, although we may first begin to perceive it as a form of nay-saying to patriarchy, an act of resistance. It has of course included role playing, self-hatred, breakdown, alcoholism, suicide, and intrawoman violence; we romanticize at our peril what it means to love and act against the grain, and under heavy penalties

(Rich 1980, 649).

Heterosexuality denies women's sexuality in order to control and suppress any transition, creativeness, and economic advancement of women. The heterosexual society has excluded women from functioning in both public and private spheres. Women were given no choice but to accept their position in society as secondary to that of men. Rich says that the burial of the female-identified experiences in history has led the society to reject any issue related to the female-identified experience.

Rich rejects the use of the clinical implications associated with female desire. Instead, she calls for the use of female-identified existence to describe the creation of

these women throughout history and to use the term female-identified 'continuum' to include the entire range of a woman-identified experience. She thinks that the new understanding of female-identified experience in addition to the appropriate language can face the deviant misrepresentation created by the clinical terms of the traditional society. Rich calls women to have a better understanding of the female experience, which leads to more forms of "primary intensity" to be enhanced by women.

Rich believes that the female-identified experience can be a source of resistance to the heterosexual thought. It helps women to deny the right of free male access to women's body. Rich argues that female-identified women have been cut off the historical narrative and even in the case of mentioning some examples, these examples were talking about women's stories of male homosexuality.

Rich has gone to the extreme of proposing that all women should engage themselves in some form of female-identified relationship, and give up the male role in this relationship. She thinks that this is the only means of facing the heterosexual oppressive thought. She thinks that this new experience can give women a better understanding of heterosexuality; experiences that will help them assess the heterosexual experience. She says that heterosexuality is a political institution constructed by men historically and culturally to be the only valid way living, which in turn maintains the male dominance over females. Rich urges women to reject this oppressive ideology and to try a new experience in order to give woman the choice to make up her mind instead of man. Radically, Rich introduces the female-identified continuum to be the best milieu for women's existence. The female-identified relationship is not only a sexual attraction and physical act for Rich, but it is an

emotional experience and strong bond that tie women together, especially they are familiar with the same experiences. Furthermore, Rich thinks that within the heterosexual thought system of the patriarchal society, female-identified women will not be admitted a space and will be continuously framed as deviants of society. She thinks that understanding of female-identified experience will help to develop a better understanding of female sexuality and way it is constructed throughout history.

In 1984, Rich wrote another essay, “Reflections on Compulsory Heterosexuality” to review the critical views written about her former essay, “Compulsory Heterosexuality”. Rich re-modified her argument to show the real intention behind writing her essay. Rich wants to contribute to the understanding of sexuality from a different perspective. She raises awareness about the presumption of female heterosexuality in order to look at this issue differently. She says that her essay should be read as a new manifesto. She explains that the purpose of the essay is to question heterosexuality in an attempt to create new different realities like homosexuality. In brief, Rich looks for a female-identified revolution against heterosexuality (Rich 2004).

De Beauvoir distinguished between sex and gender saying that there is an interaction between social and natural functions in the sense that sex is born and gender is created. She views civilization as a major constituent of this being. Systems of interpretation related to biology, psychology, reproduction, and economics constitute the male figure in terms of the female ‘other’. For her, women are constructed as women and that the only way of destructing patriarchy is when women break out of their objectification (Selden et al 2005).

Cole and Cate introduced a renewed appreciation and assessment to Adrienne Rich's CHLE in their study entitled, "Compulsory Gender and Transgender Existence: Adrienne Rich's Queer Possibility" (2008). They presented a new reading of the transgender issues in light of Rich's essay. Rich's objective in her essay was to create a kind of strategy that generates a deeply felt self-understanding of woman as an identity or subject position in a context defined by the Law of the father. Rich calls for certain continuum, which is "a strategic mechanism for generating politically viable identities and alliances. It is a way of shifting investments, a reorientation that attempts to demystify and recognize women's complex lived experience" (281-282).

They argue the need to use Rich's logic and calls to challenge prescriptive sexuality to create a transgender continuum that challenges heteronormativity and homonormativity of the binary genders. They concluded the need of the transgender continuum to foreground the violence of the sexual binary system of the patriarchal society, as Rich did in denaturalizing heterosexuality in her continuum. Cole and Cote introduced the possibility of using Rich's logic as one of the base assumptions of the queer theory, which does not match the objectives of my study.

A very important study on female desire in Rich's poetry was conducted by Colette Ann Peters in his, *"WHATEVER HAPPENS, THIS IS": Lesbian Speech-Act Theory and Adrienne Rich's Twenty-One Love Poems* (1993). Peter used the theory of Austin's *Speech-Act* to provide a means by which to read the linguistic "action" in Rich's love poems. Rich expressed her belief in the power of the poetic language to make a change and to act. She said in "Power and Danger: Works of a Common Woman" that "Poetry is above all a concentration of the power of language, which is

the power of our ultimate relationship to everything in the universe (On Lies, Secrets and Silence (LSS), 1979, 248). The Speech-Act theory states that language performs power through words that do act and create. He concluded that the Speech-Act theory helped Rich to express her female-identified experience in linguistic terms because she was silenced throughout history from talking about this experience. Rich's poetic language was performative because she was able to speak the 'unspeakable,' and to name the 'unnameable' (Peters 1993).

Susan Driver approaches Rich's conception of maternity in her essay, "Reading Adrienne Rich's *Of Women Born as a Queer Feminist Daughter*" (2006) in light of Teresa de Lauretis' (1994) expansive notion of experience as a dynamic activity of self-representation. De Lauretis tries to establish a kind of a feminist theory of experience that envisions subjectivity as an 'ongoing construction'. This experiential language shakes subjectivity through activating the conditions and contours of sensual living to create an interplay of relations institutionally separated (113).

Driver says that there is a gap in the queer theory for it has failed to offer an alternative to desiring maternal subjects. Another gap is in the feminist theories because they are subject to the heterosexual norms in understanding motherhood. She sees that both the postmodern feminist writers and the queer theorists misunderstand the role of the maternal subjects in the construction of identity and gender because they still associated maternal subjects with norms of heterosexuality and gender essentialism.

Driver followed a close textual and reflexive procedure of interpretation to Rich's *Of Women Born* to show that maternal body can exceed binary thought and universal norms, and suggest a corporeal mode that intersects various acts of feeling, desiring and thinking. She did that in the light of De Lauretis's concept of experience which includes a continual reworking of discourses by feeling, thinking, imagining and desiring subjects (109). She filled the gap in the queer feminist theory by re-merging maternity and desire that is grounded in Rich's *Of Women Born*.

Formation of the Self in the light of gender and sexuality was also studied in Suzana Binti Taslim's, *Language, Gender and Sexuality in Lee Kok Liang's London does not Belong to Me and Shirley Geok-Lin's Joss and Gold* (2009). The study argues the centrality of both gender and sexuality to the formation of identity. Lacan's psychoanalytic theory of the Unconscious and the post-Lacanian feminist views were utilized to study how metaphor represents gender and sexuality in these two texts. The study concluded that these two writers utilized metaphor and metonymy to capture the gendered identity and sexual self of their characters in their texts.

M. D. Keith conducted a study, *Cantatas of the Wild: Memoir, Mysticism, and Modern Feminist Poetry* (2012), in which she says that Rich's poetic words are generating hope, and her erotic vision of women constructing their identities according to a linguistic map inspired many women to go on in this path. She says that Rich articulates for women what they could not express about their own personal lives in certain moments of history (101).

Elaine Merks describes the emergence of the female-identified feminists saying that their voices are very subversive because they work to displace the phallus and create a new pleasure. They establish a new relationship to gender and pronouns. Their aim is not to the savours of the world, “but to create hyperbolic, sensuous fictions that illuminate possibilities for the women as narrator and the women as reader” (Wolfe & Penelope 1993, 283).

2.5 Construction of Subjectivity

Before going into the discussions and debates about the definition and construction of subjectivity, it is noted that the words ‘subject’ and ‘self’ are used interchangeably to talk about subjectivity. The word ‘subject’ is widely used for its social, psychological and cultural implications.

Identity construction is defined in terms of its relationship to many factors like language, sex, gender, race, politics, etc. These factors identify both individual and group identities. Within the field of psychoanalysis and feminist thought, the focus on the construction of identity is based on the individual identity.

Subjectivity refers to “an abstract or general principle that defies our separation into distinct selves, and that encourages us to imagine that or simply helps us to understand why our interior lives inevitably seem to involve other people, either as objects of need, desire, and interest or as necessary sharers of common experience. In this way, the subject is always linked to something outside of it—an idea or principle or the society of other subjects” (Mansfield 2000, 3). This indicates that the subject is not an isolated entity but operates at the intersection of certain truths and principles.

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories made a turning point in the history of psychoanalysis for his theories and investigations undermined the traditional thinking and perspectives of the self-present individual. Freud shifts the focus from the metaphysical consciousness into the divided unconscious. Consciousness was viewed in the traditional thought as the irrefutable locus of individuality that is not affected by external forces. Freud, on the other hand, focused on the unconscious stating that the individual was subject to cultural and discursive influences. Oedipus complex explains the development of infantile sexuality whereby the incest taboo directs the individual towards acceptable sexual behaviour. The child suffers this complex when he reaches the genitals stage, which is shown as the first love-object and a longing for the opposite gender parent and results in the equivalent parent becoming a threat to the fulfilment of this taboo.

Freud states that if the individual needs to be socially acceptable sexual being, he has to repress the desire of loving one parent and wishing the death of the other. He thinks that this can be fulfilled by the fear of castration and the repression of Oedipus complex, which begin the division of the subject and determine gender role. The boy fears castration, loss of the penis, and the girl accepts castration. The boy's interest in his sexual organ leads to the sublimation of the Oedipus complex and is central in the development of the ego as an alternative love-object to both mother and father in the form of the self-love, leading to the development and supremacy of male sexuality. Thus, the boy achieves his masculine status.

The girl, on the other hand, suffered lack and inferiority at the hand of Freudian psychology, which led to the diminishing of the female influence in the society.

Because of the castration complex, the girl feels that she is not a rival to the boy and that she is weak and inferior. The girl, in this case, directs her desire towards the father, the one who has the penis. As such, the Oedipus complex divides the male and female subject through the imposition of discursive gender role.

Lloyd comments in his book, *Beyond Identity Politics* (2005) on the concept of power and subordination of females within the feminist discourse saying:

Current attempts to understand women's oppression tend rightly to conceive it as operating in multiple intersecting registers. Attention has therefore turned to exploring the dense network of structures that converge to produce women's subordinate place in the world. Accompanying this shift in how to analyse oppression has been a rethinking, in some quarters at least, about how to understand society itself. Society has often been presented within feminist work as a totality, that is, as an integrated whole amenable to knowledge and analysis in terms of an underlying (patriarchal) structure (75).

Jacques Lacan rereads the psychoanalytic theories of Freud, focusing on the role of language in the construction of the subject. His 'Imaginary phase' shows the influence of the image on the development of the subject. In addition, Lacan is interested in the way the subject is constituted by language and the Symbolic order. In his *Ecrits*, he shows the primacy of language in the development of subjectivity. His point of departure from the Freudian psychology lies in his interest in the discourse of Saussurian semiotics and the works of post-structuralism.

Lacan rejects Freud's model of the ego pattern that aims to secure the ego's dominance and control over the id and the superego. He does not believe that the ego is an autonomous and innate self; instead, he thinks that the ego is a provisional

construct that can be easily hurt by changes of the drives. Lacan thinks that culture, language and unconscious desire produce subjectivity. He modifies Freud's displacement and condensation replacing them with metaphor and metonymy. He says that metaphor operates by substituting one term or another, while metonymy operates by connecting one term to another. The metaphor makes use of the shared meaning among terms, whereas metonymy makes use of historical and cultural associations (McAfee 2004). Lacan operates in the unconscious, thinking that the effects of the unconscious can be seen in language. This makes Lacan say that the unconscious is structured like a language.

Lacan works too on Freud's Oedipus complex and his concern with the subject of the father as the point of interest for both of the boy and the girl because of the 'penis envy'. Lacan is not interested in the subject of the father, rather he is interested in what the father signifies. He calls it 'the law of the father' for what the father stands for and represents. He turns his attention for what the 'penis' signifies. He calls it the 'Phallus signifier' for it signifies what women lack and what men have. Thus, the phallus constitutes a sexual difference. It stands for women's lack and men's plenitude. The problem is that men's sense of plenitude is strictly associated with the accompaniment of women who want what they have. Men need women around them to be constituted as lacking, so they will live the illusion that they have the phallus and the power comes with it. The phallus is a signifier and not an organ, so no one can ever have it. This process leads to desire. Desire is generated from the need of men and women to feel the power of the phallus. Desire is generated from the incompleteness of both men and women. Women urgent need for the phallus makes men who have the phallus as signifiers feel the power in the symbolic realm.

The child is born into an ideal life of plenitude, in which he lives the life of oneness in the lap of his mother. His needs are met without knowing that they are needs. Later, the infant realizes that there is a gap between a need and its satisfaction. The mother turns to be the object of the infant's concerns. But this object is not distinct from himself but in connection to himself, as its first imago; an object the subject reacts to as if it were real. Lacan calls this phase the *imaginary realm*. The imaginary realm is the way reality appears to a pre-linguistic consciousness. In this phase, the infant does not distinguish between the truth or fiction of its images, symbols, and representations (McAfee 2004).

In addition to the imaginary realm, Lacan's introduces the other two: the real and the symbolic. Lacan's the Real is what is outside of both the imaginary and symbolic. The symbolic cannot capture the real because it is always only a substitute (Evans 2006). The infant in his imaginary realm starts realizing that there are certain boundaries to itself that separate it from others. Another thing realized in this phase is that the mother is not all-powerful. Boy infant sees the mother lacks a penis. Therefore, the child is forced to identify with his father. With the loss of immediate gratification arises the experience of lack, the beginning of need. Thus, the child resorts to language to demand things. The child starts to experience the gap between needs and satisfaction; it is an on-going state of desire that can never be met. The subject becomes always the subject of desire. Therefore, the phallus is the ultimate signifier: it is the representation of what one really wants, which is called by Lacan *le objet a*. Everyone hopes to go back to a life of plenitude with his mother, but this means they will not get into the symbolic world to have their subjects. All the productions of civilization are the effects of our loss of our mother's devotion.

Lacan's symbolic realm is the realm of language and symbols, structures and differences, law and order. This is the realm where "the individual is formed as subject" (Letche 1997, 68). The symbolic is also the realm of radical alterity which Lacan refers to as the Other. Thus, the unconscious implies the existence of the Other that belongs totally to the symbolic order. The symbolic consists of the rules of the father law that regulates desire in the Oedipus complex. It is the realm of culture as opposed to the imaginary order of nature. Whereas the imaginary is characterized by dual relations, the symbolic is characterized by triadic structures, because the intersubjective relationship is always 'mediated' by a third term, the big Other. The symbolic order is also the realm of Death, of Absence and of Lack. The symbolic is both the Pleasure principle which regulates the distance from the Thing, and the Death drive which goes beyond 'the pleasure principle' by means of repetition; in fact, the death drive is only the mask of the symbolic order (Evans 2006).

Lacan's contribution is not restricted to the shift of focus of psychoanalysis from the ego to the unconscious, but he has introduced the importance of language in the development of the subject. He believes that the unconscious, just like language, needs to be viewed in linguistic terms.

Lacan's subject is based on both a lack and desire for the other. De Saussure's Semiotics and Levi-Strauss' incest taboo has led Lacan to introduce his theory of subjectivity as determined and divided by language. Once the child is subject to the law of the father by entering the symbolic world, he engages in a linguistic process that is culturally determined and sexually differentiated by language. His interest in language represents a break from the philosophical tradition of the subject that

prioritizes the primacy of self-present consciousness, and from Freud's continuation of this tradition, despite his shift in focus from the conscious to the unconscious. Here lies Lacan's famous sentence: 'the unconscious is structured like a language'. Reference to language dominates Lacan's concept of the subject in the mid-1950s and mid-1960. He distinguishes the subject of the statement from the subject of the enunciation to show that because the subject is essentially a speaking being, he is inescapably divided and castrated. Lacan defines the subject as that which is represented by a signifier for another signifier; in other words, the subject is an effect of language (Evans 2006). Although language introduced a new way to the unconscious to Lacan, its metaphysical nature always denied a complete understanding of the unconscious.

Both Lacan and Kristeva agree upon the importance of language in the constitution of subjectivity. Kristeva starts with the theoretical frameworks of Lacan. She differs with Lacan at the point of time in which the infant begins to distinguish itself from the mother. She posits this break before the mirror stage at an earlier time when the infant begins to expel from itself what it finds unpalatable. She calls this process, *Abjection*. Kristeva insists that the infant learns the ways of the symbolic and of culture from his mother and not just his father. The child orients his energy towards his mother from whom he found no distance or subject-object distinction in what Lacan calls the imaginary realm. Kristeva argues that the imaginary is not lost in the symbolic territory. She calls that the *Semiotic*, which does not end when the child accesses the symbolic world, but stays in the periphery of unconsciousness. Kristeva's Semiotic with its affect-driven modes of signification remains a companion in the process of signification. Kristeva's theory states that the symbolic

is not always the most powerful mode and that the semiotic is not only a constraint like the symbolic, but it tends to gain the upper hand at the expense of thethetic and predicative constraints of the ego's judging consciousness. Lacan argues that the imaginary realm is beyond analysis and that only the symbolic matters in understanding subjectivity, while Kristeva argues that the imaginary realm should be discerned for it is always in play in our poetic and evocative means of signification.

Kristeva's critique of Lacan's Symbolic Order was discussed in Barzilai's essay, "Borders of language: Kristeva's critique of Lacan" (1991). Barzilai focused on Kristeva's reconsideration of Lacan's teachings and practices of the symbolic order. She tried to show that Kristeva's criticism of Lacan's formula, in relation to her borderline patient's discourse, has other implications for more forms of communication. Moreover, Kristeva challenged Lacan's elementary structure of all language and unconscious processes. Barzilai explained that Kristeva's contribution is the re-surfacing of the Freudian theory of language because it was eclipsed to a certain extent by his disciple Lacan who gave the privilege only to the 'paternal signifier'. She showed Kristeva's concerns over the inappropriateness of Lacan's formula for the feminist discourse of woman's identity.

Lacan's and Kristeva's definitions of the subject were approached in a study entitled, *Virginia Woolf's New Intellectualism in Relation to the Construction of a Third Gender based on Desire in her Selected Works* by Montashery (2012). Montashery stated that Lacan's Symbolic Order is "the realm of law, language, society, and cultural beliefs", which is structured to go in line with the male signifier "the phallus" (26). Thus, women fail to reflect their desires, which are key determinants

of the identity formation. The study was concerned with the third space created between the semiotic and the symbolic.

Another comparative study was done by Anne Angeline Abraham entitled, *To Realize and to Release: Self-Actualization in the Poetry of Adrienne Rich and Nikki Giovanni* (2007). It was conducted in the light of the Maslowian theory of the hierarchal needs. The study aimed to prove that the need for self-actualization is a driving force behind the literary creation of these poets. The study concluded that the need to realize the importance of self-actualizing was the real motif behind the evolution of these two poets. In addition, it proved that their poetry helped in the release of the potentials they have, which helped in the development of their poetics as self-actualizing poets.

2.6 Review of Past Literature Related to the Theory

The history of Western culture relies on the distinction between two familiar dichotomies. These dichotomies rest on the binary opposition system that keeps things categorized into two contradicted groups like the distinctions between nature and culture, between body and mind, between the unconscious and consciousness, and between feeling and reason. Such thought favours one of the two opposite sides to be the civilized human being who stands for reason and culture, while the other side acts out of lust and is driven by emotion. Kristeva's contribution lies in her focus on the two opposing poles. She thinks that semiotic pole that stands for nature/body/unconscious always is discharged into the latter (symbolic/culture/mind/consciousness). Instead of holding to the dualistic thinking of the West,

Kristeva is showing how the poles of these dichotomies are intertwined (McAfee 2004).

Poetic language plays the leading role in the undermining of dominant social discourses through the creation of new 'subject positions'. This shows that the subject is not a mere blank waiting for its social or sexual role, but the subject is 'in process' and can change itself other than what it is (Selden et al. 2005). Therefore, instead of looking to subjectivity as the result of the Oedipus complex, Kristeva's theory of the semiotic concludes that certain aspects of subjectivity always escape the determination of the symbolic order, thus undermining the deterministic oppression of the individual by the law of the father.

Kristeva's started at this point in which the Symbolic world represses the totality and fullness of the imaginary world. The language of the Symbolic world turns to be the substitute for the child's ideal integrity and attachment to his mother and in this case, the only signifier will be the law of the father and the patriarchal thought. Kristeva differs with Lacan's concept, thinking that the pre-symbolic dimension is never out of range. The semiotic chora in addition to the symbolic are intertwined and connected in the process of signification because the semiotic still has its power of energizing the symbolic mode though it is within the periphery of awareness. In addition, the Semiotic is not exclusive to women only, but it emerges from the pre-Oedipal linguistic phase in which both men and women entertain the ideal unification with the mother's body (Kostić 2006).

Some studies have dealt with the issue of identity formation in Adrienne Rich's poetry. An example was "Re-Versing the Past: Adrienne Rich's Postmodern Inquietude" (1997) by Barbara L. Estrin. She focused on Rich's strategies of representing the female identity in her *An Atlas of the Difficult World*. She stressed that Rich's subject in this book was representation itself. She stated that Rich's major concern was the re-visioning of the history of women, revisions that involved the entrance into a previously unthinkable and unsayable dialogue with the writing self and the poetic form. Estrin said that Rich tries to imagine the unimaginable as the first step, and then she gives what she imagines a voice, body, and forum. At the end of the article, she summarized Rich's message in her collection that she opened the way to what will be her continuing "transformation" and "re-articulation" of the forms she inherited. The study was framed by the poetics of Rich more than any other frame.

Rabine L. W. discussed the relationship between women and semiotics in the article, "Julia Kristeva: Semiotics and Women" (1977). The article intended to explicate Kristeva's ideas on women in the light of Marxist- Feminist criticism in the United States. Rabine said that a text in class societies could either perpetuate or challenge the dominant ideology oppressive to women. He considered two questions to conduct his research. The first: What tools offered by semiotics can sharpen and deepen our analysis of those literary structures that reflect a sexist ideological structure? The second: In what way does Kristeva's theory perpetuate those structures? A thorough discussion of these questions helped the researcher to pinpoint the advantages and disadvantages of following the semiotic theory to the analysis of women's position in the patriarchal society.

McGraw believed in his study “Splitting Subject/Splitting Seduction” (1984) that Kristeva's “theory of the speaking subject offers women (and men alike) the possibility of asserting their claim to a new and different kind of logic. For Kristeva’s signifying practice is grounded in a perpetually self-revising, open-ended form of knowledge which is immediately relativized, confronted with alien concepts and subjected to rigorous analyses” (146).

The function of the semiotic for Kristeva is to subvert the fixed meanings of the symbolic language because they rely on the system of binary opposition. Kristeva rejects the dichotomy of this system believing that the semiotic unconscious emotions and drives are continuously articulated into the symbolic signifying process of language. She intertwined these dichotomies. Kristeva’s point is “the symbolic mode of signification is meaningful because of the way the semiotic energizes it” (McAfee 2004, 18). She thinks that modern literature has the power to shock the reader’s consciousness, forcing him to question the validity of his discourses and ideologies. It has the power to transgress the boundaries of the patriarchal culture, which circulates negative association to the female identity. Language for Kristeva is a dynamic force in empowering women via the creation of counter-discourses. Male and female writers have recognized that speaking in the tongue of the dominant has the advantage of being subversive (Gillis, Howie, & Munford 2007).

Hezaveh, et al. conducted a psychoanalytic study on the revitalization of identity in Tennessee Williams’ play under the title, “Revitalizing Identity in Language: A Kristevan Psychoanalysis of Suddenly Last Summer” (2014). The study examined the qualities of unresolved psychological complexes of Williams and his characters

in light of Kristeva's the Semiotic and intertextuality. The gap of the study lied in the critics' response to Williams' play. Critics characterized Williams' plays as plays with themes of violence and madness but they couldn't justify the connection between the fragmentary identities of the writer and his characters and the excessive use of poetic language in his plays (3). The objective of the study was to project the writer's and characters' unconscious through language and to examine the role of this language in representing the disintegration of identities. The study concluded that the poetic language has the power to recover their identities through the semiotic disposition into the symbolic language. This study focused on the unresolved psychological problems of Tennessee Williams, which are detected in his characters and the role of language in recovering identities and rehabilitating characters with no reference to the feminist thought that focuses on the status of women within the patriarchal society.

Abjection is the second concept employed in the current study. Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (POH) (1980) discusses how subjectivity is constituted in the first place. The infant lives a life of plenitude, oneness and of the semiotic chora when he is in the lap of his mother. The infant knows no borders when coming into being. The first time the infant sees itself in the mirror, it gets identified with the image in the mirror. This identification forms the infant's sense of unity in himself. The child is aware now that he is a subject separate from others.

Abjection is:

a process of jettisoning what seems to be part of oneself. The abject is what one spits out, rejects, almost violently excludes from oneself: sour milk, excrement, even a mother's engulfing embrace.

What is abjected is radically excluded but never banished altogether. It hovers at the periphery of one's existence, constantly challenging one's own tenuous borders of selfhood (McAfee 2004, 46).

It should be noted that abjection as one of the Oedipal phases can be conducted even after subjectivity. The abject is what does not respect borders. Kristeva associates the abject with "what is jettisoned from the "symbolic system". It is what escapes that social rationality, that logical order on which a social aggregate is based" (Rich 1982, 65).

Both Lacan and Kristeva agree that the child develops his sense of unity when he is in the mirror stage. The child tries to identify himself with the image in the mirror to develop an identity. Unlike Lacan, Kristeva thinks that after the child's unification with the image, he begins to separate himself from others in order to develop borders between 'I'. Through abjection, the child learns to expel what seems to be part of himself. He learns abjection when he is still in the imaginary union with his mother before entering the symbolic realm. Abjection helps the infant to get into the borders of subjectivity and he will abject his mother's body. In order to be a subject, the child must renounce its identification with its mother; it must draw a line between itself and its mother to get the formation of 'he' or 'she' in the symbolic world. Keith Reader mentioned the beginning of abjection according to Kristeva in his book, *The Abject Object: Avatars of the Phallus in Contemporary French Theory, Literature and Film* (2006) saying:

the process of subject-formation begins very early indeed in the infant's life, well before the mirror-phase and the intervention of the father, in the detachment from fusion with the mother that takes

the form of abjection. Much of the wider importance of Kristeva's work, indeed, resides in the stress she places on the child's pre-Oedipal relationship with the mother, a phase largely ignored by earlier psychoanalytic writers (Reader 2006, 46).

Hence, abjection goes on with the whole of human life. Cultures created certain rituals to deal with this threat. Religion played the key role in facing the abject things through exercising certain rituals to purify the self. Later, art takes the responsibility of purification by conjuring up the abject things it seeks to dispel. Kristeva thinks that literature helps the writer and the reader work through some of the maladies that afflict their souls. Psychologically, surviving these trials involves working through conflicts, so the subject will not be doomed to act them out. Literature can be cathartic when displaying the symptoms of certain malady of the soul (50).

There was a study done by R. F. Franklin on the concept of love in Joyce Carol Oates' works in the light of Kristeva's concept of abjection. It was entitled, "Oates's Stories of Romantic Love and Kristeva's Abject" (1998). Because Oates told stories of love that don't go with the romantic love stories, Franklin studied these love stories within Kristeva's concept of 'manic love' because some readers misunderstood Oates as a poet of violence. He argued that the idea of manic love in Oates' poetry has its foundation in the pre-Oedipal period of human life. Exploring his topic through Kristeva's Abjection, he concluded that the manic love in Oates' poetry is rational and destructive: thus "the desire for the lover is an intense echo of the desire for maternal presence, which was lost in the course of ego development of the individual." Franklin's study applied Kristeva's model of abjection to the

romantic love between man and woman, neglecting the woman-to-woman relationship.

Abjection was again the theoretical framework for the study of the issue of identity in Valk's doctoral thesis entitled *Exclusion and Renewal: Identity and Jewishness in Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and David Vogel's "Married Life"* (2015).

Discussing the issue of identity in the lens of Kristeva's the abject, she said that:

Abjection in the title of Kristeva's work has nothing to do with its everyday meanings such as the state or condition of being cast down, brought low, humiliation, degradation, dispiritedness or despondency. Rather it is a complex, drive-oriented and thus ambivalent psycho-dynamics of identity-formation offering possibilities for identity/ subjectivity not yet tied down to communication and signification in the social order" (2).

The reading of any text in the light of Kristeva's notion of abjection shows that the drive-ambivalence of abjection reflects itself in a very peculiar way. Abjection is a psychodynamics of excluding the other (woman) in the form of art, which in turn renews the representation of that other in ways not already fixed in the cultural patriarchal discourses on women. Kristeva introduces this notion of abjection as a universal principle of all identity-formation in characters whose borders of identity are uncertain (Valk 2015).

A study conducted on Shakespeare carried the title, "Tracing the Cases of Abjection in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" by Amir Andwari. In this study, Andwari explored some cases of abjection experienced by the major characters. He claimed that some of Shakespeare's characters possess the potential to be approached by Kristeva's concepts of the abject. He stated that the

characters, under the pressures of the symbolic order, react to these pressures, thus, their borders of subjectivity would be shaken and they become vulnerable to the abject. The study concludes that the articulation of the semiotic helps the characters to achieve their goals, which were impossible at the beginning of the plays.

