ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF FEMALE VOICE IN ADRIENNE RICH

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Abstract

Always renewing and transforming itself, Rich's poetry is an incarnation of human artistry reflecting human growth and change. Following a chronological vein, one cannot help but notice that Rich starts her literary mission as a conservative formalist following masculine aesthetics in *A Change of World*. However, gradually in *Diving into the Wreck* Rich turns to an overt radical feminist protest against the dominating patriarchal system which excludes women from the book of myth. Finally in *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far* Rich lets go of the male and turns to genuine female aesthetics creating a purely female myth. The present research, focusing on these stages of Rich's poetic journey from *A Change of World* through *Diving into the Wreck* and finally to *A Wild Patience*, aims at analyzing Rich's poetic development in terms of Showalter and Cixous's feminist analyses.

Keywords: Adrienne Rich, Helene Cixous, Elaine Showalter, feminism and femininity

1. Introduction

Rhetoricians have challenged the function of language as a neutral mirror of objective reality; rather they assert that it plays a powerful undeniable role in shaping human experiences and perceptions of the world. Having such view of rhetoricians towards language in mind, feminists consider the structure of language as being gender-based functioning both as a means of expression and repression. Lacan, utilizing Derrida's term, illustrates the phallogocentric structure of language to refer to the privileging of masculine in construction of meaning throughout the patriarchal history. Lacan believes that Western thought is based on systematic oppression of women's experience brought about by the phallocentric structure of language which allows no place for feminine writing. Due to the control of men over their territory, according to Cixous (1975), women have been confined to live in a narrow room where they have undergone an unconscious brainwash throughout the whole history. Once they learn their name, they are also taught that "their territory is black" because they are considered to be black. Women are taught that their "continent is dark" and dangerous. That is how women's horror of their "dark" places have been internalized and at some point, as it seemed to be, eternalized. Riveting us between two horrifying myths of the Medusa and the abyss, the patriarchal society has made us to believe that ours is too dark a continent to be exploreable. (349)

Patriarchal thought has limited female biology to its narrow specifications. The feminist vision has recoiled from female biology for these reasons but now, as Rich (1986) asserts, it should come to view "women's physicality as a resource rather than a destiny" (188). Therefore, while phallus is a masculine metaphor in phallocentric language introduced by Freud and Lacan, female body is the source of meaning in "écriture feminine." Going with such attitude towards language and femininity, Adrienne Rich

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rediscovers female experiences in her poems through using what Cixous calls "écriture feminine" or female writing. Through viewing women's sexual difference as a *source* (of imagery) rather than a point of inferiority to men, Rich exhibits the productivity and plurality of women's language and experience that allows another birth to the woman-within of the poet. Through using genuine female art forms which serve to subvert the phallogocentric structure of discourse, Rich brings into being the symbolic weight of female consciousness, illustrating the oppressive forces that obstruct female expression, and create a female space of expression in her texts.

In a society where language becomes an instrument in the hands of the males, Rich undergoes a risky project through which she evades the "discourse that regulates the phallocentric system" (Cixous, 1975: 353) Through a chronological look at Rich's poetic career, one can understand that Rich undergoes a process of evolution in reflecting female voice in her writing. The present study aims at analyzing the female modes of writing and expression in the poems of Adrienne Rich throughout different periods of her literary career. The current research shows how Rich's manner of writing changes from a conservative and subservient female writer to a radical feminist who aspires for what Showalter calls a female wild zone of experience.

2. Discussion

Throughout the whole patriarchy a woman is pushed to internalize the standards of the dominant culture and to imitate its established modes of writing and behavior. Internalizing the male assumptions about female nature, women under such government try to write "equal to the intellectual achievements of the male culture" without daring to display an original, innovative and independent art. (Showalter, 1979: 35-6) Accordingly, at the beginning of her female literary career, Rich was merely imitating the established modes of expression; her works were, thus, hardly self-defining during that period. Having been nurtured under the guidance of an exacting father, Rich was thoroughly influenced by her father who demanded her to write through strict established forms and meters. She tried to copy verses in his study and to compose traditional rhyming poetry to satisfy her father's aspirations. (Langdell, 2004: 9-12)

