



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***RESTRUCTURING FEMALE IDENTITY THROUGH THE KRISTEVAN
APPROACH IN ADRIENNE RICH'S SELECTED POETRY***

MOHAMAD FLEIH HASSAN AI-JANABI

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By

MOHAMAD FLEIH HASSAN AI-JANABI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

January 2017

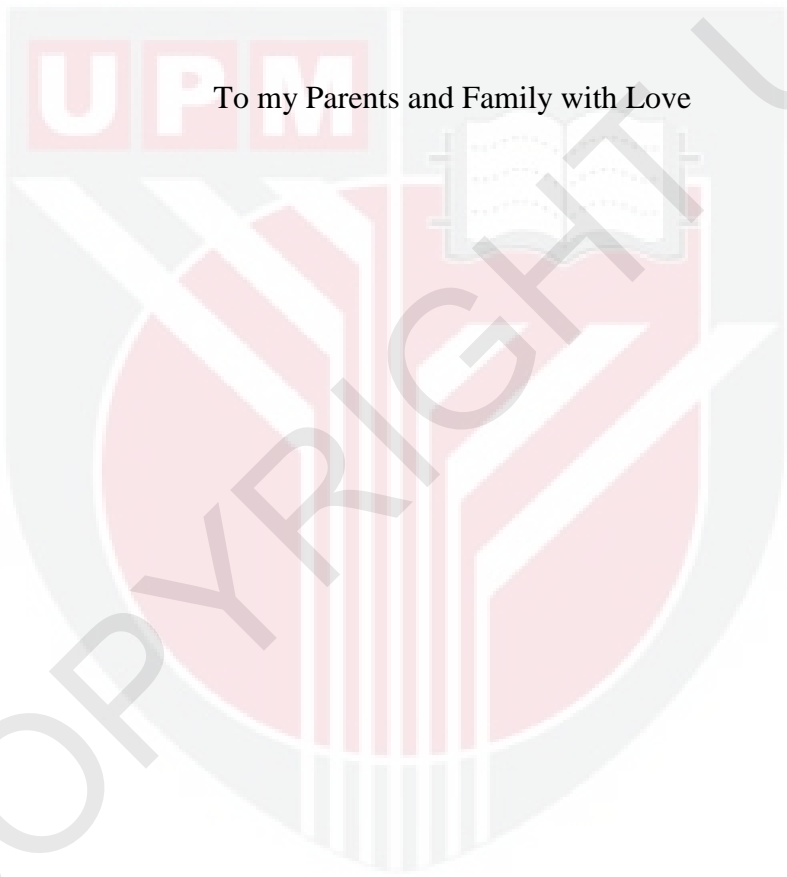
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To my Parents and Family with Love

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in the fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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MOHAMAD FLEIH HASSAN AL-JANABI

January 2017

Chairman : Assoc. Prof. Rosli Bin Talif, PhD
Faculty : Modern Languages and Communications

Adrienne Rich (1929-2012), a radical feminist poet in the United States, was credited with her power of using language as a medium to give voice to women who are marginalized by patriarchy. Thereby, female identity became a recurrent theme in her poetry. However, Rich's discourse of female identity has been highly radicalized due to her extreme attitudes towards patriarchal thought. Hence, her poetry has been approached within the confines of the Queer theory. Thus, the first objective of this study is to explore the role played by the signifying system of the symbolic language in depriving women of their own female identities in the light of the patriarchal discourse of identity formation in Rich's early poetry. The second objective is to examine the articulation of the semiotic elements in Rich's poems and their role in disrupting the symbolic signifying system of language, which would lead to the circulation of new meanings that reflect women's needs and desires and help in re-structuring female identity. The third objective is to explore Rich's discourse of desire in selected poems in light of Kristeva's concept of Abjection in order to resituate the female desire in relation to the dominant heterosexual thought as an active, and transgressive variable in the reconstruction of female identity. The study relies on Kristeva's *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), utilizing the concepts of *The Semiotic and The Symbolic* to explore the power of the semiotic in troubling the symbolic system of signification. Kristeva thinks that the Semiotic and the Symbolic aspects of language are completing each other in the signifying process of the speaking subject. Moreover, the study relies again on Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), to deal with the abject representation of female desire as a transgressive force for the heterosexual thought. Selections of Rich's *A Change of World* (1951), *A Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* (1963), *Necessities of Life* (1966), *Diving into the Wreck* (1973), and *The Dream of Common Language* (1978) are chosen for the study to cover the different stages in Rich's career. The study concludes that the articulation of the semiotic elements 'maternal emotions and drives' into the symbolic system of signification will generate new signifying system that helps in circulating a new discourse of female identity

formation. Moreover, it concludes that Rich's re-orientation of female desire was a technique to turn female desire into an active and transgressive variable in the reconstruction of female identity.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PENSTRUKTURAN SEMULA IDENTITI WANITA MELALUI
PENDEKATAN KRISTEVAN DALAM PUISI TERPILIH ADRIENNE RICH**

Oleh

MOHAMAD FLEIH HASSAN AL-JANABI

Januari 2017

Pengerusi : Profesor Madya Rosli Bin Talif, PhD
Fakulti : Bahasa Moden dan Komunikasi

Adrienne Rich (1929-2012) sebagai penyair feminis radikal di Amerika Syarikat telah dikreditkan dengan kekuatannya menggunakan bahasa sebagai medium bagi menyuarakan wanita yang diperkecilkan oleh patriarki. Oleh sebab itu, identiti wanita menjadi tema yang berulang dalam puisinya. Walau bagaimanapun, wacana Rich mengenai identiti wanita telah diradikalkan secara melampau disebabkan sikap ekstremnya terhadap pemikiran patriarkal. Oleh itu, puisinya telah didekati dalam lingkungan teori Queer. Jadi, objektif pertama kajian ini adalah untuk menyelidiki peranan yang dimainkan oleh sistem penandaan bagi bahasa simbolik dalam melemahkan wanita terhadap identiti mereka sendiri dari sudut wacana patriarkal mengenai pembentukan identiti dalam puisi awal Rich. Objektif kedua adalah untuk meneliti artikulasi elemen semiotik dalam puisi Rich dan peranan mereka dalam menggendalakan sistem penandaan simbolik bahasa yang membawa kepada penyebaran makna baharu yang memperlihatkan kehendak dan keinginan wanita dan membantu penstrukturan semula identiti wanita. Objektif ketiga adalah untuk meninjau wacana Rich mengenai keinginan wanita dalam puisi terpilih dari sudut konsep abjek Kristeva supaya dapat diletakkan semula keinginan wanita dalam hubungannya dengan pemikiran heteroseksual dominan sebagai variabel yang aktif, berkuasa dan transgresif dalam mengkonstruksikan semula identiti wanita. Kajian ini mendekati *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984) Kristeva, menggunakan konsep *The Semiotic and The Symbolic* bagi meneroka kuasa semiotik dalam menggugugatkan kesignifikan sistem simbolik. Kristeva berpendapat bahawa aspek Semiotik dan Simbolik bahasa saling melengkapi dalam proses penandaan subjek berkenaan. Tambahan pula, kajian ini bergantung juga pada *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982) Kristeva, bagi menangani representasi abjek keinginan wanita sebagai kuasa transgresif bagi pemikiran heteroseksual. Seleksi *A Change of World* (1951), *A Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* (1963), *Necessities of Life* (1966), *Diving into the Wreck* (1973), and *The Dream of Common Language* (1978) oleh Rich telah dipilih bagi kajian ini bagi merangkumi peringkat yang berbeza dalam kerjaya Rich. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa artikulasi elemen

semiotik '*maternal emotions and drives*' ke dalam kesignifikanan sistem simbolik akan menjana sistem penandaan baharu yang dapat membantu penyebaran wacana baharu mengenai pembentukan identiti wanita. Tambahan pula, kajian ini menyimpulkan bahawa penstrukturan semula Rich mengenai keinginan wanita merupakan teknik bagi menukarkan keinginan tersebut sebagai variabel yang aktif, berkuasa dan transgresif dalam penstrukturan semula identiti wanita.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 13 January 2017 to conduct the final examination of Mohamad Fleih Hassan on his thesis entitled "Restructuring Female Identity Through the Kristevan Approach in Adrienne Rich's Selected Poetry" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

