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**THE REPRESENTATION OF FEMINISM IN ADRIENNE  
RICH'S SELECTED POEMS**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study is aimed to reveal the feminism idea in Rich's selected poems, a woman author in the mid of 20<sup>th</sup> century and in Second World War. The feminist theory is the main theory used in analysing the data. Biographical and social approach is used in conducting this study. Those approaches are very helpful in helping to understand the ideas of feminism in Rich's selected poems. Descriptive qualitative and bibliographical are the methods that applied in this study. The result shows that the women in Rich poems did try their best to fight for their rights to oppose the culture and patriarchal society in their time. This can be seen from the analysing of the ideas of the behaviour of women in the poems.

Keyword: Adrienne Rich, feminism, poem.

**ABSTRAK**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkapkan ide feminisme dalam puisi Adrienne Rich, seorang penulis wanita pada pertengahan abad ke-20 dan dalam periode Perang Dunia Kedua. Pendekatan Biografi dan sosial digunakan dalam melakukan penelitian ini. Pendekatan-pendekatan tersebut sangat membantu untuk memahami ide-ide feminisme dalam puisi Rich. Metode deskriptif kualitatif dan bibliografi adalah metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa wanita dalam puisi Rich telah mencoba yang terbaik untuk memperjuangkan hak-hak mereka untuk menentang budaya dan masyarakat patriarki dalam eranya. Hal ini dapat dilihat dari analisis dari ide-ide dari perilaku perempuan dalam puisi.

Kata Kunci: Adrienne rich, feminisme, puisi.

**INTRODUCTION**

**Background**

In our society women always put as the second sex or the second class compare to the men. This thinking was increasing to be a statement that the women's duties are to serve their husband, to do the households chore, and to raise and educated their children. While in comparison the men's main duty are to look for a job to feed their family at home. Those idea actually were the main factor that made women treated so differently in society.

Adrienne Rich is of American poet, essayist and dramatist. But she was mostly known as the feminist poetry. She is known as the most influential self-identified lesbian feminism in the middle 20<sup>th</sup> century America. Rich continued to evolve around the free verse; she is even growing politically aggressive because of her involvement in feminist activity.

In 1973 she published one of her best work *Diving into the Wreck* and it got an award; National Book Award. The failure of communication between men and woman on both a personal and cultural level is the most topics she talks about in this volume of her.

Rich's poems that have been interest the writer to analyze are *Dream I'm the Death of Orpheus* and *Diving into the Wreck*. In the first, *Dream I'm the Death of Orpheus*, it talks about diminished man's power over woman and therefore they should face the authorities. Woman also discovers and celebrates the consciousness of female powers. In *Diving into the Wreck*, tell about the relationship between women and men and how the women gained her power as being oppressed by the dominant role of men in the society. The reason the writer choose those poets to be analyzed because they represent the problem of gender inequality which always happen either in marriage or in relationship. Based on these, the writer chooses and will analyze how the idea of feminism portrayed in those poems.

#### **Scope of the problem**

The writer will limit the problem which only analyzed the feminism in Adrienne Rich's selected poem, *Dream I'm the Death of Orpheus* and *Diving into the Wreck*. The idea of feminism and how the occur in her poems along with how she explain that idea will be the writer main problem.

#### **Research Questions**

Based on the previous background the writer formulated the research questions as follows: How is the representation of feminism of Rich's selected poems? How do the women struggle for their right in the selected poems?

#### **Objectives of the Study**

This study is aimed to: analyzed the representation of feminism idea and to reveal the struggle of women on the selected poems.

#### **Significance of the Study**

This study is conducted to analyze the representation of feminism idea in the selected poems. Rich's idea of feminism will be analyzed in this study. Feminism is always an interesting idea to study. When the idea of feminism represented in the poems we also can see the struggling of the women in the poems. Their struggle actually represent the era they lived in. The writing will give more information and could enrich the knowledge and the understanding of the readers in studying more about feminism.