Therefore, Rich became a proficient prosodist under her father's education with his advocacy of masculine aesthetic refinement which led Rich to write following male aesthetics. she was taught the poetic craft of such male poets as Frost, Dylan Thomas, Donne, Auden, MacNeice, Stevens and Yeats whom she was assigned to read and who affected her first two volumes of poetry with their "elegantly crafted, tightly rhymed, prize-winning poetry" (Martin, 1984: 175). This is what feminists like Cixous and Showalter have always tried to put under question; they believe that women "have always read *men's* writings" and their writings have always been affected and shaped by dominant masculine literary canons. (Showalter, 1991: 21) In such a society, language becomes an instrument in the hands of the males through which they govern the forms of expression and thus silence the female for whom masculine forms of expression do not function to convey their real life experiences. (Cixous, 1975: 353)

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2.1. The Conservative Rich in *A Change of World*

The evidence of Rich's early poems, especially those included in her *A Change of World*, proves the effects of male literary canon in Rich's early writing. Poems in *A Change of World* reflect the influence of male aestheticism particularly that of Auden. What Auden lauds in these poems is the echo of his own voice imitated by a school girl who seeks the approval of her pedagogic and paternal elders. Jarrell affirms this idea in his review of Rich's poems by mentioning such traces of male literary tendency as that of Auden's on Rich's writing; he describes one of her poems as "getting one of Auden's old carbons for Christmas" (qtd. in Wasley, 2000: 157). Detecting the causes of such female tendency towards male aesthetics, Showalter (1979) asserts that "we are both the daughters of the male tradition, of our teachers, our professors our dissertation advisors, and our publishers— a tradition that asks us to be rational, marginal and grateful". Women writers had to struggle against such "overwhelming odds" to write, publish and gain public approval. (39) Since the most prestigious and intellectual pieces of writing dealt with formalism in such a condition the only thing that the female writer could do was to compose through the "scientific language of formalism and structuralism, to play Dorothea to these Casaubons" in order to gain approval of the judges. (Showalter, 1975: 460) This is the role which Rich played for such Casaubons as Arnold Rich, a believer in formalism, and Auden in her first formalist volume of poetry.

Talking about the doubtful male-oriented poetic process during her starting steps as a poet, Rich in her *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence* maintains that "in those years formalism was part of the strategy" (1979: 40-41). She had no other choice but to be an obedient daughter to her male masters in order to gain approval of the judges to publish and to establish her as a creditable poet in masculine literary circles. Rich uses the traditional craft of poetry to conceal her rebellious ideas which she was not prepared to risk consciously at the time. She tries to communicate her feminist ideas through different male accepted media including formalism, traditional prosody, and sound patterns.

"Mathilde in Normandy," for instance, at the surface level seems to be dealing with the story of a subservient woman, Queen Mathilde, William the Conqueror's wife, who after her husband's departure for the war stays at home weaving the "Bayeaux tapestry, which depicts the Norman Conquest of England." Therefore, superficially it is the story of a passive subservient woman doing a *proper lady*'s pastime; an apparently trivial job which is set at contrast to her husband's duty to go to the battlefield. The poem is a thorough depiction of Rich's use of formalism and emotional detachment from what she narrates. Nothing in the poem catches the male critic's attention but the beauty of imagery used in it and "if there are 'knots' in this poem, they will slip by without much notice." Rich's craft approaches to what Auden dubs Rich's *A Change of World* with and praises for, that is, "a capacity for detachment from the self and its emotions without which no art is possible." But Rich uses this formalist distant surface, appreciated by the male critic, and the metaphor of weaving "as metaphor for ordinary female creativity" as a strategic device to render her forbidden thoughts or, to quote Keyes, to handle certain unorthodox materials. For the conscious reader, beyond the superficial portrayal of a

