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Exposition of Mythical References in Adrienne Rich's Selected Poems

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Abstract

This study centers on Adrienne Cecile Rich's selected poems and investigates the excessive use of mythical references. It further explores how the use of myth serve the poet's own experiences of life and reflect her personal memories in the poems is my research objective for which I have used Roland Barthes and Northrop Frye's ideas related to myths, to prove the research claim I have used Roland Barthes "Mythology" and Northrop Frye's "Anatomy of Criticism" for theoretical support. This study exclusively focuses on analyzing Rich's selected poems "Diving into the Wreck", "Living in Sin", "Trying to talk with a Man", "Snapshots of a Daughter in Law", "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" and "Planetarium" in terms of mythical reference. This study interprets these poems to approach towards the essence how she has implied the mythical references to show the reality of women in the context of patriarchal society. Implication of myth is purposeful in the aforementioned poems with the intention of making identification with real life situation but looking from the eyes of women wearing the glass of myth.

Keywords: Myths, gender identity, patriarchy

Exposition of Mythical References in Adrienne Rich's Selected Poems

Adrienne Cecile Rich in her poems concerns about the mythic realities in relation to the gender issues. Her poems entitled “Diving into the Wreck”, “Living in Sin”, “Trying to talk with a man”, “Snapshots of a Daughter in Law”, “Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers” and “Planetarium” have been studied with the purpose of analyzing them in regard of examining mythical references. Myth concerns with historical realities and sayings about the people, places and things about historical, cultural and religious perceptions. It focuses on heroic activities about god, goddess and god-like-things whereas Adrienne Rich's selected poems symbolically refer to the demon, angel, ghost and ghostly things with historical connectives with the evil spirits. Therefore, the above mentioned Adrienne Rich's selected poems are the depictions of misrepresenting the status of woman through the use of mythical reference as a tool where males are taken as superiors from the time of early historical periods of gods and goddesses that continues up to now and women are perceived as a means of pleasing for them and believed to fulfill their certain dreams and desires. As a form of conscious living being, women nowadays are trying to resist and they want to make them free from the historical fragmentation of myths and modernity that are reflected in her poems.

This research uses concepts of myth from Ronald Barthes and Northrop Frye which demystify institutions and concepts that appear to be natural or neutral in conceptual illusions. The study uses myth from gender perspectives and tries to oppose the ill-intentions and wrong practices of the historical connectivity. This study also focuses on contemporary issues concerning the gender role and the issues of female that have been portrayed in her poems respectively. She has employed the mythical references relating to the persona of her poem that I choose to study in this

thesis. These poems have been particularized in the issue of gender to include personal mythmaking connecting with the political relationships.

My study on Rich's poems focuses the idea of myth as created by the male chauvinistic society and seeks for the freedom of women that they want to create their own identity. Till today, these selected poems have received ample reviews from the modern critics and researchers who break the boundaries from historical practices and the modern academic take over in her subject matter that she has basically focused upon. Rich is conscious about historical sayings, social beliefs and need of social transformation through the poetic projections.

The American poet, essayist, feminist and creative artist Adrienne Cecile Rich was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on May 16, 1929, and she died in 2012. She is primarily influenced by her father, as a consequence of which she encouraged herself not only to read the poems of other writers but to write with her own imagination. She flourished her interest in literature within her father's library, where she read the work of writers such as Ibsen, Arnold, Blake, Keats, Donte Gabriel Rossetti, and Tennyson.

She became deliberately involved in anti-war, feminist activism and civil rights. She received major prizes, companionship, and international acknowledgement for her work. She was called one of the most widely read poets of the second half of the twentieth century. Rich's first poetry collection *A Change of World* was selected by renowned poet W.H. Auden for the "Yale Series of Younger Poets Award". She is recognized as a revolutionary female writer for depicting the image of women by using mythical references in American society. Like many other mid-century poets, she is extremely troubled by a world which is more and more fluid. She can be considered as an intellectual and expert viewer who can observe happening factors of the society by observing all the issues happening around. She grasps far away the

prevailing level of suffering in her poetry. And what she sees in her society is beyond her tolerating level. Collecting all her eagerness of her poems, this study has grasped one of these common myths in Adrienne Rich's selected poems.