Zalina binti Mohd Kasim, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Wan Roselezam binti Wan Yahya, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Arbaayah binti Ali Termizi, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Scott H. Slovic, PhD

Professor
University of Idaho
United States
(External Examiner)



NOR AINI AB. SHUKOR, PhD

Professor and Deputy Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 28 February 2017

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Rosli bin Talif, PhD

Associate Professor
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Hardev Kaur, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Manimangai Mani, PhD

Senior Lecturer
Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

ROBIAH BINTI YUNUS, PhD

Professor and Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date:

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Signature: _____
Name of
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Committee: _____

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Committee: _____

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Member of
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Committee: _____

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARPP	Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose
CW	A Change of World
CEP	Collected Early Poems: 1950-1970
CHLE	Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian existence 1980
DCL	The Dream of a Common Language: Poems 1974-1977
DW	Diving into the Wreck: 1971-1972
LSS	On Lies, Secrets and Silence: 1966-1978
RPL	Revolution in Poetic Language
SD	Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law
WFT	What is Found There
WWDA	When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The movement for change is a changing movement, changing itself, demasculinizing itself, de-Westernizing itself, becoming a critical mass that is saying in so many different voices, languages, gestures, actions: It must change; we ourselves can change it. We who are not the same, we who are many and do not want to be the same.

Rich' *NTPOL*, 1985

The idea of woman as a muted individual has circulated in the literary, social and political canons and in the readers' consciousness for a very long time. Women have been silenced throughout history due to the structure of their identities as weak, passive and powerless in the patriarchal society. They have only been voiced in the twentieth century when they started breaking the conventional boundaries of the dominant patriarchal society. They realized that the only way to express themselves and to talk about their experiences in their writings is to go through these male-oriented ideologies and deconstruct them. Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* are among the most famous feminist writings that talked about women's oppression and the strategies of empowering them.

Many women's movements around the world emerged as a kind of revolt against the social, political and economic inequalities between males and females. Such inequalities seem to be founded on certain social, biological and cultural causes. Among them is the association of women with nature and the reproductive system, which has justified the exclusion of women from the literary, political and social scenes. Another cause is that women are unfit for logical reasoning due to their association with emotion. Thus, women have been domesticized to the extent that they have been deprived of the right to share with the man in managing the social, political and economic lives, or even the right to vote.

Moreover, Western ideology has relied for a long time on the system of binary thought, which entails the necessity of a unified 'subject'. This ideology takes as fact the need for a unified consciousness in order for human beings to recognize and understand their world. Such a unified consciousness makes it obligatory to define the subject in terms of its relationship with a distinct object. Thus, the subject 'man' becomes in dire need for an object 'women' to feel its priority and distinctiveness (Henriques et al. 2001). To maintain this kind of relationship, language turns to be

the medium through which the subject recognizes the object. Therefore, the language needed for this subject/object relationship should be orderly and grammatical to have significations approved by this man-made discourse. This language stresses the priority of order and reason, which led to the optimization of patriarchally-oriented ideologies and discourses. As such, the symbolic system of signifying meaning is designed to serve the interests of the subject because he is the major signifier in the Western ideology.

Thus, women's liberation became a key issue for the feminist writers and thinkers. Women's liberation movements emerged worldwide to defend women's rights and to put an end to oppression. Starting with the first-wave feminist movement in the 1920s, it focused its attention on the criticism of liberalism. Within the context of the First-wave feminist movement, women were no more than caretakers, nurturers, and housewives because the neutrality of the liberal thought could not get rid of gender distinction. The re-formation of female identity was not taken into consideration in the agenda of the first wave feminist movement due to their focus on equality and liberty. Their agenda based on the model of women 'rights' did not "aim to challenge the ways in which social roles are gendered" (Hughes 2002, 46).

The advent of the second wave of feminism (1960s-1990s) shifted the emphasis to the politics of reproduction, to sexual difference and to women's female experience. They wanted to celebrate women's 'difference' and 'sexuality' as sources for the empowerment of women (Evans 1995). In this wave, feminists focused on guaranteeing women the rights of sexual difference and reproduction regardless of sex. Therefore, the structure and restructure of female identity became a major concern in the movement's agenda, as in the case of Adrienne Rich who found a fertile ground within the second wave movement to circulate her ideas regarding poetic language and desire.

Accordingly, the Freudian and Lacanian theories were re-circulated vehemently within the circles of literary and feminist writers of the second wave movement, especially the Theory of Subject. In the modern age, women were more de-territorialized and more dehumanized at the hands of patriarchal thinkers and writers, partly because of the concepts of Freud and Lacan. Freudian psychology defines the subject as having 'a knowable content and is measurable against a normative path of development' (Mansfield 2000, 66). Freud thinks that gender identity and family politics form the context that makes the subject faces the first crisis in the process of formation. Thus, the male and female subjects are left with the Oedipus and Electra complexes, respectively (Gay 1995). From this context emerges the masculine subject that is defined with a clear sense of its needs and purposes, unlike the feminine who is structured as an object defined in terms of its relation to the masculine subject.

It was in the nineteenth century that women writers started to seek definitions appropriate for the description of the female experience. Women writers started a

long journey to find proper tools for the definition of female identity, a definition that does not rely on the male subject and on patriarchal thought. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar stated in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (1980) that “woman writers in England and America, throughout the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth, have been especially concerned with assaulting and revising, deconstructing and reconstructing those images of women inherited from male literature” (76).

Moreover, Virginia Woolf described the status of woman, especially woman writers within the patriarchal literary tradition in *A Room of One's Own*. She said that women have been signified as lacking the power of reasoning because they do not fit the cultural standards and criteria of the patriarchal symbolic world. The identity of woman is structured according to the rules of the patriarchal society, thus, when they sit to pen down their stories, they write fabricated stories, not stories of their own. The law of the father creates what is appropriate and inappropriate for women to be accepted in society. Female identities, therefore, have been structured to be inferior, weak, and dependent. Woolf said, “men are hated and feared because they have the power to bar her way to what she wants to do—which is to write” (1929, 49).

In addition, Carolyn Heilbrun in her book, *Reinventing Womanhood* (1979), discussed major issues related to the construction of female identity for twentieth-century American women. She characterized that the failure of women in constructing a sound version of female identity lies in the inappropriateness of past role models. She called for the urgent need to find ways to construct new models for female identity. Thus, it becomes an urgent demand for women to think of substitutes for the male-oriented discourses of woman's construction of identities.

As a result of the continuous degradation and subjugation of women, the feminist writers have responded to these inequalities by challenging the dominant assumptions of the patriarchal thought system. One of the strategic techniques of challenging these dictating assumptions is the refusal of the essential nature of structuring female identity. The female identity is constructed in the light of the Freudian and Lacanian psychology as passive and inferior because the differentiation between male and female establishes specific gender roles that favour males and suppress females. Freud ascribes to woman the resigned acceptance of the castration complex that leaves them feeling unequal to the man who has the phallus. Lacan, on the other side, states that a woman has to give up her semiotic maternal language and to use man-made language to find a space in his world. This symbolic masculine language leaves woman unshielded because the signifying system of this gendered language signifies woman as passive, subjective, irrational, and the object of desire.