### **The Theoretical Approach**

Wellek and Warren (1993: 110) stated that "there are two kinds of approaches in analyzing literary works; they are intrinsic and extrinsic approach. An approach which analyzes literary based on the text and the elements such as character, plot, setting and theme called the intrinsic approach. When it is analyzing the literary work from outside or external factors such biography, history, psychology, and so on. So in this study, the writer will use extrinsic approach which is more suitable for this study.

### **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **Feminism**

The object of feminism is women. As they always treated as second sex in society, they tried to seek a way to get justice for the equality of men and women rights. Women actually have become the victim of patriarchal society for years. They always placed for childbearing and taking care of their husbands needs. But they will not get a pleasure for their self.

The early stage of feminism actually tried to distinguish between sex and gender. Sex actually refers to the biological side, also about the physical difference between men and women. It refers to what men and women have from the day they were born. They were typically categorized as men, women, and intersex. Gender refers to the attitudes, behaviours, demeanour or psychology that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. Behaviour that is compatible with cultural expectation is referred to as gender-normative; behaviour that is viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitutes gender non-conformity.

How the women and the men would get the same chances in the society is the point of feminism. The women were taught to defend their self from the unfortunate condition. It also teaches women how to use their talent as best as they can and to work together with men in order the get the better life. In other words when therewere a chance, the women and men should have given the same opportunity.

The difference between 'feminine' and 'feminist' is very important for us to know. The term 'feminine' is all about embracing the natural qualities of woman. A feminine woman is the one who spends most of her time if her feminine energy. That means she is a receiver of attention and help. She is in touch with her feelings and values them. She is in touch with her feeling and she listens to the people around her.

Then the 'feminist' is focused on proving that there is equality between men and women. A feminist woman can be completely opposite of the feminine woman. The feminist woman embraces the idea that men and women are equal and can do the same things. The feminist woman embraces masculine energy. She is doing, conquering, moving up the career ladder, leading people, making as much money as her male counterpart, getting things done (Issakova: 2012).

The feminism itself have been through some stage in it development. The first wave of feminism took place in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century

emerging out of an environment of urban industrialism and liberal, socialist politics. The goal of this wave actually was to open up opportunities of women with a focus on suffrage. The wave formally began at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 when three hundred men and women rallied to the cause of equality for women. Elizabeth Cady Stanton drafted the Seneca Falls Declaration outlining the new movement's ideology and political strategies (Rampton, 2015).

Feminism in its early stage was interrelated with the temperance and abolitionist movement and gave voice to now famous activist such as the African-American Sojourner Truth, who demanded: "Ain't I a woman?" Victorian America saw women acting in very "unladylike" ways (public speaking, demonstrating, stints in jail), which challenged the "cult of domesticity." Discussions about the vote and women's participation in politics led to an examination of the differences between men and women as they were then viewed. Some claimed that women were morally superior to men, and so their presence in the civic sphere would improve public behaviour and the political process (Rampton, 2015). So, basically in this first wave of feminism is the first wave that sought after the equality in property rights, changes in the marriage relationship, and eventually, in women's suffrage, or women's right to vote.

The second wave of feminism began in 1960s and continued into the 90s. This wave unfolded in the context of the antiwar and civil rights movements and the growing self-consciousness of a variety of minority groups around the world. The New Left was on the rise, and the voice of the second wave was increasingly radical. In this phase, sexuality and reproductive rights were dominant issues, and much of the movement's energy was focused on passing the Equal Rights Amendment to the Constitution guaranteeing social equality regardless of sex (Rampton, 2015).

The first phase of the second wave began with the protest against Miss America pageant in Atlantic City in 1968 and 1969. Feminists parodied what they held to be a degrading "cattle parade" that reduced women to objects of beauty dominated by a patriarchy that sought to keep them in the home or in dull, low-paying jobs. The radical New York group called the Redstockings staged a counter pageant in which they crowned a sheep as Miss America and threw "oppressive" feminine artefacts such as bras, girdles, high – heels, makeup and false eyelashes into the trashcan.