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dependent, passive and submissive woman, this poem deals with such themes as the creative power of women and their "envy of man's freedom to roam, to fight, to vanquish." (1986: 25-8) This is a subject which Rich cannot openly acknowledge to be meant by her but which is voiced through the disguise of her formalist male aestheticism creating a "double-voiced discourse" containing both the voice of the dominant and the muted. (Showalter, 1981: 201)

Likewise, in "Aunt Jennifer's Tigers" Rich intelligently portrays women's predicament, generally, and her own situation, specifically, as a female artist through the disguise of an obedient female writer following masculine formalist style of writing. The poem explores the tension between "the protagonist's creativity and her social circumstances." The dominant institutional discourse and its definitions exerts an agonizing influence over Aunt Jennifer's sense of self making her to be "terrified" and "mastered" by its power. (Werner, 1988: 14) The word "master" is profoundly significant in that it illustrates the mastery or domination of patriarchy over a woman that is reflected in demanding a mastery of form from the female artist. (Langdell, 2004: 26-7) But the poem is written in "perfect quatrains in iambic pentameter" conforming to the male aesthetic preferences. (Langdell, 2004: 26) It also portrays Rich's "traditional use of accent clusters," approved by her masculine supervisors but, ironically enough, the accent clusters used in the poem portray both "the oppressive atmosphere of her marriage […] and the world of her creative transcendence." Moreover, the rapid tempo, which Rich uses for the tigers before disturbing the rhythm by the introduction of the wedding band, represents the power of such an art. (Werner, 1988: 15)

> Aunt Jennifer's fingers fluttering through her wool
> Find even the ivory needle hard to pull.
> The massive weight of Uncle's wedding band
> Sits heavily upon Aunt Jennifer's hand.
>
> 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. (Rich, 2002: 4)

Besides, the image of a traditional woman weaving tigers through her wool is very much helpful to Rich's feminist purposes. Aunt Jennifer's embroidery functions as a disguise to prevent any doubt of the masculine literary circle for her anti-femininity. But the fact is that the tigers in Aunt Jennifer's piece of quilt are not merely the art of a traditional woman subservient to the trivial roles prescribed for her by the patriarchy; rather they serve as a symbolic embodiment of the confident female artist who is certain of her innate powers, "fixed and framed within the screen, as within the art form" (Yorke, 1997: 25). This is exactly the case with Rich herself who is hiding her power behind her formalist art frame. Therefore, although caged behind the bars, Rich displays a glimpse of the feminist insights which are going to fuel the fury of her later writings through the picture of a submissive female writer accepting the bars of her cage.

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Thus, as the woman persona who disguises her real power, the suppressed tiger, behind her needlework, as an act of submission to the patriarchal role prescribed for women, so does Rich through disguising her feminist ideas behind her submissive craft.

2.2. The Radical Revolutionary Rich in *Diving into the Wreck*

Cixous and Showalter criticize conservative manners of female writing as seen in Rich's *A Change of World*. According to Cixous, a fear has been internalized in women throughout patriarchal history with regard to writing of themselves since theirs is a "dark continent." Thus, women have been drawn to use a phallogocentric discourse which is inadequate and even repressing for women to express their female experiences. The imposed phallogocentric speech pattern used by women exhibit powerlessness and inferiority, thus, women need to make their own language through changing the present phallogocentric language and adopting a more powerful speech pattern that allows them to express their real feeling. A woman, Cixous insists, "must write of herself and her body to break from the phallogocentric system." Helen Cixous, Luce Irigaray, and Julia Kriesteva, as mothers of poststructuralist feminist theory, consider women as trapped in their own bodies by a language that does not allow them to express themselves. Hence, they exhort to a feminine mode of writing or what Cixous (1975) terms as "écriture feminine" as the "inscription of female body and female difference in language and text" (347). On the other hand, Showalter (1981) also emphasizes that a "literature which is always pulling down blinds is not literature. All that we have ought to be expressed— mind and body— a process of incredible difficulty and danger". Women should not stop on working within the limits of male discourse and their accepted manners of writing. (191-3) Female writing, Showalter (1979) asserts, cannot and should not go "forever in men's ill-fitting hand-me-downs". Women's literature must free itself from the accepted male models of criticism and guide itself by its own impulses. (37)