Jenny Robinson dealt with the spaces of transformation in his study, "Feminism and the Spaces of Transformation" (2000). He stated that the feminist political theory relies on certain spatial imaginations to create a politics of transformation. His study discussed the politics of transformation in relation to two transformation accounts of Judith Butler and Luce Irigaray. He argued that Butler's and Irigaray's works suggest that transformation of gender relations is expressed in the form of ubiquitous revolution, which occurs everywhere, or as a dream of an (im)possible future. Accordingly, the study turned to discuss Julia Kristeva's feminist work, as she offers a different heterogeneous account of transformation. Taking into consideration Kristeva's heterogeneous account of transformation, he concluded that abjection offers diverse and productive spaces because it is not only about creating borders and assuming dominance for masculine spaces. Robinson here associates Lefebvre's account of representational spaces with Kristeva's accounts to explicate how spaces themselves can be transformed and how these accounts can create a feminist politics of space.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I reviewed the major premises in the writings of Adrienne Rich. I reviewed the poetics of Rich in her early period of writing poetry, in addition to the radical transformation that characterized Rich's career. I went through the articles

and books written about her to see the critical response to the radical feminist agenda of Rich and her poetry. Some reviews were dedicated to deal with Rich's concept of female desire for it was the source of much debate. Also, I reviewed the construction of identity within the field of psychoanalysis and linguistics beginning with Freud, Lacan and ending with Kristeva's contribution to the theory of the subject. Moreover, a review of past literature is conducted on the theory. The present study will deal with Adrienne Rich's discourse of female identity in light of Kristeva's theories of the subject, which is going to be conducted in the following chapters of this study.

CHAPTER THREE

A CHANGE OF WORLD: FALSE CONSCIOUS SELF

3.1 Introduction

The problem with women, especially in the twentieth century, was that they had been taught to be good housewives, caretakers and nurturers only. They accepted the role given to them by patriarchal ideology that they are “the angels of the house”. The acceptance of such labels put women into frames that kept them away from what was going on outside their houses. Betty Friedan described women in her *The Feminine Mystique* saying:

Their only dream was to be perfect wives and mothers; their highest ambition to have five children and a beautiful house, their only fight to get and keep their husbands. They had no thought for the unfeminine problems of the world outside the home; they wanted the men to make the major decisions. They glorified in their role as women, and wrote proudly on the census blank: “Occupation: housewife” (1963 18).

Thus, women felt totally isolated from social, economic, and political life. Any kind of definition to woman could not be approved unless associated with the existence of man. Penelope Eckert said in her essay, “The Good Woman” that it was easy for men to define themselves in the society depending on their achievements, possessions, or their institutional role, but “women must justify and define theirs on the basis of their overall character and the kinds of relations they can maintain with others” (Lakoff 2004, 167). Friedan went on saying that women’s suffering lies in the internalization of thoughts imposed on them by external factors: “chains made up of mistaken ideas

and misinterpreted facts, of incomplete truths and unreal choices. They are not easily seen and not easily shaken off” (31). Again, women faced another problem of how could they find the appropriate means of expressing themselves. They realized that they were bound by the symbolic order of language because it was formulated to serve man only. The language was determined to maintain man’s power over woman. Jan Campbell talked about the role of the symbolic language in depriving woman of her subjectivity saying that “the symbolic is phallic, identity is constructed within the realm of the masculine; the feminine is left behind, situated as a negative, unconscious and bodily exclusion, outside culture, representation and sanity” (2000, 80).

Adrienne Rich, a radical feminist who dedicated her poetry to the salvation and liberation of women, has fully experienced the negative role played by the masculine symbolic language in depriving women of their female identities. Although Rich imitated the styles and subject matters of the great male writers in the first stage of her writing poetry, this stage was very significant in the sense that it enriched Adrienne Rich’s later understanding of the consequences of following the patriarchal thought. In this stage of false unconscious self, Rich accepted the definition of identity given to her by the dominant patriarchal discourse. She accepted the role described to her to be a woman defining herself in terms of the existence of the white, male, heterosexual man. She accepted whatever was stated by patriarchy without questioning because she was convinced that she is not fit for logical reasoning, thus, she left the lead to a man who would guide her and give her self-definition. In this stage of false unconscious self, Rich had internalized the demands

and traditions of the masculine symbolic discourse, which increased women's oppression and subjugation. She was unaware of the contradictory life she was living, and the cause of such contradiction lied in her quest for success through blind imitation of successful male writers.

A Change of World (1951) was Adrienne Rich's first collection of poems. It stood for the stage of her false unconscious self when she pursued the definitions of identity given to her by patriarchy. This volume of poetry was introduced by W. H. Auden for the Yale Younger Poets Series. It was praised by Auden for it echoed the great male writers of the period like T. S. Eliot, Robert Lowell, Allen Tate, Ezra Pound, and Wallace Stevens. Auden said in the preface that Rich's poems in this volume "speak quietly but do not mumble, respect their elders but are not cowed by them, and do not tell fibs" (Rich et al. 1993, 278-279). Rich had written this collection under the influence of male writers. Her style was characterized by formal control and objective vision that reflected the critical spirit of the period. Keyes mentioned the reasons why Auden praised Rich saying:

Auden praised Rich for traditional "feminine" virtues like dutifulness and self-restraint. He says that her poems tell the truth and that she knows her craft. Auden mostly praises her *modesty*, a term he uses twice, summing up his opinion of the volume by saying that the poems are "neatly and modestly dressed" (1986, 17).

Adrienne Rich (1929-2012) was brought up in a milieu that was totally fashioned by patriarchal thought in every facet of life. Great male figures who mastered the literary scene created their own rules for what should or should not be written. Rich's

poetry writing foray was premised on the imitation of poetic conventions of the canon. She started writing poetry that foregrounded the literary styles and subject matters of the period; a period that was totally fashioned by male writers' thoughts. Moreover, Rich was raised in a family who upheld the importance of reading and imitating the great literary figures. *A Change of World* (1951) was her first collection of poems that were complimented by W. H. Auden himself in his preface to this collection. Auden said:

In a young poet, as T. S. Eliot has observed, the most promising sign is craftsmanship for it is evidence of a capacity for detachment from the self and its emotions without which no art is possible. Craftsmanship includes, of course, not only a talent for versification but also an ear and an intuitive grasp of much subtler and more difficult matters like proportion, consistency of diction and tone, and the matching of these with the subject at hand; Miss Rich's poems rarely fail on any of these counts (Rich et al 1993, 278).

It is noted above that craftsmanship, decorum and detachment were really what mattered for those writers. The poetic conventions at that time dictated that only issues that garnered public opinion would be written. More importantly, women writers had simply to follow the rules of writing sponsored by the great male writers of the period. Thus, woman had to talk about impersonal issues, and repress her female voice in her writings. That was the milieu that characterized the early poetry of Adrienne Rich, thus earning her the label of 'great imitator'.

These formalistic techniques and modes of expression left Rich incapable of finding her voice in her writings. She could not talk about her ambitions and concerns as a woman living a life ruled by masculine thinking. This left her ambivalent about

satisfying the demands of the great male pioneers of the period and following her needs and desires as a woman seeking her own female identity. She described her relationship with her materials saying, “In those years formalism was part of the strategy -like asbestos gloves- it allowed me to handle materials I couldn’t pick up bare-handed” (Rich 1972, 22). Moreover, Rich realized that the distinction of a man at the expense of woman did not lie in certain innate attributes or characteristics, but it was imposed on woman by force. She wrote in her essay “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision” (1971) that “The charisma of Man seems to come purely from his power over her and his control of the world by force, not from anything fertile or life-giving in him” (36).

Despite Rich’s realizations of the oppressive doctrine that overshadowed her own desires, she could not give voice to her early poems because she was still using the same symbolic tools and modes of the writing of the common male writers. These modes of writing convey only the fixed meanings of what Lacan called ‘the symbolic language’ that serves the masculine needs and neglects the feminine ones. The poems in CW describe the world full of threats, death, wars, hunger, and struggles. Although there is a poetic voice in these poems, this voice has little knowledge about this world and it seems that it has no effect upon it.

3.2 An Unsaid Word: The Good Wife Never Asks!

‘An Unsaid Word’ from Rich’s collection of poems, *A Change of World*, marked her commitment to the formalistic style of the great writers of the period. The poem was written during a time when Rich was living under a false consciousness and believed that success lay in the imitation of the great male literary figures. Thus, she crafted

her poems and manipulated her subject-matter in accordance with the discourses of the patriarchal world. Rich's voice in this period was "a voice framed in the persona of an objective seer, one without gender-consciousness" (Diaz-Diocaretz 1984, 4). 'An Unsaid Word' discusses the relationship between man and woman. This poem was written in a milieu fashioned by Eliot's conventions and discourse of the kind of writing that was needed. Detachment of the self was one of these major conventions. Thus, Rich kept herself detached from what was going on in her poems as in 'An Unsaid Word' in order to meet the criteria of success. She was still trying to find her niche in the literary world. During that period, woman writer had to succumb to the masculine rules of Lacan's the Symbolic order, which is closely linked to the phallus. Thus, she had to bury her voice and emotions in order to be admitted into that world. Rich, in her early poetry "spoke in a derivative voice, the language of the "universal." Reluctant to speak as a woman, she echoed the voice of her male poetic ancestors. Because she hesitated to voice her own experience, her early poems are highly polished but avoid emotional depth" (Reisman 2012, 200).

Keyes says that W. H. Auden's praise for Rich in his forward to her CW came as a result of her typical experiences and artistic modes of expression of the patriarchal discourses. Her work was measured according to the standards of men, in total neglect of her gender. Her absence of voice in her early poetry led Auden to publically introduce her as 'a good imitator' (1986, 16).

Through Symbolic Language, man wields power because language provides the symbol and connections by which the world is interpreted. The post-structuralists think that the "process of symbolic activity does more than construct the ideal mode

of domination. It actively plays a part in the construction of thought as it attempts to structure experience” (Kirsch 2000, 42).

The female speaker in ‘An Unsaid Word’ lives in man’s world which is symbolic and masculine. The unnamed speaker in the poem does not have an identity. The female name was a signifier for negativity so female writers used pseudonyms to beget power and acceptance enjoyed by the exalted male writers. Rich did not identify herself with the speaker of her poem who, as ‘the Angel of the House’ is entrapped in a traditional role defined by a patriarchal society. She resigns herself to her role and does not attempt to distract or accompany her man in his journey.

McGuirk stated that there was a message to be said in Rich’s poem, ‘An Unsaid Word’, but she did not find the means of sending it:

The negative--"unsaid word"-indicates that there is in fact "a word" held in abeyance, while the hypothetical mode of the poem suggests an inability finally to accept the imperative the poem apparently takes as a given. In the end, "An Unsaid Word" leaves the impression of personal will and identity reined in by ideological will, by prosodic skill and syntactic control (1993, 69).

Actually, all the critical views written about this poem resonate with the patriarchal ideology and masculine discourse of inferiorizing woman’s status in the society by decentralizing her position and marginalizing her. It became a prerequisite for women writers during the time of Adrienne Rich, to inculcate patriarchal values in their writings. Women writer talked about public issues in their particular contexts. The woman was deemed incapable of thinking like a man, and was thus likened to nature in order to signify her incapacity for logical thinking. Thus, the man in the

poem leaves his woman behind, and she leaves him solely to his thoughts, in his 'estranged' world:

She who has power to call her man
From that estranged intensity
Where his mind forages alone, (1-3)

The woman in this poem is the subject of this poem. She did not bother her husband asking him about his destination because she thought that he is intellectually superior to her, thus leaving him 'forages alone' and keep waiting is a characteristic of the good wife in the patriarchal society. She copes with the stereotypic model of woman:

The female subject is a willing helpmeet, well-educated to serve as consort to an intelligent man but alert to the fact that his mind forages alone, not with hers. He is the one whose intellectual occupations dominate his waking life: his scholarship must not be disturbed. The female subject, committed to her relationship with the man, exercises a passive form of power, and embodies the traditional female power of resignation. Here the subject position is the traditionally feminine and heterosexual (Langdell 22-23).

The woman is criticized for being submissive because she remains where he left her, waiting for him. This serves to intensify the fact that since she was there waiting for him, she was 'still his own'. In addition, the last line of the poem stereotypes woman as submissive and weak because woman keeps waiting and weeping for the master of the house. Feminists criticized Rich's portrayal of woman as passive and submissive and although Rich was conscious of this bitter reality which had resulted from following man-made discourse, she did not react to these circumstances. This realization was not enough to change her course of life because then, she believed

that going with the male discourse was the only means of defining herself. Scott states in his “Domination and the Arts of Resistance” (1990) that “THE POWERFUL, ..., have a vital interest in keeping up the appearances appropriate to their form of domination. Subordinates, for their part, ordinarily have good reasons to help sustain those appearances or, at least, not openly to contradict them” (70).

Rich had said in her masterpiece, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (1986) that women’s role in the society is to be mothers, care-takers, and nurturers:

Institutionalized motherhood demands of women maternal “instinct” rather than intelligence, selflessness rather than self-realization, relation to others rather than the creation of self. Motherhood is “sacred” so long as its offspring are “legitimate”—that is, as long as the child bears the name of a father who legally controls the mother (42).

The woman in ‘An Unsaid Word’ is described as confused and lost because her man had left her. Her despondency signifies that she is unable to live without a man. The power she enjoyed to call her man was misunderstood as a negative power resulting from the fear of being alone. She was a long time ago described by patriarchy as being incapable of living alone, unless in relation to the existence of a man. She could not make use of her words because they signify and appease only man’s needs and desires. She lacked the appropriate means to empower herself. Thus, she ‘stands where he left her’ with no choice or options.

Yet keeps her pace and leaves him free,
And when his thoughts to her return

Stands where he left her, still his own,
Knows this the hardest thing to learn. (4-7)

The speaker in Rich's 'An Unsaid Word' restrains herself from calling out to him but awaits his return like a virtuous wife. She has mastered the act of self-denial, as was the norm for women in the 1950s. She represses her most elemental feelings and gives up her own identity to validate her existence through man. She sees herself as a burden to man as evidenced by her choice of words, 'leaves him free,' kept waiting till 'his thoughts return to her,' to find her stand still in the same place (Keith 2012).

Although this woman does not show her weakness in the poem, she keeps waiting for him because she has accepted the role prescribed to her by the patriarchal discourses. She puts aside her needs for her sole purpose of caring for the man. She does not even ask him if she could be allowed to join him in his journey; instead, she lets him go alone, 'Yet keeps her pace and leaves him free'. She describes herself as having the power, but is powerless in a sense that her power is all but focussed on the needs of her man instead of empowering herself, and creatively expressing that self. Her belief in the validity of the definition of the female self designed by patriarchal ideology was the major reason behind her failure.

The symbolic reading of 'An Unsaid Word' reveals two voices within this poem i.e. the dominant and the dominated. The dominant male voice prevails over woman who is subservient to the dictates of patriarchy. She is meek and gives total control over to her man. The formal style of writing prioritizes the dominant male voice. The poem

is polished with carefully cadenced stanzas, rhymes and rhythms, weaving a symmetry which was a pre-requisite for publication of such literary work. The rhyme is disciplined and follows the scheme of (a, b, a, b, a, a, a). The poem's syntax is perfect and appears effortless and graceful. The poem meets the requirements of a well-crafted poem, in which no colloquial expressions are used and no personal feelings are mentioned. Every thought mentioned is related in one way or another to the dominant male character in the poem. The language controls the persona in this poem, leaving her with no choice to select her words in talking about herself (Keyes 1986).

The man-made Symbolic order restrained woman's role in society. She was deemed incapable of logical thinking and weak hence was not afforded choice or opportunity to be her own woman. The persona in the poem does not associate with the semiotic elements related to maternity because woman was forbidden to talk about her personal life. Rich, then, remained within the realm of patriarchal context and followed its norms of writing. Thus, the persona accepts the labels assigned to her. She uses the word 'forage', which carries a symbolic interpretation that signifies man's ability to think and reason against woman's incompetence. He leaves her behind and embarks on a journey that is to her, unfamiliar, 'where his mind forages alone'. This symbolic signification is intensified by the adjective "estranged" used to describe the world man goes into alone, in order to feed his mind because he thinks his woman is a misfit who should be confined to only domestic roles. In her first collection of poetry, *A Change of World* demonstrates Rich's failure to find her female voice because she was looking "for the same things she had found in the

poetry of men, because she wanted women poets to be equals of men, and to be equal was still confused with sounding the same” (Martin 1984, 94).

Diaz-Diocaretz commented on the title of Rich’s ‘An Unsaid Word’ saying that it was very suggestive to reflect the message of the poem. She described the poem as:

Written as a single sentence carefully balanced in subordinated clauses arranged in iambic cadence, this poem initiates the woman’s voice containing hidden tones of imminent awareness of difficulties and constraints; it inaugurates the route which will be followed, the field which would be ploughed (1984, 52).

At the end, the persona of Rich’s ‘An Unsaid Word’ could not express her feelings and kept them unsaid because she followed the fixed meanings raised by the symbolic language. In her early stage, Rich followed what was already prescribed for women because she thought that it was the best way to get her persona voiced but unfortunately it was false and biased. Pursuing an acceptance and admittance by the great male thinkers of the period, Rich was ready to sacrifice every personal thing to meet their demands; she “had suppressed, omitted, falsified even, certain disturbing elements, to gain that perfection of order” (Rich et al, 165). That pursuit was the major reason behind Rich’s early false unconscious understanding of the position of woman in life and her impotence of transforming herself and crossing the bars created by the patriarchal discourse. The female persona in ‘An Unsaid Word’ was introduced as a woman who went with the grain accepting every single label and frame given to her by patriarchy, thinking that it was for her good.

3.3 Aunt Jennifer's Tigers: Failure of the Symbolic Order

Rich's 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers' (1951) described an image of a woman who was troubled with her household life. Aunt Jennifer escaped her husband's brutal world to her imaginary world because she thought that she had no place in the real symbolic world. She started weaving images of dancing tigers in the field to reflect upon her buried feelings. Knitting turned to be the only means for Aunt Jennifer to express her innermost desires through art only. Aunt Jennifer suffered a false unconscious life that she cannot change her miserable life because she was not fit to do a change by herself. On one hand, language with its symbolic signifiers already designed the female subject of Aunt Jennifer as passive, powerless and inferior. The Aunt was living the burden being a housekeeper and caretaker in the patriarchal society. On the other hand, she felt the power of the semiotic; the energetic drive for creation inside her, but it was only in the world of imagination. As a result, Aunt Jennifer's subject was divided between accepting the symbolic frames given to her by patriarchy, and the following of her semiotic drives and world of imagination. Rich wrote two poems, namely 'Mathilde in Normandy' and 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers' to show that woman has the power, but she gave up utilizing it because of the false definitions and conventions of patriarchy. Though Aunt Jennifer escaped her traditional role through the craft of knitting, this skill was experienced negatively for it did change nothing on the ground. She was content with the schizophrenic life she had in her household, knitting the image of the unafraid tigers, but not following their example.

Mary Slowik examined Rich's early work in her "The Friction of the Mind: The Early Poetry of Adrienne Rich" (1984). She dealt with the issue of anger in the early

volumes. Regarding Rich's 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers', Slowik stated that the speaker in this poem condemned Aunt Jennifer's marital situation which caused her misery and criticized her silent revolt represented by weaving an embroidery of vital masculinity while she herself was doomed to live the 'ordeals she was mastered by.' She said that the final stanza juxtaposed the dead aunt and the lively needlework of tigers to point "to the way art can critically counter the predicament which brings it about and reveal the underlying tragedy" (1984, 146).

Rich in her early poetry was writing for a particular man in order to please him because she was brought up in a milieu that was totally fashioned by the traditions of patriarchy. She was not only preoccupied with the satisfaction of the male figure in her poems, but also with the poems written about women. She said in her essay, "When We Dead Awaken" (1971):

there were all those poems about women, written by men: it seemed to be a given that men wrote poems and women frequently inhibited them. These women were almost always beautiful, but threatened with the loss of beauty, the loss of youth, the fate worse than death (21).

Undeniably, Rich was familiar with the literary conventions of the period, which led her to follow the rules of writing established by patriarchy. As such, she found herself overwhelmed between following the masculine criteria of success and the following of her personal female voice. Such conflict was clearly reflected in the poems of this collection, especially 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers'.

In Rich's 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers', there was a double-voiced discourse, in which there were two stories: the dominant story and the muted one. These two stories encouraged two possible interpretations of the text. Though Aunt Jennifer fitted into the category of being a good housewife who kept her job done perfectly, she reflected upon her agony and disappointment through her embroidery only because in reality she could change nothing.

The speaker in Rich's poem was detached from Aunt Jennifer and remained outside the action of the poem as no sense of identification was accepted with the woman artist. The speaker described Aunt Jennifer knitting a decorative screen. The screen was decorated with the image of dancing tigers in the forest. The poem relied on the contrast between the lively, powerful and fearless tigers and Aunt Jennifer who was presented as old, scary and weary. This contrast as a structural device of the symbolic language served the circulation of meanings of the binary thought. Thus, it empowered man as the master and woman as the slave. The woman was absented from culture, which is why Aunt Jennifer resorted to imagination and knitting to escape oppression and subjugation. She was scared of her husband, unlike the tigers that 'do not fear the men beneath the tree'. It was through her tapestries that she conveyed her feelings of terror experienced with her husband. Only in the world of imagination, Aunt expressed her courage by the tigers' pacing 'in sleek chivalric certainty'. But the problem here is that this poem "asserts the traditional theme that art outlives the person who produces it" (Keyes 1986, 22). The semiotic drives and energies could not be tolerated in the symbolic world, thus, the Aunt projected what was she denied onto a piece of art.

Aunt Jennifer's tigers prance across a screen,
Bright topaz denizens of a world of green.
They do not fear the men beneath the trees;
They pace in sleek chivalric certainty. (1-4)

Such projection ensued forms of disguise and denial on the part of Aunt Jennifer. She projected her feelings in the embroidery of the fearless tigers, giving them the attributes of power, courage and strength but she did not claim any of these attributes as her own. Aunt Jennifer and other women of different generation:

were frequently overpowered by ordeals imposed by fathers, husbands, sons, or male authorities in general, yet they have been able through their art-through quilting, knitting, gardening, or in this case needlework-to produce something beautiful and memorable, something eternally alive (Landgell 2004, 26).

Keyes said that the Aunt "never integrates the "tigers" into her psyche, Aunt Jennifer remains ambivalent toward them" (1986, 22). The tigers asserted their own independence, confidence and freedom away from the authoritative power of men. Actually, this was caused by the fact that Aunt Jennifer did believe in the incompatibility of the symbolic language in serving her needs. Thus, Aunt thought that she was doomed to live the ordeal of life.

Rich's Aunt Jennifer was a passive and terrified woman, overwhelmed between her desire to have freedom and imagination represented by the tapestry of 'prancing tigers' and imprisonment and imitation imposed by gender roles of patriarchy. Rich wrote in her essay, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" (1971):

I thought I was creating a portrait of an imaginary woman. But this woman suffers from the opposition of her imagination, worked out in tapestry, and her life-style, “ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.” It was important to me that Aunt Jennifer was a person as distinct from myself as possible- distanced by the formalism of the poem, by its objective, observant tone-even by putting the woman in a different generation (Rich 1979, 40).

Aunt Jennifer did not find the appropriate signifiers that could convey meanings help in the expression of her needs and desires. The only signifier working here was that of ‘Uncle's wedding band’, which only signified the heavy burden and ordeal of this woman because of this marriage.

Aunt Jennifer's finger fluttering through her wool
Find even the ivory needle hard to pull.
The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band
Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand. (5-8)

The ‘massive weight’ of the band rested heavily on her hand, chaining her and reminding her of the bond of marriage, turned to be a symbolic signifier of slavery. ‘Uncle’s wedding band’ weighs the woman down (Keyes 1986). In return, Aunt Jennifer was not even able to pull the needle through the wool because it was handicapped by the Uncle’s wedding band. Her fingers ‘fluttering through the wool’ indicated her worry and scare because she knew that she was monitored by her man at all times. It was only art that could release her feelings. The symbolic world curbed any endeavour to show woman’s genius. That is why, Aunt Jennifer escaped to the imagination because it was only in the imaginary world that she could find a space to express her semiotic drives and reflect upon her desires. Rich herself was

separated from the persona of her poem by the use of the third person pronoun because it was not permissible to the female writer to voice herself directly in her writings following the symbolic system of signification of the masculine language. Imagination and creation were continuously separated in man's world because creation was only associated with man's intellect and culture. Associating women with nature and imagination, Aunt Jennifer could not find a place for her in the world of patriarchy. This kind of division, between imagination and duty, power and passivity was intentionally formulated and maintained to keep women in an inferior position to men.

The poem was well-crafted and written in a strict structure, following the quatrain form and rhyming aa, bb, cc, dd, ff, dd. The rhyme scheme indicated discipline, which was a demand by the great male elites for those who want to be successful writers. But this kind of discipline and imitation left women with no choice to express and circulate their own feelings. Werner said that Aunt Jennifer's Tigers "demonstrates Rich's ability to use her control of sound, rhythm, and metrical emphasis to explore an issue of great importance in the development of her personal and political vision: the creativity of women not recognized as artists by the dominant culture" (1988, 14). Though the 'prancing tigers' stood for Rich's creative power, it was a passive kind of power that was not exploited because the speaker failed to find the suitable means to transform that power into the world of reality. The lively power of the tigers was limited to the world of imagination and it was introduced in sharp contrast to the impotence of Aunt Jennifer in order to show that woman's creative powers and feelings have no place in man's symbolic world. Babu

discussed the language of Aunt Jennifer's Tigers in his study, *Aesthetics and Politics of Language in Adrienne Rich* (2013) saying:

The poem's style and structure favours a masculine form rather than a feminine one. It is straightforward and to the point as its brevity seems to indicate. This poem also employs a very formal aabbcc rhyme scheme, which adds to the poem's formality and objectivity (41).

Even when Rich came to talk about Aunt Jennifer, she referred to parts of her body 'finger' and 'hand' instead of talking about the whole body as a sign of degradation and inferiority. Fluttering fingers and terrified hands signify nothing but the impotence and subservience of Aunt Jennifer in facing the oppressive ideology of the Uncle's way of life. On the other side, Rich tried to demonstrate an alternative for women to escape their traditional role as in the case of Aunt Jennifer who found herself in her tapestry. One of her tactics was the addition of stressed syllables and enjambment. She established a rapid tempo in stanza one when the tigers went on prancing in the forest while the rhythm was disrupted when she started talking about the wedding band in the second stanza (Werner 1988). The clash was obvious between the semiotic energy reflected in the rapid rhythm of the first stanza, in which Aunt Jennifer was relying on her imagination to create embroidery of dancing lively tigers, and the slow motion of the second stanza when she mentioned the symbolic signifier of the 'wedding band' that chained and mastered her.

The poem showed Aunt Jennifer's genius in incorporating the experience of male power into a work of art that testifies the transformative power of women's creativity. Alliteration as one of the semiotic aspect of language was intellectually

utilized by Rich to convey themes of male dominance and female subjugation. Werner commented on Rich's manipulation of sound devices saying, " "Tigers" transforms the *g* of "ringed" and the *er* of "mastered"; "made" emerges from "mastered," "dead," and "ordeal," all words associated with masculine power and female suffering" (1988, 16). Even the rhyme scheme, they were very tight to prevent Aunt Jennifer from reflecting and identifying herself with the lively tigers. The rhyme scheme was set "to control the turbulent emotions that seethe beneath the surface" (1984, 180). These semiotic elements failed to be injected into the symbolic masculine language in order to fill the gap between these two modalities of signification. Though the image of the 'proud' tigers ended the poem with an optimistic tone, it was only in her piece of art and nothing changed on the ground, leaving the speaker overwhelmed between the semiotic maternal drives and the symbolic patriarchal signifiers.

At the end, Aunt Jennifer felt that it was only death that could liberate her from man's oppression because the symbolic language did not signify what serves the expression of female identity. It was only on the semiotic imaginary level with her piece of needlework art that she reflected upon her quest for freedom through the tigers that 'will go on prancing, proud and unafraid'.

When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie
Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by.
The tigers in the panel that she made
Will go on prancing, proud and unafraid. (9-12).

Rich was aware that the repression of unarticulated experience as in the case of Jennifer led to her dual life and that the shift in consciousness “involves exploring of repressed experiences, naming these perceptions, and incorporating them into daily life by creating new clusters of awareness, new patterns of meaning” (Martin 1984, 169).

The failure of awareness of the importance of integrating the semiotic drives into the symbolic language resulted in Aunt Jennifer’s destabilized subject and in her sense of incompetence in finding an appropriate female voice that defines her subjectivity as a woman. Aunt Jennifer adapted the fixed meanings of the symbolic language in defining her subject. Thus, her female subject was only defined in terms of the symbolic order, which relied on the superiority of the male subject.