It was easily marginalized and viewed as less pressing than another thing, such as, The Black Power or efforts to end the Vietnam War. This is happened because of the second wave of feminism found voice amid so many other social movements. This wave was increasingly theoretical; it was based on mixture of psycho – analytical and neo – Marxism, and began of the subjugation of women with broader critiques of patriarchy, capitalism, normative heterosexuality, the woman's role as wife and mother. So the sex and the gender finally differentiated; sex is all about biological, and the gender is all about culture-to-culture that construct by social values over the time (Rampton, 2015).

As we can see, the first wave of feminism was generally propelled by middle class, Western, cisgender, white women, while the second wave drew women of color and developing nations, seeking sisterhood and solidarity,

claiming "Women's struggle is class struggle." Feminists spoke of women as a social class and coined phrases such as "the personal is political" and "identity politics" in an effort to demonstrate that race, class, and gender oppression are all related. They initiated a concentrated effort to rid society top – to – bottom of sexism, from children's cartoons to the highest levels of government.

The last stage or the third wave of feminism began in the mid 90's. It was actually informed by post-colonial and post-modern thinking. In this phase many constructs were destabilized, including the notion of "universal womanhood," body, gender, sexuality and heteronormativity. An aspect of third wave feminism that mystified the mothers of the earlier feminist movement was the readoption by young feminists of the very lip-stick, high-heels, and cleavage proudly exposed by low cut necklines that the first two phases of the movement identified with male oppression. Pinkfloo expressed this new position when she said that it's possible to have a push-up bra and a brain at the same time (Rampton, 2015).

The "grrls" of the third wave stepped onto the stage as strong and empowered, eschewing victimization and defining feminine beauty for themselves as subjects, not as objects of a sexist patriarchy. They developed a rhetoric of mimicry, which appropriated derogatory terms like "slut" and "bitch" in order to subvert sexist culture and deprive it of verbal weapons. The web is an important tool of "girlie feminism." E-zines have provided "cybergrrls" and "netgrrls" another kind of women – only space. At the same time – rife with the irony of third-wave feminism because cyberspace is disembodied – it permits all users the opportunity to cross gender boundaries, and so the very notion of gender has been unbalanced in a way that encourages experimentation and creative thought (Rampton, 2015).

This is in keeping with the third wave's celebration of ambiguity and refusal to think in terms of "us-them." Most third – wavers refuse to identify as "feminists" and reject the word that they find limiting and exclusionary. Girl – feminism tends to be global, multi-cultural, and it shuns simple answers or artificial categories of identity, gender, and sexuality. Its transversal politics means that differences such as those of ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, etc are celebrated and recognized as dynamic, situational, and provisional. Reality is conceived not so much in terms of fixed structures and power relations, but in terms of performance within contingencies. Third wave feminism breaks boundaries (Rampton, 2015).

One of the strains of this complex and diverse "wave" was the development of women – only spaces and the notion that women working together create a special dynamic that is not possible in mixed – groups, which would ultimately work for the betterment of the entire planet. Women, due whether to their long "subjugation" or to their biology, were thought by some to be more humane, collaborative, inclusive, peaceful, nurturing, democratic, and holistic in their approach to problem solving than men. The term eco-feminism was coined to capture the sense that because of their biological connection to earth and lunar cycles, women were natural advocates of environmentalism.

### **A Brief Biography of Adrienne Rich**

Adrienne Rich, U.S. poet, scholar and critic, was born on May 16, 1929, in Baltimore, MD. She was a college student when her poems were chosen for publication. Rich's increasing commitment to the women's movement and a lesbian/feminist aesthetic influenced much of her work. She also wrote compelling books of nonfiction.

Rich married an economics professor Alfred Conrad. The couple soon started a family that would grow to include three boys. The talented writer struggled with the traditional expectations of being a wife and mother, and this internal conflict found its way into her work. With her poems, Rich examined and challenged social norms and the imbalance of power between men and women. She also fought against the Vietnam War and for civil rights.

By 1970, Rich had become estranged from her husband and she decided to leave him. He committed suicide later that year. Continuing to commit herself to social activism, she released the poetry collection, *Diving into the Wreck*, in 1973. Rich won the National Book Award for this work the following year.

Rich published an essay collection, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, in 1976, which gave voice to many women's issues surrounding parenthood and marriage. Around this time, Rich came out as a lesbian. She later became involved with writer Michelle Cliff, and the couple stayed together for the rest of Rich's life.