More importantly, language as a key determinant of subjectivity is an effective symbolic means that links power and control with psychological demands and cultural identity of the individuals. Dale Spender said in *Man Made Language* that, “Women cannot have equal access to discourse and at the same time leave the rules

for male access to discourse undisturbed” (1980, 89). Lacan states that power is maintained in the hands of males who give up their association with maternity in the first years of the child’s life in order to be the masters of the patriarchal world. The one who needs to control the world has to control language. Therefore, the politics of power necessarily entails a politics of language as well. The socio-linguist Robin Lakoff (2004) thinks that language used by women contains patterns of weakness and uncertainty, dealing with trivial and unserious issues and focusing on personal experience. On the other hand, male utterances contain strong patterns with an affirmative tone revolving around serious public issues, therefore, women should adopt man’s style of utterance in order to achieve the equality they dream of (Selden et al, 2005). Thus, women were discontent with their position as subsidiary to men because in many patriarchal societies, as Millett in *Sexual Politics* said, “languages, as well as cultural tradition, reserve the human condition for the male” (2000, 54).

Moreover, language’s order and reason have been continuously threatened by the subversive noise of pleasure like music and poetry. Earlier in the Greek time, Plato considered poetry as an imitation and that “imitation itself embodied a step away from the truth since it produced an imperfect copy of the Form or essence of a given entity” (Habib 2005, 50). Rationalists such as Plato always keep a sharp eye on the dangerous influences of poetry and music because they raise man’s desire. It was only in the late twentieth century that poetry is given a priority as a means of transgressing the grand narratives of the patriarchal thought. Poetic language shows how dominant social and political ideologies can be undermined by the creation of new ‘subject positions’. Accordingly, feminist writers utilize the language of poetry as the means by which they can re-define their identities and liberate women from the bondage to the single-oriented masculine rules and traditions.

Other key determinants of subjectivity are gender and sexuality. Again, gender and sexuality are manipulated by thinkers of the patriarchal society to keep women in an inferior position by categorizing men as the subjects of desire and women as the objects of desire. These thinkers establish the binary opposition system, which frames women as weak, inferior and dependent females while men are framed as strong, superior and independent. Therefore, women want to separate themselves from both the homophobic heterosexual community and the homosexual male community to advocate social, economic, and political empowerment.

Freud and Lacan are severely criticized by the feminists on the ground that their theories are heterosexist and that they have done harm to the feminist agenda. But it is undeniable that Freudian and Lacanian theories of the unconscious and sexual difference made psychoanalysis to be a significant tool in the analysis of ideologies and discourses that cause oppression against women. For example, their concept of sexual difference showed that men manipulated and channelled desire in order to reproduce patriarchal power relations and to maintain women’s subjugation to patriarchal rules and thought.

The feminist writers reject the thesis of Freud and Lacan concerning the construction of female identity based on the sexual difference because they think that both of them were descriptive rather than prescriptive. Feminist theorists consider Freud's theories of the unconscious and sexual difference limited to the role of showing how desire is programmed to reproduce patriarchal power relations and to keep women in a subjected position as the objects of desire for the masculine subjects. Lacan also said that the "female desire is resolved through the full appropriation of femininity, that is, in becoming a pure reflector for male desire, the imaginary site of an absolute satisfaction." (Butler 1987, 203) Thus, the female desire is only defined in terms of its relatedness to the male desire. Accordingly, the female desire has been subjugated and exploited by patriarchy as a tool for suppressing the female identity.

Simone De Beauvoir whose *The Second Sex* distinguished between sex and gender in order to make women aware of the distinction between basic biological differences between the two sexes and those constructed by the metaphysics of gender is an example of these feminists. She rejected the biological determinism of Freud and believed in the interaction between social and natural functions:

Society codified by men decrees that woman is inferior: she can only abolish this inferiority by destroying male superiority. She does her utmost to mutilate, to dominate man, she contradicts him, she denies his truth and values. But in doing that, she is only defending herself; neither immutable essence nor flawed choice has doomed her to immanence and inferiority. They were imposed on her. All oppression creates a state of war (1949, 849).

De Beauvoir ascribed the negative association of women to the systems of interpretation related to biological differences, reproduction system, psychoanalysis, and economics, which define man as subject against woman the object. De Beauvoir posited that women would not be able to destroy patriarchy unless they break out of the frame of 'objectification' (Seldon et al, 2005). The significance of De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* lies in its circulation of key ideas of the second feminist movement in the seventies, which are related to the idea of gender as a social construct rather than an essential one. It opens the gate in front of feminists to think of deconstructing the heterosexual thought as a kind of a reaction against the stereotyping of female desire as passive, dependent and powerless.

Julia Kristeva, as a feminist, linguist and psychoanalyst, has re-worked Lacan's theories regarding the role of language in structuring the conscious. She has proposed in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984) that even the texts of the canon writers contain certain elements that undermine the old fixed meaning of a text. These elements demolish the denotative meanings of a text and imply as well that meaning in large part is made by the poetic and affective aspects of the text. Kristeva has introduced the concept of the Semiotic to reconceptualize "the pre-Oedipal space

where bodily pulsations, not yet gathered into a system of drives, will intermittently disrupt symbolic discourse” (Wright 2000, 7).

Significantly, Kristeva discussed the concept of Abjection and its relevance to the re-formation of grand discourses in her *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. She writes of abjection as that which “disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect border, positions, rules” (1982, 4). For Kristeva, the abject is always related to matters that traverse the body’s boundaries, ‘polluting objects’ that “always relate to corporeal orifices as to so many landmarks parcelling-constituting the body’s territory” (71).

In one of the studies, Gender and abjection of desire are discussed in Calvin Thomas’ book, *Masculinity, Psychoanalysis, Straight Queer Theory: Essays on Abjection in Literature, Mass Culture, and Film* (2008). He relied on the Lacanian discourse of identity construction to highlight the privileges enjoyed by males, and on George Bataille’s understandings of abjection. Nonetheless, he tried to follow queer discourses that are hostile to the order of masculine thought. The book talks about abjection due to its perverse and pervasive strategy in troubling the subjectivity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Female identity has become the major concern for women writers and feminist thinkers. This topic has been scholarly researched in various fields of literature. Much is written about the oppression and subjugation of the female identity and many propositions have been discussed through various theoretical frameworks to figure out the appropriate means of ending this patriarchal oppression.

One of these feminist writers whose works are credited with bringing woman’s oppression to the forefront of poetic discourse is Adrienne Rich (1929-2012). She dedicated much of her works to the study of female identity and to find the appropriate means of restructuring it away from prejudiced patriarchal ideologies (Abraham 2007). Moreover, much scholarly research was conducted on Adrienne Rich’s poetry, but it followed the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of radical feminism and Queer theory due to the extreme views of this poet (Aktari 2010). However, less attention is paid to the study of the poetics and politics of Adrienne Rich’s discourse of identity reformation in the light of Julia Kristeva’s *Theory of the Subject*. Kristeva’s theory is selected as a framework for the current study in order to free Rich’s discourse of identity formation from the labels and frames that stereotype her poetics and politics as ‘radical feminist’ and ‘queer poet’.

Moreover, Rich’s discourse of *The Female Principle* was not seriously taken into consideration because of the radicalization and queerness characterizing her poetry.

