

## Use of Symbols in Adrienne Rich's *Diving into the Wreck*

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### Abstract

Rich's essays and poetry from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s have been considered her most radical in part because in them, she rejected her earlier use of androgyny and seems to make a case for feminist separatism. Rich's vision of a perfect society for woman is very attractive and ideal one. She has always perfection in her feeling that makes her a confidence lady. She will be defined solely by her reproductive function, her understanding and experience of life will give her a vision as effective and as commanding as history has known.

*Diving into the Wreck* presents a less privatized and more mythologized version of the theme in *Walking in the Dark*. Rich again creates a setting that merges the ruinous state of modern civilization with the damaged sexuality of the self. The poet begins the imploration alone, but she suggests that others have risked such journeys toward clarification. In a passage that Rich and most readers now find problematic the solitary explorers modulates into an androgyny as she approaches the wreck. The poem showcases the world and its reality and symbols help and expand our understanding.

**Keywords:** Gender, Postcolonialism, Culture and Anarchy.

Adrienne Cecile Rich (1929-2012) was an American poet, essayist and feminist. She was called one of the most widely read and influential poets of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and was credited with bringing the oppression of women and lesbian to the fore front of poetic discourse.

Adrienne Rich was born 19 may, 1929 Baltimore, Maryland, the older of two sisters. Her father the renowned pathologist Arnold Rich was the chairman of Pathology at the Johns Hopkins Medical School, and her mother, Helen Elizabeth (Jones) Rich was a concert pianist (before she married) and a composer. Her father was from a Jewish family, and her mother was southern Protestant, the girls were raised as Christians. Adrienne Rich's early poetic influence stemmed from her father who encouraged her to read but also to write her own poetry. Her interest in literature was sparked within her father's library where she read the work of writers such as Ibsen, Arnold, Blake, Keats, Rossetti and Tennyson. Her father was ambitious for Adrienne and "Planned to create a prodigy." Adrienne Rich and her younger sister were home schooled by their mother until Adrienne began public education in the fourth grade. The poems sources and *After Dark* document her relationship with her father, describing how she worked hard to fulfill her parent's ambitions for her moving into a world in which she was expected to excel. Her first collection of poetry, *A Change of world* (1980), was selected by the senior poet W.H. Auden for the Yale series of younger Poets Award,

Rich gained her college diploma at Radcliff, Harvard, where she focused primarily on poetry and learning writing craft, encountering no women teaches at all.

In 1953, Rich married Alfred Haskell Conrad, an economics professor at Harvard University, whom she had said of the match. "I married in past because I knew no better why to disconnect from my first family... I wanted what I saw as a full woman's life, whatever was possible (243)." They settled in Cambridge and had three sons the birth of David in 1955 coincided with the publication of her second volume, *The Diamond Cutters*, a collection she said she wished had not been published that same year, she also received the Ridgley Torrence Memorial Award for the Poetry Society of America. Her second son, Paul was born in 1957, followed by Jacob in 1959. Some most important works of Adrienne Rich are, *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* (1913), *Necessities of Life* (1966), *Diving into the Wreck* (1972), *An Atlas of the Difficult World* (1991) and *Tonight No Poetry will Serve* (2011).

*Diving into the Wreck* is the collection of the book\_of poems by Adrienne Rich. It is an extraordinary one. The pre-dominant emotion seemed to be anger and hated and these are certainly present in the poem. *Diving into the Wreck* is one of those rare books that forces one to decide about herself. It is instead a book of exploration of travels. The wreck she is diving into in the very strong title poem is the wreck absolved myth particularly about man and woman. It is a journey to something that is already in the past in order to herself the reality behind the myth. As explores she is detached, she carries a knife to cut short her memories, her way and cut structures apart, a camera to record and the book of myths itself.

This quest for something beyond myths, for the truth about man and woman about the powerless and powerful is presented by the book. The landscapes are diverse the first poem *Trying to Talk With a Man* occurs in a desert, which is only dry but also deprive of the human activities a place where bombs are tested like the wreck the desert is already in the past. The presentation is beyond salvation though not beyond understanding as in the landscapes of *Walking in the Dark*.

Giving her view that the wreck the desert, the wood lot cannot be revealed, the task of the woman, she is powerless is to concentrate not on fitting into the landscapes but on reminding herself creating a new landscape getting herself born This is a unique poem which convinces we most often when they are true to themselves as structures of words and images when they resist the temptations to diagnoses' when they preached at me "The words are purposes/the world are maps (Rich 52-53)".

