

RE-GENDERING DISCOURSE IN ADRIENNE RICH'S SNAPSHOTS OF A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

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Abstract

Adrienne Rich is one of the most famous American feminist poets in the modern world. She stated that women are gendered in the patriarchal society to be inferiors, victims and weak. In Rich's poem, Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law, she proposes that re-gendering discourse will help women to prove their own female identities away from the patriarchal heterosexual discourse which oppressed women along history. This article focuses on Adrienne Rich's poem in the light of her feminist discourse of re-gendering, through tracing the semiotic elements within the symbolic patriarchal language. This is done by applying Kristeva's concept of the Semiotic and the Symbolic to be the framework of the study. Kristeva states that the semiotic is maternal and the symbolic is masculine, and both of these modalities are needed in the signifying process. Therefore, Rich regains to language the feminine principle which is the only way to create an unprejudiced language that is fair to the masculine and feminine needs

KEY WORDS: SEMIOTIC, SYMBOLIC, PATRIARCHAL DISCOURSE, FEMALE PRINCIPLE, RE-GENDERING DISCOURSE

INTRODUCTION

One of the major concerns of feminism is the examination of the grounds upon which women are denied access to public life and identified with the private and the domestic only. Women are absented from public scrutiny; and in turn they are not fit to political change. Feminists fought against the single male view of reality. This male view is a strategy to silence women and make them invisible in language. They defend a pluralistic view of reality, which is more reasonable and tolerable. Feminist writers look for meanings that redistribute power, and reclaim the right for women to rename things and end their silence. Adrienne Rich has addressed this kind of exclusion from public life, especially from the literary and intellectual life, the professions, and politics in her poems. Jeevan kumar conducted a study to Rich's poem entitled "Adrienne Rich's Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law: A Study" to show Rich's transformation towards more feminist agenda in her career (255). She did her study following a textual analysis of the poem. She relied on the discussion of the figures of speech used by Rich, without referring to any conceptual framework for the study conducted. She focused on the emergence of this poem as a touchstone to her poetic development and as the first important statement of Rich's feminism. Kumar's approach to the study of the poem followed the chronological order of writing its sections. In each section, she comments on the role it plays in the creation of an awareness in the daughter's mind, giving her more insight on how she should give up her domestic role and start to look for herself first. The descriptive style of approaching the poem is beyond the scope of the study I am conducting on the poem within the

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psycho-feminist domain. My study traces the semiotic elements in Rich's "Snapshots" to show their role in subverting the fixed meaning of the symbolic world to help women find new spaces of existence and resistance.

Susan Driver studied Rich's poetics and concept of maternity in her masterpiece essay, "Reading Adrienne Rich's *Of Women Born* as a Queer Feminist Daughter" (2006), in light of Teresa de Lauretis' expansive notion of experience as a dynamic activity of self-representation. De Lauretis tries to establish a kind of feminist theory of experience that visions 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).

Susan argues that there is a gap in the queer theory, for it has failed to offer an alternative to desiring maternal subjects. Another gap in the feminist theories exists because they appeal to the heterosexual norms in understanding motherhood. She posits that both post-modern feminist writers and queer theorists misunderstand the role of the maternal subjects in the construction of identity and gender because they still associate maternal subjects with norms of heterosexuality and gender essentialism.

Susan employed a close textual and reflexive procedure of interpretation to Rich's "Of Women Born" to show that the maternal body can exceed binary thought and universal norms, and instead suggests a corporeal mode that intersects various acts of feeling, desiring and thinking. She did that in 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 reemerging maternity and desire which is grounded in Rich's *Of Women Born*. My study goes within the scope of Psychofeminism to deal with the concept of the maternity in light of Kristeva's Semiotic to help women subvert the symbolic language through re-signification and re-gendering.

Rich felt that her early writings of poetry were targeted towards the satisfaction of the old pioneers of patriarchy because she was writing her poems following the styles and poetic diction of the great figures in the literary circles 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 to the formal male style of writing. Women write about themselves using men's voice and style. But she became aware that both of these two reasons are connected to the use of language. (314)

ADRIENNE RICH'S POETICS

Adrienne Rich (1929-2012) was taught at home by her mother until the fourth grade. She was interested in writing and her father encouraged her to utilize his extensive collection of Victorian literature at home. Rich graduated from Radcliffe College in 1951, and she wrote her first volume of poetry, *A Change of World*, which was selected by W. H. Auden for the Yale Series of Younger Poets award. Guggenheim Fellowship enabled Rich to travel to Europe and England in the following year. By 1959, Rich was the mother of three sons, and had no more time for writing. Rich was unsatisfied with her life and her writing in this period. She published *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* in 1963, a collection of poems drawn from the fragments of writing she had compiled over eight years. This volume is widely considered her breakthrough because of its overt delineation of female themes. Later, she was involved in the civil rights and anti-war movements in 1966.