Rich thought that she has been betrayed by the absence of the female principle, and the single-mindedness of words and images that were inappropriate to signify the true definitions of the female self. Accordingly, there is hardly any research conducted on the poetry of Adrienne Rich to help to articulate her discourse of the female principle. There was a study done on the self in Rich's poetry by D. W. Lucas (2014). Lucas dealt with the Self and its representation in the literary language of Adrienne Rich, Mark Strand, Derek Walcott, and Charles Wright to understand the kind of relationship between authority and identity in poetry. However, the study discussed the 'Self' in terms of the poets' views and their contexts with no reference to Kristeva's concept of the Subject. Thus, the current study aims, through following Kristeva's *The Semiotic and the Symbolic* to re-circulate Rich's female principle back into the symbolic language in order to help in the articulation of female needs and desires, which consequently re-structure the female identity.

There is hardly any research focusing on Adrienne Rich's poetry in light of Kristeva's Semiotic and its power of subverting the fixed meanings of the Symbolic signifying system. One of the studies done by Petrović under the title "Gender and Difference in the Poetry of Adrienne Rich" showed the failure of the symbolic language in reflecting Rich's needs and desires in her early period of writing. She argued that Rich imitated the styles and techniques of male writers in her early poetry because she was looking for a space among the successful male writers (1997). However, Petrović's study did not find the way of articulating Rich's *The Female Principle* into the masculine language. As such, the current study incorporates *The Semiotic and the Symbolic* in subverting the grand narratives of the symbolic language and in the creation of a re-signifying process for the restructure of female identity.

In addition, Rich's discourse of female desire was the reason for radicalizing her poetics by critics to the extent that it was inaccessible and unapproachable to her readers. Her belief that heterosexuality is compulsory and that it is institutionalized to coerce more oppression on women led to more radicalization and extremity of her ideas. Her discourse of female desire was highly investigated within the frames of the Queer theory (Tsai 2002). Accordingly, Rich's thesis of female desire comes to be the source of still-on-going controversies in the various literary, social, and political scenes. Some critics and even feminist writers rejected Rich's discourse as an appropriate discourse for restructuring female identity, as in the case of Rene Denfeld who launched an indictment against some feminist theorists, including Adrienne Rich in her book, *The New Victorians* (2009). She criticized radical feminist theorists for their belief that the heterosexual intercourse is 'inherently invasive and oppressive act' and that it is the reason behind women's oppression (1995, 11). Therefore, abjection is selected to unleash Rich's discourse of desire away from radicalism and the Queer theory.

However, Rich's discourse of desire was not studied through Kristeva's *Abjection* and its power of transgression. Instead of going with Denfeld's harsh criticism of Rich, or reading Rich's poetry within the framework of Queer theory, the present

study will go through the analysis of Rich's female desire in the light of Kristeva's concept of *Abjection*. Abjection has the function of deconstructing the patriarchal matrix of woman's desire as passive, dependent and powerless, in order to help in the creation of new spaces to the circulation of a new signifying system that turns women's desire into active, independent, and powerful, thereby helping to re-structure the female identity.

More importantly, the issue of restructuring the female identity is not explored in Rich's poetry through the amalgamation of the two concepts of *The Semiotic and The Symbolic* as well as *Abjection*. The current study follows the *Semiotic* in exploring Rich's poetry in order to subvert the signifying system of the symbolic language and to regain the female principle back to language, which would signify women's needs and desires. Simultaneously, it follows the concept of *Abjection* to transgress the patriarchal definition of female desire as passive and powerless. Abjection troubles the borders of female identity through abjecting female desire in hope of transforming it into a positive and active variable in the construction of female identity. The amalgamation of these two concepts will fill the gap of radicalizing and queering the poetic discourse of Adrienne Rich through bridging her poetics into the public domain without framing them with the patriarchal labels like 'radical feminist' and 'queer poet'.

1.3 Research Objectives

The present study deals with the restructuring of female identity in Adrienne Rich's selected poetry in the light of Julia Kristeva's theory of the Subject. Thus, the first objective of this study is to explore the role played by the signifying system of the symbolic language in depriving women of their own female identities via biased discourses and ideologies. In order to achieve this objective, I explore the symbolic representation of female identity in selected poems of Adrienne rich to reveal how the symbolic modality of signification has manipulated language to keep women in an inferior position to men.

The second objective is to examine the articulation of the Semiotic elements in Rich's poems and their role in subverting the symbolic signifying system of language in order to recirculate new meanings that reflect women's needs and desires and help re-structuring female identity. This objective is going to be achieved through tracing the semiotic elements inside the poetic texts for they have the power of troubling and transgressing the Symbolic order, which in turn lead to the re-signification of the sign system of language. As a result, the symbolic modality empowered by the semiotic one will be the tools of signification for shaping and re-shaping female subjectivity. Thus, female identity can be restored with the restoration of maternal elements into the Symbolic language.

The third and final objective is to explore Rich's discourse of female desire in selected poems in the light of Kristeva's concept of *Abjection* in order to resituate the female desire in relation to the dominant heterosexual thought as an active, powerful and transgressive variable in the reconstruction of female identity. Rich believed that woman is engendered within the heterosexual thought to be an object of desire, which implies her inferiority and subordination to the subject of desire 'man'. Within heterosexuality, female desire is defined as negative, dependent and powerless, thus, exercises a negative role in structuring female identity. Abjection will transgress the heterosexual definition of female desire, turning it into an active, independent and powerful variable in the construction of female identity.

In order to achieve this objective, I will explore Rich's representation of female desire in the light of *Abjection* in Rich's selected poems to show that this desire is an abjecting desire to the heterosexual thought. I will also show that this abjected desire is a desire to the maternal space as a determinative force in the deconstruction of male-oriented narratives and in the reconstruction of female identity.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, the study will seek to answer the following questions:

- 1- How does the signifying process of the symbolic language play a role in creating and circulating meanings that oppress women and victimize them in the light of the patriarchal discourse of identity construction?
- 2- How can the concept of the Semiotic be a subversive power to the signifying system of the symbolic language? How can it help in the circulation of new meanings that would help in the reconstruction of female identities away from the distortion of the patriarchal signifying process of language?
- 3- How can the concept of Abjection be fruitful in exploring the representation of female desire within the institutionalized system of heterosexuality? How can a woman, the 'other' of male consciousness and his object of desire, create either the linguistic or social conditions that establish her female identity away from the single-minded discourses of patriarchy?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The subject of woman's identity is widely studied in the various fields of social sciences. In literature, it is also investigated following various theatrical and conceptual frameworks. In this respect, Adrienne Rich as a well-known feminist poet has dedicated much of her writings to the cause of women's emancipation from patriarchal oppression. Rich has been widely researched in literary studies, but her

writings have been studied within the frameworks of radical feminism and the Queer theory as in Susan Driver's *Reading "Adrienne Rich's Of Women Born as a Queer Feminist Daughter"* (2006), for example. Out of the framework of the Queer theory, a study is conducted by Nodeh, S., & Pourgiv, F. entitled "Form is the Ultimate Gift: Showalter's Linguistic and Cultural Model of Gynocriticism in Adrienne Rich's *A Change of World*" (2012). The study argued that although Rich was a great imitator of the patriarchal rules of writing in her early stage, she utilized the linguistics and aesthetics to create a defence mechanism against oppressive patriarchy. It is done in the light of Showalter's gynocriticism to show Rich's revolutionary views, strictly in the first volume only and away from Kristeva's concepts. However, there is no study conducted on Adrienne Rich's poetry in light of Julia Kristeva's *Theory of the Subject*. Thus, the current study aims to unleash the poetics and politics of Adrienne Rich regarding the reconstruction of female identity outside the Queer context, because her poetics and politics have been framed by patriarchal critics as radical and queer. The study intends to show that these frames and labels are patriarchal in their implications and that they have been exploited by male critics to oust Adrienne Rich's discourse from the literary and feminist circles.