Consequently, Aunt Jennifer lived a false unconscious life due to the dominance of the masculine symbolic language. She could not communicate with her surroundings because they did not represent any meaning that serves the female case. Her escape to the world of art reflecting her feelings into the image of lively tigers indicated certain kind of power, but this power could not be translated into the Uncle’s patriarchal world due to the absence of appropriate signifiers because of the single-minded prejudiced language. As such, the female subject was continuously destabilized by the symbolic order. The female subject was not given a chance to be constructed in a healthy unbiased environment, thus it was only constructed according to the terms and conditions of the patriarchal thought. Thus, living an ivory-tower life was the only solace for the female self in order to escape the harsh realities of the modern world. Finally, the speaker in Rich’s ‘Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers’

did not succeed in the identification with the fearless tigers due to the lack of appropriate signifiers in the symbolic language. However, she was capable of projecting the lively tigers' image, which showed that Adrienne Rich was moving into more open assertion of her poetic consciousness that would be seen in her next stage of writing poetry.

3.4 Storm Warnings: Vulnerability of Woman's Internal World

Adrienne Rich voiced the victimization and wrath experienced by women under patriarchy, thus, she has rejuvenated the American tradition of political poetry through destabilizing the basis of patriarchal thought. Rich's poetry questions and challenges the traditions and encourages the readers to change their current situation. Her poems reflect her desire to initiate change within society through finding appropriate ways to face oppression and single-minded norms. Rich said that this poem is "about powerlessness-about a force so much greater than our human power that, while it can be measured and even predicted, is beyond human control" (Langdell 2004, 18).

Rich's 'Storm Warnings' implies that the speaker lives in the very far north and that the storm is a duty to destroy something. Though the speaker looks unaware, she is troubled by the howling storm approaching the house. The girl lives in an illusion that she can escape the oppression of patriarchy by secluding herself in the house and living in her imaginary world, but the man-made discourse relies on woman to be the object against which his subject is defined. The poem relies on the contrast between the physical storm, which is represented in the inability to avoid the storm wind and the metaphorical storm, which is represented in the emotional struggle of the girl.

The persona in 'Storm Warnings' is a girl who escapes the conflict and fluctuation between the internal and external climates. The girl could not face the external threats represented by the howling storm, and her sole defense was to 'draw the curtains'. Thus, Rich communicated the girl's sense of powerlessness and helplessness through her figurative language. 'Storm Warnings' is seen as the kind of poetry that is written before Rich's turned to writing as a mature woman (Stoner 2003).

Rich started the poem with an image of an incoming storm: "winds are walking overhead" personifying this howling storm as threats approaching the world of the lonely girl and creating the illusion of weather as a human presence. The image suggests that the girl feels threatened and disturbed by this restless wind. Women can escape the threats of the patriarchal thought by simply caging themselves inside the house. The approaching threat disturbed the serenity of the girl's internal world. This is reflected in the first stanza when she is forced to leave her imaginary world and observe the wind through the window. Rich utilized this image to show that there is no place for imagination in the world of reality. The world of logic and reason keeps disturbing the world of fancy, thus, the girl could not continue her reading and could not keep shielding herself of the external threats:

The glass has been falling all the afternoon,
And knowing better than the instrument
What winds are walking overhead, what zone
Of grey unrest is moving across the land,
I leave the book upon a pillowed chair

And walk from window to closed window, watching
Boughs strain against the sky (1-7)

The speaker tried to secure herself of these external threats ‘wind’ of the patriarchal world by staying inside the house closing the windows thinking that this barrier would protect her. Despite her precautions, she felt anxiety while doing the precautions, which is reflected in the tone of these lines, “the air /Moves inward toward a silent core of waiting”. The broken ‘glass’ in the first line sets the ominous tone of the poem foreshadowing that something bad would happen. The tone is nervous and stressed, knowing and resigned, indifferent and undaunted, and heartbroken and devastated. The girl has no trust in the external realities of the modern world; therefore, she keeps herself aloof in hope of salvation. The approach of the wind is the approach of danger, which she tried her best to avoid through closing the window and drawing ‘the curtains’ but it was in vain. The internal imaginary world could not save women of the terrors and hazards of patriarchy.

More importantly, Rich tried to address different kinds of hazards and dangers other than the threats of the wind. She wanted to address the problem of woman’s internalization of the symbolic patriarchal thought. She thought that woman’s passivity and powerlessness are caused because of woman’s acceptance of the masculine structures and patterns of living. Women’s acceptance of the patriarchal definitions and sets of rules put them in a position of negativity. Their subjectivities have been defined in terms of already-set discourses written by masculine thinkers. They have been defined as female objects that go in sharp contrast to the controlling male subjects. Therefore, Rich was keen in connecting the storming wind that is

raging outside to the emotional storms raging inside the girl in a metaphor that becomes a metaphor for the emotional turbulence inside her:

Weather abroad
And weather in the heart alike come on
Regardless of prediction. (12-15)

Metaphorically, she used the 'wind' as a signifier of the patriarchal threats that endanger the female identity. The girl is not left alone, though she isolates herself inside her house living her fantasies because she has no place in man's world. Rich compared the oncoming storm to "weather in the heart" and that this storming wind was moving towards "a silent core of waiting". These two images suggest that both women in general and the girl in particular equally could not protect themselves from the external threats of patriarchy represented by the blowing wind and the internal emotional threats of depression and subjugation caused by single-minded masculine thought.

Again, the visual aspect of the poem indicates the lack of choices of the speaker. The poem is written in four equal length stanzas of seven lines, which indicates that she is following a strict form of writing poetry due to her commitment to the patriarchal models and definitions of writing. Moreover, the fluctuation of the speaker is also reflected in the poem's unrhymed iambic pentameter, incomplete line at the end of each stanza and the not continuous rhyme. Syntactically, the poem is written with long flowing sentences written in common vernacular.

In the same vein, the textual reading of the symbolic language of the poem suggests the unease and annoyance of the speaker who is problematized by the approach of the wind. For example, the alliteration of 'w' sound in 'What winds are walking overhead, what zone' and 's' in 'strain', 'single' and 'secret' is utilized by the poet to make its function the imitation of the wind's sound in order to express the sense of irritation with the approaching storm. The speaker realizes that she is dismayed by the wind because it signifies everything she tries to hide from. She knows that the world outside her house is totally corrupted and dangerous; therefore, she has endeavoured to immunize herself through living her imaginary world inside the house and spending the time reading her fictional stories that are plotted away from the patriarchal definitions.

Rich was highly influenced by the logic and intellect of patriarchy in her early career; therefore, she used images of measuring instruments such as clock. Also, she used the instrument of weatherglasses in a suggestive way as this instrument cannot measure the pressure precisely and cannot make a change for the measures. This image indicates the stagnancy of the masculine mind. Kristeva said that images of the symbolic masculine language suggest static and single-oriented meanings that only serve the circulation of man's needs and desires, therefore, she defines the symbolic as "a way of signifying that depends on language as a sign system complete with its grammar and syntax" (1984: 27).

Language is engendered to serve a masculine-oriented thought. For example, the verbs like 'falling', 'walking', 'leave', 'strain', 'waiting', 'alter', 'control', 'rise', and 'close' seem likely passive verbs, indicating the theme of weakness and

defencelessness of the girl. Moreover, according to the signifying system of the patriarchal language, the colours used in the poem indicate an isolated tone as in 'grey unrest is moving across the land' and 'I draw the curtains as the sky goes black'. These colours set the mood of the poem as gloomy and melancholic both in the external and internal world.

In addition, Rich compares the literal meanings of the instrument of the patriarchal world like the predictors, clocks, and weatherglasses with that of her emotions, which are disturbed with the approach of the storm. Rich expresses the girl's weakness against these external threats of man's biased ideologies. The girl tries uselessly to defend herself in the shelter by closing the windows of glass and closed shutters and doors, but all her efforts failed with the 'insistent whine' of the storm accessing the house from the keyhole:

We can only close the shutters.
I draw the curtains as the sky goes black
And set a match to candles sheathed in glass
Against the keyhole draught, the insistent whine
Of weather through the unsealed aperture. (21-25)

Rich's message is that women cannot evade the emotional suffering resulting from men's oppression just like the inability to avoid the storm and threats of nature. Though Rich complains that the storms threaten both man and woman, once she talks about the emotional turbulence, she talks about woman's feeling of pain as she is victimized by the external world and agonized by the internal one.

3.5 Conclusion

Rich's first collection, *A Change of World* received doubled-edged criticism. On one hand, this volume was complimented by patriarchal writers at that time for its neatness, discipline, and commitment to the rules and styles of writing of the great male figures of the literary scene. However, these critics ignored the absence of Rich's personal voice in this volume and they focused only on her successful imitation of the great masters of the canon. Therefore, this chapter explores the role played by the symbolic modality of language in creating a signifying system that deprives women of the articulation of their own female needs and desires. Selections of Rich's CW have been explored in the light of Kristeva's the symbolic to examine the symbolic representation of female identity in the light of patriarchal biased discourses. This stage is called a 'False Unconscious' that characterized Rich's first volume due to the entire commitment to the patriarchy.

For example, Rich's 'An Unsaid Word' talked about a typical woman of the modern age. The female character is denigrated by patriarchal discourse as unfit for reason; thus, she spends her time waiting for her man at home and does not join him in his 'estranged intensity'. Therefore, the study concludes that the female persona in 'An Unsaid Word' adapts the symbolic linguistic tools to familiarize her mind to man's mind-set. Thus, she is silenced by the strict patterns of the symbolic language.

Feminist writers considered Rich's poetics in this volume as no more than an extension of the single-minded discourse of patriarchal writing. Moreover, they considered her an anti-feminist writer. They said that Rich's 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers' represent negative stereotypical image of women who could not face their fatal

destiny. They blamed her for the escape to her ivory tower. Aunt Jennifer escaped the harsh reality of her living into the world of art and imagination. She spent her time weaving images of lively Tigers without daring to change the course of her life. But, the present study argues that Aunt's passivity results from the language's symbolic signifiers, which are designed to label the female subject as passive, powerless and inferior. Aunt Jennifer did not succeed in the identification with the fearless tigers due to the lack of appropriate signifiers in the symbolic language.

In addition, Rich's tone in 'Storm Warnings' was another image of women's passivity as she showed no opposition to the external threats of the storm. The girl in this poem tried to protect herself against these external threats but it was in vain as there was no immunity against these threats. Living an ivory-tower kind of life was not enough to save women from the oppression of the single-minded thought of patriarchy. Rich in this early stage of writing poetry accepted the sets of definitions given to woman by patriarchal writers and made her characters approve and internalize man's prejudiced definitions that women are unable to change the course of things.

The analysis of the present chapter concludes that Rich's imitation of the traditions and discourses of patriarchy in her early stage was not only to gain an acceptance from the great literary writers of the period as critics argued, but she had in mind the access to the sources of power as she followed the masculine techniques of writing. She realized early in her life that masculine writers seized power in their hands only and that they monopolized the linguistic tools to maintain this power. Therefore, she believed that she needs to go inside this patriarchal ideology to discover how it

works, and as a result, she would be equipped with the same tools that would empower her as a woman writer. However, this stage helped her to understand the working of patriarchy, which would evolve Rich's poetics to the second stage of her career, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

SNAPSHOTS OF A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW: DUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

4.1 Introduction

The publication of *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* (1963) marked the second stage of Rich's poetic evolution. She got an inner conflict between the traditional patriarchal demands and the internal voice of writing herself. This volume was characterized by its individual style, personal concerns, and the use of certain poetic techniques that reflect her feelings. She investigated the sources of her conflict through registering her new experiences and through the violation of writing rules. She voiced herself for the first time in her poems. She said in "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" (1971):

I began to feel that my fragments and scraps had a common consciousness and a common theme, one which I would have been very unwilling to put on paper at an earlier time because I had been taught that poetry should be "universal," which meant, of course, nonfemale (Rich 1979, 44).

Rich abhorred the systematic denial of women's access to the public domain. She examined the grounds upon which women are prevented sharing their experiences publicly. They were identified with the private and the domestic only. Women were absented from public scrutiny; and in turn, they were not fit to political change. Feminists fought against the single male view of reality. This masculine view was a strategy to silence women and make them invisible in language. They defended a

pluralistic view of reality, which is more reasonable and tolerable. Feminist writers looked for meanings that redistribute power, and reclaimed the right for women to rename things and to end their silence. Rich has addressed this kind of exclusion from public life in her poems, especially from the literary and intellectual life, the professions, and politics. Jeevan Kumar conducted a study focusing on the emergence of Rich's poetic development in "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law: A Study" (2013). She showed that this collection marked Rich's transformation towards more feminist agenda in her career (255).

During the fifties of the twentieth century, Rich paid more attention to the expressive values of her poetic texts. Simultaneously, she had no particular addressee in her mind due to the influence of the patriarchal traditions. She said that men have cut themselves off from the female experience. Hence, she was forced to the edges of the masculine culture, which gave very little to woman's needs and desires (Rich et al, 315).

Rich felt that her early writings of poetry targeted the satisfaction of the old master of patriarchy because she was writing her poems following the styles and poetic diction of the great masters of the literary circle like T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden. She herself was not fully sure whether the problem with gender identification lies in the use of wrong language that lacks the female principle or it is her problem that she could not fit the formal male style of writing. Women write about themselves using man's voice and style. However, she became aware that both of these two reasons are connected to the use of language.

Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law (1963) was Rich's third volume of poems. It was a transitional work since it marked her graduation from the first stage of false consciousness into the second stage of double consciousness. Instead of the blind imitation of the great male writers of the patriarchal society, she turned to focus on the real situation of women's suffering, frustrations and exploitation in the patriarchal world. For the first time in Rich's career, she asserted herself as a feminist writer who talks about women's situations and experiences.

This collection shows the failure of Rich's dream of becoming an accomplished poet under the patronage of patriarchal ideology. The social and familial responsibilities bothered Rich to the extent that she could not cope with such burdens. She felt her creativity is waning due to the overloading responsibilities of being a housewife. She realized that she could not follow her dream of expressing the female self inside her while it was demanded that she fit into the stereotype roles meant for women. The overall tone of this collection reflects the grievous exploitation of woman by the single-minded discourse of patriarchy. Hence, Rich explores in this volume the sense of frustration, guilt and suppressed anger. This collection:

introduces Rich's central themes regarding patriarchy: the emptiness of women's experience in patriarchally defined roles; the role of repression in enforcing patriarchal values; the relationship between this repression and oppressive institutions relying directly or indirectly on force, particularly the threat of rape; and the need for an active response to both repression and oppression based on a post-Cartesian sense of interrelationship (Werner 1988, 47).

In her early stage of false consciousness, Rich tried to disguise the self in her writing because it was not permissible to talk about personal issues by patriarchy. Through

the affirmation of the self, she attempted to resist the pressures imposed on her by an institutionalized society. This resulted in a deep fissure inside her between the expression of her female needs and desires and the imitation of compulsory heterosexuality and patriarchal ideology. Hence, within the masculine discourse of identity formation, women had no choice but to accept the definition given to them, thus, they had to accept that they are second hand to men. They accepted their world to rely on the system of binary opposition, which empowered men at the expense of women. Rich felt the burden of following the society's definitions of the self. She realized that there were some people who worked hard to maintain the old ways of living to secure their power and dominance over women. She wrote in her essay, "Power and Danger: Works of a Common Woman" (1977):

The necessity of poetry has to be stated over and over, but only to those who have reason to fear its power, or those who still believe that language is "only words" and that an old language is good enough for our descriptions of the world we are trying to transform" (Rich 1979, 247).

Diaz-Diocaretz commented on Rich's SD saying that "woman stands in permanent conflict between her awareness of selfhood, and the meshes of patriarchy and society trying to entangle her consciousness; this conflict provides the nucleus and point of departure in her subsequent books" (1984, 8).

Accordingly, the symbolic system of signification of the patriarchal thought still had a great negative impact on Rich's choice of medium of expression. Rich was still under the control of the rules of syntax and structures that follow the male's public interests at the expense of the female personal experience. Thus, Rich felt a deep

fissure inside between the commitments to the patriarchal rules of writings and listening to feminine voices inside her, which seek an outlet to the female semiotic drives and emotions.

4.2 Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law: Double-voiced Discourses

Rich's 'Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law' registered her dissatisfaction with the discrepancy between her ambitions to reflect her own female desires in her writings and the traditional patriarchal rules that prohibited her from the expression of these desires. She experienced distress due to her conflicting roles as women and as an artist, but she was able to understand the social and cultural roots of her despair. In this volume, she experienced new techniques to show the change in her views to the world. One of these was the allusion to female figures like Mary Wollstonecraft, Simone de Beauvoir, and other revolutionary women in order to show her readiness to radicalize her views around the status of women in particular and the world in general.

Adrienne Rich's *SD* (1963) is situated at the point of dual consciousness, in which the female recognizes the different ways of defining her identity. In this stage, the individual becomes conscious of two different definitions of the self: the first imposed on her dictating her how to act to suit the common gendered discourse and the second one grows inside pushing her to resist this dictating discourse through re-gendering it. With *Snapshots*, Rich started "dating her poems, as a way to record her own awareness and the process of becoming conscious of her inner changes" (Diaz-Diocaretz 7). The title shows discontinued and disordered photographs of a woman in her middle age living a contradictory kind of life. Biologically, women feel

inferior and weak in comparison to the powerful male. Social symbolic restrictions dictated by men upon women chain them leaving them unsecured and alienated. The writer criticizes women for being submissive to the convention because they listen to the contents of Nature. This woman is trapped between the limitations and nature of her life imposed on her by the masculine thought, and her needs and potentials which stimulate her to resist (Annas 1982).

The poem starts with the description of women living in the symbolic world that demands of them coping with the structures and rules of masculinity or they would suffer double inferiority and humility. The poem consists of ten sections, written in a free-line verse of varied number of lines and stanzas. Rich polemized against the traditional values of the patriarchal society and narrated the experience from the point of view of woman: 'she' and 'you' but with no reference to the 'I' because it was still unclear. The poet uses many references to various male and female figures in history to create a kind of foundation for upcoming discourse with the two women – mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Rich enhances her women with the words that give them the power to reconsider the kind of ideology that dictates upon them following the conventional roles as wives, mothers and house caretakers. Rich said in her "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" that:

It was an extraordinary relief to write that poem. It strikes me now as too literary, too dependent on allusion; I hadn't found the courage yet to do without authorities, or even to use the pronoun "I"-the woman in the poem is always "she" (1972, 24).

The female writers could not have a discourse of their own for they cannot be admitted a place unless their literary value is determined by masculine standards. The failure of women writers is ascribed to their imitation of male's style of writing, which expresses a discourse that does not cope with their own female identity. Rich started borrowing female models of history to replace the male ones she used to cite earlier in her poems. Like many other women activists who were fighting against war and fighting for the rights of minorities, blacks and underprivileged people, she became aware of the secondary roles that women were forced to play in patriarchal society. The social positioning of women became the theme of SD as Rich struggled to write her way out of the isolation of private life and simultaneously to find a poetic form that could express the contradictions she felt mired in (Sevcik 2010).

According to Kristeva, the semiotic elements include the figurative language, even “structural linguistics, operating on phonological oppositions, or on two axes of metaphor and metonymy, accounts for some of the articulation, operating in what we have called the semiotic” (1984, 41). The simile in ‘Snapshots’ suggests the fragility of speaker’s mind as it is compared to ‘moldering like wedding cake’. Her potentials are buried and decayed like the remnants of her wedding cake because she has to cope with romantic feminine ideals. The simile shows the fragility of both of the mind of speaker and the cake and that both are susceptible to rotten:

Your mind now, mouldering like wedding cake,
heavy with useless experience, rich
with suspicion, rumor, fantasy,
crumbing to pieces under the knife-edge
of mere fact. (7-11)

The mind of the speaker is burdened with fantasies and doubts like piece of cake which is rich but heavy on the stomach. Mother-in-law has no ambition or a chance to run away from her bitter world because she 'still has her dresses copied from that time' and simultaneously her mind is 'crumbling to pieces under the knife-edge of mere fact', while the daughter-in-law is conscious of the ties, which chain her by daily household affairs 'wiping the teaspoons'. So the only way of saving herself is to run away from her mother-in-law as the angles urge her to do so.

Reisman describes the kind of language and style followed by Rich in writing about her themes of women's oppression in, *Critical Survey of Poetry of Feminist Poets* (2012) saying:

Language is simpler, texture less dense. The title poem is a series of vignettes of women's experiences. It fairly bristles with quotations drawn from Rich's wide-ranging reading. According to the poem, male authorities have always defined women in myths and literature. Thus, women lacked a literature of their own in which to define themselves (193).

'Snapshots' recorded the emergence of female voice of Rich as she started freeing herself from the restrictions of formalism. Thus, she was overwhelmed between the commitment to the law of the father and the expression of her personal female voice in her writing. She tried new poetic forms of expressing the suffering and ordeals of woman in the American society. She started writing directly about her female experience. The poem presents various portrays of women lacking their own subjectivity because they live under the discourse of the patriarchal society. Kathleen

Moore describes women's burden in, *Contemporary American Women Poets* (2002)

saying:

In *Snapshots*, themes such as the burden of history, the separateness of individuals, and the need for meaningful human relationships carry an added sensibility regarding gender and its express impact on one's life. The volume's title sets this group of poems within a frame of woman as daughter-in-law, wife, and mother bound into a set role within traditional social patterns and an awakening sense of identity. The adoption of this personal, exploratory voice carries a perspective that calls into question assumptions about identity and gender relations and debates throwing over these assumptions versus living within their structures (Cucinella 297).

Another important simile is in the fifth section. It entails a turning-point in the poem. It is the starting point of woman's realization that she should transform herself of the old gendered-discourse into the new re-gendered one. She shaves her leg, 'she shaves her legs until they gleam like petrified mammoth-task' hoping not to injure man's sensibilities. She tries to cope up with the female stereotypes of patriarchy. Though the sweet smiles and good looking, she is aware that her legs after shining look like the tusks of mammoth; a prehistoric animal, "The ordinary scene of the woman falsifying her nature, trying to please and look the way she is expected to is a contemporary image that emerges as anti-poetic especially because of the neighbouring voice of Horace" (Diaz-Diocaretz 1985, 75). She is aware that by her endeavours to compromise with the male stereotypes dictated upon females, she is doing a kind of compromise with an old-fashioned mono-dimensional discourse that negates her female identity and dictates upon her a conforming submissive kind of identity.

Merk says that the speaker in 'Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law' is a female who is totally divorced from herself; therefore the poem is rendered in the third person only. The title of the poem draws the attention of the readers to the ways of defining women in relation to men: as daughters-in-law, they are legally bound to their husband's family and society. This detachment signals the separation and disconnection of the lives of women governed by the norms and rules of patriarchal society (Merk 2010).

The tone also is one of the techniques employed by Rich to show the discrepancy between the old-fashioned discourse of patriarchy and the new emerging voice inside the speaker. The tone is melancholic in the first section of the poem as the life of daughter-in-law became miserable and unbearable because of the mother-in-law. The daughter is chained by the mother-in-law who represents structures and rules because the kind of relationship between them is governed by their relation to the symbolic world of men. The opposition between the daughter-in-law's early life; which was fresh and fertile and the new dull life she has after marriage caused her such a melancholic mood. She follows her emotions in structuring her way of thinking. She has the potentials but she could not utilize it in the symbolic world because she spends her time preparing coffee or 'dusting everything'. The tone is melancholic because the poem starts with a monotonous life of a woman who gives up her ambitions and needs for the sake of meeting the needs of her family. But at the end, the tone turns to be revolutionary through calling women to be courageous and to free themselves of the household chains.

Rich's poem starts to explore the idea of the psychological split inside women: the splits caused by conflicts between contradictory social expectations, the split between taking oneself seriously as a writer or putting others first, for example, Rich redefines this splitting process in ways which emphasize its potential for new development, new consciousness. Rich's work celebrates the split as a process of growth, painful and valuable instead of looking for closure (Little 1990).

Supernatural elements reflect the inner pains and depressions of the woman's everyday life under the patronage of patriarchy. The woman hears voices of the angels urging her to be impatient. The angels ask her to save herself only leaving other people around her because she cannot help them:

Only a week since They said. Have no patience
The next time it was: Be insatiable.
Then: Save yourself; others you cannot save.
Sometimes she's let the tapstream scald her arm,
a match burn to her thumbnail,
or held her hand above the kettle's snout
right in the woolly steam. (17-23)

Supernatural elements have been presented to the scene to show the subconscious world that has no place in the world of reality. Angels represents her subconscious desires that warn her from sacrificing herself for the sake of others, and start looking for her freedom. There were fits of suspicions and periods of depression and she thought that these mean that she was ungrateful, insatiable, and even a monster. These voices haunt her telling her to be resistant and rebellious but "she can hear but not obey" (Rich 1979, 45). Actually, these voices do not belong to angels, but to monsters, the inevitable accompaniment of growing self-consciousness and self-

involvement for other women. These voices of monsters come from within, from her semiotic subconscious urging her to reject the patriarchal models of femininity (Rich et al. 1993). Rich said that she has to follow the traditional role prescribed to her, i.e. to be children nurturer all the day, and to be with a man in the old way of marriage. Therefore, her imaginative activity was left behind to decay and a conservative role was requested and dictated upon her. She was choked with such kind of dual life and wanted to search for an outlet in order to be able to find her female identity and genuine self.

Though Rich realizes “the extreme difficulty of articulating an alternative vision in a patriarchal language” (Werner 48), she does believe in the power of words in generating a new unprejudiced discourse. She has the vision that women can construct a kind of a linguistic mode that can liberate them and inspire the upcoming generation. She articulated for women thoughts that they could not experience and articulate before. Women align their consciousness to Rich’s propositions when they listen to her or read her words: a personal experience through one’s senses as much as the intellect.

Moreover, the allusion to Emily Dickinson was also employed successfully by Rich to help in the motivation and emergence of the female self. Although Dickinson was a great genius woman but her intellect could not stop her from being involved and burdened with any woman’s housework. Dickinson was living a dual conscious life. She was surrounded by kitchen staff, like pots and dishes that contain jellies, and dusting tools, but this didn’t curb her creative talent:

.... My life had stood- - a Loaded Gun- -
in that Amherst panty while the jellies boil and scum,
or, more often,
iron-eyed and beaked and purposed as a bird,
dusting everything on the whatnot every day of life. (46-50)

Rich relied on the use of direct allusion to certain literary, political or historical figures to illustrate and support the speaker's poetic argument. Through the technique of allusion, Rich:

not only creates a diachronic relation between a voice in the past and her own, but also proposes a reversal of values in order to create an internal polemic with the alien text. This specific reformulation of literary tradition, norms, and values is an essential characteristic to describe the feminist intertextual factor: there is a sub/version of form and content (Diaz-Diocaretz 1985, 74).

Another allusion to 'Mary Wollstonecraft' in section seven urges women to go against the grain if they want to see their existence within the patriarchal society. Women should fight against odds if they want to contribute significantly in the creation of civilization. They could not contribute to such a creation because they don't conform to patriarchal rules of woman's position in the house as children nurturer and house carer. Rich mentioned this example of Mary who fought against men with her intelligence and ambition and came to be a threat to the patriarchal discourse. This woman ignored all male endeavours to disgrace her reputation and diminish her achievements. She challenged the structured patriarchal conventions that undermine women's potentials:

a woman, partly brave and partly good,
who fought with what she partly understood.

few men about her would or could do more,
hence she was labelled harpy, shrew and whore. (74-77)

She lived two contradictory lives. On one hand, she fought against the social conventions and restrictions that keep women illiterate and incompetent to males. On the other hand, men felt jealous of her achievements and started calling her with obscene names and titles like 'harpy' who is the cruel woman and 'shrew' who is the problem-maker, nagging or bad-tempered woman.

Again, another allusion is mentioned to a French philosopher, Diderot who speaks of how women lose their dreams and their selfhood at fifteen. They turn to be partly conventional and partly legendary, in which they no longer could change their lives. They dream only of the bygone chances:

"You will die at fifteen," said Diderot,
and turn part legend, part convention.
still eyes inaccurately dream
behind closed windows blankening with steam. (75-78)

They are left with, "fire, tears, wit, taste, martyred ambition," stirring inside their breast. Rich criticizes those women who are satisfied with the roles given to them by males in the ninth stanza. They are content with 'mere talent' and the position they have within the household:

Our blight has been our sinecure:
mere talent was enough for us- -
glitter in fragments and rough drafts.
Sigh no more, ladies.
Time is male
and in his cups drinks to the fair. (93-98)

She explains the way of fooling women with this situation by saying that they are deceived by flattery, which pushes them to adapt such submissive roles. Flattery has blinded them from endeavouring to fulfil great aims. Few examples of heroic female characters succeed in their influential works to challenge the masculine thought. She says that few female 'applicants' are ready to take the adventure to get the honour of martyrdom for the sake of liberation.

Rich comments on an important irony lies in the prejudicial masculine discourse in section six. Rich suggests that patriarchal tradition has at all the time put men in a superior position and women in an inferior one. The irony is that men have introduced this inferior site of women as a natural site rather than as a female creation. Man is associated with culture while woman is associated with nature. Man is associated with mind and intellect while woman is associated with feelings and passions. The aim of such kind of a discourse is to associate woman with everything that is weak and fragile. Nature is personified as a mother who has all females as her daughters-in-law instead of her daughters. Kristeva, on the other hand, represents the maternal body as some kind of a third term, as a place of in-betweenness, connecting culture and nature. By the power of the semiotic, things will be re-signified in the symbolic world. Kristeva is strategically employing the notions of the semiotic maternal chora, and the maternal body, in order to shift and alter something within phallogocentrism (Butler 1999).