By 1969 she and her husband had become estranged from each other, so he committed suicide the following year. During the early 1970s Rich devoted much of her time to the women's movement

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and began identifying herself as a radical feminist. In 1997 she was awarded the Academy of American Poets Wallace Stevens Award. In the same year, Rich refused to accept the National Medal award for the Arts because she was criticizing public policies and governmental priorities believing that these institutions circulated the gendered discourse that served the masculine needs only. (Bomarito & Hunter, 2005, pp. 329-330)

Rich re-valued women who were 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, p. 160)

Rich widens the scope of poetic language away from the numerous contemporary definitions of language as signs to be manipulated. Rich believes in the significance of language in changing the conditions of women and the female principle. "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, p. 200)

As an essayist, polemist, poet and feminist theorist, Rich transformed the personal experience of poetry into the public domain, gaining much public audience and empowering politics by using poetry as a form of public speech. She contributed to the rewriting of the well-made private lyrics in more public forms, giving poetry the power to rename and reconstitute the narratives. Sevcik describes Rich's strategy of writing her poetry saying, "Rich has sought to place her poems discursively and materially in spaces that are public and political while asserting that reading always occurs simultaneously at a particular site and in the abstract system of language" (Sevcik, 2010, p. 3)

JULIA KRISTEVA'S THE SEMIOTIC AND THE SYMBOLIC

The history of the 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 emotions. Kristeva's contribution lies in her focus on the two opposing poles. She thinks that the semiotic pole, which 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, pp. 16-17).

Kristeva admits the urgent necessity for the Symbolic to have a logical conscious language, but in order not to make it a biased patriarchal language, it must be continuously renewed through tracing the heterogeneous energy of the unconscious represented by the Semiotic's play of forces and drives which represent the residue of the pre-Oedipal stage. According to Kristeva, these drives appear as a pulsational pressure inside the language itself and are reflected in its tone, rhythm, imagery, and also in contradiction, meaninglessness, disruption, absence and silence. (Petrović, 1997, p. 4)

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Lacan's concept of the Symbolic entails the burial of the Semiotic if the child wants to get an access into his own subjectivity. The child should give up his first identification and attachment with his mother, in order to construct an identity that copes with the patriarchal model, which favours the masculine over the feminine. Kristeva started at this point, in which the Symbolic world represses the totality and fullness of the imaginary world. 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 although it is within the periphery of awareness. Kristeva shares Lacan's view that the subject is an effect of its linguistic practice, but we must include semiotic linguistic practice. Kristeva thinks that such repression of the Semiotic world is not total but it will be in the periphery of awareness. It can be traced in the Semiotic aspect of language and its manifestation undermines the fixed meanings and opposites of the patriarchal culture. 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, pp. 73-74)

Kristeva introduces the concept of the Semiotic, stating that it has the power of subversion. The semiotic subverts the Symbolic mastering over language, giving new spaces and voices to emerge. Kristeva says that the Semiotic is never ending when the child gets into the Symbolic world, but it still persists within the periphery of consciousness, deconstructing the binary between the masculine and the feminine through emphasizing the interaction between the Semiotic and the Symbolic as the two modalities are needed for the signifying process. These two modalities are completing each other within the process of signification that constitutes language, which in turn constitutes one's identity. Kristeva's the Subject in Process is indebted to these two modalities for signification. (Moi, 1986, pp. 92-93)

THE FEMALE PRINCIPLE

Rich tried to analyse society in relation to the ethical relationship between the male principle and the 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 deems the priority of 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, pp. 193-194)

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

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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.

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

“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)

THE SEMIOTIC ELEMENTS IN RICH'S *SNAPSHOTS OF A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW*

Adrienne Rich's *Snapshots* (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. 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 insecure and alienated. The writer criticizes women for being submissive to conventions 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, p. 16).

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. Otherwise, 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. The poet uses many references to various male and female figures in history to create a kind of foundation for the 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.

Female writers cannot 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 a patriarchal society. The social positioning of women became the theme of *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* 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, p. 81).

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Rich mentions the kinds of oppressions of the symbolic world and the kinds of potentials women have in the semiotic realm that submerges from time to time to empower women in the face of oppressive patriarchy.

Simile

Simile is one of the first semiotic elements used by the speaker in this poem. 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”(Kristeva, 1984, p. 41). The simile in ‘Snapshots’ suggests the fragility of speaker’s mind as it is compared to ‘mouldering 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 the mind of the speaker and the cake and that both are susceptible to rot:

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

The mind of the speaker is burdened with fantasies and doubts like a piece of cake which is rich but heavy on the stomach. Mother-in-law has no ambition or a chance to run away of 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’. Therefore, the only way of saving herself is to run away from her mother-in-law as the angels urge her to do so.