During her legendary career, Rich won many awards, including a fellowship from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation in 1994. She did turn down one prestigious honor in 1997, refusing to accept a National Medal of Arts from President Bill Clinton for political reasons. More recently, Rich picked up the National Book Critics Circle Award in 2005 for *School Among the Ruins, Poems 2000-2004* (Biography, 2016).

### **Biographical Approach**

Reaske in Wijaya (2013), said that "Biography is a detailed description or account of someone's life." It is more than a piece of paper which was using for applying of job. It is more than the fact of the list on that paper, such as education, work, and relationships. Biography portrays the subject's experience of those events.

What make it difference from profile or resume, biography presents or highlighting many aspect of the life of the certain subject. It is also show the intimate details of experiences, and the analysis of subject's personality. So, what is biographical approach in literature?

In sociological perspective, the biological approach has been widely recognized since the seventies of the last century in European social research in general, but especially in gender studies and youth sociology. It means that being susceptible for "first order constructions" as the basis for making scientific interpretation as "second order constructions". This approach actually criticises a positivistic understanding of social phenomena and takes into serious account what especially feminists demand for social research and practice: to take into account the dimension of subjective experience.

Even though this approach has lost its appeal after Barthes announced his "death of the author" in 1968, some people still argue that there are texts where knowledge of an author's biography can sometimes be very helpful in analyzing literary works. It will be very helpful to understand the text better otherwise we would not be able to interpret certain allusion or references.

Biographical approach examines the literary work which is related to the author's life. And often a particular poem or song is subject to this kind of analysis simply by nature of its material in relation to the background of the author's personal experience. Simply to say that biographical approach is an approach used to understand and comprehend a literary work by studying deeper about the life of the author (Wijaya, 2013).

## METHODOLOGY

### Method of Collecting Data

Library research method is the method that the writer uses in collecting the data. This method of research could allow the writer to take and collect all the data from various sources.

### Data Source

The source of the data was taken from the selected poems of Rich namely, *I Dream I'm the Death of Orpheus* and *Diving into the Wreck*. The data of this study are all the sentences from the poems.

### Method of Data Analyzing Data

The writer used descriptive qualitative in analyzing the data. The writer used the feminist theory by Adrienne Rich and uses the biographical approach in this study. In analyzing the data there are several steps that author done, they are:

1. Read the poems very carefully
2. Then identify each line of the poems which support the main problem
3. Next, based on the data found, the research questions are identified, analyzed and found, the writer used clear and vivid language to explain them.
4. Lastly, the conclusion will be made after all the analysis have been done previously.

## FINDINGS

### The Representation of Feminism Idea in Rich Selected Poems

In the poem entitled *I Dream I'm the Death of Orpheus* it refers to Greek mythology, which is involved the son of the God of the Sun, Apollo and a muse, Calliope, the son is Orpheus. Orpheus was killed by the Dionysus' followers. It was happened when they discovered him mourning of his wife's death. The followers became angry at him because he refused to join in with their high spirit, so they threw the stones at him. In order for the stones not to hurt him, Orpheus charmed using his music. But the followers' of Dionysius saw him; they slew and threw him into the stream.

Rich referred to Orpheus's wife in this poem, *I Dream I'm the Death of Orpheus*, Eurydice, as the followers of Dionysius only slew him because he felt mournful towards his wife.

*I am walking rapidly through striations of light and dark throw  
under an arcade.*

*I am a woman in the prime of life, with certain powers  
And those powers severely limited  
by authorities whose faces I rarely see*

(Line 1-5)

In the first line of the poem, we can clearly see the use of "light" and "dark" are used together. "Dark", in this poem shows as the representation of suffering, while the "light" represent the pleasure in life. From these words, we can say that the speaker knows how to feel in "light" and "dark".

The line 3 to 5 the speaker continually talk about of being free, strong, and proud. The line "I am a woman in the prime of life, with certain powers" is repeated in the poem. This line represent the condition of the speaker is very happy with her place in herself. She also realize that she does have strength and power, but she also knows that her power is limited by the authorities within her society.