Moreover, Rich's poetry has been highly queered to the extent that her critical feminist ideas and perspectives are partly neglected as unfit to the feminist cause. This queering of her discourse of female identity has led even some feminist writers to the rejection of her discourse under the excuse that her ideas create another form of matriarchal prejudice. Thus, the current study comes to deal with the restructuring of female identity in Rich's poetry in the light of Kristeva's theory of the subject. Kristeva's theory of the *Semiotic* and the Symbolic, as well as Abjection, helps in the articulation of Rich's ideas far from patriarchal frames. Hence, the study emphasizes that the on-going circulation of labels like "queer poet" and "radical feminist" for Adrienne Rich doubles the silence of women and the patriarchal oppression against them.

The current study follows a psychofeminist approach to the study of restructuring the female identity in Adrienne Rich's selected poetry. It explores new techniques of restructuring the female identity in Adrienne Rich's poetry in the light of Julia Kristeva's theory. Thus, it is significant in the sense that the rebirth of Rich's the female principle via Kristeva's *the Semiotic* would help women to articulate their semiotic drives and emotions into language and reconstruct their own identities without relying on the single-minded masculine discourse.

Significantly, many feminist writers including Rich talked about the necessity of creating a language for women, but it was impossible because in this case, they are creating another single-minded feminine language that will be again in sharp contrast to the patriarchal language. The result will be more conflicting discourses and more enhancement and maintenance to the binary system of thought. Here come the significance and relevance of using Kristeva's theory of the semiotic and the symbolic in the present study. The current study incorporates the articulation of the maternal emotions and drives via Kristeva's the semiotic into the symbolic modality

of the patriarchal language in order to signify meanings that serve both man and woman simultaneously. Accordingly, Rich's poetics and politics would be liberated from the frames of radicalism and queerness.

Equally important, earlier studies missed the discussion of identity reconstruction within Rich's discourse of female desire. The available research dealt with Rich's discourse of this desire in the light of the Queer theory only. Therefore, using Kristeva's concept of *Abjection* to study Rich's female desire will contribute in the emancipation of female desire from being passive and powerless, and transform it into an active and powerful agent in the reconstruction of female identity.

More importantly, Rich's discourses of the poetic language and the female desire have not been combined simultaneously so far to study the female identity. They have been separated in the previous studies. Thus, the current study uses Kristeva's the semiotic and the symbolic to study Rich's poetic language and uses Abjection to study her discourse of female desire regarding the restructure of female identity. The amalgamation of these two concepts un-radicalizes Rich's discourse of poetic language and to un-queers her discourse of female desire via following Kristeva's concepts.

1.6 Conceptual Framework

Julia Kristeva's theory of Subjectivity is the theoretical framework of this study. The study aims to explore the role of the symbolic modality of signification in depriving women of their female identities in the light of the patriarchal thought. Simultaneously, it examines the role of the articulation of the semiotic elements in subverting the symbolic signifying system of language in order to create new spaces for the circulation of meanings that help in the reconstruction of female identity. Moreover, Kristeva's the semiotic and the symbolic is amalgamated with her concept of Abjection in the study of female desire in order to transgress the stereotyping of female desire as passive, and powerless as well as to transform it into an active variable in the re-structure of female identity in Rich's poetry.

Julia Kristeva's linguistic theory came to be increasingly influenced by psychoanalysis, an influence that resulted in the psycho-linguistic understanding of language proposed in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984). Kristeva is interested in the inherent materiality of language as represented by the speaking subject. She is not satisfied by the conviction that language is a simple conveyer of meaning. Instead, she is interested in the heterogeneous nature of poetic language that escaped the oppression of strict scientific understanding and symbolic representation. Kristeva thinks that the locus of poetic language could be found within the semiotic, and she developed her notion of 'semanalysis' to act against the determinism of the structural linguistics by focusing on the outside of language. She presents a theory of the processes that constitute language. They are centred on the speaking subject. In

order to understand the signifying process, Kristeva transforms Lacan's distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic order into a distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic. She says that the interaction between the semiotic and the symbolic constitutes the signifying process. She thinks that the semiotic divides and explores positive alternative expressions of subjectivity. The semiotic is linked to the pre-Oedipal primary processes, the basic pulsions of which Kristeva sees as predominantly anal and oral. The endless flow of pulsions is gathered up in the chora. Kristeva appropriates and redefines this Platonic concept and concludes that the chora is neither a sign nor a position, but 'an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases... Neither model nor copy, the chora precedes and underlies figuration and thus specularization, and is analogous only to the vocal and kinetic rhythm (Moi 1986).

The chora will be more or less successfully repressed and can be perceived only as pulsational pressure on or within symbolic language: as contradictions, meaninglessness, disruption, silences and absences. The chora, then, is a rhythmic pulsion rather than a new language. It constitutes the heterogeneous, disruptive dimension of language, which can never be caught up in the closure of traditional linguistic theory. Kristeva thinks that the semiotic disposition will follow deviations from grammatical rules of language, yet prove meaningful and pleasurable. Kristeva focuses on the heterogeneous nature of language in order to shed light on the importance of the materiality of language and to question the predominance of the symbolic. The semiotic as a signifying practice highlights the non-symbolic aspects of subjectivity. These elements remain after the subject enters the symbolic order and create the division between the semiotic and the symbolic.

Kristeva says that the symbolic language of the patriarchal society does not reflect women's needs and desires. Even when women write about themselves, they "operate at the symbolic register of language (i.e., those who do not practice feminine writing) cannot break down the defensively constructed male discourse. Their texts, says Kristeva, display very little difference from those written by males" (McGraw 1984, 145).

In her *Revolution in Poetic Language* (RPL) (1984), Kristeva introduces the concepts of *the Semiotic and the Symbolic*. She transforms Lacan's distinction between the imaginary and the symbolic order into a distinction between the semiotic and the symbolic (Moi 1986). She thinks that language is constituted by two modalities of signification and that the "dialectic between them determines the type of discourse (narrative, metalanguage, theory, poetry, etc.) involved; in other words, so-called "natural" language allows for different modes of articulation of the semiotic and the symbolic" (1984, 24). Moreover, the semiotic and the symbolic modalities seem contradictory, but they actually complete each other in the process of signifying meaning. Therefore, the signifying system produced by "the subject is always both semiotic and symbolic, no signifying system he produces can be either 'exclusively' semiotic or 'exclusively' symbolic, and is instead necessarily marked by an indebtedness to both" (Moi 1986, 92-93).

Kristeva stresses the significance of the symbolic to have a logical meaningful language, but it should be empowered by the semiotic to have unbiased language. The symbolic should be continuously renewed through following the heterogeneous energy of the unconscious articulated by the semiotic's play of emotions and drives that represent the residue of the pre-Oedipal stage. These drives appear as the pressure inside the language and are expressed in its tone, rhythm, rhymes, imagery and also in the contradiction, meaninglessness, disruption, absence and silence (Petrović 1997).

Kristeva believes in her RPL that art in general and poetry, in particular, are the semiotic aspect of the symbolic and thus represent the flow of *jouissance* into the language. She adds that through "cracking the socio-symbolic order, splitting it open, changing vocabulary, syntax, the word itself, and releasing from beneath them the drives borne by vocalic or kinetic differences, *jouissance* works its way into the social and symbolic" (Kristeva 1984, 79-80).

