

**ADRIENNE RICH'S PERSONAL VISION IN
SNAPSHOTS OF A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW**

ESSAYS IN LITERATURE

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ADRIENNE RICH'S PERSONAL VISION IN SNAPSHOTS
OF A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

An Abstract
Presented to
the Graduate Council of
Austin Peay State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Cecelia Iandoli

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ABSTRACT

Adrienne Rich's third volume of poetry, Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law, marks a decisive advance in her power as a poet and reflects a significant redirection in her personal development. From an impersonal poetry, she turns to writing about her own life directly and nakedly. She grapples with her past identity and attempts to shape a new self-definition. She rejects the limitations imposed on her by antiquated societal norms and replaces them with new values.

An inevitable consequence of forming one's own vision is alienation. But, however great the suffering, Rich insists on going beyond simple answers based solely on rational solutions and demands an acceptance of the relativity of truth. A special obstacle to obtaining truth is the belief in stereotypical roles. The "noble" male, the passive male and the passive female are three roles that Rich finds particularly detrimental to personal fulfillment. Of the three, the passive female, shaped by a patriarchal society, is the role most condemned by the poet. In her search for truth, she discovers love and marriage to be outdated rituals that, paradoxically, increase our loneliness. A further impediment to vision is our belief in personal immortality.

Rich's vision is always personal, always flexible, and always solitary. It grows from her own desolation and from her own destruction of myths; it flourishes despite the enmity of a patriarchal regime. To her readers, she brings the messages: reject the facile and absolute; accept the humane and the fragile; persist in the search for answers that fit us as individuals.

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**by
Cecelia Iandoli
December, 1977**

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Cecelia Iandoli entitled "Adrienne Rich's Personal Vision in Snapshots of a Daughter-In-Law." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Lewis C. Tatham
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:

Don W. Don
Second Committee Member

Edward E. Irwin
Third Committee Member

Accepted for the
Graduate Council:

William H. Ellis
Dean of the Graduate School

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Adrienne Rich's third volume of poetry, Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law, marks a decisive advance in her power as a poet and reflects a significant redirection in her personal development. Albert Gelpi has called Snapshots a "crucial event in the career of any artist: a penetration into experience which makes for a distinguishing style."¹ Her earlier volumes had been praised for their craftsmanship and restraint. W.H. Auden in his Foreword to A Change of World commended her for having "not only a talent for versification but also an ear and an intuitive grasp of much subtler and more difficult matters like proportion, consistency of diction and tone, and the matching of these with the subject at hand." He also noted that she "displays a modesty . . . which disclaims any extraordinary vision."² In a review of her second volume, The Diamond Cutters and Other Poems, Randall Jarrell compliments her for her craftsmanship but speaks slightly of her ideas. "Her

¹Albert Gelpi, "Adrienne Rich: The Poetics of Change," American Poetry Since 1960, ed. Robert B. Shaw (Cheadle, Cheshire: Carcanet Press Ltd., 1973), p. 126.

²W.H. Auden, "Foreword," A Change of World by Adrienne Rich (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), p. iv.

scansion . . . is easy and limpid,"³ he writes, but she is "a good poet who is all too good--one who can afford to be wild tomorrow."⁴ In The Diamond Cutters, composed largely of travel poems, Rich's attitude toward her subjects is one of detachment.

Snapshots marks a radical reorientation. In an interview with Robin Morgan in 1975, Rich spoke of this change:

I was changing my forms, changing my structures, writing about women's lives, writing about my own life very directly and nakedly for that time and for me at that time--this book was ignored, was written off as being too bitter and personal. Yet I knew I had gone out beyond in that book. I was also very conscious of male critics then, and it was like flunking a course. . . . But I knew I was stronger as a poet. I knew I was stronger in my connection with myself.⁵

This thesis is an examination of the precise nature of the development undergone by Adrienne Rich, as reflected in her poetry.

Snapshots represents Rich at a juncture in her life at which she is grappling with her past identity and attempting to shape a new self-definition for the future.

³Randall Jarrell, "New Books in Review," The Yale Review, XLVI, 1 (September, 1956), 100.

⁴Jarrell, p. 103.

⁵Robin Morgan, "Adrienne Rich and Robin Morgan Talk About Poetry and Women's Culture," New Woman's Survival Sourcebook (New York: Knopf, 1975), p. 107.

Those values instilled in her from childhood, and hitherto unquestioned, are questioned. She is at a crossroads where she must either suppress her new perceptions and continue her past aspirations or cast away her old, inaccurate identity and begin the quest for a truer self-definition. The latter course is the more difficult and requires a special form of courage; it is this course that Adrienne Rich takes in Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law.

Rich's inner conflict may be characterized as a struggle between perpetuating antiquated, societally-based norms, which she has come to view as delusions, or going beyond these limitations to adopt new values. This latter choice demands "hard vision and restlessness."⁶ It involves a sharp break with the past and a complete trust in one's senses, in "vision" to see through the chaos that must necessarily follow.