Rich raises her voice calling women to consider the consequences of an alternative female-authored tradition that speaks from a gendered subjectivity. She describes the

importance of a feminist and revisionary poetics saying that re-vision is the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction. “Rich’s poetry insists upon bodily presence, an eroticized, corporeal self that speaks of its desires in ways that we can strongly identify as deriving from the Romantic bodily self.... One of the functions of speaking through and for a marginalized historical woman is to enter her subjectivity to release her hitherto silenced voice” (Roberts 2008, 94-95).

Rich proposes to all women at the end of the poem that they there is a chance to change the double life they experienced under patriarchy. She believes that women of the future can re-gender the oppressive discourses of patriarchy and put an end to the duality of the female self:

Her mind full to the wind, I see her plunge
Breasted and glancing through the currents,
taking the light upon her
at least as beautiful as any boy
or helicopter,
poised, still coming,
her fine blades, making the air wince. (112-118)

Rich celebrated the most desirable freedom. She violated the rules of writing inherited from the patriarchal traditions beginning with “the dropping of the initial capital letter in each line, use of speech cadences, increasing enjambment and limiting the use of rhyme. Here Rich for the first time identifies herself as a feminist poet” (Mukherjee 2015, 213).

Women should not submit to the time of male, but she has to resist and refuse the subordinate role given to her by man. Rich has a different clear vision of the status of women in the future ‘delivered, palpable, ours’. All the aspects of nature, the sea and the wind admit that she has the talent to be aware of her power. She wants the readers to realize the significance of a change in the way of women’s thinking to be able to create their own discourses.

‘Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law’ talked about the recognition of the ways one has been defined. The poem described the contradictions in a woman in her prime of life. Descriptions of women’s limitation were given by men in order to keep them in an inferior position. Simultaneously, women of bravery were mentioned like Simone De Beauvoir and Mary Wollstonecraft, who addressed women's needs and capacities in their writings. Rich introduced double-voiced discourses through naming woman’s oppression and naming champion figures. The speaker in this poem was confused between these two discourses that she disappeared at the end of the poem.

4.3 The Roofwalker: Inadequacy of Language

Adrienne Rich’s ‘The Roofwalker’ (1961) portrays the construction of houses’ roofs that were not finished by the roof builders. The poem relies on the image of roof building. It compares the construction of the roof to the construction of the self. The comparison was keen as the ‘half-finished houses’ stand for the fragmentary life she had under patriarchy. The speaker describes the various tools used by the roofwalkers in the construction. These tools belong to man’s symbolic world as roofwalkers are supposed to be all males. Thus, they are not fit to the description of

the female semiotic drives and emotions. Moreover, these tools already proved their failure as the houses' roofs were still unfinished.

The house stands as a symbol of security and protection that were not fulfilled. The poem opens with the houses 'half-finished' and closes with no sign that these houses were finished. The semi-finished houses show no physical capabilities of offering shelter, and there is something about them that is only half formed. In addition, Rich portrayed a life of daring self-exposure as well as a life of submission to rules not designed for her. She tried to question the adequacy of tools used to seek the truth. Rich's exploration for an appropriate tool to figure out her female self increased her sense of duality as the appropriate tools were not available yet. Werner said that Roofwalker "emphasizes, both thematically and figuratively, the inadequacy, especially for a woman poet, of the confessional mode which provided a transition between formalism and the "open" poetry of the early 1960s" (1988, 131).

Spiegelman said in "Driving to the Limits of the City of Words": The Poetry of Adrienne Rich" (1989) that Rich in *The Roofwalker*:

begins to abandon this last infirmity of the romantic mind, because she increasingly refuses to take the world as it is given. Her distaste for lapidary forms and for the calm betrayals and falsehoods of language gives way to her later, far from adolescent, rebellion against tradition (151-152).

'The Roofwalker' dealt with the inadequate tools and how to find the appropriate one. Rich relied heavily on the use of the symbolic masculine language and its system of signification in the first stage of writing poetry. Later, she realized that

these tools are not fit for the expression of the female identity. Rich “engages directly in the struggle to release herself from an abstracting, colonizing language. This dualistic language splits mind from body and tames and disembodies both poetry and perception” (Babu 200, 4).

This poem was written in a period characterized by “discontent and lack of a clear vision of alternatives. Rich increasingly rejected the privileged life given to her as a model white wife with a house and children. She thought of herself as Aunt Jennifer who only finds herself in her artistic works. Thus, she started denying the rules for writing poetry; the ones that do not take women’s personal needs into consideration. The poem started with the description of a group of roof workers finishing their day with repairs done to the roof. Then, the entrance of the speaker in the poem connects between an external event represented by the roofwalkers’s job and the speaker’s state of mind (Keyes 62). The speaker identifies herself with these roof builders to share their experience:

I feel like them up there:
exposed, larger than life,
and due to break of my neck.
was it worthwhile to lay---
with infinite exertion---
a roof I can’t live under? (13-18)

Such kind of identification was a violation to the symbolic rules of talking about public issues at the expense of personal ones. It was a tentative identification, which:

gives way almost immediately to a strong statement of alienation from the entire enterprise of house-building, of poetry.... Perceiving herself [Rich] as the victim, rather than the architect, of her discourse, she dismisses her image of herself as heroic quester along with her belief in her vocation as a poet employing the familiar techniques of the dominant mode” (Werner 1988, 131).

The use of the first person pronoun ‘I’ gave the poet a chance to convey some of the semiotic drives to the symbolic signifiers of the masculine language. But, these tools “All those blueprints,/closings of gaps,/measurements, calculations?” were not her vocabularies, thus adding more to the estrangement of her feelings. She tried to “break free from passivity only to succumb to another, less terrifying passiveness” (Rich et al. 372). Although, Rich chose the male identification in her poem by assuming that at that time there were no female roofwalkers, Rich was actually still under the pressure of patriarchal thought. She did not as yet succeed in giving up the centrality of the male’s existence to the female experience. Keyes said that:

Rich’s projection of her female persona into alternative male figures adds further evidence to a concept of a gender-free reality where selves are costumes and costumes are selves. Nakedness is thus another costume, worn for a while perhaps, definitely reckless in the context of this poem, but “with a shade of difference,” changeable (1986, 64).

Rich was dissatisfied with the dominant roles given to men at the expense of women’s inferior positions. She showed her dismay with the passive submission to the patriarchal norms that gave women no admittance. Thus, she opined that the symbolic tools, the maps, measuring and calculations are inadequate to tell the truth. Identifying herself with the male persona ‘Roofwalkers’ was not enough to realize

the female experience, therefore she did not identify herself with the metaphor of nakedness:

I'm naked, ignorant,
a naked man fleeing
across the roofs
who could with a shade of difference
be sitting in the lamplight
against the cream wallpaper
reading—not with indifference —
about a naked man
fleeing across the roofs. (193-94)

The speaker did not choose her life; it was chosen for her by other male figures who exercised every act of power against women. She was given the wrong definitions of what it is meant to be a female in the masculine world. The problem at this stage was that she is no longer the blind imitator of the symbolic discourse of patriarchy. This time she is conscious that this was not her life and the tools were not the appropriate ones for the identification of her own life:

A life I didn't choose
chose me: even
my tools are the wrong ones
for what I have to do. (22-25)

The speaker realized that these symbolic signifiers falsify the real story of the female experience. Hereby, the speaker was fully conscious that this life was not appropriate for woman, which caused the duality of living. The failure of interaction between the symbolic signifiers of the masculine world, “my tools are the wrong ones” and the semiotic drives of the female self resulted in the domination of the single-minded discourse of patriarchy at the expense of the female self. The poet in this poem suffered a mental torment because she realized that she was entrapped and enslaved beneath man’s shadow.

At the end, two identifications with the male figure were presented: one was with a ‘naked man fleeing/across the roofs’ and the second was with a man ‘sitting in the lamplight’ reading with care the story of the ‘naked man’. This changeability of the self’s identification indicates the uncertainty and instability of the speaker’s state of mind, which was worn between fitting into the society’s norms of gender category and the following of her female inner drives.

Rich exploited the technique of male identification in this stage of her writing poetry. She was still under the influence of the male dominance. Thus, she thought that empowering the female self inside her could be done through the identification of the source of power in the society that is the male’s power, but she realized the futility of the symbolic order in reflecting woman’s semiotic needs and desires. Her strategy of identifying with male figures was meant to teach women the power to transform. She thought that:

If woman’s power-to-transform is cultivated outside the sphere of male influence, ..., the emergence of a truly different creature

occurs, one unimpeded by the constraints of gender. Rich gives a glimpse of this new creature as she “plunges/breasted and glancing through the currents.” A new poetry is beginning here, one that is distinctively female in nature and forged in women’s experience and perceptions (Keyes 65).

The image of the ‘naked man’ described Rich’s sense of estrangement and inappropriateness of the vocabularies of the dominant modes. She revealed her dissatisfaction with the male figure of ‘roofwalker’ to be an expression of the female quest. This indicated the limitation of all forms of signification of the symbolic language upon woman’s creative powers (Werner 1989). Accordingly, it was a critical period in the Rich’s career as she was overwhelmed between staying the faithful daughter of dominant ideology and the quest for an appropriate vehicle for the expression of the female experience.

It was very difficult for a woman raised and influenced by male writers to express her voice and creativity with this language that served the patriarchal suppression of female power. This resulted in Rich’s sense of conflict and confusion between the imitations of the great male masters and the writing about her female individuality.

4.4 Tear Gas: The Oppressor’s Language

Rich’s ‘Tear Gas’ was written on October 12, 1969 when reports talked about the tear-gassing of protesters marching against the treatment of G.I prisoners in the stockade at Fort Dix, New Jersey (CEP, 1993). Rich utilized the image of gas tears to talk about the internal tears inside her for the lack of the appropriate language that can translate these tears into words. She sought a language that can heal the wounds, and a language that can transform the bitter reality of women’s lives. Her former

experience and mastery of the traditional rules of writing helped her to master her art through developing her own style. She recognized that the language she used to talk about her concerns were untrustworthy. She expressed her mistrust in the signifying process of the symbolic language in this poem saying:

... I am afraid
of the language in my head
I am alone, alone with language
and without meaning
coming back to something written years ago:
our words misunderstand us. (CEP, 419, 21-26)

The symbolic language of man's world is unfit for the expression of woman's needs. It caused nothing but suffering, oppression and isolation because it only describes the single-sided story of reality. The speaker feels her words are meaningless because they do not signify women. Lechte says that, "Because the discipline of sociology has tended to be concerned only with the symbolic..., it has not been able to move beyond the sphere of representation and the symbolic as its precondition. Many strictly sociological representations of works of art, therefore, tend to focus on the (symbolic) message, for which the work is seen as a vehicle, rather than on the (semiotic) nature of the aesthetic achievement" (1991, 131). Thereby, it is not the problem of the speaker alone but the problem of every woman and in every age. The speaker feels that her identity is defined by sets of rules written a long time ago and they are inappropriate now to the expression of her individuality.

Since language is the instrument of oppressing women and silencing them in Rich's first stage, she realized that language could also release her feelings of anger and suppression in the second stage. In 'Tear Gas', she used the 'tears' metaphorically to stand for the internal tears caused by the patriarchal oppression of women. She made use of a political public situation, in which protesters were attacked by tear gas to stop their march, and merged it with a personal private experience of pain and terror. The tear gas situation was diligently associated by the speaker with the inner-conflict of women as they face the same oppression as the protesters. Every endeavour of women to express their individual needs and desires would be met with aggression and violation to their rights because they stand as a threat to the social norms.

Creatively, the speaker uses personification to show the conflicting emotions raging inside her due to the discrepancy between her personal life and the demand of the patriarchal society. The personification reflects the bitterness inside her when her words fail to understand her. She personifies language as a human being capable of thinking and understanding when she attributes the verb 'misunderstand' to language: 'alone with language/and without meaning/ coming back to something written years ago'. Hence, the personification is not only used to describe the cut off communication between man and woman but also to describe the failure of the symbolic language with its vocabularies in communicating and understanding the female experience. Actually, this personification is treated with deliberate exaggeration by the poet to show the tragic pain inside the speaker due to the dual life she experiences because of failure of language in expressing personal female needs.

Rich called the symbolic patriarchal as ‘the oppressor language’ (Stanton 1987), and she was continuously in pursuit of a language that encodes feminine experience from woman’s perspective.

It wasn’t completeness I wanted
.....
No, not completeness:
but I needed a way of saying
(this is what they are afraid of)
that could deal with these fragments
I needed to touch you
with a hand, a body
but also with words (CEP, 31-47)

The fluctuation of the speaker’s tone is seen in the visual aspect of the poem. Some lines are short in length but they outnumber the long lines. The speaker is hesitant due to the failure of finding appropriate words to name the female experience, thus she opines her views in very short lines as if she stumbles when talking. Every time she endeavours to articulate her own individual female experience, she is faced by the language’s rules of syntax and grammar, which chain the expression of her female needs and desires.

The similes in ‘Tear Gas’ poignantly reflect the burdens inside the speaker and state her desire for a new language that does express the female principle. The comparison between the language she seeks and the ‘pigment’ shows Rich’s desire of externalizing her views to the world through merging the internal female experience

into the public patriarchal language and thought. She is dissatisfied by keeping woman's feelings hidden and calls for externalizing them just like the 'pigment' that shows the outside complexion of a person. She wants to stop the dictating role of the patriarchal language and more importantly she wants woman's feelings to be recognized by others.

In addition, the image of the burst of blood vein is very suggestive in the sense it shows that the continuity of oppressing women and silencing them will lead to a volcano of a different kind. Women cannot hold with the continuous systematic subjugation of women around the world, one day they shall explode just like the burst of a vein due to high pressure. The colour of blood as 'black' foreshadows the anger and wrath that will explode one day due to the high pressure caused by patriarchy:

I need a language to hear myself with
to see myself in
a language like pigment released on the board
blood-black,
veined with contradictions
bursting under pressure from the tube. (CEP, 48-53)

Rich realized that the plight of woman in the society and at home was caused by sets of definitions imposed on her by men. She believed that the process of liberating herself starts with the realization that her body has certain potentials unknown to men. Kristeva opined that the body of the mother is "the focus of the semiotic as the 'pre-symbolic'-a manifestation –especially in art, of what could be called the

‘materiality’ of the symbolic: the voice as rhythm and timbre, the body as movement, gesture, and rhythm” (Lechte 1991, 129). Hence, she questioned every mode and every vocabulary of the symbolic language realizing that no word currently could express her semiotic drives, unless it is associated with the body; the place of the material support of the language of communication because “the nature of meaning is distorted if it is reduced to what is possible within the conventional framework of communication” (Lechte 99). Thus, she put every aspect of her life on the margin:

The will to change begins in the body not in the mind
My politics is in my body: accruing and expanding with every
act of resistance and each of my failures
Locked in the closet at four years old I beat the wall with my
body
that act is in me still (CEP, 36-40).

The speaker did not believe in the adequacy of language in expressing her needs, therefore she resorted to tears as they were more authentic and genuine to the expression of female experience. She listened to the unconscious voice inside her mind, whose expression threatened the symbolic language as Kristeva suggested that “the unconscious is precisely what is (potentially) disruptive of the symbolic, as death is disruptive of life” (Lechte 1991, 45). She was motivated to utter some of the thoughts in her mind when she thought of her internal unconscious drives:

I want you to listen
when I speak badly
not in poems but in tears

not my best but my worst
that these repetitions are beating their way
towards a place where we can no longer be together
where my body no longer will demonstrate outside your
stockade
and wheeling through its blind tears will make for the open air
of another kind of action.

The speaker also relied on repetition as a structural principle to emphasize the idea of language's betrayal to the expression of her emotions, for example, 'I am afraid' is repeated three times to stress her mistrust in the symbolic language, 'I am afraid/of the language in my head'. On the other hand, repetition was also used by the speaker to articulate her own desire of challenging the patriarchal conventions through violating the rules of writing and declaring her readiness to part of man's symbolic world in which she had no language to use, 'these repetitions are beating their way/towards a place where we can no longer be together'. Spiegelman said that "Rich's poetry is poetry of repetition: its assertive verbs express the demands of self on the world. The language of choosing, in its insistent repetition, is made part of a specifically educational program" (1989, 183).

The speaker's tone at the end of the poem was completely different from the one at the beginning. The poem started with a reluctant tone resulting from the lack of suitable vocabularies that could define the female experience; language was strange to the speaker, 'our words misunderstand us'. At the end, the tone moved towards more affirmative and emotional tone as the speaker started focusing on the use of 'I'

to express her ideas, “From an aside to a full articulation, from a muttered, private grief to a public conversion of fear to bravery” (Spiegelman 1989, 172).

4.5 Conclusion

‘The Dual Conscious stage’ registers Rich’s personal voice for the first time in her career. This chapter is designed to examine the role of the symbolic signifying system in creating single-minded discourses that serve only man’s needs and desires at the expense of women’s articulation of the semiotic drives. *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* stand for the inner conflict of Rich between the commitment to the patriarchal writing and the articulation of her female needs and desires.

This volume also received little attention by critics because Rich was labelled as ‘the great imitator’ of the patriarchal writers. However, the current study concludes that Rich in this volume realized an important issue, which is the inappropriateness of man’s language to the expression of the female voice. Thus, Rich was more alienated and detached, which was the reason behind self-rejecting every definition ascribed to the female identity by masculine writers that are discussed in the next chapter. This study also concludes that though Rich suffered the duality of consciousness in this stage of her career, it was very critical to her poetic evolution seen in the next stages.

The analysis of the selected poems; ‘Snapshots of A Daughter-in-Law’, ‘The Roofwalker’ and ‘Tear Gas’ concludes that this stage has recorded the emergence of Rich’s female voice as she started violating the rules of formalism. Rich introduced snapshots of the life of a daughter-in-law who enjoyed the pleasure of life when she was unmarried, but with marriage she replicated the misery of her mother-in-law

because she subjugated herself to the traditions of patriarchy. The chapter concludes that she failed to save herself because of the lack of appropriate linguistic tools that could change her life. As well, it is concluded that 'The Roofwalker' motivated Rich to look for a new system of signification that does not rely on the symbolic signifying process. The female speaker rejected the identification with the Roofwalkers and their tools due to the invalidity of the masculine language to describe the female experience. Simultaneously, the analysis of Rich's 'Tear Gas' in light of the symbolic mode of signification concludes that words betray women when they are not energized with the power of the semiotic drives and emotions. The speaker in this poem openly articulated her mistrust in a language with words that 'misunderstand us'. Thus, the chapter concludes that this duality of experience transformed Rich into a new level of seeking appropriate linguistic components that rely on female sources of power.

CHAPTER FIVE

NECESSITIES OF LIFE: THE UN-NAMING STAGE

5.1 Introduction

In the early stage of Rich's poetry, women sought an acceptance in the patriarchal world. Thus, they buried their voices and masked their identities in order to gain a position in man's world. They adapted the masculine discourse of defining woman's identity because they thought that they are unfit to create their own female discourse. They were great imitators of the great male masters; therefore, they were left far behind in terms of having their own personal canon. Women disguised themselves under masks made for them because they were not in the position to make demands. Keyes said that these masks can "be a certain kind of language or tone, perhaps a gentle acceptance or modesty. Flattery takes form in the imitation of man's words or attitudes- anything that will please or seduce" (1986, 18).

Later, in the collection of *Necessities of Life* (1966), Rich realized that she could not reach her optimum potential within her traditional married life. She suffered the inner conflict between meeting her creative potentials and following the single-voiced discourse that dictates the acceptance of the stereotypic role of being a housewife and caretaker. She thought that experiencing a new stage of consciousness entails first the rejection of the old one. Keyes talked about Rich's realization of the role of language in creating negative meanings that form false discourses, "In some poems, Rich defines the quality of this language negatively; she explores what it should not be. Certain context, images and collocations of words create these negative definitions"

(1986, 67). Therefore, Rich opined that “To seek the new self, capable of receiving and transmitting messages from its own interior by means of conventional language is useless, because it can only perpetuate the old separate self it was invented to deal with” (Petrovic 1997, 261).

Moreover, Rich believed in the importance of giving up the old patterns and structures of patriarchy if woman wants to get her female definition. Woman cannot define their female subjects while they are still chained by the patriarchal definitions and prescription for the female experience. After having lived in dual consciousness during the time of *A Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law*, Rich realized that “Her business, to the degree that she can make it out, is to feel herself, to think beyond formal categories, to reject whatever is merely habitual on behalf of what she can discover as potentially to be won” (Boyers 1973, 134).

Thus, Rich thought that is an urgent demand to reject every definition given to woman by patriarchy before starting the stage of redefining the self. The stage of renaming should start with un-naming the false definitions imposed on her. Being familiar with the traditions and conventions of the patriarchal thought, Rich was qualified to characterize and diagnose the false self; therefore she unnamed her Self as a step to re-name it. Un-naming stage is crucial to the following stage of renaming. Simultaneously, Rich admitted that it was not easy for woman to give up the long-established definitions of the female self that became no longer useful as she had no substitution to replace these definitions. Un-naming is a difficult process. Rich said in “Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying” (1975) that the hollowness created by the un-naming stage:

has been identified with lovelessness, barrenness, sterility. We have been urged to fill our “emptiness” with children. We are not supposed to go down into the darkness of the core. Yet, if we can risk it, the something borne of that nothing is the beginning of our truth (Rich 1979, 191).

In this stage, Rich was under the influence of two great female writers; Emily Dickenson and Sylvia Plath. She was attracted by the poetic consciousness of these two writers, which showed the beginning of Rich’s transformation towards a more female poetics. Under the influence of other female writers, she realized the importance of language in integrating the poet and woman altogether. For example, in this collection, Rich used the first person pronoun for the first time to shatter the formalist aesthetics of patriarchy.

Nevertheless, Rich suffered a dual conscious life experienced in the time of writing *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law*, in which she was living two definitions of self. One ‘self’ is defined according to the way it is supposed to act; determined by external forces as in the case of *A Change of World*, which defined her identity in terms of the patriarchal discourse. The second definition focuses on the growing sense of self that goes against the first definition. By the time she wrote *Necessities of Life*, Rich had started to feel the urgent need of finding and defining herself in her writing, which went against the rules and styles of patriarchy. She realized that it is important first to violate and un-name the patriarchal rules in order to be able to articulate and name her needs and desires later. It was important to her to deconstruct the patriarchal ideology, then to reconstruct a new ideology that does not suppress women. In this collection:

Rich articulates her emerging awareness that individual experience cannot be arbitrarily separated from its historic context, and there is a growing conviction that the tension she experiences between her personal values and larger social forms embodies the cultural schism between mind and body, nature and civilization, oppressor and oppressed, which she feels is the basis for patriarchal order (Martin 1984, 184).

5.2 The Trees: The Discourse that is not Mine!

‘The Trees’ tells the story of the trees, which disengage their roots one night and break out of the house, heading to the forest where they are met in celebration and reunion by winds and moon. The persona of the poem was not involved in the trees’ departure and didn’t think about the consequences of this departure; yet she had:

a curious sort of revolution that doesn't try to change the structure of things within the house, but simply withdraws its presence, its implicit support through acquiescence, says, "I prefer not to." The speaker of the poem is not yet ready to follow the trees' example, yet she identifies with them and their action” (Annas 1982, 17).

Following Kristeva’s thesis that the signifying process, hand in hand with the semiotic, can be transgressive, disruptive, and revolutionary (McKafee 38). Rich started writing poems that infringed the traditional rules of writing set by the patriarchal society. This was to show that the symbolic mode of signification is meaningful only if the semiotic energizes it. Rich wanted to find in language not only herself but also the larger community of women. Spiegelman says that in Rich’s poetry, “The adequacy of language versus its inadequacy and the attempt to assert commonality in the face of the knowledge of individuality are her constant themes” (1989, 148).

'The Trees' (1963) published in the collection *Necessities of Life* marked Rich's transformation in style and subject-matter from patriarchal discourses into the new discourse that would give women a voice and identity. It was written at a time when Rich started her unnamings stage, in which she denied her strict commitment to the patriarchal modes of writing. Keyes states that Rich's originality in her early poems was not in the forms and styles of the masters she imitated, but in her 'insights into what it means to be a woman in the kingdom of the fathers.' Rich started addressing her subject through her insights into the poetic skills that she learned from her mentors. Thus, she found her way (1986).

Imagery is one of the semiotic aspects of language. Kristeva thinks that even "structural linguistics, operating on phonological oppositions, or on two axes of metaphor and metonymy, accounts for some of the articulation, operating in what we have called the semiotic" (1984, 41). The Trees relies on the image of moving trees from the house into the forest. The symbolic reading of this image indicates rootlessness. Masculine thought continuously suppresses women by associating them to the elements of nature, to show their weakness and irrationality. But the semiotic reading of the image of moving trees shows woman's escape to their being. The exodus of the trees represents the feminine generative power. The poem focuses on the inadequacies of the available figures for the persona's experience. The poem describes the trees' disengagement of their roots in one of the nights and their break out of the house, where trees are gathered to celebrate their reunion by winds and moon in the middle of the forest. Symbolically, nature's images represent women's weaknesses but the semiotic modality infers that these images liberate women from

the fitters imposed by masculine discourses. The trees here stand as symbols for woman and the self. The persona in this poem has a double self: a self that is simultaneously identified with and detached from the trees. At least, the persona shows compassion to the captive trees' escape to freedom.

Woman's escape to nature is assigned as weakness and inferiority by patriarchy, but such kind of escape is a re-union that "sets forth the notion of woman as centre of inherent strength, as substance itself, as an empowered being interpreting the world from the inner eye of woman" (Diaz-Diocaretz 65).

I sit inside, doors open to the veranda
writing long letters
in which I scarcely mention the departure
of the forest from the house. (17-20)

Rich concluded that woman in a patriarchal society is a marginal figure but one who is capable of seeing what men in power cannot see. Rich's personal life experiences, as well as her observations of the lives of other marginal women gave her the advantage of seeing things differently and awkwardly. This different perspective is totally feminine. Rich defamiliarizes this notion of everyday commonality to one that suggests its many referents or how it is signified.

The 'moon' is a very metaphoric referent that has been re-signified in Rich's 'The Trees'. At the beginning of the poem, the speaker says that 'the whole moon shines in a sky still open' in the fresh night. It is given a negative connotation within the

patriarchal discourse. The moon is associated with woman's changing and unstable mood. This description is given by someone living inside the house, yet is unaware of the surroundings. Man does not take the natural elements into consideration because he thinks they are a source of weakness and irrationality. But the speaker gives a different description to the moon at the end of the stanza. She describes the moon as a mirror broken into many pieces. This change is caused by the trees that have uprooted themselves for the world outside. When they are celebrated by all the elements of nature, their branches rise into the sky, blocking the moon. Thus, the moon appears to be broken into pieces through the trees' tapestry of leaves. These pieces can be seen flashing at the top of the tallest oak tree. The freedom of the trees and their re-union with nature empower these trees with a living force. Such a symmetrical re-union is celebrated by nature: 'Winds rush to meet them'.

The variable length of sentences in this poem reflects the attitudes of the speaker. Unlike 'An Unsaid Word', some sentences in 'The Trees' are short and musical while others are long, suggesting that the speaker is both hesitant and overwhelmed by the departure of trees from the house. In addition, there is no strict rhyme scheme or meter pattern in this poem which is considered one of the semiotic elements of subverting the patriarchal discourse and rules of writing. Ghaderi says that "the unspeakable, which is not posited in the Symbolic, can be expressed only when the language becomes poetic. The language becomes poetic when the semiotic transgresses the symbolic in such a way that the rhythms, the music and the sound of the language threaten the denotative function of the language" (2008, 16):

The trees inside are moving out into the forest,

the forest that was empty all these days
where no bird could sit
no insect hide
no sun bury its feet in shadow (1-5)

There is no life in nature because woman is not there. Women represented by ‘the trees’ become the source of power to the elements of nature. Images of birds with no shelter and insects with no hiding place show a barren life. Such barrenness cannot be rehabilitated without the trees that give life and shelter to its dwellers. Woman in the lap of nature connotes power and empowerment for other living things. The symbolic discourse used to connote women’s weakness inside the natural world in order to keep them in their masculine world as victims. Lalbakhsh describes this thought as “a nullification of the socially-constructed ideology that associates men with knowledge and women with domestic labour and house chores” (2014, 24). Men in their patriarchal world have this compelling need to lord over women to enforce their superiority over them. But once women succeed in uprooting the long-established and single-minded discourse of patriarchy, they will be free, just like the trees and they will be life-giving catalysts.

The ‘doors’ have a semiotic aspect as well. They represent barriers between the internal and external worlds. Simultaneously, they stand for the meeting points between the masculine world of culture and the feminine world of nature. Rich articulates her consciousness in the blurring of these barriers. The speaker inside the house is unaware of the departure of the trees, and is busy writing ‘long letters’, though the smell of trees permeates the house like a voice through these doors.