Rich in her poems brings many mythical references from the Bible and contemporary social political issues. It is essential to understand the mythical references the poet is using in her poems in order to perceive what she is particularly trying to convey to the readers. Without understanding the myth, it is difficult to feel the depth of her poems. Rich's poems, "Diving into the Wreck", "Living in Sin", "Trying to talk with a man", "Snapshots of a Daughter in Law", "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" and "Planetarium" deal with oppression of women and she uses mythical references to delineate the situations of oppression.

Women, in benevolent society, force for change and feminist movement has overelaborated the formation of women. At the time of 19th century female circumstances changed to some range. At that time many American female poets were reflecting back upon the painful and discordant history of this century from the perspective of the oppressed and they talked about semiotic biasness and were misrepresenting the myth. Later on, from the mid-1950s, she started to give the date to her poems for a historical context.

In her time, poetry was written about the politics, war, bravery, economics and power which gave first concern to the male. But Rich's modern poetry presents the modernity, the poem shows the problem of discrimination, and raises an issue of breaking up and indifference in the lives of women. Her poetry provides a strong belief in women's freedom and their desire. Rich depicts the problems of patriarchal thoughts imposed upon women and how they have been commoditized by society. Patriarchal thoughts exploit them and they get themselves isolated. In order to prove

her points, she uses a lot of mythical references. During her time, many American woman poets were reflecting back upon the painful and unjust history of this century from the perspective of the women. Woman is still tracked by the affectionate notion and wrong social practice.

The mythical reading of her poems provides a rich diversity of analysis in the poems. While the origin of myths date back to classical times, we find the meaning associated with women. Woman is still tracked by the patriarchal norms and values as they are supposed to restrict themselves within four walls of house. So, in Adrienne Rich's selected poems, "Diving into the Wreck", "Living in Sin", "Trying to talk with a man", "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law", "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" and "Planetarium" deal with mythical connection to the oppressed women. Mythical elements concern with a group of people or culture based on their ethical, ethnological and the cultural connectivity. Most of the myths are associated with women and they tell us a lot more about the women as inferior and men as superior. Most of the women related mythical stories are based on man's desire about female ability.

Myths can be found in human origin and today's modern cultures, too. It concerns with traditional practices of myth making. Myths explain the things based on the sayings and stories which may carry out the historical truth and some stories may be fictional.

Adrienne Rich's poem "Diving into the Wreck" first published in a collection of the same name in 1973, suggests that there are many probabilities of recapturing and re-learning who we are. Presuming the concept that culture does not represent women as a submissive character, not having self-identity but is defending the mixed culture of Mermaid and Merman. Man can take control of womanly attributes and woman can be masculine in nature. In the portrait of poems, she dramatically realizes

this segregation and also explores the relationship of isolation and brutality.

The poem seemingly is about the description of obligatory preparation to go underwater and explore the wreck. Speaker goes under water using the ladder and her personal dedication alone to find out wreck as it is. When she reaches down, she realizes her true and critical role she has been playing in society. This analogy of her journey from land to underwater stands for story of women in everyday life.

Analogically, this symbolizes how women, in patriarchal social structure, should be explore of the wreck or the damage. Their identity given by patriarchal social structure is not absolute. And for cutting that structure apart, feminist literary criticism acts as the sharp knife. In this poem, the vivid description and terrifying circumstances while moving underwater world symbolize the hardship of women:

black and I'm 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. (36-41)

These lines depict that her determination is powerful. Due to her awareness about the falsification of women in the myths, and her strong will power to probe into the truth, speaker is ready to bear the hard work and pain.

This poem concerned with myths and storytelling. The poem advocates for equality and expresses that there may be possibilities of rediscovering and re-learning who we are and what book of myths tell about us. Her most of the poem are about discovery, myths, awareness and freedom. Similar myths "angel", "monsters", "demon" can be found on certain poems.

The poem "Living in Sin" presents a supposed couple's living-together stories in which the girl has to bear the responsibility of the homely works. They are together before marriage. The title itself is mythical which depicts the religious thoughts. The word 'Sin' is related with Christianity, not only 'sin', we find many words which are related to the Bible's deadly sins. The poet is using these mythical references to show the women's position in religions.

Rich's poem "Living in Sin" explores women's expedition from feminist perceptions. In this poem, a woman wants to entertain her relationships but her physical environment is so embracing. The relationship she expects and the relationship is actually altered. Further, the relationship as it literally is with giving mythical reference: "rubbed at his beard, went out for cigarettes; \while she, jeered by the minor demons"(18-19). These lines indicate that her relationship is beyond her expectation.