"Vision" has a special meaning for Rich. It is more than mere sight. Rather, it is a crucial instrument of survival. "Vision" comes to mean an individual's only method for perceiving a newly evolving, uncharted world. "Vision" imposes meaning on an otherwise random universe. It brings order to the chaos and leads us to truth. For Rich, truth consists of an acceptance of her human, temporal existence and a greater appreciation of her kinship with other human beings.

⁶Jerome Judson, "For Summer, a Wave of New Verse," Saturday Review, 46 (6 July 1963), 31.

This thesis traces Rich's development from a person who accepted a facile brand of knowledge to a person whose concept of truth becomes larger, limitless, and, sometimes, random. Since truth is without pretension or illusions, it may result in irony. Out of the destruction of all the old illusions, Rich develops her personal vision.

The initial consequence of relying on one's vision is alienation. Chapter II examines poems in which she insists that one seek the truth despite the alienation, the pain, and the contradictions. In these poems she also denounces simple answers based solely on rational and logical solutions. Truth is no longer for her an absolute. Personal significance and power are exposed as illusory; man, himself, is seen as inconsequential.

Chapter III examines poems in which she attacks another illusion: stereotypical roles. Three poems--"The Knight," "Antinous," and "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law"--illustrate Rich's belief that roles confine us and passivity keeps us from the creation of a personal vision. Since vision is the only road to personal meaning, these contradictions must be put aside.

Vision must be attained alone; therefore, alienation is unavoidable. Neither love nor marriage can lessen this separateness. Chapter IV examines those poems in which Rich suggests that the rituals of love and marriage may indeed exacerbate our aloneness. She is taunted by the

sterility of this isolation and questions whether or not there are any benefits to be gained from a pursuit of truth.

Chapter V considers those poems which attack one last illusion: the belief in personal immortality. The destruction of this illusion opens the door to a more affirmative view. In recognizing our own limitations in time, we can appreciate more fully our ancestral identity and, through this deeper appreciation of our past, reduce our feelings of alienation. The final result is tenderness. In the last poem to be discussed in this chapter, "Prospective Immigrants Please Note," Rich uses the metaphor of a door to represent her own philosophical choice. She has chosen not to perpetuate the old comfortable illusions but to pass through the doorway and strike out as an immigrant, ready to create her own version of the truth, a personal vision.

CHAPTER II

THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH

The first step in Rich's developing vision is her decision to seek the truth, no matter how much pain may accompany the quest and no matter how contradictory may be the truth she discovers. In pursuit of the truth, one must be prepared to dispense with whichever of one's illusions may hinder its attainment. In the three poems to be discussed here, Rich recounts her passage from a world in which it is believed that answers exist, if one knows where to look for them, to one in which only personal truths, acquired through exploration, have any validity.

In "From Morning Glory to Petersburg," Rich portrays herself consulting The World Book Encyclopedia. It is appropriate that she chooses a compendium of knowledge to begin her search for truth. It symbolizes an old comfort--books and pictures which are organized to provide information. But at the outset of the poem she indicates that her eyes even now have "grown dubious" and knowledge has become "untidy."

She reminisces about a time when knowledge was available and absolute:

I can recall when knowledge still was pure,
 not contradictory, pleasurable
 as cutting out a paper doll.
 You opened up a book and there it was:
 everything just as promised, from
 Kurdistan to Mormons, Gum
 Arabic to Kumquat, neither more nor less.
 Facts could be kept separate
 by a convention; that was what
 made childhood possible.¹

Knowledge was once containable; facts could be separated
 and enumerated. From this relatively simplistic, tranquil
 phase Rich has now moved to a more complicated reality:

. . . Now knowledge finds me out;
 in all its risible untidiness
 it traces me to each address,
 dragging in things I never thought about.
 (p. 12)

Knowledge is no longer so handily packaged. It is limitless
 and convoluted. It "traces" her down; it "drags" in new
 addenda. Once embraced it often feels more a burden than
 a release. Rich concludes wistfully: "If I could still
 extrapolate/ the morning glory on the gate/ from Petersburg
 in history--but it's too late." There is no going back
 once Rich accepts the responsibility of her increased
 awareness.

Books, as compendiums of knowledge, fail Rich. She
 distrusts their facile organization; they are illusory.
 They promise answers to indecipherable questions. The
 answers do not hold up under attack.

¹Adrienne Rich, Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law (New
 York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1956), p. 12. Subsequent
 references to the volume will be in the text of the paper.

"Merely To Know" marks an advance in her pursuit of knowledge. Having rejected books of knowledge, she begins a search into the nature of her ancestors; she writes more explicitly about her personal pursuit of knowledge. In the first stanza Rich's persona has crawled into the soil, "kicking" and "sniffl(ing)", breathing in" the cobwebs and remains of bugs and skeletons in an attempt to reach her predecessors' remains. She becomes increasingly active; this woman is unlike the woman in "From Morning Glory to Petersburg" who simply "allowed" knowledge to track her down. This person is seeking something with a vengeance:

Let me take you by the hair
and drag you backward to the light,
there spongelike press my gaze
patiently upon your eyes,
hold like a photographic plate
against you my enormous question.
(p. 28)

Here Rich hopes to arrive at the truth by capturing its image photographically. The technique proves no more capable of working for her than did the books.