Throughout patriarchy, according to Showalter (1977), women have internalized their feminine conflicts and never directly mentioned them in their writings but they deeply feel the need for a movement beyond self-sacrifice and self-repression; they deeply feel the need for rebellion against the masculine tradition and for confrontation with patriarchal society and culture. Hence, by discarding the conventional ideas of dependence that were held up for their admiration, women turn their back on the tradition in which they were nurtured. Thus, feminist writers indiscriminately abandon the old bonds— denouncing their (literary) fathers— and servitudes, demanding "self-realization", freedom of individuality and personal will. Casting away "the old probes and veils", feminist writers are determined to know and say everything, no matter how ugly and outrageous. (227-8)

Rich undergoes the same process in giving voice to female experiences. After following the tradition of her old masters and never directly identifying herself as a feminist in such conservative volumes as *A Change of World*, Rich in *Diving* bids farewell to an old way of love and "an old grammar of loving". Talking about her early poetry, Rich notes "I was trying, to write about the craft of poetry. But I was drawing on the long

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tradition of domination, according to which the precious resource is yielded up into the hands of the dominator" (qtd. in Wasley, 2000: 162). But Rich's voice in *Diving* transforms to a robust voice of protest in American poetry. Starting strong political identification with feminism, Rich in *Diving* challenges the "unfit world" which handles the male the power to control and determine what roles shall the female play and what shall not, exactly what was done to Rich in her first period of writing through affecting the content and style of her writing. Diving down into the depths of the wreck of her psychic and cultural past, the mission of the persona in the title poem, Rich plunges to her primal origins in order to return to the root to find the origins of such an oppressive state for women: (Keyes, 1986: 138)

> I came to explore the wreck. …
> I came to see the damage that was done
> and the treasures that prevail. …
> the thing I came for:
> the wreck and not the story of the wreck
> the thing itself and not the myth (Rich, 1973: 23)

Here Rich pronounces the origins of the present oppressive status of women in the culture brought about by patriarchy which gives destructive powers to the male. Therefore, Rich (1979) believes, if women are to survive the detrimental effects of the culture in which they live, they must not only overcome the "drives" that impel them to play the roles which have been prescribed for women throughout history by the patriarchal culture but also express their anger towards such a system for imposing subservience on women throughout history. (123)

Thus, the strength of *Diving* comes from Rich's rejection of her early subservient poetry and enactment of her deep-rooted wish to explore the depths of the scars. Beginning such a mission, Rich knows that one must "reactivate the old wounds, inflame all the scar tissue, [and] awaken all the suppressed anger". Rich in *Diving* explores the old wounds which infect the whole human civilization and makes them squeeze out. (Vendler, 1993: 310)

Hence, the predominant feelings exposed in this volume of Rich's poetry are anger and hatred which is tangible even in the title of the poems included in *Diving* like "Burning Oneself In", "Burning Oneself Out", "The Phenomenology of Anger" which act out women's thirst for violence that Rich could not render in her first volume of poetry. Female anger and frustration, Showalter (1977) asserts, is expressed more directly in the feminist phase than had been done before; women's hostility towards their male counterparts is illustrated through "violent action" in the feminist phase. (160) This change of tendencies in female writing could be evidently traced in Rich's *Diving* especially when compared to her former volumes of poetry. There is a major shift of attitude in Rich's *Diving* in comparison to her *A Change of World*. In *Diving* Rich finds the courage to abandon masculine strategies of writing in favor of direct and public confrontation with masculinity. Using strong personas with a direct voice of anger, Rich (1973) gives voice to her rage as a source of energy releasing women from the social norms that are imposed

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on them by patriarchy throughout history: "My visionary anger cleansing my sight" (19). Rich believes that "anger is a creative force" that throughout history women have not been allowed to experience. Patriarchy has led women to live a life in which "their survival and self-respect have been so terribly dependent on male approval". Thus, starting a strong political confrontation with masculine dominance, Rich calls for "the Erinyes", the goddess of vengeance, to compensate for "the damage done to women in Western civilization in the name of reason, logic, and intellect" (Martin, 1984: 197-8).