Kristeva has reworked Lacan's emphasis on the centrality of the masculine dominance over the symbolic modes of expression. Unlike Lacan, Kristeva thinks that there is a chance in the subject to subvert the masculine discourse. She uses the word 'Semiotic' to refer to one of the two modalities of the signifying process (refer to Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework). Semiotic refers to the nonverbal part of the language that can be inferred from the text through non-linguistic features like punctuation, silence, pause or poetic language. Semiotic 'affect' are associated with identity-formation, in which it "points to the invisible, drive-oriented psychological forces operative in the formation of identities" (Valk 2015, 2). Unlike semiotic, the symbolic is a way of signifying that depends on language as a sign system complete with its grammar and syntax (Kristeva 1984).

Kristeva conceptualizes a pre-Oedipal space where bodily pulsations, not yet gathered into a system of drives, will intermittently disrupt symbolic discourse; these pulsations Kristeva calls the 'semiotic'. Kristeva, however, makes it clear that the 'semiotic' makes itself felt inflows in constant motion, irrespective of whether their site is a male or female body (Wright 2000). The semiotic can breach the boundaries of the symbolic in privileged moments of social transgression, and subvert its rules and operations (See chapter 2.6 for further elaboration).

Genotext and phenotext are used by Kristeva to refer to two aspects of analyzing literary texts. Genotext is "the motility between the words, the potentially disruptive meaning that is not quite a meaning below the text" while phenotext is "what the syntax and semantics of the text are trying to convey, again, in plain language" (McAfee 2004, 24). A genotext analysis can project the shattered identities of both characters and the author and their reconfiguration through the text. By definition, genotext refers to "release and articulation of drives as constrained by social codes" (Moi 1986, 28). Accordingly, "modern poetic language goes further than any classical mimesis - whether theatrical or novelistic - because it attacks not only

denotation (the positing of the object) but meaning (the positing of the enunciating subject) as well” (Moi 109).

Kristeva stressed that the heterogeneous articulation of the semiotic and symbolic disposition enables the text to signify what representative and connotative speech does not say (Kristeva 1980). She explains the process of meaning’s re-signification saying:

By reproducing signifiers—vocal, gestural, verbal—the subject crosses the border of the symbolic and reaches the semiotic chora, which is on the other side of the social frontier. The re-enacting of the signifying path taken from the symbolic unfolds the symbolic itself and—through the border that sacrifice is about to present or has already presented on stage—opens it up to the motility where all meaning is erased (RPL, 79).

Howsam said in *Reading Through Abjection* that Kristeva’s symbolic modality provides the foundation required for communication, “which allows us to make sense of the semiotic its rhythms, tones and movements (i.e. the rambling, laughter, humming, etc.) which precede, and exist as a necessary precondition for the symbolic” (2003, 3-4).

The second concept is Kristeva’s *Abjection* in her *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (POH) (1982). Abjection is the expulsion of certain parts of the body in order to establish the ‘I’. Kristeva says “The abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to I” (POH, 1). She opines that abject is “something rejected from which one does not part, from which one does not protect oneself as from an object” (POH, 4). Abjection is “a process of jettisoning what seems to be part of oneself. The abject is what one spits out, rejects, almost violently excludes from oneself: sour milk, excrement, even a mother’s engulfing embrace. What is abjected is radically excluded but never banished altogether” (McAfee 2004, 46).

Abjection occurs when the child sees himself in the mirror and tries to make a unification with this image to develop an identity, and then he begins to separate himself from others in order to develop the borders between ‘I’ and other. He learns to do that by abjection, in which he expels everything that is not part of himself. Later, the child rejects his mother because she becomes a prototype of what the drives expel. If the subject’s identity derives from the unity of its objects, the abject is the threat of inassimilable non-unity; that is ambiguity. Hence, abjection is what disturbs identity, system and order (Rich 1982).

Moreover, the child feels conflicting emotions as he is longing for the life of plenitude with his mother and the need to renounce this life in order to become a

subject. He must renounce part of itself in order to be a subject. It is never ending even when the child gets into the symbolic realm. What distinguishes Kristeva's abjection from Freud's repression is that abjection does not disappear from consciousness. Abjection remains on the periphery of consciousness. After the imposition of the symbolic, abjection tends to remain as a kind of background support for the symbolic. Kristeva says in POH (1982):

The abjection of self would be the culminating form of that experience of the subject to which it is revealed that all its objects are based merely on the inaugural loss that laid the foundations of its own being. There is nothing like the abjection of self to show that all abjection is in fact recognition of the want on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded (5).

From Kristeva's psychoanalytic perspective, abjection is done to the part of ourselves that we exclude: the mother. We must abject the maternal, the object which has created us, in order to construct an identity in the symbolic world. Abjection never entirely recedes so it haunts subjectivity, remaining on the periphery of awareness, threatening to unravel what has been constructed. To keep hold of 'oneself', a subject has to remain vigilant against what may undermine its borders. Kristeva argues that much literary creation is a means of this vigilance, a kind of catharsis of what is deemed other or abject.

She says that the writer is highly interested in the abject, thus he imagines its logic, projects himself into it, and consequently perverts language, style, and content. Kristeva says in POH:

The abject shatters the wall of repression and its judgments. It takes the ego back to its source on the abominable limits from which, in order to be, the ego has broken away—it assigns it a source in the non-ego, drive, and death. Abjection is a resurrection that has gone through death (of the ego). It is an alchemy that transforms death drive into a start of life, of new significance (1982, 15).

Franklin, R. F. stated in his study entitled, *Oates's Stories of Romantic Love and Kristeva's Abject* that the desire for the semiotic accompanies the individual through his life and can be reflected through abjecting the boundaries of the reason of the patriarchal society. He commented on the process of abjection saying:

From the point of view of a baby, between one and one and one-half years of age, there is no Self or Other because of the baby's fusion with its mother. Kristeva calls this the "Semiotic" stage of development, a blissful state that echoes the womb. As development

begins, the unity breaks, and upon the acquisition of language, the now-speaking subject enters the Symbolic where it will remain in the realm of the Law of the Father, but it will always feel "lack" for the loss of the Semiotic unity. For the rest of its life, the subject will feel a profound "desire," which will never be fulfilled. Being "in love", the lover attempts to recover the Semiotic in the romantic relationship (1998, 29).

Kristeva is philosophically interested in the problems of anxiety and nihilism of the modern age. This interest motivates her to think of abjection as a transgression to the narcissistic structure of identity-formation on the individual and the group levels (See chapter 7.2 for further elaboration on abjection as a transgression). She thinks that the semiotic and the symbolic though seemingly opposing each other but they are interrelated cultural registers and modalities of meaning and identity. The semiotic is the world of instincts and drives while the symbolic is the world of authority, rules, and traditions. Kristeva thinks that the nihilistic attitudes of the modern world are caused by the split of the two signifiers; the semiotic and the symbolic. Thus, she believes that the institution's discourse writers need to realize the necessity of connecting these two modalities in the process of signification, so we get a better signifying system that helps the formation of male and female identities away from bias.

Kristeva's thesis is that the reconnection of the symbolic meanings and the semiotic (affective/instinctual) through a theory of identity-formation with the help of abjection will give the space for the circulation of meanings generated by these two modalities altogether. Consequently, they prevent the domination of one modality over the other. As such, Kristeva's theory of abjection is actually an attempt at restoring the balance between the instinctive and the social aspects of identity-formation (refer to Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework).