*I am a woman in the prime of life  
driving her dead poet in a black Rolls-Royce  
through a landscape of twilight and thorns.*

(Line 6-8)

From those lines before, we can interpret that Adrienne Rich was influenced by one of the Orpheus movie. In the movie, Jean Cocteau represented the Death in Latin way. Death shows played by powerful woman in black, moving in a black Rolls-Royce escorted by motorcyclists' equivalent to the Hells Angels. Rich invokes both mythology and modernity; her Maenad figure is driving the poet's body in a black Rolls-Royce, and she has "contacts among Hell's Angels". The language suggests that this woman is caught in a spiral of both power and uncertainty; she certainly feels her own strength, "in the prime of life", but she repeats such phrases as though to reassure herself.

*A woman with certain mission  
which if obeyed to the letter will have her intact.  
A woman with the nerves of a panther  
a woman feeling the fullness of her powers  
at the precise moment when she must not use them  
a woman sworn to lucidity  
who sees through the mayhem, the smoky fires  
of these underground streets  
her dead poet learning to walk backward against the wind  
on the wrong side of the mirror.*

(Line 9-19)



She seems enhance the image of being a powerful woman by describing herself as “*a woman with certain mission*” and “*a woman with the nerves of a panther*”. It seems if someone has a mission, it is important to her. She also goes on to say that she will gain power if she is “*obeyed*”, and the use of such a wild and noble creature, such as panther, enhances the image of power being displayed.

In the line of “*sworn to ludicity*”, the speaker seem to realize that she has no power, and whatever power she has, it will be useless in her society because she belongs to the kind of woman who has no power at all. The speaker continually dream of holding her power in society, where it can recognized openly. Unfortunately it could not be so. It is emphasize the relation of the title and the myth behind the creation of the poem itself. The speaker actually wishes to be a nymph, a spirit of nature, who is very much free spirit, young and beautiful.

The element of the myth in which Orpheus looks back at Eurydice as she led to underground where she was told by him not to do which caused him lose her. This action most notably in the line “*her dead poet learning to walk backward against the wind on the wrong side of the mirror*”.

The word “*Dream*” on the title is the key to focus on. The speaker who throughout is represented as being strong minded and proud of herself and her power, is still left to dream about her freedom rather than live it. She is very aware that to have freedom in her society is very impossible because the tradition and the culture say so. It is just impossible to have it like the Greek nymph do. In this poem, Rich clearly examines of the unequal power relations from the perspective of the woman who longs for her freedom from the rigid society. This poem also become her way of voicing what could women were dreaming of.

The poem, “*I Dream I'm the Death of Orpheus*”, Rich seems to be fascinated by the Latin representation of Death. Rich took advantage of this Latin female Death and subverted the patriarchal existing symbol of a male Death. Politically, her attitude can be interpreted as a way of diminishing men's power over the women. So, she feels her female power as if the poem itself were a celebration of the discovery of this power.

The second poem is “*Diving into the Wreck*” that will be discuss. From the title itself we can already guess what the poem talk about. Simply to say, it looks like the poem describe someone who is the diver. This diver seems to look for the wreck of a ship beneath the ocean.

This poem grouped as free verse poem. It does not have a regular rhythm or rhyme structure. Though, this poem is also structured in other ways. It is split up into ten stanzas, all of which are more or less the same length (eight to twelve lines). When there is a break between stanzas in this poem, it signals an important shift. Sometimes that means a move from one place to another, like from the boat to the ocean. Sometimes it is a change in perspective.

This poem begins with the speaker preparation for a journey. This journey, an underwater dive into a shipwreck, symbolizes her rebirth and coming-of-age. The wreck itself is an experience that makes her ready to enter adulthood.

*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.*

*(Line 1-7)*

Why Rich would like to read a book of myth before going to dive? It is very hard to explain at this point. It seem Rich want us to wait, and to hold that image in our mind as we are read the poem.

The preparation of the speaker journey's begin by loading *camera*, indicating that it is important that she remembers this journey. She has read "*the book myths*", myth of childhood. Myths can be ancient and valuable tales passed down in the culture, they can also just be lies and made up stories. The book of myths is much different from the harsh truth of reality.