Therefore, in *Diving* Rich shows a tendency to denaturalize patriarchal hierarchy of values through transforming her poetic form and voice from "an apolitical formalist poet to that of an intensely politicized feminist poet writing in open forms" and reflecting the suppressed conflicts within women's lives. Thus, Rich's rejection of the carefully crafted impersonality of her early poetry, as "institutionalized forms of representation [which] certify corresponding institutions of power", is followed by an expansion of her poetic voice to include feminist issues and women's experiences along with untraditional poetic forms for accommodating such issues which formalism cannot fully render. (Strine, 1989: 28)

Such a change of voice and form in Rich's poetry in *Diving* could be elucidated by looking at one of the poems included in this volume. Men's egoism and superficial pretense to objectivity is the target of Rich's criticism in "Meditations for a Savage Child" as well; as representative of all male supporters' self-deceptive care and pretense to objectivity, Dr. Itard's care for the child (symbolizing women) through his male thread is severely criticized in the poem. Hence, the poem is "about the use that the male artist and thinker— in the process of creating culture as we know it— has made of women in his life and work and about a woman's slow struggling awakening to the use to which her life has been put" (Keyes, 1986: 144-5). "Meditations" draws a parallel between Dr. Itard's efforts to civilize the savage child and those of men to control women. Therefore, the child, for his vulnerability to his scientific supporters and for his resistance to their dominating social roles, becomes a symbol representative of all kinds of victims under patriarchy: "*You have the power/ in your hands and you control our lives*" (Rich, 1973: 62). Thus, through the image of a savage child, the poem discloses Rich's disgust of the patriarchal system of education and childrearing. It is as if Rich, having been brought up under such an educational system by her male masters including her father and masculine literary circle in her first period of writing, is now in her feminist phase of writing portraying the use to which her life has been put in her first period of literary creation and is trying to articulate those unsaid words, which she conservatively left unarticulated in her early volumes of poetry, through female writing.

Therefore, the real anger of the poem is targeted towards parents, as the original educators and governors, for creating scars on women's bodies. Rich in the following lines, taken from "Meditations", reflects the "self-serving foundations of patriarchal language and social values" imposed on women through patriarchal education: (Strine, 1989: 37)

> In their own way, by their own lights
> they tried to care for you
> tried to teach you to care

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for objects of their caring: …
to teach you names
for things
you did not need …
to teach you language:
the thread their lives
were strung on (Rich, 1973: 55-6)

It seems as if Rich here is talking to her father who, supervising her education, led her to care for the things he cared for through assigning her the books of the writers whom he "cared for " and imposing their manner of writing on her writing which suppressed the voice of the real Rich. Rich, through using ecriture feminine, gives voice to female existence; the child's scars, which bear witness to the child's "buried pain", are symbolic of Rich's pains as a child and as an early female writer who could not openly articulate her criticisms against such governing educational system which rendered her and other female poets speechless: "when I try to speak/ my throat is cut". These scars, as Rich describes them a "hieroglyph for a scream", become a metaphor for the violence done to the female poet by embedding silence in her and also by making her use imposed forms of learning and expression which fail to adequately render her meanings and finally result in an obliteration of her voice and identity as a woman. (Yorke, 1997: 52) Besides, in the bold rebelliousness of the savage child, who does not care for the objects of the civilized people's caring, Rich finds the unruliness which she and all other women must have shown under patriarchal education. Rich, "scarred by that process of socialization and nurture" under patriarchy, now in *Diving* calls for "re-education" which is one of the characteristic features of radical feminism. (Vendler, 1993: 305-10)

Rejecting her early subservient poetry which defines female in terms of the masculine norms and values communicated through patriarchal educational system, Rich in *Diving* turns to define the human in terms of the female. This is what Cixous's ecriture feminine demands from the female writers who abandon the conservatism imposed on them by patriarchy. Women, as Showalter (1977) notes, have traditionally been considered as "sociological chameleons" who have historically been allowed only to adopt lifestyle, class and culture of their male counterparts. Hence, refuting masculine culture, women in their feminist phase of writing form a subculture, within the larger framework of a whole society, unified by common values and experiences making their way for direct self-expression. Emblematic of women's writing during this period is, therefore, the presence of fantasies of Amazon Utopias, that is, perfect female societies. Such fantasies of female utopias function as visions of a flight from male dominated world to a culture defined in opposition to male tradition. (159)