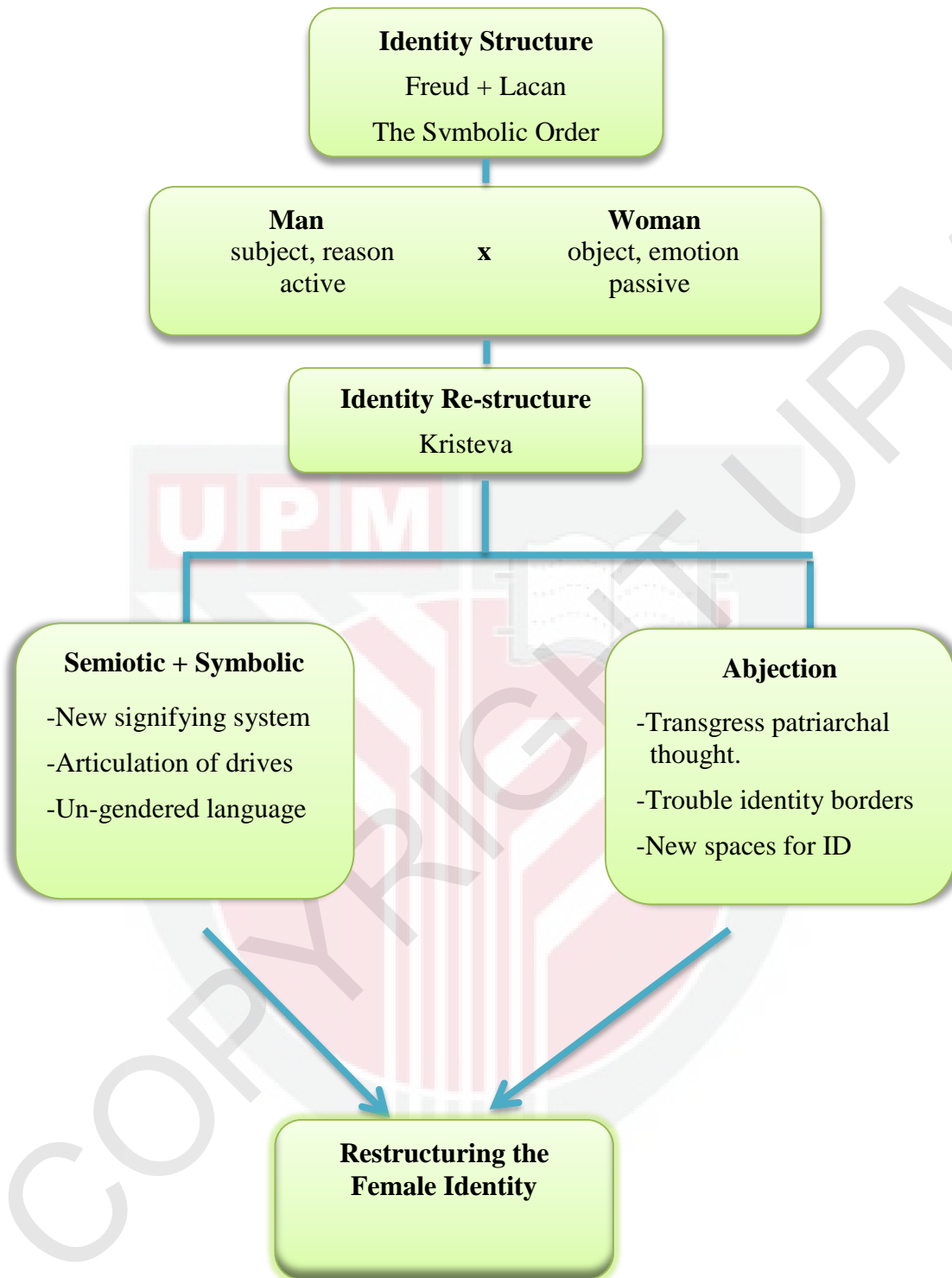


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

1.7 Methodology

The present study attempts to explore Adrienne Rich's feminist discourse of restructuring female identity. The relation between identity and affect (instinct/drive) in literature guided the study to the theoretical work of Julia Kristeva. Two concepts have been selected for the study, namely, the Semiotic and the Symbolic, and Abjection. The semiotic aspect has the power of subverting the static and patriarchal order of the symbolic language. Kristeva thinks that the Semiotic drives and emotions appear as a pulsational pressure inside the language itself and are articulated in Imagery, Rhythm, Symbol, Tone, Contradiction, and Meaninglessness. Thus, these semiotic elements will be textually analyzed to examine their subversive power.

Therefore, a textual analysis is conducted to study semiotic articulation of the sense and sound devices into the structural context to explore their role in subverting and shattering the fixed meanings of the symbolic language, which in turn create a new re-signifying system that helps in the reconstruction of female identity. Some poems of Adrienne Rich are selected to recall the female principle within language via connecting the semiotic with the symbolic as two inter-dependent signifiers of meaning. Thus, the speaking subject can be reconstructed through re-signifying the sign system of language.

Moreover, abjection is used to study the issue of female desire in the selected poems. Abjection troubles the borders of identity leading to the transgression of the patriarchal narratives and definitions of female desire. Abjecting female desire will transform it from a passive and powerless agent into an active and powerful agent in the reconstruction of female identity. Therefore, the study examines the resurface of female desire in the symbolic order as an abjecting force that is reflected in the characters' poetic language in order to subvert and disrupt the narrative of the symbolic order. Some of Adrienne Rich's critical opinions will be utilized here because of their relevance to the study of female desire, especially opinions reflected in her essay about compulsory heterosexuality.

The study covers five stages in Rich's career. For each stage, a collection of poetry is selected to handle the major issues at this stage. These stages with the texts selected are mentioned below:

1. False Unconscious Stage. The text is *A Change of World* (1951).
2. Dual Consciousness Stage. The text is *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* (1963).
3. Un-naming Stage. The text is *Necessities of Life* (1966).
4. Re-naming the Self. The text is *Diving into the wreck* (1973).
5. Re-naming the world. The text is *The Dream of Common Language* (1978).

Moreover, the current study utilized many of Rich's essays and prose writings that provide fruitful insights to the understanding of her poetics and politics (refer to Figure 1.2: Methodology).