Throughout the poem, a series of references to the symbolic illustrates how it breaks down in interactions with the real. As the liver becomes immersed in water, references to symbolic elements, such as ship's log and the book of myths, go increasingly negative. Aboard the schooner before the initial descent, the diver declares herself ready, "having read the book of myths (8)".

*Diving into the Wreck* is the record of woman's journey into corporate America. It is intended to be ironic that poem uses the image of diving down to describe the climb up the corporate ladder. As the narrator diver deeper into the ocean she is climbing higher on the corporal. This is intentional imagery because the deeper go in the ocean, the more pressure there is and the darker and murkier it gets. Once she arrives at the wreck, she has reached the glass ceiling before the narration embarks on this journey she equips herself physically and mentally the portion of the poem is very important because it shows that she will examine the wreck for herself. She is not interested in reading the book of myths and believing the glories and ideas of women in the work force as told by him. She wants to dive down, experiencing the wreck for herself, all the while recording camera as

mentioned in stanza on what she sees so that other women may benefit from what she learns.

To fully understand this poem, one must understand the culture and society that existed at the time Rich wrote it. The 1970s was a time of great change and dissatisfaction. American was in Vietnam and women were burning bras. This was long before the jay that Heather Locklear's roll on Melrose Place and it acceptable for women to wear feminine and sexy attire in the workplace. This poem illustrates the challenges women face when attempting to climb the ladder in the 1970s. It shows how they shed their femininity in order to be accepted by corporate America. It challenges all women to dive into the wreck. Thus, helping to save the way for future generations of women to highlight the ugly world that is controlled by men.

The first stanza of *Diving into the Wreck* describes the diver who is preparing for her courageous journey. She is getting ready for scuba diving. There is a reference in the book which represents knowledge of the male dominated world. The 'book of myths' contains the traditional views of gender roles. It continues to teach our nation that men have a place in the professional world while a woman's place is at home. The diver has read the book of myth so that she may combat the female stereotypes. She takes us through a list of the things which is needed to go diving. There is a cause 'a knife', 'a wet suit', 'same flippers' and 'a mask', her 'camera' to record her journey so that other woman would benefit from what she learns and accomplishes. The body armor is the business attire she must wear before the male dominated business community will take her seriously. The poem sets upon a contrast between the happy and lively world of 'Jacques Cousteau' and the lonely world of her Jacques Cousteau was an ocean explorer who made documentaries about his voyages. She wore a red slacking cap invented scuba gear and was basically everything which wants a clashing French explorer to be. She would have been the center of all kinds of Scuba activity; always helped by his assiduous team means hard working team she is totally alone.

The second stanza explains the opportunity for women to climb the corporate, for instance the reference is "The ladder is always there / hanging innocently (14-15)". Rich poses a very important challenge to all women, which can be read into the very important word change from "I" to "we" that occurs in this stanza Rich says that the women are aware of the quest for equality that lays before them, but few choose to accept the challenge. The journey for women into the tip top of corporate America is a difficult one, and it was ever more so in the 1970s when this poem was written. The idea is that a woman undergoes difficult battle, when it comes to trying to break into the male dominated corporate America and women need to rise up together. When some women choose not to take the "ladder", or the challenge, it hurts all women. In this stanza interestingly is that these lines are all about one thing which is 'ladder' It hangs off side or the back of a boat and dips into the water. It is for a diver to get into the separation between air and water between the space about the water and the world below it that is why this ladder waters in this poem. It is what allows you to cross between two world, to alone from between two worlds, to none from air to water, Now Rich takes her time, pausing to think about this ladder, to make us look at it that what fascinates her a different meaning once you have used it for people who are not divers, that ladder hangs there innocently. It is nothing special, people could walk right by it, or as she puts it is a piece of maritime florals or some sundry equipment means a little string from the both these phrases are meant to emphasize how ordinary this ladder is.

Stanza three and four of *Diving into the Wreck* describe the heroine's journey down to the wreck. This journey, through it diver into the ocean, represents the climb up the corporate ladder.