Such images of strong bonds within female subculture appear abundantly in Rich's poetry in what Showalter calls as women's feminist phase of writing. Rich not only criticizes the burden of masculine forms and tendencies on female writers but also breaks out of the patriarchal boundaries, creating a bond with other women (writers). Illustrating such tendency of Rich's, the poems of *Diving* are filled with the lives of both the oppressed and rebellious women such as Marie Curie, Elvira Shatayev, Willa Cather,

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Emily Dickinson, Audre Lorde, Rich's mother, her mother-in-law and her grandmothers. Such a tendency of Rich's displays her "deeply held belief in the necessity for bonding or community among women" and the necessity for building an Amazon Utopia, a no-man's land free from all oppressions. (Bennett, 1990: 226)

Rich in *Diving* shows her belief in the fact that there is something to be born in women and she loves this incipience. In Diving women appear "hand in hand, stumbling and guiding each other/ over the scarred volcanic rock" (Rich, 1973: 12) escaping to the imaginary which is the imaginary world of Amazon Utopia of female community free from all male oppressions and open to ecriture feminine.

3. **A Genuinely Female World of Ecriture Feminine in *A Wild Patience***

Showalter (1977) believes that after the radicalism of feminist phase of writing in female writers' works, there comes the female phase of writing in which female writers begin to develop a new manner of writing, insistently female, which "celebrates a new consciousness". In this phase, women let go of the male and rather stick thoroughly to their own female experiences and values trying to "unify the fragments of female experience through artistic vision". Showalter, quoting Woolf who points to the same period of female literary development, elaborates more on this attitude of female writing saying that "it is courageous; it is sincere; it keeps closely to what women feel. It is not bitter. It does not insist upon its femininity. But at the same time, a woman's book is not written as a man would write it". In this period of female literary development, Showalter asserts, women look at men as outsiders. They consider men's writings as "sterile, egocentric, and self-deluding" and believe that the entire literary tradition, which men had a monopoly over, has misinterpreted feminine reality. Therefore, women in this phase try to present female reality as it really is not as it has already been presented by male literary writers and critics. (240-3)

Hence, moving towards female aesthetics in her female phase of writing, Rich in *A Wild Patience* turns to redefine the female. In this volume she tries to speak of women, either women of consequence or anonymous ones, as they themselves would like to be heard. The fact that she aspires to redefine Dickinson and claim for her already trampled rights is emblematic of such a direction in Rich's writing. Trying to protect Dickinson from interpretive comments by all scholars who claim to know her, Rich in *A Wild Patience* sets to represent Dickinson with her own words as a female writer not as she is defined and interpreted by the male critics. Thus, in "The Spirit of Place" Rich addresses Dickinson to rescue her from all intrusions and her memory from the oversimplified and trivialized picture that the male experts have created:

> with the hands of a daughter I would cover you
> from all intrusion even my own
> saying rest to your ghost
>
> with the hands of a sister I would leave your hands
> open or closed as they prefer to lie
> and ask no more of who or why or wherefore

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with the hands of a mother I would close the door
on the rooms you've left behind
and silently pick up my fallen work. (Rich, 1981: 43)

Not letting the truths of women's lives, including that of Dickinson, to be obliterated again by the patriarchy, Rich calls for pure female aestheticism as it existed in the past and as it still dwells in the hearts of women not as it is presented by patriarchy.