Reisman describes the kind of language and style followed by Rich in writing about her themes of women oppression in his book, *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. (p. 193)

Snapshots recorded the emergence of female voice of Rich as she freed herself from the restrictions of formalism and tried new poetic forms of expressing the suffering and ordeals of women in the American society. She started writing directly about her female experience. The poem presents various portrayals of women lacking their own subjectivity because they live under the discourse of the patriarchal society. Kathleen Moore describes women’s burden in a book entitled *Contemporary American Women Poets* edited by Catherine Cucinella, 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

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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.” (297)

Another important simile of the semiotic aspect of the poem is in the fifth section, which entails a turning-point in the poem. It is the starting point of the woman's realization that she should transform herself out of the old gendered-discourse and into the new re-gendered one. She shaves her leg, 'she shaves her legs until they gleam like petrified mammoth-tusk' hoping not to injure man's sensibilities. She tries to cope up with the female stereotypes of patriarchy. Despite the sweet smiles and being good looking, she is aware that her legs after shining look like the tusks of a mammoth; a prehistoric animal. She is aware that by her endeavours to compromise with the male stereotypes dictated upon females, she is doing a kind of compromise with old-fashioned mono-dimensional discourse that negates her female identity and dictates upon her a conforming submissive identity.

Merk argues 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. This detachment signals the separation and disconnection of the lives of women governed by the norms of patriarchal society. (Merk, 2010, p. 9)

The tone

The tone, as a semiotic element, 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 could not utilize them 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 and putting others first. For example, Rich redefines this splitting process in ways which emphasize its potential for new development, new consciousness. Rich's work, instead of looking for closure, celebrates the split as a process of growth, which is painful and valuable (Little, 1990, pp. 266-267).

Supernatural Elements

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 by leaving other people around her because she cannot help them:

Only a week since They said. Have no patience

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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 that the semiotic subconscious world is haunting her. 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. She hears these voices but it is very difficult to follow and obey. 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 (A. C. Rich et al., 1993, p. 313). Rich says that she has to follow the traditional role prescribed to her, i.e. to be children's nurturer all the day, and to be with a man in the old way of marriage. Therefore, her imaginative activity is left behind to decay and a conservative role is requested upon her. She is choked with such a kind of life and wanted to search for an outlet to be able to find her female identity and genuine self.

Rich believes in the power of words in generating a new unprejudiced discourse. She has the vision that women can construct a kind of linguistic mode that can liberate them and inspire the upcoming generation. She articulated for women thoughts that they could not 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.

Allusions

The allusion to Emily Dickinson stands for the semiotic aspect of the poem. Although Dickinson was a great genius woman, her intellect could not stop her from being involved and burdened with any woman's housework. Dickinson was living in an intellectual milieu. She was surrounded by kitchen utensils, 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)

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. They should fight against odds if they want to contribute significantly in the creation of civilization. They cannot contribute to such a creation unless they don't conform to patriarchal rules of woman's position in the house as children nurturer and house carer. Rich mentions this example of Mary, who fought against men with her intelligence and ambition and comes to be a threat to the patriarchal discourse. This woman ignored

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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 fought against the social conventions and restrictions that keep women illiterate and incompetent to males. Therefore, men felt jealous of her achievements and started calling her with obscene names and titles like 'harpy', who is a cruel woman and 'shrew', who is a 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, their selfhood, at fifteen. They turn to be partly conventional and partly legend, 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 breasts. 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.

Irony

Rich comments on an important irony which lies in the prejudicial masculine discourse in section six. Rich suggests that patriarchal tradition has at all times 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

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maternal chora, and the maternal body, in order to shift and alter something within phallogocentrism. (Butler, 1999, p. 104)

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, pp. 94-95)

Rich proposes to all women at the end of the poem that they will succeed in changing the gendered patriarchal discourse that oppressed and subjugated them along history. She believes that women of the future will re-gender discourse through language that empowers them in the face of the old discourse:

Well,
she's long about her coming, who must be
more merciless to herself than history.
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. (109-118)

Women should not submit to the time of male, but they have to resist and refuse the subordinate role given to them by men. Rich has an optimistic vision of the status of women in the future as something '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. The poem ends with the reader's expectation that we will have a fair and equal society for both women and men.

CONCLUSION

This study presents the poetic strategy of Adrienne Rich in empowering women to improve their social status and life, through the process of re-gendering the oppressive patriarchal discourse. She creates a kind of resisting discourse because the discourse women are living is a gendered one that empowers men at the expense of powerless women. Rich believes that women can change their destiny if they employ the appropriate means of doing so. Language comes at the top of these means in liberating women through its role in the construction of a discourse that can be fair to both males and females. Rich believes in the power of the word in changing the status of women from being submissive and inferior into powerful and knowledgeable. She thinks that such changes in the use of language can occur through tracing the semiotic maternal elements within the structured symbolic language, which have their influential effects upon the construction of identity, discourse and cultural

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context. Such a semiotic and symbolic language creates an unprejudiced powerful discourse that serves the wishes and needs of both males and females.

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