In this poem, the poet distinctly uses descriptions of woman lifestyle, mostly voiceless life, to convince the poet's sentiments regarding love and relationships. On the ground of her poem, we become in a position to find her lover having the nature of ill-mannered and unpleasant. Therefore, she finds unpredicted relationship. This poem is written from the perspective of homemaker. A woman in the poem "Living in Sin" is just like an object in the house. She must do everything for her man's inner instincts and lush desires. She is just an instrument for her partners. She is there for cleaning house and pleasing her husband.

This young woman is filled with intellectual agony, hunted by the 'minor demons' of disheartened and disappointed. The saddest part of the poem is annoying discussion between man and woman, demonstrating the absence of actual conversation about their relationship. One of the best known features of Rich's poetry

is the way it combines political and individual deal with using mythology.

The poem "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law" expresses the thoughts of women and explores the numerous sides of a women's life, experience, sorrows, happiness, and struggle for their rights. The poet giving a woman character who is working in her house constantly suffers of societal dominance. The society, that values women not as a support in financial or economic aspects but they prefers to interpret them in physical aspects who should lure the male creature with their physical appearance, and they should be intoxicated by her overwhelming beauty. We can assume that the poet has intentionally selected the characters daughter-in-law but not sister or daughter in order to disclose the position of a woman who could hardly be able to live as an independent daughter but a dependent 'daughter-in-law'. The anxiety of a modern woman and her perseverance to liberate herself from conventional unaccepted society can be clearly seen whether in a metaphorical or symbolical way. Furthermore, the woman who is compelled to confine herself within the four walls of house finally gets aware of herself, about her freedom, desires and rights.

Rich's depiction of a woman as a monster refers to a various female figures assumed and brought from mythology. Mainly myths about the inferior position attributed to women can be frequently found in her poems. In this poem, mythical references like as "the angels", "monsters" etc. depicted the reality of women in society, "A thinking woman sleeps with monsters"(26). This shows that the intellectual women's are seen as "monsters" because of their capability to think and express themselves to the world of reality from the monolithic space. We can analyze the poem moving from patriarchal thoughts to revolutionary thoughts. Finally, the characters of this poem openly express their feelings and thoughts about their life.

They are getting aware of their rights and go beyond the conventional thoughts.

The poem begins with explanation of a weak older mother-in-law. Mother-in-law examines very carefully in order to find information about her daughter-in-law. She speaks of her daughter-in-law for traditional womanly characteristic who herself is ready to welcome as an emotional character favoring to follow all the traditional notions that the society has given to them. Whereas, the daughter-in-law, opposing her mother-in-law's manners, shows herself as absolute character with rationalizing concept. This poem has meticulously brought the mystic component in a way that appears unavoidable:

Banging the coffee-pot into the sink
she hears the angels chiding, and looks out
past the raked gardens to the sloppy sky.
only a week since they said: Have a patience.
or held her hand above the kettle's snout
...right in the woolly steam. They are probably angels. (13-22)

In this fourth stanza of the poem, the annoyance and aggressiveness of a supernatural character "angels" can easily be predicted in these lines. It seems as if the poet has deliberately employed this supernatural character in order to provoke the psychological imbalance of a woman emblematic of her chaotic representation. This mythical character here is trying to awake woman to manifest her hidden desires and freedom. For the sake of giving rise to a psychological tension of the woman daughter-in-law, here "angels" as a myth appears for her moral sense.

This poem explores the numerous viewpoints of a woman's life, surrounded with agony and sovereignty with the connection of myths. The poem closely turns round the woman after engaging herself in a relationship. After she engrossed herself

in conjugal life, she is obliged to fulfill her responsibilities and she must face societal norms or traditional thoughts. The poem shifts from rebuke mind to comprehensive (understanding) mood. Women have to face oppressive attitude in all society; the poem shows how women react on this attitude towards women. Here, both are blended with patriarchal values and norms. In this poem, mother-in-law suggests her daughter-in-law for the traditional attributes, but daughter-in-law tries to convince herself as a modern woman. She loves to live free and wants to enjoy her life. She has strong thoughts about her life and desires. Later on, mother-in-law also realizes that she should express about their feelings or rights. From this we come to know that, sense of bitterness, guilt, image making, and suppressed anger is mainly depicting in this poem.