In the line 3-5, she emphasizes that "*the edge of the knife-blade*" and then describe the wetsuit as "*body-armor*". It seems she is getting ready for battle. She did that in order to protect herself from the pain she may find in this new place. There is also just a little tingle of anticipation and danger in the air.

Then, she also puts on her "*grave and awkward mask*", the awkwardness indicates that she has not fully matured, while the mask implies that she is hiding her true identity from the world and perhaps is not comfortable revealing it. She is alone in this journey. Then again that feeling is balanced out when we are reminded how stupid people can look in scuba gear. The speaker points out that the flippers are "*absurd*" and the mask is "*grave and awkward*".

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

*(Line 8-12)*

Now that we have heard about the equipment, we will learn about the speaker and the setting of this poem. This poem sets up a contrast between happy, lively world of Jacques Cousteau (the example of the idolized world of diving), and the lonely world that the speaker feel. Cousteau is the ocean explorer that his explorations were made as documentaries. In those documentaries of his, he wore a red stocking cap, invented scuba gear, and was basically everything you would want a dashing French explorer to be. He would have been the centre of all kinds of scuba activity, always helped by his "*assiduous*", which is mean hard-working team. In contrast to his, our speaker is totally "*alone*".

*There is a ladder.  
The ladder is always there  
hanging innocently  
close to the side of the schooner.  
We know what it is for,  
we who have used it.  
Otherwise  
it is a piece of maritime floss  
some sundry equipment.*

(Line 13-21)

There is something unique about this line, it just talk about ladder. Rich introduce where the "ladder" is. She merely indicated to the reader that it is where the ladder is. But that is a lot already. It forces us to confront the image of the ladder, to think about what ladders do. Here, we make ourselves aware that ladders are the way to change our position to change our position, to move up or down. In this case, the move down will take the diver into another world.

The ladder also representing the beginning of the coming of age process and can only be used when one is ready to use it, otherwise, it serves no purpose. The ladder also represents security to the speaker because it is a link that connects between the world of air and the sea. In this case it is very parallel with the speaker's childhood and maturity.

So, in these lines Rich takes her time here very well. She makes us pause to think about this ladder, to make us look at it. What fascinates her is that the ladder has a different meaning once people have used it. For someone who is not a diver, that ladder "hangs there innocently". It is nothing special; you could walk right by it. As Rich puts it, it is "a piece of maritime floss, some sundry equipment"(20-21). In here maritime floss means something like a little string from the sea, and sundry could be means random or miscellaneous. Both of these phrases are meant to emphasize how ordinary this ladder is. But once you have been on a dive, you know that going down the ladder is ultimate moment. We have probably all had this experience in some way. Talk about experience, before we drive a car, we actually have no idea or even care what the different parts are. Then we understand and realize how important a gearshift is, why a brake pedal could mean the difference between life and death. Relying on a thing, even an ordinary brings it to life and makes it special.

*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.  
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.*

(Line 22-33)

The rungs of the ladder represent the different stages the speaker must undergo before plunging into the water. The line "I go down" is repeating that symbolize this slow descent; as she cannot dive into the water all at once; rather, it is a gradual process that requires her to undergo the different levels of her coming of age before she can enter the unfamiliar water.

For now, the speaker seems still in the familiar territory. The line "The oxygen immerses me" prove this line. We usually use the word "immerse" to talk about liquid, when we submerge something. So this word choice makes it seem like the speaker is swimming in the air. We certainly can feel a sense of safety, of normalness in the line "the clear atoms of our human air". It will be just an obvious point for us if we look at it at glance, but the speaker would like to emphasize that we as human being are very dependent of the air. Since humans must breath air in order to survive, it is not normal for humans to enter the sea, to become part of that world. Now, we see the equipment. The flippers are unnatural equipment for the speaker because it makes her "cripple" and "crawl like an insect". All these process of changing world are scary, hard and awkward especially if you get through them alone. Now we can see that the speaker is emphasizes loneliness again, reminding us that "there is no one to tell me when the ocean will begin".