The personification of the sun burying its feet in the shadow is a very important semiotic element that subverts the connotation of the sun. Within the patriarchal discourse, the sun is a symbolic signifier of masculinity, power and domination. Sun is associated with man for it has life-giving power; it rejuvenates and sustains all life on earth. The sun is re-signified in Rich's 'The Trees'. In this poem, the sun is made weaker in comparison to the trees. It is no longer life-giving, but is personified as a human being in need of shadows. This time the sun is in need of trees, which shows that man cannot survive without the existence of woman as a vital variable in the establishment of an unbiased discourse to their life. The personification of tree roots freeing themselves from the concrete veranda via the use of the verb 'disengage' deconstructs the rigid male-established thought. The series of negations and the emptiness of the forest have not disillusioned the speaker for she positively says:

the forest that was empty all these nights
will be full of trees by morning. (6-7)

Another semiotic sign in 'The Trees' is the identification of the speaker. In her first collection *A Change of World*, Rich used the third person pronoun 'she' in her 'An Unsaid Word' as a medium of expression because she could not write about personal issues within the norms of patriarchal discourse. In Rich's 'An Unsaid Word', the relation between the 'he' and 'she' is that of master and slave, while in 'The Trees', the female persona is alone, thus, when they are out of each other's presence, they behave quite differently. Here, the speaker uses 'I' which is a confessional mode of expression that defines her personality. For the first time, the speaker's voice is

directly mentioned which is a violation of patriarchal rules of writing. The introduction of 'I' exercises a subversive power in this poem since it reveals the speaker's personal feelings which run contrary to the rule of writing public poetry. Though the speaker is imprisoned inside the house, fearing the risk of participation and preferring the safety of observation, she is still attached to the departing trees.

It is true that the persona is still influenced by the literal modes of expression of the patriarchal discourse but 'The Trees' shows a transition in Rich's imitation of the traditional forms of writing, in which new innovations have been experienced. Petrovic says in her essay *Gender and Difference in the Poetry of Adrienne Rich* (1997):

This formal shift, a result of her newly acquired ability to write, for the first time, directly about experiencing herself as a woman, is matched by a change in emotional attitude to her own femaleness. Instead of recording, in carefully cadenced stanzas, her acquiescence in a world where woman must learn not 'to call her man/From that estranged intensity/Where his mind forages alone'('An Unsaid Word', 1955), she now claims this intensity of the mind for herself (256).

Werner says that Rich used certain figures like the trees in her poems which "imply a potential unity between the persona and the sources of women's creativity in a way which implies that the specific approach to figuration may render such unity inexpressible" (1988, 132). 'The Trees' succeeded in implying the need for the dialectic of the literal and figurative modes which emerged in Rich's later poems:

The night is fresh, the whole moon shines
in a sky still open

the smell of leaves and lichen
still reaches like a voice into the rooms. (21-24)

These natural objects are re-signified to serve the speaker's intent. Thus, the darkness has no place in the forest because the moon is shining. Night here is not a symbolic signifier of darkness; instead it denotes a freshness compounded by a bright shining moon. Woman in the forest is not detached from the world as is implied by the patriarchal discourse, but she is attached to the source of her intelligence and creativity. Moreover, the female voice is resurrected through the simile between the smell of leaves and lichen, and the voice. The echo of 'a voice into the rooms' shows a semiotic reference through which the subconscious is associated with the conscious. The smell stands for woman's power that goes beyond the limits and barriers created by patriarchy, reaching like a voice inside the symbolic world. Thus, this voice troubles the speaker's mind causing her no quiescence though the masculine thought exerts every effort to silence any female voice that threatens its existence:

My head is full of whispers
which tomorrow will be silent.
Listen. The glass is breaking. (25-26)

The speaker, at the beginning of the poem, is not involved directly with the departure of the trees from the house. It is true that she did not endeavour to make certain changes in the house, yet she identifies with the trees and their departure. She thinks that everything would revert to what it was by the end of the day, but the breaking of

the glass foreshadows any shift in the traditional way of thinking. The reader of the poem is invited in by the use of the verb 'Listen'. Here, she addresses the reader to listen not only to the breaking of the glass, but to the breaking of the fitters and chains of the patriarchal thought.

The stumbling of the trees in their journey to the forest is not symbolic of failure and impotence. Male readers see this stumbling as a sign of women's failure due to their departure from the masculine world of reason and intellect. They forget that while moving forward, not backwards, is a sign of progress. Moreover, it is associated to the semiotic world wherein the child takes his first steps. The child's stumbling steps are symbolic of the difficulty women will face when they violate man-made rules to fulfil their goals. Thus, the stumbling of the trees is a reminder of the semiotic world, in which joy and cheer characterize every action. It is just like a transitional period, after which things will be fine.

Rich is convinced that a transformation of relationships requires a restructuring or re-forming, a seeing again or re-visioning of the concept of power. Such a shift in power involves exploring repressed experiences and new patterns of meaning. This redefined concept of power reflects itself in a poet's language. Therefore, Rich was aware that writing poetry would prove itself as a catalyst for social change. She had observed: "Poetry is, among other things, a criticism of language.... Poetry is above all a concentration of the power of language, which is the power of our ultimate relationship to everything in the universe" (1980, 248).

Moreover, tone, as one of the significant semiotic elements, is so meaningful to the signifying process. The speaker started the poem with a melancholic tone by when describing the empty forest, but by the end of the first stanza, the speaker is optimistic that the forest will be full of trees the next morning. The sense of joy lies not inside the house where man is the ruler, but within nature where woman is the master and cherisher. The change in the tone of the poem is clearly expressed when the speaker says 'Listen. The glass is breaking.' It is a direct invitation to the readers to share this new experience. The glass, the fragile barrier that separates the masculine world from the feminine one is breaking. Women should not be disillusioned by patriarchal discourse because once they succeed in creating a new discourse, they will be liberated.

Rich realized that such a single-minded discourse could not be the panacea for the problems of oppression and subjugation experienced by women around the world. This resulted in a dual-conscious life that overwhelmed her between meeting the criteria of success through patriarchal discourse and the expression of her own voice as a woman in her writings. Thus, this stage triggered Rich's transformation into a new stage characterized by the strategy of Un-naming to the old definitions of female identity, as a first step towards the establishment of the self in her poetry. The realization of the maternal semiotic elements helped in the rejection of the fixed-meanings of the paternal symbolic language. She gave up all the stereotypic roles given to women. The speaker at the end of 'The Trees' signified that the change is approaching with the breaking of the glass that stood as a barrier between woman and her female self.

5.3 Necessities of Life: Deconstructing Phallogentrism

Adrienne Rich in her poem 'Necessities of Life' deals with the theme of resurrection and re-birth in life. The speaker talks about the process of integrating and re-generating a strong sense of her identity after giving up her old way of living under patriarchy. She deserted her early life because she did not find herself and her voice under a discourse that was totally governed and controlled by phallogentric attitudes. Patriarchal figures and detentions were the only set for the working of the human mind. Thus, woman lost every chance to communicate with her voice and feelings as they were prohibited in the masculine world. Daly described woman's life under the patriarchal structures and definitions saying:

The roles and structures of patriarchy have been developed and sustained in accordance with an artificial polarization of human qualities into the traditional sexual stereotypes. The image of the person in authority and the accepted understanding of the "his" role has corresponded to the eternal masculine stereotype, which implies hyper-rationality ..., "objectivity", aggressivity, the possession of dominating and manipulative attitudes toward persons and the environment, and the tendency to construct boundaries between the self (and those identified with the self) and "the Other" (1985, 15).

Therefore, Rich in this collection followed a different strategy. She realized that the first step towards the discovery of female identity and proving the self is the uprooting of every single idea and definition designed by men to keep women in an inferior position. She believed that woman has to deconstruct the phallogentric thought, which suppresses the female voice if she needs a chance to find her true identity. As such, Rich equipped her female speaker in this poem with the determination and desire to re-visit her old world, but this time her speaker is

weaponized with new fresh insights to her old masculine-oriented society. The rejection of the old-set of patriarchal definitions and prescriptions is a priority to the female speaker in Rich's 'Necessities of Life'.

Accordingly, Rich thought of articulating her emotions, ideas and female voice as the first steps towards the deconstruction of the single-minded ideology. She triggered some female issues that were out of public concern for centuries, such as the talk about female desire and the destruction of the heterosexual system. For Kristeva, the expression of the female emotions and desires is the first challenge to the masculine discourse as this discourse permits no space to the articulation of these emotions and desires under the excuse that they are not fit for logical reasoning. She thinks that Western ideology relies on the system of binary opposition to maintain the male supremacy and thought. Rabine said in her essay, *Julia Kristeva: Semiotics and Women*:

This basic cleavage between what is considered the superior Masculine and the inferior Feminine is repeated consistently in Western ideologies - ideologies which function through hierarchized dichotomies in which the spiritual term, isolated from the material term, transcends it and governs it (1977, 43).

Therefore, the articulation of the female semiotic emotions and drives was Rich's objectives in this poem in order to start shaking the bases of patriarchal thought. One of these semiotic elements in this poem is the identification of the speaker. Rich used the first person 'I' to describe the speaker's experience. She describes her speaker's re-entrance of the world "piece by piece"; a world she had left before. The central theme of this poem is the struggle with the world and the role of identity in this

struggle. This time the persona is determined to get a new access into her world with a new desire to have a second chance of a new life:

Piece by piece I seem
to re-enter the world: I first began
A small, fixed dot, still see
that old myself, a dark-blue thumbtack
pushed into the scene,
a hard little head protruding
from the pointillist's buzz and bloom. (1-7)

Rich tried to violate the rules and traditions of patriarchal writing as a priority to deny the definitions given to the female self. Likely, she structured her poem in a way to mirror the development and evolution of the female speaker. For example, the central theme of the poem, in addition to its mood, were set in the first stanza, moving on in an odyssey of re-discovering the female identity in the following line, 'So much for those days'. The speaker re-visits her new old world, motivated by her semiotic drives and emotions to look differently to the future and to re-consider her past experience. She has the determination to decide here her own destiny without relying solely on the masculine discourses to know her needs. Her re-consideration of the necessities of life encourages her to get into the old life with a different understanding empowered by the articulation of her semiotic feelings:

I used myself, let nothing use me.
Like being on a private dole,
sometimes more like kneading bricks in Egypt,

What life was there, was mine,
now and again to lay
one hand on a warm brick
and touch the sun's ghost
with economical joy,
now and again to name
over the bare necessities.
So much for those days. (24-34)

The line 'let nothing use me' is very suggestive to the extent of self-composure and self-determination of the speaker. She rejects her old of life, which was like a doll to be used by men. Instead, 'I used myself' indicates that she can make her own choices this time. Therefore, this poem tells the story of a woman who takes serious courageous decisions to reverse an earlier choice made when she was living under patriarchy. She realizes the hazards lie in front of her if she dares to re-visit and-re-modify the old versions of her living, 'to lay one hand on a warm brick' though she is armed to the teeth to go in this journey of self-exploration. This woman prefers to engage in the dangerous ways of living instead of being a tool in the hands of men. She goes back to her old way of living in hope of changing older sets of definitions as it is the only way to begin establishing new foundations to an unbiased ideology. She prefers to be a shrew in the new life, experiencing the joys of life and reflecting upon her semiotic drives and emotions, instead of being the voiceless 'angel of the house' in the world of patriarchy.

'Necessities of Life' describes the speaker's recollections of her earlier life when she unconsciously accepted patriarchal definitions and conventions of the self; eventually she was speechless and powerless. Her identity was solely defined in terms of the existence of a masculine personality. Thereby, she utilizes certain vocabularies like 'swallowed', 'blurring', 'dead' and 'wolfed' to convey the speaker's sense of herself disappearing and melting away. She expresses the oppression and victimization of women in a very keen simile when she compares the state of women under patriarchy to the state of the prophet Jonah (PBUH) who was swallowed by the whale, taking him to the dark bottoms of the sea. The speaker is suffocated by the patriarchal narratives and feels that she is swallowed just like Jonah:

whole biographies swam up and
swallowed me like Jonah.
Jonah! I was Wittgenstein,
Mary Wollstonecraft, the soul
of Louis Jouvett, dead
in a blown-up photograph. (16-21)

Rich utilizes this dazzling metaphor as part of the semiotic elements of the symbolic language, which carries here the message of the speaker that the patriarchal society for women is just like deep dark waters that women cannot survive. McAfee talks of Kristeva's focus on the importance of metaphor in the articulation of the semiotic drives and emotions saying:

Metaphor, the substitution of one term for another, a carrying away that is never of the same order as the original, provides the poet a

way to sublimate potentially destructive energy. (In psychoanalytic theory, sublimation is the process by which instincts, energy, and drives are discharged or transformed into other, usually more socially acceptable, forms) (2004, 72).

As a result, she starts repositioning herself in relation to the current discourses and ideologies. She starts with defining ‘the bare necessities of her life’, moving in a long hazardous journey to achieve her mission. A very important reference to the importance of poetry in the society is made in the reference to ‘sometimes more like kneading bricks in Egypt’, in which she compares herself to the brick builder who has the ability to construct or re-construct buildings. Thus, she believes in her ability to re-construct the destruction caused by the single-minded discourse of phallocentrism. Usually, no builder can construct his new project unless he re-visits the old building to see the damage done, and the first step is the removal of debris. Therefore, the speaker compares herself to brick builder whose mission is to remove the debris (masculine narratives) and re-construct a new project (unprejudiced narratives). At the end of the poem, Rich gives an optimistic attitude of the future of the female speaker as she follows the policy of self-rejection and adopts the policy of self-discovery and re-generating the older versions of her life, therefore, she says, ‘I’ll dare inhabit the world’.

‘Necessities of Life’ initiates a new voice for a woman who demands blurred identity to be re-structured through the rejection of the sets of definitions dictated upon her by phallocentric thought. She started feeling the urge of the semiotic drives and emotion inside her that she follows the desire to regain the boundaries of her identity

through isolation and reflection. Rich made the audience aware of the gradual development of her character through the use of these words 'First', 'Now', 'Till' and 'Soon' in order to make the audience shares with her the transformation and the new experience. After making up her mind, Rich speaks in a voice that stems from the semiotic inner-side, which is emerging courageously to the surface of the symbolic language. Her message to all women is that the path to self-assurance and self-acceptance is not paved with flowers, but a path that requires much 'practice'. Yet she ensures for women that they will be pleased in taking up these paths, revealing the speaker's satisfaction with what she has found, especially the deterioration of the phallogentric narratives. Rich inspires all women around the world to take the lead in defining and changing themselves.

5.4 I am in Danger- Sir:- Our Words Betray Us

Rich believed that language is engendered to serve the masculine needs and desires only. Hence, this masculine-oriented language plays the key role in maintaining the dominance of the patriarchal culture and in disempowering women to be in an inferior position that grants them no existence in the world of patriarchy.

Therefore, Rich tried to problematize the signifying system of the symbolic language to put an end to the biased discourses and ideologies. This section is set to follow Kristeva's concept of the semiotic in exploring its role in shattering the signifying system of the masculine language as an urgent step towards deconstructing patriarchy. Hence, Kristeva thinks that poetry has the characteristics of shattering the fixed-meanings of grammar and syntax of the symbolic language. Seldon et al. commented on Kristeva's conception of the function of the poetic language saying:

Poetic language shows how dominant social discourses can be undermined by the creation of new 'subject positions'. This implies that far from being a mere blank which awaits its social or sexual role, the subject is 'in process' and is capable of being other than it is (2005, 156).

Rich stressed the connection between woman's victimization and the absence of the female principle from language in her poem 'I am in Danger-Sir'. The poem is written for Emily Dickenson who confined herself inside her house living among her poems. Rich wanted to highlight that Dickenson escaped the world of reality because she could not understand it as the language of the world did not reflect her semiotic emotions and drives. Dickenson's failure to find appropriate linguistic tools to define her identity made her retreat to the world of imagination. Rich in this 'Un-naming stage' tried to locate the female principle within the symbolic language but it was in vain.

Rich realized that the biased male judgment and the continuous oppressive policies of the patriarchal society have "created problems for the woman writer: problems of contact with herself, problems of language and style, problems of energy and survival" (WWDA 1972, 20). Dickenson as a writer did not go in line with the canon of current ideology, thus she rejected this canon. As a female poet, she felt tension when she wrote about her female experience because she did not find the linguistic signifiers to describe this experience as this language is highly codified in a way that gives nothing positive to women. Keyes said that Rich's female speakers choose their own ways as Dickenson did and "their essential action has been reflection and/or meditation" (Keyes 1986, 77). The female speaker defines herself instead of being defined, which is a threat to patriarchy. Though her definition is a semiotic

sign that troubles the male definition of female identity, she defines herself as a fractured person who lacks the attributes of humanity due to the unavailability of the appropriate linguistic tools:

"Half-cracked" to Higginson, living,
afterward famous in garbled versions,
your hoard of dazzling scraps a battlefield,
now your old snood
mothballed at Harvard
and you in your variorum monument
equivocal to the end -
who are you? (1-8)

Kristeva says that the semiotic disposition “breaks through the symbolic border, and tends to dissolve the logical order, which is, in short, the outer limit founding the human and the social” (1982 ,79). Hence, the female speaker is defined as ‘half-cracked’ spoiled by language that is masculine-gendered. She is a woman with a masculine mind-set. The image of ‘a condition of being’ as one of the semiotic elements expresses the real feeling of the female speaker inside the patriarchal society. She is no more than ‘a condition of being’ undefined, trivialized and stereotyped:

you, woman, masculine
in single-mindedness,
for whom the word was more
than a symptom-
a condition of being. (13-17)

Rich discussed the issue of language's limitations, which turned to be a central issue in the poem. Since the symbolic language was the medium of depriving women of their female identities, she strived for various ways to appropriate language due to their urgent need to express herself in writing and to claim it for female experience. She wanted "a language that, while freeing itself from the exclusionary dominance of patriarchy, establishes a new, antithetical commonality of readers, a language spoken by and for other women" (Diehl 1980, 531).

Therefore, Rich opined her belief that "If it is language that culturally traps us, then what needs to be changed is the language itself" (Estrin 1997, 348). This site of oppression also serves as a resistance site for the revision and restructuring of individual female identities. Therefore, Rich thought that language of poetry can be the means of re-visioning masculine language, negating every single biased idea. Rich's poetic language was a strategy of transgressing the grand narratives of binary thinking, which started with denying already-set definitions of the female self.

In a culture shaped by heterosexual thought, words assign their dominant associations by men, thus, women, in order to express their needs, "must either subvert their own speech by using the patriarchal tongue or else seek for themselves experiences available only to women" (Diehl 1980, 533).

Therefore, the female speaker decided to withdraw from this meaningless world, solacing herself with her poems in her private world because she rejected the definitions sustained by male figures:

and in your half-cracked way you chose
silence for entertainment,
chose to have it out at last
on your own premises. (21-24)

Accordingly, she tried to find appropriate definitions for the female subject but her endeavours faced failure because woman has been already defined in the patriarchal culture as weak, dependent and passive in comparison with the man who is strong, independent and active. As a result of this binary thinking, woman writer faced “problems of contact with herself, problems of language and style, problems of energy and survival” (Rich 1979, 37). As such, the female speaker rejected her world and the style of writing of the woman poet because she was writing from a masculine perspective and with a symbolic patriarchal language.

In this ‘Un-Naming stage’, Rich used the same tools she found in the poems written by male writers because she thought these tools were appropriate to achieve equality with men. Later, she rejected these linguistic tools and these sets of patriarchal definition because she realized that “equality entails the similarity between men and women” (Martin 1984, 94).

5.5 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter is to explore the role of articulating the semiotic drives and emotions in subverting the masculine-oriented discourse of signification. The analysis of this chapter concludes that Rich’s need to make a change in her life was

the motivating force behind the adoption of her new strategy of self-rejection. The analysis of the poems selected in light of the semiotic indicates that Rich was not only rejecting the old patterns and structures of patriarchy, but she was heading towards the rejection of female stereotypes as the first necessary towards the definition of the female identity. Therefore, the study names this stage of denial as the Un-naming stage, which precedes the stage of Re-naming.

The analysis shows that 'The Trees' is best utilized here as a semiotic element, especially when the trees disengaged their roots one night and broke out of the house towards the forest where they are met in celebration and reunion by winds and moon. This chapter concludes that this poem is an invitation to reject the old-fashioned patriarchal definitions and to re-unite with the female roots. Again, the semiotic analysis of Rich's 'Necessities of Life' concludes that this poem is not only about rejection, but a call for all women (compared to brick-builders) to take the lead and decide their future away from the patriarchal ideologies. Finally, the comparison between the female speaker and Emily Dickenson in 'I am in Danger-Sir' concludes that it is a call for all women writers to reject the symbolic signifying system just like Dickenson in order to be able to re-form their identities. Hence, the chapter concludes Rich's readiness to go into the new journey of defining the female identity, after rejecting the old stories of female identity.

CHAPTER SIX

DIVING INTO THE WRECK: RE-NAMING THE SELF

6.1 Introduction

Adrienne Rich wrote about the quest and discovery of the female identity in her works (Werner 1988, Martin 1984). Her poetry represented a progress in her ideas about womanhood. Her prose and poetic writings contributed to the feminist agenda. She advocated the urgent needs for socio-political transformations that reflect the real interests of women. Some of her writings become indispensable poetic statements for the feminist theory.

Rich widens the scope of poetic language beyond the common definitions of traditions of patriarchal language as signs to be manipulated. She focuses on the importance of language in transforming the bad current situation of women. This conviction stems from the fact that “Language that is returned to the female principle will provide the basis for social change; and, because it has played an important part in socializing men and women, it can also be used to redefine and to change existing reality” (Farwell 1977, 200).

The collection of *Diving into the Wreck* was written in a stage of self-awareness, in which Rich started recollecting and reconnecting with her Self. This stage followed the Un-naming stage when she rejected every definition given to the female subject by patriarchy. Here, Rich separated from men and defined herself as an autonomous

woman. She started identifying herself with women after rejecting the synthesis of the masculine and feminine.

Rich believed that women can empower themselves through uniting in the face of patriarchy, but she opined that empowerment should start first within the individual woman and through language as “language holds the key to transforming power” (Keyes 1986, 81). Woman’s personal power is characterized by ability to transform into the public realm in order to change the definitions and notions of single-minded discourses. This personal power of woman and its transformation to the public domain through the bonding of women would be active in restructuring power relations. Thus, patriarchy will not be the only seizer of power, but it will be re-circulated to include the power of the female discourse.

Katherine Soules studied Rich’s progressing thought in “Revitalization of Female History: An Analysis of Adrienne Rich’s *Diving into the Wreck* and *The Dream of Common Language*” (2011). She focused on Rich’s career that started with the desire for androgyny. Rich thought that the revival of desire could be done via the revival of the history of women. Soules compared Rich’s concept of androgyny in ‘Diving into the Wreck’ to her concept in *The Dream of Common Language*, which demands the rewriting of female history away from the silence of patriarchal thought. Soules reported that Rich declined androgyny because “the patriarchal structure of the twentieth century, with which Rich was contemporary, hindered achievement of androgyny because of the elevation of the masculine viewpoint above the feminine” (2011, 1242). Soules concluded that Rich presented a new definition to language that exceeded the patriarchal definitions. It is however, evident that Soules’ study of

Rich's ideas deepened solely on her theories and poetics, with no reference to feminist theorists.

Moreover, Erkan conducted an ecofeminist reading of Rich's 'Diving into the Wreck' under the title, "An Ecofeminist Approach to Adrienne Rich's Poem *Diving into the Wreck*" (2012). She explored the role played by the cultural and patriarchal discourses in oppressing both the human and non-human subjectivities simultaneously. She discussed the interrelationship and interrelatedness among each of the human subjectivity, cultural discourse, and nature. Male writers always associate women with nature to say that they are vulnerable and weak. As such, the persona in 'Diving into the Wreck' dives deep into the bottoms of her own nature in order to discover herself and to express her feminine identity (240).

Rich called all women to reconsider the implication of relying solely on a female tradition that writes from a clearly manifest gendered subjectivity. Against this background, she stressed the need for a poetics of revision; the act of re-vision is to look back with fresh eyes, and to access an old text from a new critical perspective. "Rich's poetry insists upon bodily presence, an eroticized, corporeal self that speaks of its desires in specifically unique ways that we can strongly identify as deriving from the Romantic bodily self.... One of the functions of speaking through and for a marginalized historical woman is to enter her subjectivity to release her hitherto silenced voice" (Roberts 2008, 94-95).

Diaz-Diocaretz said that Rich evolved towards more mature feminist aesthetic and into a more female poet whose:

Choice of elements in her artistic texts – rhythm, occasional rhyme, internal division of lines, intonational, phonological elements, similes, metaphors – even the separation between poetry and prose, will now be subordinated to and oriented towards a communicative function (1984, 18-19).

Rich started to attract the readers' attention to the new aspects of her language and her universal vision of a world that meets male and female needs and desires equally. Rich stated in her "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision" (1971) that "writing is re-naming" for to "be a female human being trying to fulfill traditional female functions in a traditional way *is* in direct conflict with the subversive function of imagination" (Rich et al. 174). Her new concept of 'Re-Visioning' became a strategy for feminists to circulate new discourses and agendas. She proposed the urgent need to re-vision the patriarchal traditions and to question the long-time established traditions in order to understand woman's situation in the man's society. For Rich, language used to enslave women is the same language that would re-name them.

The journey for the discovery and re-naming of the self was not an easy journey but full of difficulties and obstacles as any kind of violation to the norms would be considered a threat to the patriarchal discourse. Though hazards, Rich went on in her journey of re-discovering and re-naming the traditions as she did in her poem, 'Diving into the Wreck', in which she explored the wrecks done to the female history by biased-discourses of male writers. Therefore, she was able to introduce a new version of the female history that helped in the process of re-naming things in the patriarchal world.

6.2 Diving into the Wreck: Reclaiming Self, Language and History

Rich proposed the reconsidering of language in order to be able to subvert the patriarchal rules of poetry writing. She emphasized the need to re-vision the traditions saying that “Re-vision—the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival” (Rich 1972, 18). She could not write poems while she was chained by pre-planned materials.

Rich's ‘Diving into the Wreck’ (1973) stressed the urgent need to recreate the social and cultural standards in feminist terms. She called women writers to re-construct their narratives of female identity because no man has written primarily or even largely for women when he chooses his materials or his language. However, woman writer has chosen men’s materials to talk about him even when she writes about herself. If women give up being haunted by convention and by internalized fears of expressing themselves, then it will be an extraordinary step for female writers and readers (Bomarito & Hunter 2005).

Adrienne Rich’s ‘Diving into the Wreck’ is a story of a diver who carries the burden of having an identity that is not hers. She endeavors to discover the damage that is done to females throughout history by the patriarchal-biased societies. The diver dives into the bottom of the ocean, investigating the wreck to come back with a different story of female history that enhances a new unified identity. She introduces herself as diving into the ocean to explore the wreck of a sunken ship. The wreck stands for the neglected inner lives of women, or perhaps to the deformed civilization ruined by false thought about gender and gender roles. The diver wishes to discard

false thought through rewriting history with a language that does not bury the voice of women for the sake of proving the power of masculine discourse.

The persona in Rich's 'Diving into the Wreck' dives deep in the water, which is black and dark. This diving symbolizes that the journey into the bottoms is fearful. The whole poem is built upon the image of diving into the bottoms of unconsciousness to resurrect the female voice and experience. The image of the sea in this poem is a female image (Annas 1982).

Therefore, Rich exploits the image of diving into the bottoms of the sea because of her compassionate desire to get the attention to the buried treasures. She metaphorizes the burial of these treasures to the burial of the female voices and the burial of the Semiotic Chora within the masculine-dominated symbolic language. Metaphor is a figure of thought and of speech that makes us see one thing as another. It is viewed as 'a rhetorical or poetic departure from ordinary usage, in that it permeates all language and affects the ways we perceive and conceive the world' (Abrams & Harpham, 2011, 19). She suggests that it is urgently needed to rebirth the Semiotic aspect of language in line with the Symbolic one in case women want to avoid oppression and subjugation.

The diving image is very suggestive in the sense that it entails the diving into the periphery of awareness to recall the Semiotic (the maternal) into the Symbolic (paternal) and thus creating a kind of language that structures both the male and female identities with no reliance on the prejudiced patriarchal thought. Rich helps the reader to be aware that the diver's journey is not an individual journey of self-

discovery, but a journey to explore and understand the universality of humanity. The metaphoric use of diving in Rich's poem makes it easily accessed by readers.

Water in this poem provides a medium of reality. The poet uses this reference to water in order to show how the real, the imaginary and the symbolic can intertwine, and how the imaginary and the symbolic identification fail in the codification of the complexity of reality. The symbolic and imaginary language cannot match up with reality, so that the diver felt alienated from herself because of the symbolic narrative of her 'book of myths.'

The diver searches for more liberating forces than the search for the binary thought system of the male/female genders. The diver seeks 'the wreck and not the story of the wreck/the thing itself and not the myth'. The diver is not satisfied with the current story of the female history narrated by masculine writers. She aims to rediscover and rewrite the female history by feminine explorers:

Beyond the difficulties of structuring truth lie the issue of power and sustainability, and how they function in determining gender identities. The diver begins by asserting her independence from the imposed model of gender. Then, by crossing the threshold between air and water—man and woman—she discovers a forgotten history and finds a new integrated-self waiting for her. Rich seems to replace contorted gender roles with a freer paradigm of androgyny (Hay 2).

The diver rejects to be guided by the symbolic modes and signifiers 'book of myths' in her journey because they are built on exclusion and absence of the other sex. Instead, she prefers to be guided by the signifiers of the semiotic maternal world in addition to the symbolic ones, in which both of these modalities are needed for

signification. She refuses the masculine story told to her about female history, and decides to start a new journey of rediscovery beginning with the first maternal story that lies under the surface.

Woman within the discourse of patriarchy is associated with nature while man is associated with culture to signify that man fits reason while woman does not, and that man is qualified to guide the world while woman is not. This symbolic association triggers off Rich's quest to exploit the image of the sea to show a semiotic reference to matriarchy by diving deep into the bottoms of women's unconsciousness in order to resurface their buried voices.