The poem "Trying to talk with a man" depicts the condition of a couple through discussion about the desolation of land after having a trail by a pile of bombs in unselective methods. This idea has been portrayed in the poem. After going through the poem, we come to realize the real cause of originating devastation and chaotic surrounding around. By applying these images of bombs, the writer wants to have comparison of their relationship with bombs on trial. Like testing bombs, their relationship also has been tested again and again whether they are sheltered or calm. In this poem we can find the relationship in the operation of cracking where there is no trust of recover gratification. The woman trying to have a conversation with her husband shows her last hopeless attempt to get back fresh relationship.

They talk to each other about the public incident. Here we become aware that they are lacking in their attitude is deconstruct and decline result of care and love in their tongue. What they mostly wealthy in their relationship is dramatizing their thoughts to each other; as a result, their efforts to recover their fresh relationship went

in self-admiring.

Their exciting expeditions are contrasted with mythical references of alien landscapes. The poems referring to the "ghost towns", followed the image of "deserted arid", "deformed cliffs" and "succulent plants". Their relationship is over, nothing is left to resolve their relationship that can be attempted to save her married life.

Rich's poem "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" deals with the woman being oppressed by so-called patriarchal thoughts. Here, Aunt Jennifer wants to live fearlessly and with desires of freedom, but her life is beyond her expectation. She designed a fearless "tiger" which is bold and brave but she is not like "tiger". Tigers live in jungle; they are fearless and strong among other wild beasts which will never be exploited by other beasts. But women who live in this society are threatened of societal norms and values, basically the society which only accepts the woman with universal etiquettes and ethical behavior. We can analyze Aunt Jennifer surviving in the state of fear of her husband. By presenting the concept of "tiger" the poet shows that woman wants to live like fearless "tiger", but in reality "The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band\Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand." This "wedding band" seems to be a hindrance for her steps towards freedom. In this poem, Rich writes:

The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band

Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand.

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. (7-12)

Aunt's dead body fears of the presence of her husband even after her death, the fears

which she is unable to eradicate because of her wedding ring that still exists in her hand that she never forgets even after her death. Here, the words, "dead", "terrified", "ringed", "ordeals", "mastered" depict the fears of Aunt Jennifer towards her husband as well as darker side of her life. Her life before engrossing herself in conjugal life has eventually been overtaken by this marital relationship. At first she is so imaginative creator and seeks for liberation. She has an internal desire to live like daring 'tiger' which she has designed. Her wish to live freely presented in a negative way because of the burden of her husband.

She is living under the supremacy of her husband. Adrienne Rich does not convey her idea straightly but assembles the readers to understand her feelings through myths and symbols. Her designed 'tiger' is a symbol of boldness, expressive, forwardness, which she does not take over. The poet has generated an image of a woman's life, that she is ill-treated by her husband.

The poem "Planetarium" demonstrates the sense of detachment, struggle and unpredictability. The poem begins with woman in the circle of the night sky. The poet shows the necessary preparation for planetary observation. The line "measuring the ground with poles" expresses the various aspects of careful and exact tasks that are required to be done for the planetary observations. Women are playing ample of vital roles for these observations, but dismissing their self-esteem and identity, their effort are being hidden by the society. These are various painstaking and precise tasks that William and his sister Caroline are doing, but name of Caroline does not appear anywhere. Nobody feels indispensable to give respect to Caroline for her contributions. That is why, she is in isolation, dilemma and in a confusing state about the things which was happening around her. At last, the poet advocates for peace not for direct conspiracy and conflict not for being allocated in history.

Rich, in her poem, provides images and thoughts in ordinary conversational language. Her poems entitled “Diving into the Wreck”, “Living in Sin”, “Trying to talk with a man”, “Snapshots of a Daughter in Law”, “Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers” and “Planetarium” receive a lot of response till date. Through the language the poet comes across and structures the myths. In most of her poems, she is extremely concerned with the implication of myths. In her prior time she centers upon the symbolism, image-making and myths that language grasps. Rich’s multiplex voice is established by mythical references. She acknowledges that the myths encircling women in traditional unjust way.