*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  
it pumps my blood with power  
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.*

(Line 34-43)

If we look at this poem so far, it moves pretty slowly. This is a poem about diving, and it took us a third of the poem to even get near the water. In any case, things get going here. The entry into the water is a rush for the speaker, and also for us as the reader. The light fades away as the speaker goes deeper, and that changes the color of the water. It goes from blue to even bluer to green and to black. All of sudden the speaker says "I am blacking out", and we can almost feel the panic and the pressure and the choking feeling. And then, just as quickly things seem to be okay again. The mask then fills the speaker's lungs, and

everything clears up. But even once that first panic is gone, the speaker still has to deal with the ocean.

Here too the ocean is a stranger for the speaker, although maybe not so frightening anymore. The diver is learning to move underwater, to get used to the feeling of actually being “inside” the ocean. The ocean is completely in control though, and the diver cannot fight it, cannot use his or her power. There is a bit of alliteration here too, in the “s” sounds of sea and story. Rich uses these poetic techniques lightly, but effectively.

*And now: it is easy to forget  
what I came for  
among so many who have always  
lived here  
swaying their crenellated fans  
between the reefs  
and besides  
you breathe differently down here.  
(Line 44-51)*

In this unknown world, it is very easy to lose one’s way. She has come to the ocean and she almost goes too far and begins to get lost in the underwater world. She is surrounded by the creatures of the sea. Rich explain that there are reefs and the creature have “*crenellated fans*”, that is sort of a mysterious image. Literally, the crenellated means that a thing has notches, little gaps along it is edge. It just like when the top of the castle has little openings in it, it is probably looking like it has teeth. The word “*fan*” could be the waving top of a fish’s fin, or it could be a piece of seaweed that is shaped like a fan. Either way, we start to get an image of a rich, beautiful world under the water. It is also enough to make our speaker “*forget what I came for*”. Everything is different down here, even the most basic things have change: “*you breathe differently down here*”.

*I came to explore the wreck.  
The words are purposes.  
The words are maps.  
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*

*(Line 52-60)*

At the beginning of this section, things become more abstract. U till now, we have been hearing a straightforward story about a diver entering the water, now the speaker steps back and talks back about why she came here, and what this

journey is about. She has heard or read about this wreck before; we could assume it was probably from "*book of myths*". However, reading about something is not the same as seeing and touching it. As the speaker says: "*The words are purposes. The words are maps*". This is the reason why we travel, why we explore. We could hear anything about TajMahal in India, from everyone or from something else. But none of those are the same as going there.

In this poem we heard about the dive, but we do not actually doing it. We certainly got the "*purposes*" and the "*maps*" but maybe not the thing itself. So that is the general idea behind these few lines. But it probably will not surprise to hear that it is not just about shipwreckhere. She will not come out and say it, but Rich is pointing us toward other issues. These words could apply to many different disasters. If we struck with disaster, we always have to ask: what did we lose, and what is left behind? That is what actually the speaker means by "*the damage that was done and the treasure that prevails*".

*the thing I came for:  
the wreck and not the story of the wreck  
the thing itself and not the myth  
the drowned face always staring  
toward the sun  
the evidence of damage  
worn by salt and away into this threadbare beauty  
the ribs of the disaster  
curving their assertion  
among the tentative haunters.*

*(Line 61-70)*

This stanza is one of particular importance to the poem, as it reflects change and growth. The speaker realizes that to move forward she must put the past or "*the myth*" behind her and correct the faults within her. She has found what she has come for by learning life lessons from her confusion.

*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*

*(Line 71-77)*

The speaker seems mature now. As the speaker says "*the words are purposes*", "*the worlds are maps*", that is way she explore. She is now an experienced woman, she is realizing the advantage of her role in society. The merman's "*armoured body*" indicates that he is more powerful than she. This acknowledges the advantages of being a man in society. The description of her

hair, which “*streams black*” display the darkness she experienced when she was going for the first time diving into the wreck. The shift in this stanza indicates that she is once again feeling overwhelmed by the unfamiliar experience, as well as perhaps oppressed by the dominant role of men in society. The last line “*I am she: I am he*” suggests that she has grown and become strong enough to embody the advantageous qualities of both men and woman.