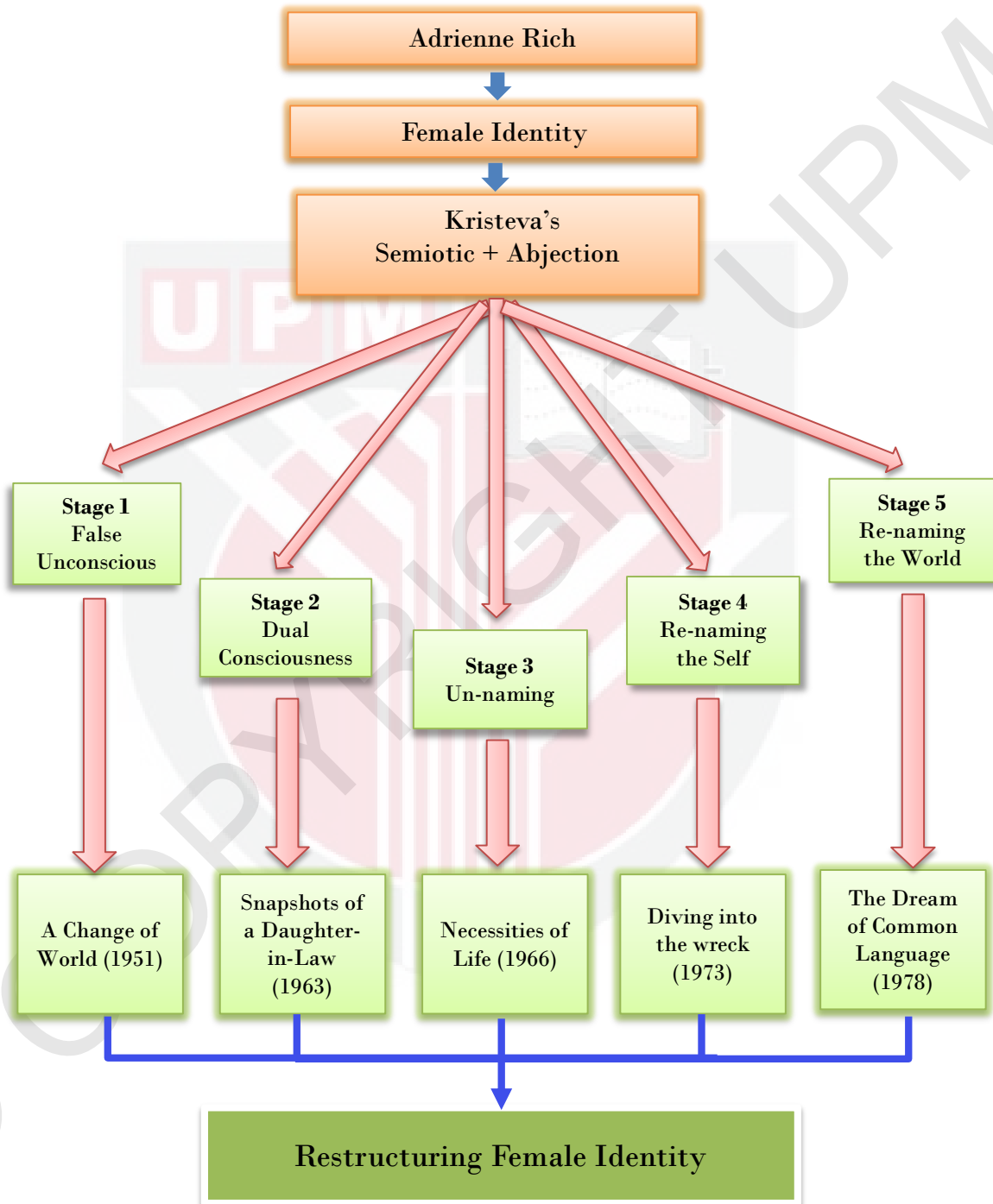


Figure 1.2: Methodology

1.8 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study is conducted within the framework of psycho-feminism, in which psycho-feminist theories have been utilized to study the topic of female identity. The study focuses on the restructuring of female identity in selected poems of Adrienne Rich, with respect to Julia Kristeva's theories of the *Symbolic and the Semiotic*, and *Abjection*. It is done in the light of the Kristeva's poststructuralist views that focus on the role of language as a vital process of signification in the structuring and restructuring of identity. It is conducted with respect to Kristeva's theories in:

- Revolution in Poetic Language (1984).
- Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection (1982).

The selection of Rich's collections of poetry depends on their liability and relevance to the topic of the study. The selected poems try to cover the various stages in the evolution of Adrienne Rich as a feminist poet regarding the re-structure of female identity. The study is limited to the following texts:

- 1- A Change of World (1951).
- 2- Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law (1963).
- 3- Necessities of Life (1966).
- 4- Diving into the wreck (1973).
- 5- The Dream of Common Language (1978).

These texts are selected because each one of them covers certain evolutionary stage in the poetic career of Adrienne Rich. The first text, *A Change of World* is selected because it covers the first stage of Rich's writing when she was still a disciple of great male writers. The second one, *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* is selected because it is the period in which Rich experienced dual consciousness due to the clash inside her between following the patriarchal rules of writing and the articulation of her personal needs and desires. The dual conscious life is behind Rich's rejection of all the patriarchal definitions given to women and this rejection is reflected in *Necessities of Life*. *Diving into the Wreck* is selected to stand for a significant stage in Rich's career, the stage of Re-Naming the Self, which is crucial to the advent of the next one. The last stage is depicted in *The Dream of Common Language*, which covers the stage of Re-Naming the World.

Table 1.3: Selected Poems

Ch.	Poetry Collections	Poems Selected
3	A Change of World	1-An Unsaid Word. 2-Aunt Jennifer's Tigers. 3-Storm Warnings.
4	Snapshots of A Daughter-in-Law	1-Snapshots of A Daughter-in-Law. 2-The Roofwalkers. 3-Tear Gas.
5	Necessities of Life	1-The Trees. 2-Necessities of Life. 3-I am in Danger- Sir.
6	Diving into the Wreck	1-Diving into the Wreck. 2-Trying to talk with a Man. 3-Incipient.
7	The Dream of Common Language	1-Twenty-One Love Poems.

The study covers the period falls into (1951-1978) as it is the period of Rich's revolutionary and evolutionary poetics. After 1978, Rich was mature enough to go into more universal and humanitarian issues that can be explored with different conceptual frameworks.

The Queer theory is not taken into consideration in the study of female desire and its role in the identity formation as many earlier studies dealt with this topic within this framework as shown in the literature review. More importantly, the present study avoids the Queer theory as a framework in favour of un-framing the poetry of Adrienne Rich from the assumptions of this theory. The researcher realizes through the literature review that critics and theorists of the Queer theory put the poetry of Rich into a frame that was used intentionally or unintentionally to keep the poetics of Rich from the public domain. Thus, the present study follows Krestiva's *Abjection* to explore the role of female desire in the reconstruction of female identity.

1.9 Definitions of Terms

- 1- **The Female Principle:** Rich defines the Western society in relation to the ethical relationship between the male principle and female one. The male principle stands for separation and objectivity while the female one stands for relationship and subjectivity. Patriarchy divided these two principles to reduce the importance of woman. This separation ascribes the priority to the male principle and inferiority to the female one (Farwell 1977).
- 2- **The Semiotic and the Symbolic:** In Kristeva's theory, the signifying process has two modes: the semiotic and the symbolic. The interaction between these two modalities regenerates the signifying process. This process re-signifies meanings that help in reconstituting language, which in turn reconstitutes identity (Moi 1986).
- 3- **Abjection:** The abject is what does not respect borders. Kristeva associates the abject with "what is jettisoned from the "symbolic system". It is what escapes that social rationality, that logical order on which a social aggregate is based" (POH, 1982). Abjection is the state of abjecting or rejecting what is other to oneself, and thereby creating borders of an always tenuous "I". Kristeva thinks that abjection is "a process that can collapse meaning, but which is nevertheless fundamental to the constitution of identity and renewal of meaning (Barrett 2011).
- 4- **The Signifying Process:** By the term *Signifying Process*, Kristeva means the various "ways in which bodily drives and energy are expressed, literally discharged through our use of language, and how our signifying practices shape our subjectivity and experience" (McAfee 2004, 14). She rejects the structuralists' idea that language is a static entity; in contrast, she looks to language as dynamic. For her, the study of the speaking subject is inseparable from the study of language.
- 5- **Subjectivity:** It refers to an abstract or general principle that defies our separation into distinct selves and encourages us to understand why our interior lives inevitably seem to involve other people, either as objects of need, desire, and interest or as necessary sharers of common experience. (Mansfield 2000)
- 6- **Identity:** It is a set of rules followed by the subject to have a solid and free self. It is achieved through subjectivity and hence becomes an outcome after the process of self-actualization (subjectivity). In this thesis, it is employed as an equivalent to subjectivity (Curti 1998).

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