As Roland Barthes in his book, entitled as *Mythologies* argues that "Myth has the task of giving an historical intention a natural justification, and making contingency appear eternal...formally myth is the most appropriate instrument for the ideological inversion which defines this society" (142). That means the myth has been an essential tool to insert or present the ideas of author in front of the reader. He establishes the idea that myth is the literary device to assert the writers’ point of view or political stand in implicit way. By standing on the ground of myth, ideas to be convinced are identified by the readers. Therefore, his idea of myth is borrowed as the significant theoretical framework to study the above mentioned poems.

Similarly, the idea of Northrop Frye on the myth has also been abstracted in order to provide the theoretical framework on this research paper. As he defines:

...myth as the same world looked at as an area or field of activity, bearing in mind our principle that the meaning or pattern of poetry is a structure of imagery with conceptual implications...The world of mythical imagery is usually represented by the conception of heaven or paradise in religion...in the sense of that word already explained...in which everything is potentially

identical with everything else, as though it were all inside a single infinite body. (136)

As he argues that the myth is the world created by imagery in accordance of the people, that is to say author with intention of creating meaning within that world. The world being "identical" to the real world. From this it can be concluded that, myth is the imaginary world created by the author within which writers attempt to assert their ideas with the world pattern of imagination. Author achieves this goal through the identical pattern or structure even within the imagery of the world view.

Furthermore, Claude Lévi-Strauss claims, "Human societies merely express through their mythology, fundamental feelings common to the whole of mankind, such as love, hate, revenge..." (428). By this, it is evident that the purpose of the mythological references as the device is implemented not only as literary device but as the means through which implied message is expressed in texts. Roland Barthes writes that, "Myth is not object, a concept, or an idea but a language, a type of speech. It is a mode of signification and is defined by the way in which it utters its message. He cautions that there are no eternal myths; it is human history that converts reality into speech" (639).

Through this connection he has specified the idea that myth is all about created utterances which is surrounded by the thoughts of the people that they have occupied after engrossing themselves in the field of experiences. Going beyond the signification of myth, it is revolving around how people express their ideas by using language. Before uttering specific sentences of their ideas, they relate their idea to human history. So, in a way, they relate human history before uttering specific sentences that ultimately convert reality into the form of their language.

James Schroeber analyzes the development of archetypal criticism in the

1950s as the beginning point. He argues that it appeared in the time of linguistic approach to literature. At that time, only formalist approach to literature prevailed. Its equivalent practice was new criticism in America. Northrop Frye appeared in the scene to train graduates from English Department in the study of myths as such in literature. Schroester argues:

The more obvious reasons for the development of archetypal criticism, especially the variety associated with Frye, can be seen in the situation in the universities at the time archetypal criticism made its appearance in the early fifties. At that time the fashionable criticism was formal criticism. Based partly on the antirom theories developed by Hulme, Eliot and Richards during the World War I era, the formal criticism began to take shape in the English and American universities during the 1930s. Before that time, literary study was not concerned with “criticism” at all. Professors of literature were “scholars” rather than “critics”. (545)

Myth criticism gave a new turn in the study of literature, making the analyst critic. Earlier they were just scholars. It added a new dimension in the study of literature. Adrienne Rich also added new mythical dimension in her poems. She explores the value of mythical references relating with gender equality. Thus, myth is all about how human approaches to human history and how they convey their ideas in the form of language. Hence, it is all about human creation.

We can relate this idea to Rich’s poems, noticing all the aspects of women misevaluation in mythical representation. She argues that women's existence in the writing is the result of male oriented creation. Belief of patriarchal society plays vital role in what they have focused in the writing. And my journey of this research also excavates the idea that mythical representation of women is only the result of male

created thoughts in their writing which is just an absurd with no concrete evidences. Adrienne Rich in her poem depicts the women's reality by using mythical references; some references are satirical and some are presented in a new way of understanding women. Therefore, above mentioned theoretical perspectives are the framework to study the poems and implied meaning is carried out by the implementation of myth.

Mary Slowik in her article argues, "Anger does not explore or express feelings, but rather releases them, and these feelings are not particularly sensitive or refined. Anger associated with feminism is even more problematic" (142). What she basically intends to prioritize is that women have trouble in finding a focus for displaying anger in their poems because their frustration varies according to the context as their frustrations are so wide-ranging that can be regarded beyond expectation, especially when it is about the women expressing their hostilities. The most privileged idea that she particularly focuses is about the anger of women where she claims that objects of women's anger range from specific husband and children to the larger injustice of a patriarchal society to the suppression of certain value systems.