*whose drowned face sleeps with open eyes  
whose breasts still bear the stress  
whose silver, copper, vermeil cargo lies  
obscurely inside barrels  
half-wedged and left to rot  
we are the half-destroyed instruments  
that once held to a course  
the water-eaten log  
the fouled compass*

(Line 78-86)

The line 78 is in parallel with the line before, 77. So we need to read the together: “*I am she: I am he/whose drowned face sleeps with open eyes*”. In here we can see that our speaker not only become androgynous, having the characteristics of a man and a woman, but now she has become one with the dead men and women on the ship. Now, it is a very sad and horrifying scene. The “*drowned face*” comes back, and we see and feel the weight of the ocean on the breast of the dead. All of the objects on the ship look like a sorry sight. There are some of treasures describing in the line 80: “*silver, copper, vermeil...*”, these are not kind of treasure that make you excited. It is proven by the speaker word: “*....left to rot*”. The other things on the boat includes “*half-destroyed instruments*” a “*water-eaten log*”, and a “*fouled compass*”. The scene is very messy, a total disaster. All the useful things on the boat have been destroyed and scattered.

The “*drowned face*” now “*sleep with open eyes*” signifies she is aware, because her eyes are open, that she is being oppressed. Her “*cargo*” is the weight that she carries from her past experiences, and the burden she feels as a woman.

*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.*

(Line 87-94)

This stanza represents the action of pull away from the ship, almost like a camera zooming out at the end of a movie. Suddenly the speaker is not just a merman or a dead woman. The speaker of the poem has become everyone: "We are, I am, you are". We all become wreck divers. We are all "the one who find our way/back to this scene". We all become victims and survivor of disaster, all recovering searching, and exploring. The poem, in its last lines, circles back to the camera and the knife, closing a loop with the first lines. It ends, though, on the book of myths: "in which/our names do not appear". We have had an intense personal experience. Maybe sad, maybe healing, maybe both. But this experience has not been recorded in the book; it is removed from the myths. Even our existence is invisible, ignored. Here we get just a glimpse of Rich's anger about the silencing of human experience. This last line leaves us to think about the ways that human history has silenced our voices and made our personal disasters seem invisible. At the same time, it offers us the hope that we can change this fact, that we can rescue our stories from the book of myths. Because the act of writing this poem is a way of "diving into the wreck", of confronting and salvaging the disasters in our lives.

This poem deals with big, beautiful images of an underwater dive. It spends a lot of time on the details, laying out the scene, showing us the fish and the weeds and the ruined cargo of the ship. The images come to us in short, sharp bursts, one line after another. It is easy for the readers to get lost in these images, and that feeling of almost being enchanted is important. At the same time though, it would be hard for the readers to ignore the other things going on in this poem. Especially when they get to the stuff about the mermaid and merman, and whenever we read about "the book of myths". Rich is a major feminist poet, and she may be using this story of a dive to ask questions about gender, history, and the importance of our own experiences.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### Conclusion

After analyzing two of Rich's feminist poems, it can be concluded that these poems express her great feeling or sense of rebellion against the condition of society at that time. Why? It was because there was a great amount of differentiation between men and women in patriarchal culture. Adrienne Rich examines the dominant role that men have in society. In which they oppress women into thinking that they are lesser-humans and insignificant. Rich was developing a voice and encouraging other women obviously in her works. She can identify to the marginalization of woman and makes it evident that what women long is freedom.

The struggle of the women's right was represented by feminism, the way women discriminated in the patriarchal culture that nullifies the human right. In order for the women to be recognized, they need to be honoring themselves first. It is also the first step of feminism when a woman acknowledges herself as a respectable and qualified being. It is the true feminism when a woman is able to decide what she believes and walk through it.



**Suggestion**

After doing the analysis and finding the conclusion, the writer would like to deliver some suggestions that there are still more interesting topics which can be revealed from Rich's poems. In the future this thesis will be useful to enrich the knowledge and understandings about the idea of feminism itself in order to struggle against patriarchal culture and woman's stereotype.

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