At last, Rich had the guts to descend into the wreck of the unconscious submerged beneath the social institutions of marriage and motherhood. She utilizes the image of diving in this poem to explore her own interior world of darkness. She discovered a landscape of pain, and anger, which forced her to take the diving step in order to explore and resurface these long-forgotten treasures. Such a journey into the unknown inner reveals certain potentials and powers, reflective not only of personal transformation but also of the capacity of women to change their world socially and politically (Keith 2012). 'First having read the book of myth' represents the historic view of women and their roles in a male society. Rich tries to change this historic perspective by exploiting the diving image as a quest for discovery as she goes in a journey to discover the truth and to rewrite it with an appropriate language.

She uses an important metaphor when she 'loaded the camera', which depicts her need to be able to capture the truth in a form that she can use as proof of the truths

she will discover later. She used the verb 'load' as if she is loading a gun that will be used to fire a shot later. In the depths of the sea, she will know the truth behind the murder of the female voice throughout history; therefore, she seems to be loading her camera to use this weapon against the causes of the female oppression and subjugation. Again, the image of checking the edge of the knife, whether it is sharp or not indicates the persona's state of mind. It gives the impression that there are certain threats that lie ahead in her journey from the masculine symbolic world 'the conscious' to the semiotic one 'the subconscious' but she is determined to confront these threats in order to fulfill her mission of self-discovery:

First having read the book of myths,
and loaded the camera,
and checked the edge of the knife-blade,
I put on
the body-armor of black rubber
the absurd flippers
the grave and awkward mask. (1-7)

This poem relates a journey from the conscious levels of the mind to the deeper unconscious levels that are forgotten, repressed, or distorted by self and others. The water into which the speaker dives symbolizes the deeper levels of the mind. The speaker wants to explore the crushed, buried aspects of the mind and heart. She stands for all women who have been forced to suppress their deepest desires, longings, and ambitions because they are using symbolic-governed language. The wreck of ship found at the bottom stands for the psyche's parts that have not been

consciously recognized. The sunken wreck represents everything that has been forgotten, devalued, and suppressed. The poet seeks the truth about these unrecognized regions. Therefore, the knife is used for dissecting what she may find in search of truth and a camera to record what is truly discovered (Milne 2009).

Simile also has its semiotic aspect as evidenced in the persona's refusal to dive into the bottoms of the sea like Cousteau and his team whose journey to the bottom was a symbolic one. They used the symbolic elements such as the map, compass and the book of myths to tell the story of women. There is, therefore, a clear manifestation of bias in their description of women because it was a masculine point of view telling women of how their characters should be. Their masculine-oriented discourse favored men over women subjecting women to an inferior position in relation to men's superiority. Unlike them, the persona launches into the bottom alone with no help of the symbolic elements because she wants to see by herself 'the wreck' and not its story:

I am having to do this
not like Cousteau with his
assiduous team
aboard the sun-flooded schooner
but here alone. (8-12)

In addition, the female character uses colors imagery to articulate her feelings. Colors are important signifiers because there is a direct relationship between the

perceiver's mood and colors. Accordingly, Colors in the symbolic world are green and blue to indicate that this is the familiar world we live in, but in the semiotic world, colors are black and dark to indicate the burial and invisibility of this world. The persona uses blue and green to describe the surface but once she dives down, colors turn into dark and black to show that the world down water is still unexplored:

First the air is blue and then
it is bluer and then green and then
black I am blacking out and yet
my mask is powerful (34-37)

The repetition of dark colors throughout the poem reflects the somber and melancholic atmosphere of the underwater world. Her mood had changed and she was blackened herself, but she got the power to go on for her mask 'pumps her blood with power'. Rich used vague descriptions of the diver's first descent to water in order to show how insidious the shift between the world up the surface (symbolic) and the world underwater (semiotic). The diver goes down gradually as the colors change from, 'First the air is blue and then/it is bluer and then green and then black', to show the gradual descent of the diver to the underwater world. The diver wants to get rid of the social limitations and oppressions of the patriarchal world by escaping to the sea bottoms where she can find freedom. Metaphorically, she feels relaxed under the water that she can 'breathe differently down here'. The diver descends to realize the vast nature of the ocean; much water and much detail indicate the richness of the hidden world down there.

Another semiotic aspect in this poem is the symbol of ladder. It is significant as a symbol because it helps the diver to go both ways: to stay on the surface (Symbolic) having one-dimensional masculine perspective to life or to go down to the bottoms (Semiotic) exploring what have been long-buried down there, which helps to have a comprehensive masculine-feminine outlook to life. Again, water causes buoyancy, which makes it a little bit difficult to go down to the sea of memories, so the ladder is the link that shifts the diver from the Symbolic into the Semiotic world. Simultaneously, the ladder would help her to head back up from the Semiotic (bottoms of the sea) to the Symbolic (deck). While the ladder is the means of enacting a watery descent that overturns the ascents and conquest stories of males, Rich implies the urgent need for women to distinguish between myth and reality (Ostriker 1982).

‘The ladder is always there, ‘hanging innocently’ helps the diver to cross between the world of water and the world of air, which are separated. People think that the ladder hangs there innocently and that it is no more than ordinary equipment. But once man dives, he will recognize the importance of the ladder because it takes him to the other world.

I go down.
My flippers cripple me,
I crawl like an insect down the ladder
and there is no one
to tell me when the ocean
will begin. (28-33)

Her flippers make her feel uncomfortable and make her crawl like 'an insect' as she uses the ladder to get into the bottoms with difficulty, fully aware that she dives down alone. The journey is a little bit awkward and scary, especially when she realizes that she is alone and that there is no one to guide her. Though she dives by using the ladder, she gives up the ladder in order to explore on her own. She has to do the job alone, 'I have to learn alone to turn my body without force.'

'The book of myths' is also an important symbolic signifier. It symbolizes the male dominance over females because men exploited the falsified history and definitions of patriarchy written in this book to impose their own discourses upon women. The book is not a record of facts but a book full of myths that favor the male gender against the female. It favors the masculine discourse as the one that is fit to survive, and neglects the female discourse accusing it of irrationality, inferiority and invalidity. This unfair book actuates women of what to do and how to behave if they want to be accepted in man's world. It obliges women to follow the instructions of the 'book of myths' and live according to the rules of patriarchy if they seek an admittance and acceptance. Women are threatened to face more marginalization and oppression if they reject man's thought.

Other significant symbolic tools are the book, map, compass and log book. She reads first the story told in the book about wreck and carries the map. These symbolic linguistic tools serve as a guide for her in the underwater world. The diver gets an idea about the wreck from the 'book of myths'. But the diver seeks 'the wreck and not the story of the wreck/ the thing itself and not the myth', therefore, when the diver probes the reality of the wreck, she discovers that the tools of navigation that

used to be useful in the symbolic world are no longer useful in the semiotic world because they are half destroyed and serve one-sided masculine perspective. These tools cause a problem of gender identification. Women write about themselves using man's tools and voice. Simultaneously, they used to follow the formal style of writing that serves the male needs neglecting the female ones. These two problems are connected to language which Rich finds perilous (Rich et al. 1993). These navigational symbols serve no purpose and are completely irrelevant because the wreck is not going anywhere. Therefore, the diver cannot find their names in the book of myths, 'our names do not appear.'

The speaker's body in 'Diving into the Wreck' becomes equipment that she must learn to maneuver underwater. The speaker focuses her attention on how she must position herself in relation to her search instead of what she may find at the bottom.

Rich writes:

the sea is another story
the sea is not a question of power
I have to learn alone
to turn my body without force
in the deep element. (39-43)

The diver has to cope with the new world because it is different from the world up above. Also, she has to find her way of moving in the new world: 'I have to learn alone'. This process of transforming one's life into a new life is not an easy job at all.

Watching the scene underwater, she realizes that she must not forget the purpose of her dive. She must depend on herself to explore the wreck.

The poem is written for all women to raise their voices. It triggers the awareness of the patriarchal nature of the modern society, where men determine what is appropriate and inappropriate for women. Therefore, this society left women out of the discourse and tried to shape their lives according to its rules, careless of women's needs and desires. Rich refers to the book as 'the book of myths', because it becomes a symbol documenting falsified truth, rather than plain truth especially about the lives of women. Hence, the poem is considered as a kind of feminist manifesto, by which women can rewrite the history of their lives and to face the male ignorance and prejudice (Milne 2009).

The poem opens with short musical sentences describing the preparations for a journey into the bottom of the sea. The journey will be taken individually, which is clear through the affirmative tone of 'I am having to do this.....but here alone.' There is a sense of determination in the mind of the persona for she started trying on the diving kit without knowing first why she would dive! The determinative aspect of the persona is seen in the use of alliteration of 'B' sound in 'the body-armor of black rubber', and in the repetition of the words, 'I go down'.

Repetition is part of the semiotic elements of language. In this poem, 'I go down', 'I go down' are repeated to intensify the sound effect of the text through its poeticality. It shows the speaker's readiness to dive down to the bottom of the sea to the

subconscious world with no scare. The following stanza gives a drum-like emphasis through the repetition of the word 'down' (Gilbert 1997):

I go down.
Rung after rung and still
the oxygen immerses me
the blue light
the clear atoms
of our human air.
I go down. (22-28)

In Rich's poem, the transition from land to sea seems to be a gradual process, but it is quite clearly a matter of active agency and determination to descend to the unknown bottom and face the difficulties. Again, the repetition of the word 'then' three times when the persona started diving indicates the speaker's progression in diving to the bottom and the gradation which was clear in the change of colours from 'blue' into 'green' and then 'black'. Though the persona is blackened out spiritually, she feels powerful for her mask 'pumps my blood with power'.

The events of Rich's poem happen almost entirely in the underwater world, with only a slight reference to the world on surface. The kind of language used in describing the first diving steps underwater indicates that what threatens her is the 'human air,' not the water: 'Rung after rung and till / the oxygen immerses me'. She feels that her life in the symbolic patriarchal world is dull and suffocating, whereas the semiotic world underwater helps her to rebirth herself. The persona is aware of the threats of the underwater world, yet she has the determination to face these threats because she

thinks that the knowledge she will acquire there is not simply fatal but potentially redemptive as well (Gilbert 1997).

The patriarchal structure of the twentieth century hinders achieving the androgynous being due to the preference of the masculine thought over the feminine. The patriarchal thought suppresses the feminine traits and makes it impossible to create balance between the feminine and masculine ones. A woman is expected to remain wholly feminine under patriarchal stipulations. Rich therefore tries to empower herself as she has achieved the androgynous ideal. She expresses a need to rediscover the history of women. She goes on in her journey to defy the mythical history. She explores the shipwreck of history looking for the real story:

I came to see the damage that was done
and the treasures that prevail.
I stroke the beam of my lamp
slowly along the flank
of something more permanent
than fish or weed
the thing I came for:
the wreck and not the story of the wreck
the thing itself and not the myth (55-63)

Rich wants to see the damage done to females and to look for 'treasures prevailed'. She is not looking for 'fish or weed', but she wants through her journey to know the truth and demythologize the story of the wreck by checking the real wreck herself, seeking hidden history of women. After discovering the female buried treasures, Rich succeeds in incorporating the androgynous ideal, destroying the barriers

between the feminine and masculine tradition and transferring the masculine into feminine:

This is the place.
And I am here, the mermaid whose dark hair
streams black, the merman in his armored body
We circle silently
about the wreck
we dive into the hold.
I am she: I am he (71-77)

Keyes commented on 'Diving into the Wreck' saying that it addresses all humans, male and female, giving them the power of transformation. He wrote "A man who is "half-destroyed" has denied the woman in him; a woman, just the opposite. Both "once held to a course"; both, however, must become whole again so that they can function properly" (1986, 155).

Bryan Aubrey comments on the diver's discovery at the bottom of the sea when the diver found the drowned face that 'always stare toward the sun among the wrecks' saying:

Set against the rather pessimistic feelings generated by the poem is the striking, twice-mentioned image of the female face carved on the prow of the ship, which appears to have survived intact. The eyes are open and look up to the sun, an image that suggests the tenacity and will to survive of women in general, which seems to be confirmed by the fact that when the diver arrives at the scene he/she indeed discovers the precious metals that remain. It is as if the essence, the gemlike quality of the inner self remains, even in the midst of all the destruction that time and culture have wrought on both men and women (Milne 2009, 67-68).

The speaker ends the poem becoming everyone: 'We are, I am, you are'. Everyone becomes a wreck diver because resurrecting the semiotic elements within the symbolic structure of language will help in the creation of a unified unprejudiced language:

We are, I am, you are
by cowardice or courage
the one who find our way
back to this scene
carrying a knife, a camera
a book of myths
in which
our names do not appear. (87-94)

At the end, the poem circles back to the camera and the knife. It ends again with the book of myths: 'in which/ our names do not appear'. There is a glimpse of Rich's anger about the silencing of human experience. The end of the poem makes everyone think about the ways that human history has manipulated language to silence the female voices and made their personal disasters seem invisible. The end of the poem makes every reader conscious of the negative consequences of burying the female voices and that the way out of this trouble is women's awareness of their situation. As a result, they will work hard to find the means of resurrecting themselves again specially through the means of language.

The re-birth of the semiotic elements within the symbolic masculine language can regain to language the feminine elements that lead to the use of a language that is fair to both male and female needs and desires. The persona in *Diving* dives down to the bottoms of her semiotic subconscious to resurface her female and maternal buried

voice and desire which are absented from the scene because of the symbolic masculine language. The persona retells the old-fashioned story of women's oppression and subjugation to patriarchy. This time the story is told through female lens and by female narrator who unmasks the truth of the female story, thus equipping the women folk with an appropriate language that restructures and empowers their female identity. The persona at the end of the poem comes into a new realization and awareness of her potential that prove a manifest ability to find her true identity.

6.3 Trying to talk with a Man: The Personal is the Political

The seventies of the Twentieth Century witnessed the great movements of women's liberation. The publication of *Sexual Politics* by Kate Millett, and *The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830–1980* by Elaine Showalter were widely read inside and outside the academic world. In addition, other influential works published in 1970 like Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood is Powerful* and Toni Cade's *The Black Woman ... etc.* Moreover, poets like Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, Audre Lorde, and novelists like Toni Morrison and Alice Walker contributed their masterpieces in this critical period. The women movements had its great impact on the European continent in general and the American society in particular. Women raised the slogan that "the Personal is the Political". They challenged the exclusion of the "personal" from the political domain.

Feminists reacted not only against women's exclusion from the public domain, but revolted against the political foundations, which caused women's oppression at home and inside the family. Women were involved in civil rights and Black power. Women writers gave their own definitions of what aspects of the "personal" were relevant. They wrote about women's experience of sex, childbirth, depression, suicide and rape; issues that did not go with the current of the literary canon. Poetry was one of the successful tools employed by feminist writers to fight for their freedom. These writings marked a shift in women's consciousness. Thus, the feminist writers started formulating female aesthetics and discourses that help in the expressions of female needs and desires.

One of these feminist voices was Adrienne Rich, who formulated her own version of the female aesthetics in her collection, *Diving into the Wreck*. She tried to put an end to the male's supremacy over female through her technique of re-naming the self. She said that patriarchy handcuffed the emergence of female power by forbidding the inclusion of the personal into the public matters, thus, women's voices and desires were totally buried. Hence, she described the source of evil coming out of the exaggerations of the masculine thought. Moreover, she put her faith in the development of the personal/political female power as the source of every good. Through the new politics, Rich utilized a female imagery to reflect the voice of women and re-birth their semiotic drives. She refused women's belief in their incompatibility to be a counterforce to male power. More importantly, she realized the importance of naming and defining herself first as a necessary step before

changing the world around. Kristeva stresses the importance of poetry as a vehicle of change in:

In confronting the world of discourse in its constitutive laws, poetry ceased being poetry and opened a gap in every order where the dialectical experience of the subject in the signifying process might begin (RPL 1984, 84).

Rich's 'Trying to talk with a Man' collected in *Diving* concentrates on the power of woman. In the early stages of Rich's career, the female speakers in her poems experienced power negatively because they could not utilize the power of the semiotic drives to transform as the case was in 'An Unsaid Word', 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers', 'The Roofwalker' ...etc. In the early stage, Rich feared the expression of the self in her poems because "those who have the power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you" (BBP, 199). Instead, the self was clearly stated in 'Trying To Talk With A Man' as the female speaker talked face to face with her husband about their marriage. Rich empowered women through connecting their physical beings with the natural world. Nature always was associated with women's weakness, but this time nature comes to be the source of empowerment for women. Images taken from nature helped the speaker to express her personal feelings, thus articulating new meanings that empower women. Babu talked about the power in this poem saying that, "The poetic consciousness in poems like this seeks not to assume man's power, but to develop a wholly different way of being in the world. To that end, Rich composes poems with a female audience in her mind" (2006, 195).

The poem connects between the private life and the public one in an outstanding allegory. The setting of the poem is in the 'desert'. She held a dialogue face to face with her husband in the middle of the desert to associate the barrenness of the desert with the futility of the masculine thought from one side. She compared the destruction caused by the single-mindedness of patriarchy to the destruction caused by the explosion of a nuclear weapon. The 'deformed cliffs' of the desert and the 'condemned scenery' symbolize the destruction of the human civilization because of men's misuse and misunderstanding of the universe. On the other side, Rich used imagery of the natural world as a technique of empowering women.

Womanly power is different from manly power in the sense that woman's power is transformative while man's power is the power to control and the power to destroy. Man's power of destruction is directed towards nature because it is linked to woman. Thus, they give negative description to nature and try to keep it in sharp contrast to reason and intellect to subjugate both women and nature. The patriarchal writers offer oppressive images for nature and the unconscious mind, because they are scared that they become a source of empowerment for women (Werner 1988).

The poem is a dialogue between a husband and a wife. She took the lead in the conversation, which is one sign of experiencing the power of the semiotic drives. She felt the necessity of expressing her semiotic drives as the first step of empowering herself via language. Actually, this dialogue is a dialogue between the semiotic and the symbolic which results in the creation of a language that helps in the establishment of the female identity.

This poem connected the private and the public in an endeavor to break the rules and overcome the masculine power over the female. In her patriarchal world, she could not communicate with her husband because the symbolic language did not have the appropriate signifiers that express female needs.

Actually, the symbolic system of signification of the masculine cannot be replaced, but can be energized with the power of the semiotic as Kristeva stated, “the symbolic mode of signification is meaningful because of the way the semiotic energizes it” (McAfee 2004, 18). For example, the sun is always a symbolic signifier of masculine power. It is associated with men’s generative power. But the sun in Rich’s ‘Trying To Talk With A Man’ is associated this time with the female speaker, which is a violation to the symbolic order of the masculine thought. Rich re-signified the referents and meanings associated with the sun to be at the side of the female speaker. Traditionally, woman is associated with moon as a sign of weakness due to the changeable phases of the moon. Thus, the moon as a symbolic signifier stands for the fragility and changeability of woman’s mind. In contrast, the female speaker identifies the motion of her semiotic drives ‘underground river’ in a metaphorical way with the ‘acute angle of understanding’ that moves just like ‘a locus of the sun’:

Sometimes I feel an underground river
forcing its way between deformed cliffs
an acute angle of understanding
moving itself like a locus of the sun

into this condemned scenery. (3-7)

The image of the 'deformed cliffs' stands for the obstacles created by men to hinder the progress of women and to keep them subjugated. But the female speaker feels the power inside her 'underground water'; the power of the semiotic drives that seek their way to be resurfaced into the symbolic system of signification. She no longer buries her emotions and drives to cope with the patriarchal norms and definitions. Although there are obstacles, she finds herself a way to the expression of her voice through the re-signifying process. Sun is re-signified to serve the circulation of woman's power in man's symbolic world, using "The sun as metaphor for the understanding within the speaker places her apart from the destruction. Not a destroyer, she is the mother of light, her power the creative power of sun and earth" (Keyes 140).

Again, Rich made use of a very important image to express the semiotic drives inside her. She compared the expression of her feelings to the motion of the 'underground river' in the desert. Keyes said that "The image suggest a birth passage whose difficulty is conveyed by the relationship of the 'river/forcing its way between deformed cliffs as a child along the birth canal' (140). The 'underground river' stood for the speaker's semiotic emotions raging inside her to find an outlet to surface in the symbolic world. The expression of the female semiotic drives would not be an easy process as it threatened the symbolic order, but Rich succeeded in establishing a new system of signification relying on the power of the poetic language. She reconsidered the relationship between woman and nature. Instead of signifying nature as a source of woman's weakness and illegibility for logical thinking, Rich

gave nature the power of healing the mind/body split. She thought that woman has a great chance for recovery because of her relationship to the natural order.

Martin said that “Rich’s poetry has evolved from the perceptions of a woman dependent on men for her social and sexual identity and economic support to the discoveries and difficulties experienced by a woman who has become autonomous and self-directing” (1984, 234). Rich rejected the supremacy and authority of males. Instead, she made use of the romantic individualism and feminist poetics to empower herself as a woman writer. She rejected the fissure inside the female psyche, which is divided against itself by the patriarchal ideology that gives women no chance to perceive the source of their energy.

Rich characterized the roots of women’s failure in defining their own identities to the failure of the masculine discourse in expressing the female needs and desires. Martin said that Rich’s ‘Trying To Talk With A Man’:

explores the breakdown of communication between men and women that results from the definition of men as dominant, masterful, and controlling and women as powerless, passive and receptive. Deprived by the convention of submissive femininity of the opportunity to use her own emotional and intellectual resources, the poet laments to her lover that she feels “more helpless/With you than without you” (1984, 191-192).

Another semiotic element in Rich’s ‘Trying to Talk with a Man’ was in the mixture of the personal and the political. She utilized a political situation of the nuclear-testing poems to compare it with a personal relationship of failed marriage, ‘Out in this desert we are testing bombs / that’s why we came here’. The division between

the public issues and personal experience was a prerequisite and a demand by the symbolic patriarchal culture for any writer. The violation of this rule entailed the failure of finding a place in the literary circle. But, in this poem, Rich compared the speaker's sense of depression due to her personal marriage failure to a public event of dramatic explosion of a nuclear bomb. The anguish of the speaker was experienced on the individual level and gave no interest to the public community. Therefore, the speaker chose the 'desert', which stands for the waste land of the modern world to reflect upon her feelings. She wanted to say that the burial of her drives due to failure of marriage caused her harm equal to the damage of a nuclear weapon. Such process of moving from a public conscious event, 'nuclear-testing poems' and a personal unconscious experience, 'failure of marriage' was intended by Adrienne Rich to show that the poetic form must connect the conscious to the unconscious experience. Rich said:

A poem can't exist without form, but it should be the result of a dynamic or dialogue between what is coming out of the unconscious and what is coming out of experience. This dialogue is expressed through the medium of language, and everything that means-rhythm and sound and tone and repetition and the way words can ring off each other and clash against each other (qtd. in Martin 1984, 169).

The desert as a symbol of sterility and barrenness functioned also as a setting for testing relationships. The woman held her face-to-face dialogue with her husband in the desert where bombs were tested to reflect about their relationship. She had the hope 'to change the face of/driving among dull green succulent', to change the bad situation of their relationship. They left behind the old way of living, giving up:

whole LP collections, films we starred in
playing in the neighborhood, bakery windows
full of dry, chocolate-filled Jewish cookies,
the language of love letters, of suicide notes,
afternoons on the riverbank
pretending to be children (8-13)

Choosing the setting of the desert, the speaker repudiated the symbolic patriarchal imagery, whole LP collections / language of love letters...etc. She chooses the desert to be away of the stuff of man's symbolic world, which kept them apart the whole period. In the city, they are preoccupied by these patriarchal images that distracted woman from thinking of herself. Out in the desert, man is disarmed of his symbolic weapons 'the patriarchal images', which helped him subjugating women through internalizing these images.

Another important technique used by Rich to circulate woman's power was the technique of listing as a means of detailing the "fundamental ambivalence the poet feels when accounting for all the presences and absences in her world" (Spiegelman 1989, 165). She listed all the tools that kept her preoccupied with man's world, 'LP collections, films, love letters' and helped in the suppression of her semiotic needs and desires. In the desert, man was disarmed from all the instruments that maintain his dominance in the city, thus woman was able to hold a dialogue face to face to express her feelings of their broken relationship.

Margaret Atwood said in a review of *Diving into the Wreck* (1973) that the couple's dream of making a change was doomed to failure just like the failure of their reconciliation because they realized that they were deceiving themselves and that

“the bombs are not external threats but internal ones” (Rich et al 1993, 281). Rich described the reason of invalidating change in her essay, “Husband-Right and Father-Right” (1977):

The fear of change thus intersects with a fear that lucidity and love cannot coexist, that political awareness and personal intensity are contradictions, that consciousness must dissolve tenderness, intimacy, and loyalty. Lucidity, political awareness, and consciousness are equated with intellectual nihilism, with depersonalization, with the spirit of objectification (Rich 1979, 216).

Rich reacted to this oppressive policy of patriarchy through separating the speaker’s voice from the addressee. This time the speaker and the addressee are not the same, as the case was in Rich’s early collections in which she preferred an impersonality and detachment between the ‘I’ and ‘you’ to follow the traditions. Here, Rich identified the addressee who is “the oppressor, the male world, man in patriarchy” (Diaz-Diocaretz 1985, 100). This process of identification and separation helped the speaker to express her semiotic drives and emotions and to direct them against the source of her illness.

6.4 Incipience: Dissecting the Masculine Mind

Rich’s ‘Incipience’ collected in *Diving into the Wreck* talks about the confrontation between a man and woman. Rich has identified herself with the female speaker in order to articulate her views about woman’s desolate life under patriarchy. The womanly power for Rich is:

Personal in that it depends upon the development of individual strength and vitality in a woman. It is transformative in that it involves change within woman concerning certain societal notions about feminine passivity and submission. Essential to the development of this personal power is bonding among women, which will generate a political power capable of making changes on larger scale, among them a radical shift in the power structure of the patriarchy (Keyes 1986, 137).

In section two, a woman neurosurgeon dissects the brain of a man dreaming of women who metamorphose into strange mythological creatures. Rich showed that the patriarchal images are images of isolation and that they are inappropriate for the expression of women's needs. Therefore, she stressed the need to move outside 'the frame of his dream', to give up the patriarchal images, and to replace them with images appropriate to the expression of the female needs and desires.

As a result, Rich stated that women cannot find their female self-definitions unless they first reject these biased ideologies. Hence, women need to start un-naming themselves as a kind of clearing the female mind of the falsified versions of femininity, then, they can re-construct discourses that help defining the female identity without bias. It is only the un-naming strategy that could give women the chance to move on towards the stage of self-definition.

In 'Incipience', Rich projects images of men who do nothing but sleep and dream. Even when man is awake he is shown as doing nothing positive. All what he does is spending his day standing 'throwing stones into the black pool I which keeps its blackness'. Actually, woman is quite aware of the fact that the male perception of woman is just as though she were a commodity and that she was not respected as a

person. The following lines show Rich's disgust with the way of perceiving women by men:

We are his dreams
We have the heads and breasts of women
the bodies of birds of prey
Sometimes we turn into silver serpents
While we sit up smoking and talking of how to live
he turns on the bed and murmurs (23-28)

The images drawn in man's dreams are all images associated with the patriarchal perception of women. Their symbolic implications show man's perception of woman as no more than a body of sensual gratification. Women's representations are associated only with the objects of desire. Men objectify women as sources of pleasure in the real life, which is why the reflections of these patriarchal stereotyping of women will be seen in men's dreams. The image of 'silver serpent' is a clear example of such kind of stereotyping, in which women are compared to the snakes in their deceptiveness and treason. Moreover, 'birds of prey' indicates women's victimization at the hands of men. Feminists think that all men have the 'male gaze', which focuses only on the physical beauty of women and considers every woman a chance 'prey' for desire.

Thus, Rich followed the strategy of rejecting every patriarchal definition set for the description of female experience. She believed that women have been denied access into the masculine mind for two reasons: first, because they are not fit for logical reasoning; second, because they represent a threat to the masculine domain. In order

to succeed in the strategy of rejection, women have to access this mind to study its workings then they will figure out the appropriate means of rejecting and denying these single-minded ideologies.

Therefore, the speaker introduces the image of a neurosurgeon accessing the dreams of a man and dissecting the mind of a male. She utilizes this image in order to articulate her own emotions and drives over the working of the masculine mind, and to take this kind of accessing as a priority to know the appropriate means of destructing the single-minded discourse. Hence, she would be able to create her own discourse of re-constructing the female identity:

A man is asleep in the next room
A neurosurgeon enters his dream
and begins to dissect his brain
She does not look like a nurse
she is absorbed in her work
she has a stern, delicate face like Marie Curie
She is not/might be either of us (22-28)

In this poem, the speaker gives up the personal voice as a strategy of universalizing the female experience. She uses the plural pronoun 'we' instead of the pronoun 'I'. In this stage of 'Naming the Self', Rich did not want to talk about her female experience alone as she did believe that all women have the same crisis and burdens resulting from living under the yoke of patriarchy. Thus, the rejection of patriarchal definitions and traditions demands first an access to the mind-set of the makers of these ideologies and discourses to see how they operate.