The aim of this study is not to dispute Mary's idea but to show that the interpretation of women etiquettes can't be concretized and is not absolute but in fact they are misinterpreted in every aspect of their nature. In order to present this idea, I have collected Rich's poems as evidences where she has protested misinterpretation of women by using mythical references.

Adrienne Rich's selected poems highlight issues of identity through mythical references. The poet, refusing the inequality between male and female, advocates for the commencement of same sort of environment for them both. The poet using mythical references in a new way to discover the truth, proves that the myth is human construction according to the social, cultural and religious set up.

Thomas Myers argues that, “women interpretation is the result of imaginative use of the fact that will connect the war and its immense associative power to an existing body of myth and history”(121).It means that women are misrepresented in the writing of war period which is the consequence of faith in power. The people holding power, they have the prominent contribution in manipulating the representation of women focusing on clichés the ideas that they have displayed in their writing. My exploration departs from Thomas and insists the idea that women misinterpretation is indeed the consequences of male-chauvinism, the thoughts of the society where it believes that the women are confined themselves within four walls of a house. It portrays the women condition in the society and advocates for equality.

The poem “Diving into the Wreck” is the absolute question over the base structure of benevolent society. In this poem the speaker states, "first having read the book of myths" (1), specify to the preset identity of women by patriarchal society, where women are either misrepresented or not represented. Therefore, the speaker of this poem is unsatisfied to the books of myths, the one "in which\our names do not appear" (93-94). Identity of women is drowned deep into the dark ocean like the wrecked ship. Existence of them is vanquished into the massive pool of patriarchy. The imposed identity of women by so called men of the society is not the real one.

As the feminist critic Alicia Striker suggests that, “the thing itself is mythical that there is no reality separate from subjectivity” (33). The prevailing identity of women is male view centered and mythical. Therefore, speaker in this poem is preparing herself to the journey of hardship for discovering their real identity, existence value, and relearning about things itself not the story of myths.

The social ship is wrecked by the chaos generated by the myths. The myths or thoughts about female created by patriarchal society have biasbecause of the

boundary between males and females. Their role and relationship are as Christian feminist states "distorted, damaged and destroyed". Binary opposition is revealed as a result of such partiality in the society. Women are not supported to the journey of exploring their identity. They has to do themselves. As the poet writes,

I put on
the body- armor of black robber
the absurd flippers
the grave and awkward mask
I am having to do this
not like Cousteau with his
assiduous team
aboard the sun-flooded schooner
but here alone. (4-12)

She means to say that if any man has attempted to do anything he would have been supported and guided by many people even the society provokes him either through the exaggeration of his ability or manipulating his ways of thoughts but here the speaker is a woman and she is alone in her journey. According to the speaker, these kinds of chaos are created by the male dominated society. Thus, speaker's intention is to explore the causes of damage and reform it through diving.

Women's will power for seeking the truth out of ocean is require for protecting existence of themselves. As Helen Cixous appeals for revisiting myths in her essay, "The Laugh of the Medusa" (33). Likewise, speaker in this essay also is preparing herself for adventure to discovering her true identity and dismantling the previous myths created in society as she mentions', "first having read the book of myths" (1). She seems to be well known about how the myths underestimates women from past to

present. As Rachel Blau Duplessis argues that, "Rich's choice indicates that the invention of self-exploration and reevaluation of myths is crucial to her..." (199), which is also reflected in the poem through the confession of speaker that she makes an appeal for revisiting the myths already created: In *Theories of Myth*, as Percy S. Cohen argues:

A myth is a narrative of events; the narrative has a sacred quality; the sacred communication is made in symbolic form; at least some of the events and objects which occur in the myth neither occur nor exist in the world other than that of myth itself. (337)

Thus, the poem dismantling the myth which is created by the male chauvinistic society. Persona of this poem also highly determines to proceed her mission though she is quite alone.

Speaker has foregrounded the difficulty or hardship while gaining identity or existence. When the speaker states, "I go down.\ Rung after rung" (22-23). She seems not in mood of giving up her mission despite her "Oxygen immerse" (24). As Laura Jackson refers in her poem, "As stone suffers of stoniness\so I of my whoness" (5-8). Since speaker is alone in her journey, there is no one to guide and direct her toward her destination. There might come obstacles, challenges while in the way to the destination of discovering "whoness". But still women should focus and be eager to head toward the goal of finding themselves. Until and unless they are not ready to bear the pain, their identity is not possible to gain.