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. (*Diving into the Wreck 31*)

There is a symbolic analysis of the ladder. At the first it seems like an obvious point, but the speaker wants to emphasize the dependency of the diver on the air, since humans must breathe air in order to survive. It is not normal for human to enter the sea to become part of the world. This process of changing world is hand awkward and many be a little scary, especially when one is alone. She emphasizes loneliness again, reminding that there is no one to tell when the journey will begin. There is no one who could tell that 'when the ocean will begin'. The flippers that are trying to fit into corporate American are now crippling her. As she adopts the masculine clothing demeanor, and mind set she is losing herself.

In fourth stanza, she is describes so for things are moving pretty slowly she enter into the water is a rules for her to and the light fades away as the she goes deeper, and that changes the color of the water.

In fifth stanza she is finally into the male dominated corporate world and submerged herself in their masculine, having taken this intense which she finds difficult to remember. These women have had to fully assimilate into a man's world in order to further their caress. They even had to learn to sway "Their crenellated fans" in self defense against this now hostile territory. I come to see the damage that happened and the treasures that prevail. I stroke the beam of my lamp slowly along the... of something more permanent than first or weed (*Diving Into the Wreck 31*)".

She came to implore and investigate the business world. She wanted to see first hand the damage inflicted on al of womankind by assimilating into this culture and the rewards they could reap if they successfully penetrated the male dominated corporate. American, she slimes her light on this world in hopes of revealing all of its hidden secrets. She is searching for the permanent rewards of breaking the glass ceiling. In this section, things become more been hearing a straight for word story about a diver entering the water now she sleeps back and talk about why she came here and what this journey is about. She had heard or read about the wreck before but reading about something is not the same as seeing and touching it as she says 'the words are purposes (*Diving into the Wreck 31*)'".

The stories about corporate America are heard and the glass ceiling and discrimination faced by women who choose to have a serious career in business, but the heroine did not want to rely on the tabs of others. She wants to experience it for herself, and she is there, deep in the corporate world, she sees how being apart of this world kills our woman hood (drowned faces) In order to succeed in business, women must allow the feminine part of themselves to die. Many don't even realize they have killed off a part of themselves and is why they still stare towards the seen. 'And I am here, the mermaid whose dark hair streams black, the merman in his armored. We dive into the hold I am she; I am he' (*Diving into the Wreck 32*).The transformation, she has undergone has caused her to lose her femininity and adopt masculine traits.

In the eight stanza, when we read two lines together, they say "Iam she, I am he/whose drowned face sleep with open eyes (*Diving into the Wreck*)". She is not only androgynous but she has become one with the dead man and women on the ship. It is sad and horrifying seen. The drowned face comes back, and see and feel the weight of the ocean on the breasts of the dead even the objects in the ship are a sorry sight. These are some treasure some 'silver' and 'copper' and

‘vermeil’. But this is not the kind of treasure you get excited about. In fact she does not seem to care at all, and only notices that a tin has been left to rot, and a fouled compass. This is a scene of total disaster all the useful things on the boat have been destroyed and scattered. In the last stanza she wrote.

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. (Diving Into Wreck 31)

*Diving into the Wreck* presents a less privatized and more mythologized version of the theme in *Walking in the Dark*. Rich again creates a setting that merges the ruinous state of modern civilization with the damaged sexuality of the self. The poet begins the imploration alone, but she suggests that others have risked such journeys toward clarification. In a passage that Rich and most readers now find problematic the solitary explorers modulates into an androgyny as she approaches the wreck:

The mermaid whose dark hair/ streams black, the merman in his armored body/... I am she: I am he...” speaking, feeling and seeing for both sexes, the poet wants to witness “the wreck and not the story of the wreck/the thing itself and not the myth. Margaret Atwood notes that the wreck is “beyond salvation though not beyond understanding. (239)

The poem actually offers very little analysis of the wreck and quite a bit of explanation of how the wreck is approached, how the inquiry is carried out, and how the explorer understands mission and her/himself, other than describing true wreck of the self and of cullers as the drowned face and the half destroyed instruments that once held to a course the water eaten log the fouled compass, the poem focuses on the process and attitude of the explorer even the motive is value and not necessarily pure.