More importantly, Rich thought that the understanding of the patriarchal operating mind would give a better understanding to status and position of women in relation to men. The line 'he turns on the bed and murmurs' shows the extent of male's negligence and degradation of women. Her intention is to reach 'outside the Fame of his dream' even though she knows for certain that 'Nothing can be done I but by inches'. She is aware that there is no place for the semiotic emotions and drives in man's world of logic and reason. Therefore, it becomes urgent for women to find their ways to articulate these individual emotions to empower language with the female principle:

Without the symbolic intervening as order, identity, consciousness, etc., there would be no art as we understand it in western society, because there would be no language as communication. On the other hand, without the semiotic, the symbolic would lack any form of materiality with the result that there would still be no art or language as communication (qtd. in Lechte 1991, 130).

Rich was weaponized through her long time commitment to the patriarchal traditions of writing with an ideology that helped her to understand the workings of patriarchal thought and how to react to it. Her experience with the writings of the great writers of the canon empowered her to have her own theory of poetry, which consists of the poet's righteous indignation and her mitigated rage against biasness and single-mindedness (Bennett 1986). In this poem, she chooses to be a neurosurgeon with a face like that of 'Marie Curie'. She chooses Curie, the female scientist who was a victim for her experiments over radium, to show the readiness to get inside the masculine mind, dissecting it to understand how it works whatever the consequences would be. For Rich, this is the only way to deconstruct the masculine narratives; the

deconstruction from within. Defining the self should be preceded by deconstructing every single-minded idea or thought serving one side at the expense of the other. The speaker ends the poem optimistically when she says:

Outside the frame of his dream we are stumbling up the hill
hand in hand, stumbling and guiding each other
over the scarred volcanic rock. (33-35)

The speaker turns to the use of the pronoun 'we' at the end to suggest the universality of the female experience in a semiotic image, an image of women climbing the hill hand in hand to show cooperation and the mutual aid among women. Though they stumble in their way up, they help each other to cross these stumbles; the patriarchal barriers created to keep women in an inferior position to men. 'the scarred volcanic rock' reflects the difficulty women would face in their access to the patriarchal territories which are booby trapped with various kinds of mines to stop women from treading them. Hence, the speaker, enjoined by her female colleagues, is fully determined to get into these prohibited territories demining all the obstacles to be able to work through them.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter explores the role played by the articulation of the semiotic emotions in the deconstruction of the symbolic signifying system of language, which helps to create new signifying system. The chapter concludes that the successful articulation of the semiotic drives and emotions into the symbolic language introduces Rich to the appropriate means of defining her female experience. Thus, the chapter calls this

significant transformational stage as 'Re-naming the Self', which liberated Rich's voice of the chains of patriarchy.

The semiotic analysis of 'Diving into the Wreck' registers Rich's success of arming her female characters with the appropriate means of discovering the self. The image of diving to the bottom of the water is a diving to the subconscious to re-birth the female emotions in light of the Semiotic. Also, this chapter proves that Rich succeeded in empowering women the strategy of connecting the personal with the political. The exclusion of the personal from the public domain was a constant strategy of oppressing women. However, Rich utilized the natural imagery in her poem 'Trying to Talk with a Man', to empower women. She used the 'desert' as an allegory to signify man's barren thought. In contrast, the 'sun' represents the power of women for the first time in the history of language and mankind in light of the Semiotic.

The chapter concludes that in 'Incipience', Rich is totally energized and weaponized with the power of the Semiotic to give definitions of her own to the female experience. She uses the image of a 'neurosurgeon' to dissect the masculine mind in order to understand its operating system. In 'Incipience', the female speaker has succeeded in crossing all the barriers when she is equipped with the appropriate linguistic tools that articulate her needs and desires that is why this stage carries the title of Re-naming as the most important concluding remarking in this chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DREAM OF COMMON LANGUAGE: RE-NAMING THE WORLD

7.1 Introduction: Emergence of an Ideology

The poetry of Adrienne Rich explores the possibilities of what constitutes the female identity in the patriarchal world. Woman, in Rich's early life, had to accept the world as it was given to her. Her individuality was already defined by pre-established rules of patriarchy by which she had to abide. Rich believed that woman is the first source of emotion, love and nurture for both female and male children. Thus, the search for love in male and female should be directed towards women in particular. Woman exists in the life of children, caring, nurturing, and loving them. It is only through the child's recognition that he/she is different, in what Lacan calls the 'Mirror Stage', that he or she separates itself from the mother. Later, sexual orientation of the female would be determined by the sense of lack intensified by the symbolic world that empowers man and weakens woman. Men "need women to be constituted as lacking in order for them to have the illusion that they have the phallus and the power that comes with it" (McAfee 2004, 32). Rich realized that sexual orientation had been exploited to serve man's desires and needs only. Female desire was institutionalized as passive, dependent and powerless, compared with male desire which is active, independent and powerful. Consequently, women were deemed subservient to men. Heterosexuality thus entailed the existence of a subservient female whose desire is repressed and ignored to give man the feeling of superiority over woman. He is the giver and she is the taker; so he is the master and she is the slave.

Therefore, Rich's poetry points the way toward how such a re-representation might occur. The purpose of her writing, according to Rich, "is to liberate women, [which] means to change thinking itself: finally to reintegrate what has been named the unconscious, the subjective, the emotional with the structural, the rational, the intellectual; ... and finally to annihilate those dichotomies" (Rich 1995, 81).

Rich realized that it is not easy to release the woman poet from her own linguistic anxieties; caused by words that do not signify their female needs. She could not give up the traditional images and their connotations, when she thought of writing her poems. Because of this limitation, Rich articulated in her 'Twenty-One Love Poems' certain techniques to:

advocate a language that borders on silence. Thus the gesture of isolation, the exclusionary act itself, may, Rich speculates, provide an untainted source of female power. Consequently, the poems in this volume address, in various ways, the need to minimize language, to divest the word of its accretions of power by replacing it with actions identified as preserving and sustaining a woman's integrity (Diehl 1980, 538).

In this stage of Rich's career, she was evolved from naming and defining herself into the naming of the world. Here, she focused on the importance of pushing language beyond the limits of patriarchy. She no longer believed in the neutrality of symbolic language. She thought that "Writing and language must be the space and the instruments to shape an ideology that only begins to be reified and named" (Diaz-Diocaretz 18).

In the early stages, she was aware that her power was limited from within and outside because of the masculine thought. But the next stages witnessed a rebellion

that has been inaugurated with a journey of self-discovery. Rich followed a new technique to fulfill her journey represented by the isolation from the roots of the older ways of living. She exiled herself from the patriarchal environment through travelling out of Europe to get herself cut from the barriers and shackles of man-woman frame.

In *The Dream of a Common Language*, Rich broke the barriers of the conventional world. She moved towards the contextualization of women-to-women relationships in the American patriarchal society. In this collection, she introduced the urgent need to “re-construct language by introducing new codes in order to build a new system of correlations for women in society” (Diaz-Diocaretz 23).

Rich followed new strategies to direct the reader and to involve him in the process of actualizing the new feminist ideology promoted in her poetic texts. Her discourse of poetry shifted from being a verbal art to the creation of aesthetic texts that have their communicative value. She wanted a discourse that is not only exploring women’s world but a feminist discourse that reconsider every negative meaning associated with women. She opined in her essay, “Vesuvius at Home: The Power of Emily Dickinson” (1975) that she called for extreme poetry because “the poetry of danger, can allow its readers to go further in our own awareness, take risks we might not have dread” (Rich 1979, 182).

The new feminist poetics aimed at the re-construction of language that would be fair to the female needs and desires. In return, the reader of Rich’s poems would transfer the meanings conveyed in these poems into her subjectivity. This was Rich’s strategy

in which she consciously wanted to restructure the old ideological foundations that shaped women's consciousness with male-based definitions. Keyes said that in Rich's collection:

the love of women for one another is more "generative" for Adrienne Rich than heterosexual love because it leads her to a new language. Her vision encompasses an ideal order of society based on the value of women, not as aberrant and "other" from man, but in the fullness of her powers (1986, 169).

More importantly, Rich sought to establish a foundation of a world for all women to be given a predominant importance, which was corroborated in her DCL. She thought heterosexuality should be studied as an institution exploited by patriarchy to victimize women and subordinate them. She stated her thesis in her "Compulsory Heterosexuality" (1980) that "heterosexuality, like motherhood, needs to be recognized and studied as a political institution-even, or especially, by those individuals who feel they are, in their personal experience, the precursors of a new social relation between the sexes" (637). Rich argued that the assumption that most women are innately heterosexual was a theoretical and political frame utilized by men to keep women as needy for males because within the heterosexual system women are objects of desire; thus passive. She rejected the assumption that women have to interiorize heterosexuality as the right model of life. She said that woman-identified relation has been written out of history because it was a threat to man's supremacy over women. The female desire was degraded through history and prescribed as insanity, sickness and danger. She said that heterosexuality is a system imposed, organized, propagandized, and maintained by force on women (Rich 1980).

Rich tried to analyze society in relation to the ethical relationship between the male principle and female one. She defined these two principles according to the traditional Western thought in which the male principle stands for separation and objectivity while the female one stands for relationship and subjectivity. Rich distanced herself from the traditional Western definition of these two qualities and their interrelationship. She believed that patriarchal society divided these two principles, which caused a ‘terrifying dissociation of sensibility’. This kind of dissociation allowed society to reduce the importance of woman and the female principle to suit its masculine notions of acceptability. Therefore these two principles are kept separate and deemed the priority of the male principle, with a dislike for everything related to the female principles. Patriarchal thought defined masculinity as the right to dominate and control femininity. Thus, this thought objectifies the female and cause the suppression of the female principle.

Moreover, Elaine J. Lawless did a study on the abjection of woman in her essay, “Woman as Abject: "Resisting Cultural and Religious Myths That Condone Violence against Women” (2003). She argued in her study that cultural and religious constructs continue to support the view that women are associated with pollution, filth, and sin, thus abjected. These constructs justify the ongoing aggression against women in various cultures because of the defiled status of women due to these very constructs. She believed that a woman who flees violence through the enactment of her own agency is able to identify the dangers of the view of woman as abject while she simultaneously resists these negative readings of woman. Some of these women “defy the "woman as abject" trope, as they dare to re-define themselves in ways that

interrupt and critique cultural and religious myths about women.” (239) However, Lawless’ study focused on the stereotyping of women as abjects by certain cultural and religious myths, which maintained women’s defilement and loathing without taking into consideration that abjection can be also a transgression to these constructs.

Hence, a study was conducted on Rich’s ‘Twenty-One Love Poems’ entitled “Love Poetry, Women’s Bonding and Feminist Consciousness: The Complex Interaction between Edna St Vincent Millay and Adrienne Rich” by Artemis Michailidou (2006). It studied the relationship between Millay’s poem, *Fatal Interview* and Rich’s ‘Twenty-One Love Poems’ to show that Millay had exercised a great influence on Rich concerning the discourse of articulating the female desire. It concluded that both writers tackled patriarchal thought with their articulation of desire and showed the importance of self-referentiality to poetic composition.

Rich introduced her new proposal ‘the act of re-vision’, which rose lots of implications that polemize patriarchal thought. She was transformed with her poetics from the artistically detached and objective writer in the fifties of the last century to the more individual and feminist ideologist in the seventies. She relied on language to present her critical views of the patriarchal world, arguing for an alternative world. Diaz-Diocaretz (1985) says in her *Translating Poetic Discourse: Questions on Feminist Strategies in Adrienne Rich* that Rich’s new revolutionary thesis consists of:

a set of textual strategies concerning the use of certain lexical and semantic decisions in order to develop a displacement of connotation. For example, Rich introduced new correspondences and oppositions to the contextual connotations in her female and

lesbian identified poetic texts to change the emotional connotations of passivity associated with women into connotations of positivity (62).

She argued that the female desire could change the fixed-meanings of passivity and inferiority associated with women by the symbolic language; she introduced the discourse of desire to be a weapon of defying the supremacy of males over females through the use of a language that connotes no negative association to women. This discourse includes the set of works in which the authors have not “internalized the patriarchal view of their subservience nor accepted, even superficially, their feminine role” (Heilbrun 1982, 810). The writer tries to assert herself in her text by the act of naming the text as subservient to the norms of writing of patriarchy. Another way of asserting the self in the text is by contextualizing certain referential meanings encompassing relationships of love between two female subjects. The aim is to create a vision of female identified world governed only by women. Feminist writers commit themselves in their texts to create a new female-identified discourse directed towards the reshaping and reformation of the female identity (Diaz-Diocaretz 1985).

Women are invisible within the patriarchal society, which pushed Rich to criticize continuously the marginalization and degradation of women in the society. Rich endeavors to give woman’s life a meaningful existence by identifying and unifying women’s life and experience of the past with these of the present. Women-to-women relationship is Rich’s feminist vision for the end of women’s misery. Diaz-Diocaretz comments on Rich’s vision saying:

Woman is no longer living in a man's world; the critique of patriarchy and Rich's self-assertion open a new territory for the bonding with other women through the "power of language, which is the ultimate relationship with everything in the universe" (1985, 61).

The subject/object system relies on the idea of there being a male subject with a female object. Women confound the system, and because they cannot occupy the subject or object position without contradicting the binary system, they must exist outside of the patriarchy. So, if they want to exist, they have to follow a new procedure. Rich thinks that the subversion and revision of patriarchal language in addition to the placement of female interaction as a political alternative to heterosexuality can be the new procedures to liberate women of the fitters of patriarchy. Rich said in her essay:

Woman-identification is a source of energy, a potential springhead of female power, violently curtailed and wasted under the institution of heterosexuality. The denial of reality and visibility to women's passion for women, women's choice of women as allies, life companions, and community; the forcing of such relationships into dissimulation and their disintegration under intense pressure have meant an incalculable loss to the power of all women to change the social relations of the sexes, to liberate ourselves and each other (CHLE, 657).

Rich's hope-generating words and her vision of women constructing a linguistic map to freedom inspired new voices to come forth. She thought that women could utilize their female desire to subvert the culturally constructed representation of women. Thus, woman's position would be resituated in relation to the dominant patriarchal order as an autonomous and powerful by claiming her sensual subjectivity.

Rich's feminist approach towards the traditional discourse of patriarchy evolved into a discourse written by women, for women and about women. Diaz-Diocartez described Rich's new discourse as:

no longer reacting predominantly against the world of patriarchy, but is acting towards the meaning and complexities of bonds and alliances among women, moving into the nurturing world these relationships can create. If man exists in this new type of discourse, it is only incidentally, as a distant presence, as an outsider to this woman's world, or as a transgressor, and, ironically, as a deterritorialized being (1984, 22).

Therefore, Rich hoped throughout her collection of the 'Twenty-One Love Poems' that the readers would recognize the ideologies associated with heterosexuality and the conventional ways of reading, against which these love poems position themselves. She argued that the deconstruction of heterosexual thinking would help in the creation of certain spaces for the circulation of female discourses that would be fair to women's needs and desires.

7.2 Abjection is a Transgression

The concept of abjection is a key concept presented in Julia Kristeva's seminal book, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1980), which presents a viable way of representations of female desire. Kristeva focuses on the marginalization of women both in mainstream society and in the traditional psychoanalytical theories. Everywhere, women have been labeled as inferior and unequal to man, and her female desire as passive and negative.

Women have been degraded and ignored within the Freudian and Lacanian psychological domains. Within the framework of these two schools, the early phase of the child's life is a life of plenitude, in which he experiences fullness and oneness with his environment. The child sees no distinction between himself and his mother and sees no subjectivity in himself. He comes into being without any borders. But these borders must be developed to get into the world of the subject. Freud had opined that the child makes a distinction between self and Other when it realizes that the mother lacks the same sexual organ that the father has; Lacan believed that the subject is constituted when the child recognizes its difference from the mother when it identifies with its reflection in the mirror. He called this 'the mirror stage' which gives the child the sense of unity when he sees himself in the mirror and starts realizing that he has a unitary self. This stage describes the formation of ego through identification with the counterpart in the mirror. The child claims this image as his own, which gives him the sense of mastery. Moreover, this stage has a symbolic dimension, which is represented by the figure of the 'other' distinguished from the figure in the mirror (Evans 2006). Thus, if the child wants to gain access to the symbolic world, he has to split from his mother and be identified with 'the Name of the Father' because the father stands for the phallus, the major signifier. Levine says in his book *Lacan Reframed* (2008):

In the Name of the Father the child must learn to tear himself away from the seductive Desire of the Mother, to identify himself with the father's naysaying to incestuous desire, to renounce the impossible burden of being the Imaginary phallic object that the mother lacks, to accept the Symbolic promise of becoming a father in the future, but only after having waited his turn (14).

Both Freud and Lacan “posit women as lack and as castration” (Barrett 2011, 96). Kristeva says that “Freudian theory is constructed in such a way as to void the borderline subject who faces the abject; it also voids Kristeva’s own voice” (Harrington 1998, 149). Kristeva says that the child starts separating itself from others before the mirror stage. She calls this process of separation ‘abjection’. Abjection is the state of abjecting or rejecting what is other to oneself, and thereby creating borders of an always tenuous “I” (McAfee 2004, 45). The abject is the unspeakable and unnamable because it is related to the things that are disgusting like vomit, blood, bile, by people who suppress and reject the chaotic part of the self, the Id in order to fulfill the state of superego.

Abjection describes the horror experienced by the child as it attempts to separate itself from the pre-Oedipal mother in its passage from the Imaginary to the Symbolic Order. It is the mother who is experienced as abject when the child expels itself from the mother-child dyad and becomes a subject. Kristeva adds that the experience of the abject doesn't stop when the child gets into the symbolic order. She thinks that the abject never ceases to haunt the borders of identity, but continuously threatens to dissolve these borders and in turn threatens the unity of the subject. Ross comments on abjection saying “It is in fact an integral part of the identity process; as one attempts to ensure his or her subjectivity through the abjection of the other, one never quite succeeds in differentiating the self from this abjected other” (1997, 149).

Kristeva thinks that abjection is “a process that can collapse meaning, but which is nevertheless fundamental to the constitution of identity and renewal of meaning” (Barrett 2011, 94). She utilizes abjection to deconstruct the conventional formation

of identity which excludes the female as the Other to the self, and to destroy the strict hierarchical boundaries between the subject and the object. Simultaneously, she reconstructs a new discourse that does not suppress the female identity through the creation of a fluid identity which embraces the Other and disrupts the system of binary thinking. She rejects the thesis that the subject is stable. Instead, she thinks that the subject is dynamic when this subject carries the Other within it, and she calls it a “subject-in-process”. Moreover, the female desire is also repressed and marginalized by the patriarchal thought, and perceived as lack by the patriarchal sexual politics of difference. Woman is framed as an object of desire, thus weak and passive. On the other side, man as a subject of desire is the powerful and active. Thus, Kristeva thinks that the abject is brought into play in modern literature as “a critical practice that puts subjectivity into crisis; it is a work by which categories of identity are abruptly questioned, disrupted, and challenged” (Ross 1997, 149). In this respect, the aim of Kristeva’s abjection is to free the female desire from its conventional definitions as a site of negation, lack, and absence (Aktari 2010).

7.3 Twenty-One Love Poems: Reconstructing the World

Rich wrote the Twenty-One Love Poems in 1974 and included them in her collection *The Dream of Common Language*. These poems were her first collection of poetry with an explicit desire. They challenged the dominant cultural values and discourse while exemplifying the internally dialogic, self-reflexive motion of Rich's poems. Rich had experienced abjection from the heterosexual world when she articulated her womanly love. She transformed this experience into art, thus creating her artistic female identity that went against the patriarchal rules.

Rich's sequence love poems offered her ideas in a confessional mode. The poems were not only a journey of self-discovery in the external world, but also a journey into the speaker's mind. The poet started the journey with her lover inside the city to explore her inner-side; a journey that ended with poet's returning to herself. The twenty-one sections of love poems express "all the desires and wishes that arise from the intimacy between two women; and as a determination to conquer the mutual, common fears, so that the failures in the past help them to discover a viable future" (Diaz-Diocaretz 1984, 57).

These poems talked about a relationship between two women; a relationship that flourishes and disintegrates depending on the forces within these women. These poems offered various portraits of love between two women who refused to accept and live the confines of a heterosexual life. Rich questioned the assumption that all women are innately heterosexual and that it is the only choice appropriate for women. She stated:

Yet the failure to examine heterosexuality as an institution is like failing to admit that the economic system called capitalism or the caste system of racism is maintained by a variety of forces, including both physical violence and false consciousness. To take the step of questioning heterosexuality as a "preference" or "choice" for women-and to do the intellectual and emotional work that follows-will call for a special quality of courage in heterosexually identified feminists but I think the rewards will be great: a freeing-up of thinking, the exploring of new paths, the shattering of another great silence, new clarity in personal relationships (CHLE 648).

Hereby, Rich's 'Twenty-One Love Poems' attempt to demolish this assumption that heterosexuality is a preference for women. She worked on the redefinition of female

desire, which had been framed as passive and dependent. Thus, the promotion of female desire as active can be achieved in the light of abject representations, which challenge the strictly constructed hierarchical relationships between men and women. Feminists tend to re-establish the story of female desire to turn it into an active catalyst in the re-formation and re-historization of female identity. Rich tried to construct a counter-discourse in order to subvert the negatively imposed meanings of female desire by re-producing and re-introducing them as positive ones. Moreover, Rich proposed that women could enact their discursive practices of desire to recast the traditional subject/object relations, and to subvert the dominant / submissive roles that are socially constructed as an oppressive system of sexual subordination for women. Rich then set out to construct her ideology of the female body and female sexuality by re-writing its representation. Spiegelman commented on Rich's acting out of her anger saying:

In her earlier poetry, notably *Necessities of Life*, Rich duplicates the process outlined by Julia Kristeva in *Powers of Horrors*: "I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself*, within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish *myself*"⁶. Rich has discovered an appropriate form, not a mere outlet, for her anger; in so doing, she creates a *self*, expelling and establishing simultaneously (1989, 163).

Rich's 'Twenty-One Love Poems' are a series of twenty-one poems written in free verse and styled in traditional Petrarchan sonnet form. They tell the story of love between two women. In these poems, Rich writes through 'her body' to personify its language. She speaks to both herself and her lover in these poems, about personal and other matters close to her heart, a domain she was so familiar with. Thus, she discussed her private concerns within the public realm because she wanted to "re-

birth the desiring female lover, using the sonnet structure to reform the lover's body within the new, external space of the poem" (Bassnett 2007, 50).

The abject is associated with everything that should be expelled and excluded to beget a proper subject. The proper subject should not be related in any way to the mother because she is abjected by the child as the Other, the Object and the improper, which are needed to constitute the subject according to the psychoanalysts. When Kristeva said that abjection did not end with the child's access into the symbolic world, abjection became a continuous threat to that proper subject and a transgressive power against the binary system of the patriarchal world. Thus, abjection became a subversive force to the traditional formation of female identity, and a catalyst to a new re-formation of identity. Female writers started using abject figures to shake the foundations of male-established thought.

Rich's first sonnet introduces the dream of two lovers within the public space of the city, in an endeavour to shatter the norms by presenting the personal and the forbidden into the public domain. This piques the interest of the readers to uncover an unconventional story, 'No one has imagined us' (I, 13). Man is excluded from her poems as a radical feminist technique in her new ideology. The speaker is a female talking about love story and for female audience, "History, society, tradition, and other manifestations of patriarchy become forces existing mainly in the background" (Diaz-Diocaretz 1984, 54). This is achieved by connecting the private with the public calling them 'inseparable'.

we also have to walk ... if simply as we walk

through the rainsoaked garbage, the tabloid cruelties
of our own neighborhoods.

We need to grasp our lives inseparable
from those rancid dreams, ... (I, 4-8)

Rich presented active female desire in abject forms in her poems. She connected the personal to the public through abjecting the boundaries that have been created by conventional patriarchal norms to keep the two women apart. The poet invaded the external world with her female desire through the declaration of her love to another woman. Such an act transgresses all boundaries. The two characters violate the male-dominated ideology, which renounces female-identified relation. The declaration of love between two women in the streets of the city, in man's world of logic and intellect, was a real threat to the kingdom of the father. Such a female-oriented relationship is prohibited in a world that has so far banned women from articulating their active female desire, and refused even to admit them an acceptance (Michailidou 2006). Within the patriarchal thought, woman abjects her feminine roots to be accepted into the symbolic masculine world. Thus, redirecting female desire towards these feminine roots in a female-identified love in the middle of the city is a dangerous violation to man's world.

Nevertheless, these two women were motivated to have their own female relationship because they wanted to survive the corruption of everyday life of patriarchy. They wanted to escape 'the rainsoaked garbage' of the city. More importantly, they wanted to give their love a name and to connect it to the world. The two lovers wanted to be themselves in a world that 'no one has imagined' them (I,

13). But these two women are oblivious to their surroundings because they want to 'grasp our lives inseparable'. The word 'inseparable' goes against the psychoanalytical theory of identity formation, which entails the ultimate separation from the maternal world and the adaptation of paternal values to form the female identity. This female-identified love story abjects the values of man's world, and frees women to re-form their own identities in light of what Kristeva calls 'the subject-in-process'.

Female sexuality was a taboo subject because it was stereotyped as passive and dangerous, thus, forbidden to represent any form of active female desire in the symbolic world. It is represented by abject imagery which has the potential to transgress cultural and social boundaries that privilege the male principle over the female one. Rich consequently empowered female sexuality through the new female-identified relationship. She said in her essay:

Woman-identification is a source of energy, a potential springhead of female power, violently curtailed and wasted under the institution of heterosexuality. The denial of reality and visibility to women's passion for women, women's choice of women as allies, life companions, and community; the forcing of such relationships into dissimulation and their disintegration under intense pressure have meant an incalculable loss to the power of all women to change the social relations of the sexes, to liberate ourselves and each other (CHLE 1980, 657).

In the second section of 'Twenty-One Love Poems', Rich compared her lover with a poem in order to create a relationship between the unconscious, poetry and reality:

I dreamed you were a poem,

I say, a poem I wanted to show someone...
and I laugh and fall dreaming again
of the desire to show you to everyone I love,
to move openly together
in the pull of gravity, (II, 10-15)

There is a sense of determination in the speaker's tone as she declared her intentions by repeating 'I want'. She wanted to show the world what it means to have love through woman's lens. She went against the stream, against the 'gravity' of the patriarchal thought. The barriers between the conscious and the unconscious and between poetry and reality were abjected by these semiotic imageries to show the power of women love in exploring untrodden regions.

The readiness to 'help the other live' and 'help the other die' (III, 16-17) was a shared experience by all women. They empowered themselves through uniting and collecting themselves in the face of male-oriented discipline:

At twenty, yes: we thought we'd live forever.
At forty-five, I want to know even our limits.
I touch you knowing we weren't born tomorrow,
and somehow, each of us will help the other live,
and somehow, each of us must help the other die. (III, 8-12)

The two lovers wanted to compensate the lost days they wasted because they forget their needs to meet the needs of the family. They missed loving each other in the past so they did not count them. They counted only on the love between women that

transcended the boundaries of sex to have “generalized insight of humane value” (Keyes 1986, 170).

On the other hand, the poet in section V described the negligence of female existence committed intentionally by the male writers along history. She talked about the pile of books that circulated the myth of male dominance. These books did not mention women and threw them into oblivion, which was like ‘the silence burying unwanted children - women, deviants, witness - in desert sand’ (V, 7-8):

their hands clasped for centuries -
of artists dying in childbirth, wise-women charred at the stake,
Centuries of books unwritten piled behind these shelves;
and we still have to stare into absence
of men who would not, women who could not, speak
to our life - this still unexcavated hole
called civilization, this act of translation, this half - world. (V, 14-20)

The speaker was fully aware of the inappropriateness of this world governed by patriarchy to be women’s best place. On one side, men were not ready to admit the validity of the female experience. Women, on the other side, ‘could not speak to our life’. The language of the symbolic world betrayed women from the suitable signified meanings that help them naming things. It moved between tones of understatement and assertions of the difficulties sustaining such poetry in the face of a tradition of lies and silence reflected in, ‘centuries of books unwritten piled behind these shelves’ (V, 16).

Writers like Adrienne Rich have tried to identify new categories that go against the current cultural trends and common categories in order to create a kind of diversity. Feminist theorists claim that diversity causes resistance to the normative and dominant cultural values. Subversion of the dominant power can be done by the refusal of conformity and the practice of diversity (Kirsch 2000).

At first, Rich introduces a world governed by patriarchy, 'Whenever in this city, screens flicker' (I, 1). She then makes a foray into a different world with different attitudes when she declares the love between the two women. The poet describes traditional life in the city and later, jolts the reader's consciousness by compelling him to question the patriarchal narratives. Though male writers kept women's voices buried along history with their male-oriented vocabularies, Rich succeeded in un-silencing these voices through discovering a world wholly-dedicated for women that would re-name everything. She gave new definitions for the word 'love' that it became a process of re-visioning the life between two women. For Rich, an honorable human relationship is "one in which two people have the right to use the word "love"-is a process, delicate, violent, often terrifying to both persons involved, a process of refining the truths they can tell each other (Rich 1979).

In the second section of Rich's 'Twenty-One Love Poems', she talks about woman's expression of desire through poetry and succeeds in arousing the attention of the reader to the importance of artistic composition. She considers her lover as a special artistic product that she wishes to share with 'the poet'. She wants the poet to realize that poetic composition and female desire are interrelated. Rich knew that maintaining a love relationship was not going to be easy 'is not simple', but she and

her lover went on to sustain their love and rejected the society that favored uniformity and submission to heterosexual life. These images of love story between two women brought the awareness of the speaker to the meaning of this love in the world. The speaker and the lover considered their love as a 'pure invention' (XIII).