To understand or internalize all the circumstances that live in the deep level of the affectionate society is challenging but myths are essential instrument to do operation of such structure. Kate Millett says, "a feminist critic set out to kill the angel\monster image of women..." (40). She argues, "re-reading the book of myths,

women began to wonder where our stories are” (40). Similarly, the speaker also has a strong ambition to self-recognizing for existence’s sake. She also starts asking troubling question about herself about ‘who is she in real’.

Speaker’s mission is not only dealing with the myth but rather it is a mission “to explore the wreck” (52) and “to see the damage that was done\and the treasures that prevail” (55-56). Here, when speaker mentions the word "damage" which seems to hint to the bizarre world where male and female are guided by the false consciousness that is discrimination. Her announcements pave a way for her to proceed her journey and makes clear that, “the thing I came for: \the wreck and not the story of the wreck” (61-62). It tends to indicate the fact that speaker is making point of departure from the old previously written myths and books representing women falsely. Hallman Dianne argues, “They may represent less commonly told stories but they still conform to the patriarchal tale” (38). Therefore, persona of this poem is postulating her idea that women should not only revisit to the previous myths rather more focus should be given on diagnosing the rupture made by patriarchy system between men and women as well as on the identity of women.

As a result of her courage, speaker of the poem reaches her destination. She says:

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 bold.

I am she: I am he. (71-77)

Here, speaker seems to be praising her own courage to dive into the wreck in quest of her existence. Our society tends to associate masculine traits to the men but here speaker has dared to challenge the established convention and question over the social norms. As a result, she refers herself both as "she" and "he". As Rachel Blau duPlessis examines, "Adrienne Rich's 'poems are epiphanies of self-discovery and moments of sacramental rededication to the self' (200). Here also, through the description of reaching the destination by speaker, the poet seems also portraying the scenario of self-discovery and realization.

Acknowledgement of self-potential to build up own identity is illustrated as the outcome of toil of diving into the wreck. When the speaker of the poem with her courage and fearlessness explores her true self going beyond the boundary set by her society, she is able to recognize her ability and describe own self as, "whose drowned face sleeps with open eyes\whose breasts still bear the stress" (78-79). Usually, women as DuPlessis argues, "women put on the mask the culture has long made available to them...thus, hiding the intensity of themselves...and prevent themselves from seeing or telling truths about themselves" (201). But when she dives into the reality, she recognizes her potentiality. She is able to unveil her hidden reality from herself for so long by the society.

"Diving into the Wreck" suggests all the women to be courageous to search their true self and existence. When she states, 'by cowardice or courage\the one who find our way' (88-89). Until she had not dived into the wreck of the society, she was doomed to the illusion created to hide her reality. When she dares to explore hidden truth she is now addressing all the women in general by saying, "we are, I am. You are" (87), to be fearless and made attempt to question over the existence of self. As DuPlessis quotes, "discovering womanhood and personhood are one seamless quest"

(200). Therefore, women should not hesitate and frighten to ask questions over their identity until they find true reflection of them.

In the poem "Living in Sin", Rich exposes mythical references in many ways. The title itself is mythical. The word "Sin" indicates the original sin, the story of Adam and Eve.

The poet links the "angel" and she says that the river moves at "an acute angel of understanding". This portrays the speaker and her husband finally gains knowledge of a unpleasant nature. Percy S. Cohen, argues, "My beliefs are a strong conviction, you're a dogma, his a myth. Myths, on this view, are erroneous beliefs clung to against all evidence. The term is then synonymous with fallacy and old wives..." (337). Story of Adam and Eve is a kind of myth. In this story, Eve is presented as villains or the cause of human downfall. Here, the persona of this poem is not the cause of downfall of man, but she is supporting her partner's ambitions as a musician, after her support he is not working hard. Her dreams or goals have disappeared under housework. As Frye writes: "The real interest of a myth is to draw a circumference around a human community and look inward towards that community, not to inquire into the operations of nature." The poem "Living in Sin" depicts the woman's contributions towards her husband to fulfill his ambitions and desires.