*Diving into the Wreck* offers metaphor for the crisis and necessity that could only be called a detached it in trying to talk with a man coming out here we are up against it my emphasis yet as cagey nelson has noted diving into the wreck is hardly a concrete or thoroughly grounded poem since line androgyny it supplies over simplifies sexuality and is itself a myth. (156)

For Nelson, “the poem demonstrates that one can suppress differing by mythologizing them in stylized and abstract ways however the poem attention to the process of exploring the wreck and not to the analysis of the wreck is significant for both Rich’s feminist theory and her poetic practice the poem has cleared ground, and unlike when we dead awaken it stops before it me constructs anything satisfied with creating a new signifying space rather than overly desperate to fill it. In fact, the ending returns us to the beginning of the poem and prepare for another exploration by again mentioning the knife, the camera and the look. Answerer says, the poem continually makes ready for the descent which we are then and now and perpetually just beginning (175)”. In its mythologized, abstract way, *Diving into the Wreck* conveys the dialectic between the epic feminist vision and the lyric feminist vision, as the diver and the wreck of culture coincide in image of the “drowned face.” While the modulation of the lyric “I” into the androgynous we present problems,

the strategy allows rich to avoid the potential egotism of realistic self dramatization and to expose the myth that the absence of One names signifiers we are same how unaffiliated by the reductive sexual ideologies that prevail. Like many others in the volume, this poem raises the question of origin, of where the split began (walking in the dark)". The privileges neither an external not an internal not an original unity but the common bond of incompleteness, loss, and disrepair shared by all selves.

Now she pulls away from the ship almost like a camera zooming out at the end of a movie as a dead woman. The speaker of the poem has become everyone we are I am you are we all become victim and survivor of disaster all recovering searching and exploring In the last line civiler back to the camera and the knife, closing a loop with the first lines we have had an intense personal experience may be sad, may be healing, may be both, but this experience has not been recorded in the book, it is removed from the myth. Even our existence is invisible, ignored. Here we get just a glimpse of rich's image about the silencing of human experience. And the last line leaves us to think about the ways that human history has silenced our voice and immune our personal disaster

This poem could be easily set in a cartoon world. Even line is like a phrase in a telegram. It is almost as if these words cost money and are doled out carefully as a result. We might even be hearing this over a warlike talkie as we stand on ship. We got little bursts from the diver below the water but no more information than we need.

The speaker may actually be experiencing intense amazing feeling, and we suspect there is a lot on behind these short phrases both he tone and the mission itself however are very controlled. She can't let anything get in the way of the mission the job is to look and to report back, and nothing will make our speaker lose sigh of that. Even when the report is about something as important and unfamiliar as the book of myth it is treated like a simple fact this sharp edged, all business tone makes really interesting contrast with the beautiful, strange, dream like world under the water In the book *A Separate Vision Isolation in Contemporary Women's Poetry* Deboarn Pope says: "the wreck represents the battered hulk of the sexual definitions of the past, which Rich, as an underwater explorer, must search for evidence of what can be salvaged. Only those who have managed o surmise the wreck women. Isolated from any meaningful participation or voice in forces that tied to the disaster are in position to write its epitaph and their own names in new books (178)".

Cheryl Walker says:

In the little poem, *Diving into the Wreck* surely one of the most beautiful poems to come out of the women's movement, the explorer – simultaneously male and female – achieves something close to a mythic destiny. The figure is passionate but with an isolation and passion transparent to the universal. The poem is utterly personal but there is nothing in it which draws away into private life. (*The Nation* 197)

Rich's essays and poetry from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s have been consider her most radical in part because in them, she rejected her earlier use of androgyny and seems to make a case for feminist separatism. Rich's vision of a perfect society for woman is very attractive and ideal one. She has always perfection in her feeling that makes her a confidence lady. She will be defined solely by her reproductive function, her understanding and experience of life. It gives her a vision effective and commanding as history has known.

Adrienne Rich was an American feminist and poet, longtime American feminist and prominent lesbian. She wrote more than a dozen volumes of poetry and several non-fiction books. Her poems have been widely published in anthologies and studied in literature and women's studies

course. She received major prizes fellowships and international recognition for his work.

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 needs ruined cargo of the ship. The images come to us in short sharp bursts, one line after another. It is easy for us to get lost in these images and that feeling of enchantment is important. *Diving into the Wreck* is one of the great poems of our time. It is a poem of disaster with a willingness to look into it deeply and steadily, to learn whether dreadful information it contains, to accept it, to be past of it, not as victim, but as survivor. The symbols play a unique but an important role in the mind of readers. They help transcending from one world to another. This mystic world, created by Rich takes the reader to her imaginary but a known world to which one could belong. *Diving into the Wreck* is an intense thought which unveils the poet's mind through some beautiful images which have a pictorial and well rhythmical effect.

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