Another form of abjection is seen in Rich's violation of the traditions of Petrarchan sonnet. Instead of focusing inwardly on the traditional dream of the sonnet, Rich introduces her dreamscape in the streets of the city by confessing her personal love in public spaces. Rich succeeded in unfictionalizing "a mode of discourse theorized by the New Critics in terms of dramatic propriety and "embodied" meaning, as opposed to a propositional or rhetorical meaning" (McGuirk 1993, 66). She revolutionized the lyrical form for the sake of feminist poetics and politics. She defied the traditional definition and function of the lyric, which was associated with pathos since the time of the romantics when lyric was considered as having nothing to do with rhetoric. Traditionally, there was no relation between the lyrical poem and the reader as the reader was not addressed directly and the speaker was usually nameless and genderless. Thus, the reader merges with the poet as a passive consumer of the poet's experience. The abjection of these traditional rules of lyric writing enabled Rich to become increasingly involved in the rhetorical dimension of the lyric. Thus, she produced a lyric that broke away from the romantic tradition but moved closer to rhetoric and ethos. She wanted to place the individual lyric in a wider human context and introduce the scope of the love lyric in social and literary contexts. This new function of the lyric helped Rich to openly introduce the love affair of the two female

lovers, thereby violating the norms of lyric writing by generating spaces for the expression of the newly-defined female desire.

Moreover, abjection was seen as a strategy in section VI exploited by the poet to show that women could react and even violently. The image of woman's 'hands' that were used usually to serve and to nurture others, this time, they are used to show women's potential for violence and tenderness simultaneously. These hands are great instrument for power and for danger. They are no longer the source of tenderness and seduction only. Rich believed that heterosexual thoughts bound each woman to a man, thus maintaining man's supremacy. Thus, Rich re-modified the signification of women's body with her focus on the lover's hands instead of other parts. Rich introduced the feminist poetics of desire as a substitute for traditional heterosexual love:

Your small hands, precisely equal to my own -
only the thumb is larger, longer - in these hands
I could trust the world, or in many hands like these,
handling power-tools or steering-wheel
or touching a human face. (VI, 1-5)

There is a certain familiarity and strength in the following line, 'in these hands I could trust the world' as the speaker discovers herself in the other self; the same-sex self. '...these hands' are a synecdoche for the whole female body, not just the breasts or face because these parts attract the male gaze. Hands protect women from men's greed. Moreover, these hands will liberate women from the stereotypical role

designed by patriarchy. Craddock says that “Rich removes the asymmetry of the heterosexual binary relationship by using the phrase ‘precisely equal’ ” (2013, 120). Rich removes this oppressive male principle and offers a new vision devoid of hierarchy and sexual difference. It is now a female-identified identification that unites them through love, through which they become one ‘I was talking to my own soul.’

Abjection of the seductive parts of woman’ body determined Rich’s endeavors to change the view that women are the objects of male gaze. She introduced women for the first time as subjects of desire, active and independent, instead of being objects of desire that are passive and dependent. Rich said:

The function of pornography as an influence on consciousness is a major public issue of our time, when a multibillion-dollar industry has the power to disseminate increasingly sadistic, women-degrading visual images. But even so-called soft-core pornography and advertising depict women as objects of sexual appetite devoid of emotional context, without individual meaning or personality: essentially as a sexual commodity to be consumed by males (CHLE 641).

Women faced many challenges at the hands of the heterosexual thoughts, but women’s mutual love was a process of refining and re-defining the truth.

Another challenge to the female representation of desire is seen in the lyric XV. Heterosexual thought abjects women in general, particularly their desire, which is seen as passive and powerless. Usually, the woman is the recipient of male desire and is not in a position of manipulating her desire. But, Rich introduces two lovers lying on the beach, in violation of the boundaries of heterosexuality that forbid the

expression of female desire in public places: 'lying on that beach we could not stay/because the wind drove fine sand against us/as if it were against us (XV, 1-5). The two lovers feel betrayed not only by heterosexual society, but also by language which denies them freedom to express their love. The simile of the wind throwing 'fine sand' against them indicates the prejudice and antagonism felt by the two lovers in the heterosexual milieu, in which everything is influenced and directed by heterosexuality. Thus, they face a number of challenges on the social and linguistic levels:

if we tried to withstand it and we failed -
if we drove to another place
to sleep in each other's arms
and the beds were narrow like prisoners' cots
and we were tired and did not sleep together
and this was what we found, so this is what we did –
was the failure ours? (XV, 6-12)

Peters commented on the role played by the heterosexual language in depriving women from the expression of their needs and love:

Linguistically speaking, language is a beautiful beach which, while it beckons to lesbians, will not welcome them, and will appear to be "against" them. Similarly, language is structured around heterosexual thought, and thus, for two women sleeping in the same room, it will provide only words which seem "narrow like prisoner's cots" to them because it is unable to speak to their experience (1993, 54).

Although the two lovers are unable to find the linguistic means of expressing their love, they choose not to succumb to their circumstances:

If I cling to circumstances I could feel
not responsible. Only she who says
she did not choose, is the loser in the end. (XV, 13-15)

The two lovers realized the significance of language in achieving a female intimate connection. Through language, they not only changed their inner lives, but could transform the world around, thus changing the meanings to make any kind of connection possible, 'nameless till we rename her' (XI, 10).

The forms of abjection in Rich's 'Twenty-One Love Poems' are clearly manifested in 'The Floating Poem, Unnumbered', which presented the female "experience as a liberating, mutually gratifying dialogue" that helped naming and defining each other with tenderness (Diaz-Diocaretz 1984, 62). The poem described openly the love story between two women, which threatened the institutionalized heterosexual marriage. An exercise of love is only defined in terms of the heterosexual marriage.

Rich said in her essay:

Woman-identification is a source of energy, a potential springhead of female power, violently curtailed and wasted under the institution of heterosexuality. The denial of reality and visibility to women's passion for women, women's choice of women as allies, life companions, and community; the forcing of such relationships into dissimulation and their disintegration under intense pressure have meant an incalculable loss to the power of all women to change the social relations of the sexes, to liberate ourselves and each other (CHLE 657).

The poet utilized a natural image, 'the half-curved frond/of the fiddlehead fern in forests/just washed by sun' (The Floating Poem, Unnumbered, 3-5) to describe their

love. This simile abjected the boundaries created by the heterosexual thought to keep women separated and silenced. Their act was no longer an act of shame and taboo; instead it grew just like a 'half-curved frond' that gives the sense of a new beginning and a new birth emerging. Their love and union were celebrated with joy to show that the female desire is not a dark spot in woman's history but a new aesthetic to a better understanding of the universe. Kristeva described abjection as a need in her *Power of Horrors: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) that:

The abjection of self would be the culminating form of that experience of the subject to which it is revealed that all its objects are based merely on the inaugural loss that laid the foundations of its own being. There is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all abjection is in fact recognition of the want on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded (5).

More importantly, their love was also celebrated by nature surrounding them, 'in forests/just washed by sun'. The 'sun' as a signifier of male power was abjected in this image to welcome and to nurture this new kind of female love. The image of the sun washing the forests was an image of cleansing to prove the naturalness, and purity of the two lovers' sexual act (1993).

Another form of abjection is seen in section XVIII when the speaker described the break of dawn as source of grief and anger. Symbolically and traditionally, dawn is associated with the power of generation and rejuvenation, but here it was associated with the speaker's sense of loneliness. This sense of loneliness resulted from the break between the two lovers with the advance of morning. Thus, coming of dawn

entailed the separation of the two lovers. Therefore, the speaker did not feel the warmth of sun, instead she felt cold:

I feel estrangement, yes. As I've felt dawn
pushing toward daybreak. Something: a cleft of light - ?
Close between grief and anger, a space opens
where I am Adrienne alone. And growing colder.

(XVIII, 11-14)

Rich wanted to put an end to the negative meanings associated with women. These negative associations were not only restricted to women, but to the definitions of women-to-women relations and the relationship between women and society and women and nature. Therefore, Rich was looking for a language that is devoid of these negative associations. She said in her essay, "Power and Danger: Works of a Common Woman" (1977):

The necessity of poetry has to be stated over and over, but only to those who have reason to fear its power, or those who still believe that language is "only words" and that an old language is good enough for our descriptions of the world we are trying to transform. For many women, the commonest words are having to be sifted through, rejected, laid aside for a long time, or turned to the light for new colors and flashes of meaning (Rich 1979, 247).

The only loser at the end is the one who chooses to follow the path of heterosexuality and thus be satisfied with the fixed-meanings of masculine language. Rich's defiance of the heterosexual scene represented by the expression of desire of the two lovers, and her defiance of the one-sided implication of language, renewed hope in women to fight for their rights and seek words that reflect their experiences.

Moreover, the representation of female-identified relationship transgresses dominant moral codes and norms promoted and sustained by patriarchal society. Aktari said that sexuality shows the kind of relationships between men and women under patriarchal ideology, and it “also constructs class, race, religious, and ethnic relations on the basis of definitions of men and women. The oppressor, represented by the male, womanizes its Other through oppression” (2010, 334).

The last section of love sequence poems showed that the love in this poem is not a love for particular woman but for the womanliness, which could be seen in the imagery and setting. Moon was already associated with women. Here, the poet was fascinated by spiritual resonance of the moon. She was connected with the mother earth ‘Stonehenge’, and with the moon as source of power and light in midsummer nights. Hence, the speaker was conscious of the importance and centrality of woman love and of the power inside her. Therefore, she declared her existence and freedom of choice:

Renaming the world is the major issue of Rich’s Twenty-One Love Poems, which can only be realized by crossing the boundaries of patriarchal conventions in order to create a ‘new world’ set by women. The means for the fulfillment of this dream is woman’s free choice of a language that reflects her needs and defines her will; a language that grants her the power of naming (Diehl 1980, 538).

The speaker becomes autonomous powerful to set her mind and choose her way:

I choose to be a figure in that light,
half-blotted by darkness, something moving

across that space, the color of stone
greeting the moon, yet more than stone:
a woman. I choose to walk here. And to draw this circle.

(XXI, 11-15)

The poem ends with a determinative tone that suggests the speaker's will to be herself in that selfish masculine world. She decides to brave the darkness and to flaunt her relationship with a woman, regardless of patriarchal opposition and suppression. Rich perceived the necessity of escaping the boundaries of convention to a brave new world governed 'by women outside the law'. These poems allude to how the free choices in life and language can help women redefine poetry, and equip themselves with the power of re-naming things. 'Draw this circle' concludes that the story is complete and that there is a possibility of more such poems. Therefore, Rich managed to assert the autonomy that she was seeking. Rich had stressed the role of her consciousness in these lyrics: 'I choose to walk here/And to draw this circle' (XXI, 15). In coming to love her womanliness and the female psyche, she glorifies woman. She parted from her lover at the end of the love journey, but she was connected to the world around her and to the womanliness inside, which was shaped by "her commitment to the spirit of poetry, which is "the drive to connect" " (Keyes 1986, 174).

Rich created parallels between nature and woman to express her belief that women have the power to perceive and give a name to their environment as well as themselves. She showed that women have the competence to see things differently. Her poems present a radical critique of literature in order to make readers think of

how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us, how the very act of naming has been till now a male prerogative, and how we can begin to see and name anew, and therefore, live-afresh.

Rich's emphasis and preference had been for women in positions of power, for they could extend her vision of women's capabilities. She openly discussed and expressed female-identified love in these lyrical poems to create a new awareness that women's love has also a universal significance. This time she acted "towards a new present in which her own act of writing will point to the world of relationships among and between women" (Diaz-Diocaretz 55). Through the abjection of female desire, it is possible for women writers to construct counter-discourses and counter identifications in which they subvert negatively imposed understanding of female desire by producing from them, positive ones. The female lovers in Rich's lyrics went on a love journey inside the city; they succeeded in rejecting the destructive heterosexual ideology of male-dominated society as the first step towards their quest for identity. In addition, they succeeded through their abjection of desire to defy the heterosexual norms pertaining to the formation of female identity. Thus, they managed to turn female desire from passive, dependent and powerless into a positive catalyst for female identity formation.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter deals with Adrienne Rich's controversial discourse of female desire. Patriarchal writers criticized aggressively Rich's discourse giving her labels of

radical and queer writer. Thus, this chapter explores the role played by Rich's discourse of female desire in the restructure of female identity in light of Kristeva's *Abjection*. The role of female desire in transgressing the masculine-oriented discourses, and in the creation of new spaces to re-structure the female identity in Rich's 'Twenty-One Love Poems' is explored in an important stage which is the stage of 'Re-naming the World'.

The analysis of 'Twenty-One Love Poems' in light of Kristeva's abjection liberates Rich's discourse of female desire from the radicalism and extremity surrounding her poetry in this stage. These poems have been basically approached in light of the queer theory, which made their contribution so inaccessible and unapproachable to readers. Thus, the abjection of female desire in these selected poems has succeeded in creating counter-discourses to patriarchy, which led to the re-circulation of new discourses of identity reconstruction. Accordingly, the study proves that abjection transforms the view of female desire from being passive, dependent and powerless into a positive and powerful variable in restructuring female identity.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.1 Conclusion

The issue of female identity is a preoccupation for feminist writers and thinkers as it is still a fresh and up-to-date topic for discussion. Various women movements emerged as a kind of reaction against the on-going oppression of women. Writers of the first and second wave movements emphasized women's need to rely on the theories of sexuality and difference in psychoanalysis and linguistics to end their oppression under patriarchy. Moreover, they stressed the importance of finding linguistic ways of describing women's female experience (Keith 2012). Rich was a contemporary to these two movements, therefore, the quest for unprejudiced language and un-gendered discourse were Rich's goals in her journey towards the re-formation of female identity.

Adrienne Rich's poetry has been selected for the study because of the controversies raised around her oeuvre and because of the relevance of her poetry to the issue of female identity. A selection of poems from *A Change of World*, *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law*, *Necessities of Life*, *Diving into the Wreck*, and *The Dream of Common Language* have been examined for the study because they stand for the evolutionary stages of Rich's career. These selections have been explored in the light of Kristeva's Theories of the Subject to examine Rich's discourse of female identity reconstruction.

Chapter one starts with the background of the study in order to present an outline of the overall argument of the thesis through relating it to the previous research. It describes the feminist movements of women's liberation to contextualize the issue of female identity within the agenda of these movements. The problem of the study is stated to highlight the gap in the previous studies. Further, the topic of the study has been researched in these texts within the frames of radical feminism and the Queer theory, which necessitates the research of this topic away from these frames. Therefore, Kristeva's concepts have been amalgamated to study the restructuring of female identity in Rich's poetry.

Chapter two serves two parts: the literature review and review of past literature related to the conceptual framework. These two parts contextualize the current research. They review the literature written about the construction of female identity as well as the poetics of Adrienne Rich, the female principle, the discourse of female desire, as well as the past literature related to the conceptual framework, highlighting the radical feminist critique of her oeuvre that lead to the problem statement and objectives of the current study.

Earlier studies dealt with the early poetry of Adrienne Rich as a whole labeling her as a radical feminist (Cole & Cate 2008). However, the current study concludes that the classification of Rich's career into five different stages and the analysis of the poetry of these stages in light of Kristeva's theory have liberated Rich's discourse of female identity from the labels of radicalism and queerness.

Thus, chapter three covers the stage of 'False Consciousness', which explores the symbolic representation of female identity in the selected poems of Rich's *A Change of World*. The chapter concludes that the female persona in 'An Unsaid Word' has internalized the definitions ascribed to her by a man in order to familiarize herself with his mind-set. As a result, she was enslaved by the strict patterns of the symbolic language. Also, 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers' is severely criticized for its passiveness. But, the analysis of this poem concludes that Aunt's passivity results from the language's symbolic signifiers, which are designed to label the female subject as passive, powerless and inferior. Moreover, the analysis of 'Storm Warnings' concludes that living an ivory-tower kind of life was not enough to save women from the oppression of the single-minded thought of patriarchy.

More importantly, Rich was argued to be a blind imitator in this stage of her career (Nodeh & Pourgiv 2012), which left her poetics unexplored within the feminist discourse. However, the analysis of 'An Unsaid Word', 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers' and 'Storm Warnings' in light of Kristeva's concepts concludes that Rich was not only 'a blind imitator' in this stage. Instead, she followed the Trojan horse technique to login into the patriarchal discourse, working from within to decipher all the masculine codes, which in turn helped Rich to explore the sources of the patriarchal power and to diagnose the causes of women's weakness.

The analysis of these poems also de-contextualizes Rich's poetry from the frame of blind imitation and concludes that Rich made use of this imitation through the rationalization of the formal aspect of her early poetry due to her familiarity with the symbolic language and its signifying system, thus, she turned it into a strategy of

handling materials she could not pick up bare-handed before. The investigation of the absence of the female principle and the stereotyping images helped to achieve the first objective in exploring the passive role of the signifying system in articulating single-minded discourse that left women leading a false unconscious life.

The label of radicalism is initially associated with Rich's poetry in the stage of 'Dual Conscious stage', where she started violating some of the patriarchal rules of writing. This stage received little attention by critics who regarded her poems as a radical and polemic kind of writing that do not fit to the patriarchal definitions and patterns of great writers (Homans, 1980). Moreover, past studies stressed that the absence of female principle from language gives the priority and dominance to the male principle (Farwell 1977). However, the analysis of the selected poems in light of the Semiotic confirms that this stage was very critical to her poetic evolution. The study concludes that such duality of consciousness was the real motif behind the emergence of the following Un-naming stage. For example, Rich introduced a female speaker in 'Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law' who enjoyed the pleasure of life when she was unmarried, but once she was identified the patriarchal world by marriage; she replicated the misery of her mother-in-law. The analysis concludes that she failed to save herself because of the lack of appropriate linguistic tools that could change her life

In the same vein, the chapter concludes that Rich's failure of identification with the roof walkers and their tools in her poem 'The Roofwalker' indicates the inappropriateness of the masculine language and its vocabularies to express the female experience. She compares the construction of house's roof to the construction

of the self in an endeavour to figure out the appropriate tools, but it was doomed to failure due to their invalidity to structure a female identity. Moreover, Rich's 'Tear Gas' proves her doubts in the invalidity of modes of expression of the symbolic language in expressing the female voice. Therefore, the analysis of the selected poems; 'Snapshots of A Daughter-in-Law', 'The Roofwalker' and 'Tear Gas' proves that words will keep betraying women if they are not energized with the power of the semiotic drives and emotions.

In addition, the analysis proves that this dual conscious stage, though negative, helped Rich to understand the social and cultural roots of women's oppression since she was fully experienced with the signifying process of the masculine mind. In conclusion, the analysis of the poems concludes that this stage has recorded the emergence of Rich's female voice as she started violating the rules of formalism.

The study in chapter five covers Rich's the 'Un-naming stage' in her *Necessities of Life*. This stage was a very important transitional stage before the stage of defining the self. Earlier in the last two stages, she followed her strategy of logging into the patriarchal ideology to characterize and diagnose the sources of man's power and sources of women's weakness. Here, Rich rejected the common discourse of female identity because it does not reflect the female principle in its language, which caused women's voicelessness (Babu 2013). The semiotic analysis of the selected poems concludes that the articulation of the drives and emotions help in troubling the grand narratives of patriarchy, especially the narrative of female identity structure. It shows that Rich succeeded in rejecting the patriarchal signifiers to be able to think of

appropriate signifiers that could serve woman's case, which is fulfilled in the next stage of 'Re-naming the Self'.

In this 'Un-naming stage', the female characters in Rich's 'The Trees', 'Necessities of Life' and 'I am in Danger-Sir-' are still chained by the patriarchal definitions of the female experience. Since Rich became an expert in the masculine mind-set via her last two stages, she was qualified to characterize and diagnose the false self. In 'The Trees', Rich made her point clear with the image of trees. The trees are metaphorized in a semiotic way disengaging their roots one night and breaking out of the house, heading to the forest where they are met in celebration and reunion. The semiotic analysis of this image shows that this disengagement is an invitation by Rich to reject the old-fashioned patriarchal definitions and to re-unite with the female roots. Moreover, the female speaker in 'Necessities of Life' is compared to the brick builder who has the ability to construct and re-construct things. It is proved that deconstruction was Rich's first strategy before thinking of reconstructing her discourse of female identity.

Also, the analysis of the poem 'I am in Danger-Sir-' leads to the awareness that Rich's portrayal of the speaker rejecting her life under patriarchy is a call for all women writers to deny the access into the symbolic signifying system if it does not articulate the semiotic drives and emotion of women. Rich's substitute is the rejection of man's definitions of the female self before starting thinking of appropriate means to restructure the female identity. In addition, the chapter concludes that the female speaker's rejection of the patriarchal standards highlights

Rich's readiness to launch into a new stage of seeking a definition for the female identity.

Chapter six deals with the most critical stage in Rich's career; it is the stage of 'Re-naming the Self'. The hazard that lies at this stage comes from the absence of fundamental premises that can be utilized to define the female self, especially after the stage of rejecting every definition set by patriarchy. This chapter examines the role of articulating the semiotic emotions and drives in creating a new signifying system empowered by Kristeva's the Semiotic that generates narratives fit to the expression of the female voice. The female characters in the selected poems started their journey of self-discovery armless of any appropriate means to help them in this long journey of defining the female self. The analysis of 'Diving into the Wreck', 'Trying to Talk with a Man' and 'Incipience' concludes that the female characters in these poems were aware to the rejections of the patriarchal norms and traditions because they did not want to be misled by false narratives fabricated by the male writers. Instead, Kristeva's the Semiotic has succeeded in articulating their personal emotions and drives into the symbolic signifying process, which resurrected the female principle.

In 'Diving into the Wreck' this poem, the persona dives down to the bottom of her semiotic subconscious to resurface her female and maternal buried voice that is absented from the scene because of the symbolic masculine language. The chapter stresses the importance and workability of diving deep into the bottoms of water, which is compared to the diving into the unconscious mind. The diver comes up with

a different version of female identity via weaponizing herself with different tools of unbiased language.

Another significant strategy employed by Rich to create her discourse of female identity restructure was through connecting the personal with the political as in 'Trying to Talk with a Man'. The exclusion of the personal (which is feminine) of the public domain was men's constant strategy of subjugating women. It was also their policy to objectify women, thus empowering their subjects (Werner 1988). However, the semiotic analysis shows Rich's success in utilizing the elements of nature to empower women instead of weakening her. The female persona holds a dialogue face to face with her husband in the middle of the desert to associate his thought with the futility of the desert. Moreover, this chapter concludes that Rich's strategy of deactivating the masculine codified language was successful. Her strategy was the inclusion of the personal into the public and political domain, so as to articulate her semiotic drives and emotions into the symbolic signifying. Rich re-signified the symbolic system to serve the female cause as in the image of the 'sun', which represents the power for women for the first time in the history of language.

In 'Incipience', the signifiers of the masculine language associate only isolation and degradation to the female character (Lakoff 2004). However, the analysis proves that Rich succeeded in moving out of the frame of man's mind, giving up the patriarchal images and replacing them with signifiers that reflect women's needs and desires. As such, she utilizes the semiotic image of a 'neurosurgeon' to dissect the masculine mind and to know the sources of his power. Hence, she is empowered with the appropriate tools to work through the barriers towards the re-definition and re-

naming of female identity away of masculine-oriented labels. In 'Incipience', the study concludes that Rich's strategy of accessing the masculine mind and decodifying it was the panacea for the problem of finding appropriate linguistic tools to articulate the female identity. The speaker has succeeded in crossing the barriers and climbed the shackles towards self-discovery.

The un-queering and un-radicalizing of Rich's discourse of female desire are covered in chapter seven. Rich's discourse of the role of female desire in restructuring the female identity was the core of the debates raised against Rich as a radical feminist poet. Her discourse that heterosexuality is a form of institutionalization exercised compulsorily against women was considered by patriarchal writers as a serious threat to their traditions (Distiller 2005). Thus, Rich's discourse of female desire is explored in light of abjection to unleash her discourse of the role of female desire in identity restructure from the queer and radical labels. Rich's 'Twenty-One Love Poems' are explored in the light of Abjection in order to explore the role of female desire in transgressing the masculine discourses, and in the creation of new spaces to the circulation of a new signifying system that helps in the re-structure of female identity.

More importantly, Rich's poetry was not only framed by her discourse of desire, moreover, she was completely normalized with such discourse (Tsai 2002). Thus, her discourse of female desire is investigated in 'Twenty-One Love Poems' to transform the female desire from being passive and powerless into an active and powerful variable in the reconstruction of female identity.

Earlier studies applied abjection as a concept that troubles the borders of identity with no reference to its power of transgression (Lawless, 2003). However, the current study applies abjection stressing its power of troubling the identity borders and transgressing the common discourses of patriarchy. With the help of abjection hand in hand with the Semiotic and the Symbolic, Rich was transformed into a new stage of 'Re-naming the World'. She turned to change women's subservience to men, empowered by the transgressive force of abjection in 'Twenty-One Love Poems'. In these poems, the two female characters go on in a journey of self-discovery and self-recognition, but this time it is a journey in the external world as well as into the speakers' mind. They launch into the city showing the world their open love in an endeavour to transgress the public patriarchal boundaries set in front of the power of womanly love.

Accordingly, the norms and morals of the heterosexual modern society have been abjected to give women writers the opportunity to construct counter-discourses and counter identifications to patriarchy. The integration of the personal and the political was Rich's technique to deconstruct the exclusion of the female experience from the public domain. Thus, various forms of abjection have been examined in this poem such as the abjection of the two female lovers' story in the city streets, the abjection of the seductive parts of woman's body to destroy the 'Male Gaze', the expression of female desire on the beach in a public place, and the celebration of nature for a female-identified love. The examination of this female-identified relationship in light of abjection introduces women for the first time as subjects of desire, active and independent, instead of being objects of desire that are passive and dependent. Thus,

the power generated through female desire will be an active catalyst in the reconstruction of female identities and their world.

The collections selected for the study successfully manifested Rich's discourse of restructuring female identity via Kristeva's *The Semiotic and the Symbolic and Abjection*. The semiotic has helped Rich's female characters to articulate their female emotions and drives into the symbolic signifying process, which subverted the fixed-meanings of language and created the new signifying system. These female characters have been empowered with the new signifying process to reconstruct their female identities away from biased patriarchal discourse. Thus, the hypothesis of the study has been fulfilled with the semiotic interference in re-signifying the symbolic language to articulate women's needs and desires. A language that is not gendered was Rich's objective which is fulfilled via Kristeva's *The Semiotic and the Symbolic* as two modalities of signifying meanings for the reconstruction of the female subject.

Moreover, the study concludes that abjection proves its workability in unleashing Rich's discourse of the role of desire in the re-formation of female identity. Rich's female characters abjected their bodies, their desires and their world as a way of troubling the borders of identity structured by patriarchal narratives and succeeded in reconstructing new narratives that transform the female desire as an active and positive variable in restructuring female identity.

8.2 Contributions

The current study presents several contributions in the scholarship in Adrienne Rich's poetry. The first of these contributions is the re-inclusion of Rich's feminist discourse of female identity restructure by clearing up the labels of 'radical feminist' & 'queer poet' away from her discourse via the application of Kristeva's theory of the Subject. Literature review contributes to understanding the mechanism and in identifying the tools of oppressing women at the hands of patriarchal thinkers. Moreover, a significant contribution lies in the combination of two concepts of Kristeva's theory; the Semiotic and the Symbolic, and abjection, which is not applied before in the study of Adrienne Rich's poetry in the past studies.

Another reading of restructuring the female identity is contributed in this study in the light of Kristeva's approach. This new reading contributes in making Adrienne Rich's poetry more accessible and approachable to the readers of literature after a long history of radicalization. It introduces a fresh critical insight to the reading of queer literature through employing Kristeva's concepts. Finally, this study contributes in introducing the re-birth of the female principle via semiotic as the appropriate means for having un-gendered language, as well as, the subversive force of abjection as the appropriate variable in the reconstruction of female identity in the selected texts.

8.3 Recommendations

The poetics and politics of Adrienne Rich were transformed in the late periods of her career into a universal level, paying more attention to humanistic issues rather than keeping her focus on the feminist issues. For example, she registered her outrage against the cruelties of the authoritative governments, and against all types of violence. She condemned war and terrorism. In addition, she went on to blend the personal and the public into universal contexts in the hope that she could instill hope in the readers' minds despite their despondent situation of modern life. As Rich's strategy to spread her poetics was the transgression of the grand narratives of the patriarchal thought, approaching her poetry in the light of Foucault's theories of Transgression would pave the way to the circulation of new readings to her feminist discourses, especially if it is amalgamated with Butler's concept of gender trouble.

Moreover, the later poetry of Rich is out of the scope of the current study; therefore, her involvement in more humanitarian and universal issues in the later poetry could be a good source of critical research. Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicist approach, for example, could be utilized to study Rich's poetry, which extends to a very long span that witnessed different historical contexts. Rich lived the pre- and post-World War II situations, which were disastrous to humanity in general and woman in particular. Thus, the reading of her texts in the light of New Historicism, focusing on the study of the text within the context of both the history of the author and the history of the critic would definitely introduce new readings to her poetic texts.

In addition, Kristeva's concept of the Signifying Process can further be researched to study the confessional poetry of Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton due to the close

association of the confessional mode of writing poetry to the concept of articulating the semiotic emotions and drives into the symbolic system of signification. These concepts would help in the exploration of Plath's and Sexton's counter-discourses to the oppression of the patriarchal thought.

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