Rich's poems in *A Wild Patience* display a call back for women's self-representation and self-creation, characteristic of Showalter's female phase. Rich notes that we must return to what has been lost in women's history, "the lost collection"; therefore, having read the "book of myths/ in which our names do not appear" in *Diving* in which she finds women excluded in patriarchal myth, Rich in *A Wild Patience* turns towards nurturing a female myth in her new poetry. For this purpose first she starts with retelling historical misrepresentation of women through patriarchal media. Rich believes that the images of women delivered through history by medium of "textbooks, museum labels and cultural myths" are false images. That is why she asserts that women must be interpreters, participants and practitioners of their history and myth rather than being merely detached observers who fail to claim their rights. Thus, in *A Wild Patience* Rich claims authority for women, a process which involves acceptance of "incompleteness of our historical circumstance". Such a process is evidently traceable in "Turning the Wheel"; in section three of "Turning the Wheel", entitled as "Hohokam", which is named after a prehistoric tribe that mysteriously disappeared from the desert, Rich criticizes the label of the museum of Hohokam— "those who have ceased to be". Such a label indirectly dismisses the existence of such a tribe, as female myth is totally dismissed, rather than "imagin[ing] its reality". Templeton (1994) notes that Rich is referring to the fact that history has "banished the Indian woman's ghost and irrevocably erased the traces of her historical reality" (93). Therefore, subversive to the elimination of women's myth and tradition from the face of history, Rich in *A Wild Patience* recollects women's real history and myth. In this volume she tries to "demystify false images of the past and false representations of women's lives", which was brought about by male agents. (Templeton, 1994: 93).

Hence, Rich's focus on the female is now inspired by "mythmaking". Such an attitude of Rich's in *A Wild Patience* could be traced in the sixth section of "Turning the Wheel" where Rich, having discovered the effects of colonization on the land she journeys to in this poem, turns to a goddess, a shamaness, who functions as a female artist. (Keyes, 1986: 198) Giving a vision of a goddess, Rich tries to focus on how "Unborn sisters" will see her, and female writers like her after developing the new female tradition. Conjecturing the appearance of the goddess in these lines, Rich asks us to acknowledge her and be brave enough to look at her in the eye and tell the unborn girls how she looks like in order to make her recognizable for them as well since she is the ancient goddess, the Great Earth Mother, the essence of the female which dwells in every woman. In other words, truthfully conceiving the shamaness, Rich "revises and revitalizes" historical and mythological concepts. (Langdell, 2004: 153-4)

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Thus, having undergone the conservative feminine period of writing in which Rich acted as a conservative subservient female writer in *A Change of World* and her rebellious feminist phase in *Diving*, Rich now in her female phase in *A Wild Patience* "turn[s] within" (Showalter, 1977: 240) Turning to pure female aestheticism in her female phase, Rich does not merely rise against the masculine (literary) dominance as she did in her feminist period of writing rather she looks at *women*'s texts and uses them as sources of power. Through these texts Rich creates a female utopia or a woman-identified text in *A Wild Patience* which allows women to speak as they themselves would like be heard. Such texts, which Rich symbolically refers to, are the only places where women are allowed to turn within themselves for sources of power as opposed to the oppressive male powers that has already dominated their whole lives.

4. Conclusion

Having been educated under the supervision of a male-oriented system of education, Rich starts her literary mission as a conservative formalist following masculine aesthetics in *A Change of World*. In this phase of her writing, Rich does not dare to disobey the masculine aesthetic preferences. Therefore, Rich in the first period of her writing shows up as a subservient female writer portraying submissive women through strict masculine formalism in her poetry. But gradually she finds the courage to break the bonds of traditional modes of expression and to question male dominated structures in the content of her poems in *Diving*. Rich in *Diving* mounts an overt radical protest against the dominating masculine structures which suppressed female power throughout the whole history. Rich in this volume of her poetry changes to a disenchanted questioner who draws on the necessity of reinventing cultural standards in feminist terms. Finally, having been frightened by the perspective of a feminist art which, challenging the masculine forms, walks on deadly borders, Rich in her last period of literary development in *A Wild Patience* lets go of the male and rather turns to genuinely female aesthetics**,** calling for a purely woman-centered vision and a genuinely female art form in her poetry. Reflecting such extreme transformations, Rich's poetry is a thorough embodiment of human artistry reflecting human growth and change.

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