The poem "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" is all about Aunt's fear and her desires of freedom. She has been overloaded by the responsibility of married life, has become the man's property. "When Aunt is dead, her terrified hands will lie\Still ringed with ordeals she was mastered by" (9-10). This line indicate life after death which is a myth. Many religions like Hindu, Christianity, Judaism and Islam say that life after death has been promised by god. Using this kind of mythical references, the poet is trying to depict the unending torture of Aunt Jennifer's husband.

The poem "Snapshots of daughter-in-law" is depicting anger, woman's frustrations and their thoughts about what they should do and what shouldn't. Title of this poem symbolically refers to the personal indication connecting myth to the image making about women.

The poem "Trying to talk with a man" firstly explores the value of relationship and love, the line, "the language of love-letters, of suicide notes"(12), firstly suggests a time when their relationship good. However, the language instantly follows by "language...of suicide notes", these words intend to share the darker and gloomy aspects of their relationship.

The silence of "the ghost town" depicts the silence between them. Rich's famous quotes, "Ling is done with words and also with silence", this idea is well presented in this poem. Where they "walking at noon in the ghost town\surrounded by a silence" (18-19), good moments together are contrasted with the mythical references of "alien landscape", "its ghost towns". Here mythical reference "ghost town" suggests that their failing relationship, alien landscape also portraying fear of relationship.

Rich in her poem "Planetarium" tells that their struggle is as old as the ancient cultures, who first made-up stories about the stars. Rich brings the story of the struggle through references to stellar phenomena that have only recently been come across with this problem:

Thinking of Caroline Herschel (1750-1848)

Astronomer, sister of William; and others.

A woman in the shape of a monster

a monster in the shape of a woman

the skies are full of them. (1-5)

These lines compare women and monster resembling them with each other's features

and characteristics; "the shape of monster" and "the shape of women". This shows women in the shape of a monster. "Monster" is a mythological character; it reveals many astronomical methods but it also indicates women being oppressed from society.

This poem presents the idea that monsters are in the "shape of women". Bodily representation of women and their shape have been illustrated as monstrous. This occurs religion and myth concerns the condition of "the moon", "the skies", "monster", "constellations" and other imaginative things depict that the women who are devalue and disrespect considering them as monsters. Constellations concern with the religious beliefs and social sayings are often taken from myths.

Adrienne Rich, bringing mythical references, gives images and ideas in natural conversational tongue. The persona of this poem has a desire to live with respect and pride. She is hardworking but her contribution is not acknowledged by the society:

She whom the moon ruled
like us
levitating into the night sky
riding the polished lenses. (11-14)

These lines depict that female can rule over the universe. The "moon" is presented as mythical female figure, who gives lights to this world. In absence of moon, we can find darkness and shade. The word "moon" has references of goddess in religions and myths. Here, using mythical reference "the moon", the poet is actually intending to a woman who can lead the universe and are free from traditional notions. The word "like us" connects the modern women. Rich elucidates her idea by providing mythical references, images and opinion about women in natural and casual tongue which is very impressive. This poem tries to expose a gender role that has been rooted

mythically and culturally.

Rich's selected poems focus on family relationship because they do not have good family ties. Their mental problems caused by not having a good relationship are presented in all of her poems. The bad relationship caused by gender discrimination is shown. These poems represent unhappy relationship because the man is not fulfilling his responsibilities. The poem tells the story of women's experience and love. The poet represents the fundamental inequality of relationships between men and women. Some poems present marriage with a negative light. Most of the selected poems depict how women are mastered and controlled by their husbands and societal thoughts.

In conclusion, this study analyzes the exposition of mythical references in Adrienne Rich's selected poems. In these selected poems, patriarchal allusions are exposed well in myths that have referred to the world of women suffering to expose the women's identity and their history of existence. Therefore, these selected poems advocate for self-exploration and discovery of women by themselves in a new way. The study excavates the mythical mysteries of chivalric activities that encourage women to get their real self and identity with prolonged history of ancient women hidden inside the curtain of social and socio-cultural bars.

Thus, through these selected poems, the writer sheds light on the contemporary condition of the women in society and argues in favor of equity through the implication of the literary device, myth. From this, the study argues that implication of myth is purposeful in the aforementioned poems with the intention of making identification with the real-life situation but looking from the eyes of women wearing the glass of myth. The study leaves the space for the further researchers to connect the myth and mystery from the modernistic approaches.

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