The poet wants to make her predecessors' eyes hers. Then she might share their vision and compare it to her own. The consequences of her drawing them up to the light occur to her:

What if you cringe, what if you weep?
Suffer this and you need suffer
nothing more. I'll give you back
yourself at last to the last part.
I take nothing, only look.
Change nothing. Have no need to change.
Merely to know and let you go.
(p. 28)

Rich is aware that pain may be involved in the "uprooting" of her ancestors. She asks them to bear this final burden. Rich's own need is "merely to know." "Merely" vastly understates the issue. Rich has moved from her earlier passive role to become an active seeker. However, as long as Rich acts with a certain ruthless zeal, her ancestors' visions will be sealed off from her. She is willing to let them "cringe" and "weep" in an effort "merely to know." But her search involves a basic brutality and narcissism; this harshness precludes any real understanding of them as fellow human beings. It is essential to destroy illusions but not while brutalizing another human being. Furthermore, their answers will not work for her since truth is always individual in scope.

So Rich begins to look elsewhere; she looks inside herself. In "Double Monologue" her tone seems both jaded and ironic. Her illusions have failed her, yet her search continues. She grows worn and even a trifle bitter. She weathers the loss of illusions; her poems reflect her whittling away at the superfluous.

In previous poems Rich has used "knowledge" and "truth" as synonyms. In this poem "truth" is given a quality of the absolute. Since Rich's own changes reveal her rejection of the belief that any idea or answer is absolute, she speaks the word "truth" now with some sourness, some impatience. For a world gone secular, it is a sacred word; for Rich it is an illusory word. Knowledge,

by contrast, she sees as fluid and bountiful. It is an acquisition of sorts; one can pursue knowledge. In fact, one must pursue knowledge at all costs: despite "weeping" and "cringing," one must persist. Rich rejects all rigidity.²

Rich begins "Double Monologue" with lines that form a crucial question: "To live illusionless, in the abandoned mine-/ shaft of doubt, and still/ mime illusions for others?" (p. 33). Once we have questioned our own illusions, what stance do we take regarding others and the illusions they perpetuate? "Find yourself and you find the world?/ Solemn presumption! Mighty Object/ no one but itself has missed,/ what's lost, if you stay lost?" (p. 33). Rich rejects the idea that the quest for knowledge is for ourselves alone; she sees the insignificance of the individual who seeks merely personal salvation.

Rich, in denying the importance of the egocentric individual, is not led to a glorification of the traditional social order. It, too, is weak: "The needle drowns in the haydust./ Think of the whole haystack--/ a composition so fortuitous/ it only looks monumental" (p. 33). The power of society is an illusion: it consists of creating an image that appears "monumental." Like the

²Richard Howard, "A Review of Diving into the Wreck," Harper's, 247 (December 1973), 121.

haystack which is comprised of small straws held together in a tenuous formation, power is also a precarious construct. The "needle" (i.e., the individual) is trapped and lost in the haystack. She considers the consequence of passivity as a response of the individual to this random universe:

Wait out the long chance, and
 your needle too could get nudged up
 to the apex of that bristling calm.
 Rusted, possibly.

(pp. 33-34)

Passivity and patient waiting turn us to rust. The strength of the social order is a delusion. The individual is inconsequential. From these rejections, Rich turns to "truth."

Time wears us old utopians.
 I now no longer think
 "truth" is the most beautiful of words.
 Today, when I see "truthful"
 written somewhere, it flares

like a white orchid in wet woods,
 rare and grief-delighting, up from the page.
 Sometimes, unwittingly even,
 we have been truthful.
 In a random universe, what more

exact and starry consolation?

(p. 34)

In a random universe, truth is relative. But Rich's pursuit of knowledge continues because her search is essential to her own emerging identity.

Since I was more than a child
 trying on a thousand faces
 I have wanted one thing: to know
 simply as I know my name
 at any given moment, where I stand.

(p. 33)

Rich's growing awarenesses have displaced the illusions of logic and rationality, as symbolized by her encyclopedia metaphor, and transcended the simple belief that her predecessors' answers would serve her too. In "Double Monologue" she catalogues other illusions: the illusion of personal significance, the illusion of power, the belief that patient waiting will serve, and finally, the illusion of an absolute truth. Rich's purpose in the destruction of these illusions is to work out her "ragged human feeling" while simultaneously understanding the senseless isolation of an individual in a random universe.³

³ Judson, p. 31.

CHAPTER III

DESTROYING THE ILLUSION OF ROLES

Adrienne Rich believes that one of the chief obstacles to the attainment of vision is the commitment to role-playing. She suggests that we need to break away from the roles that confine us so that we may reach our fullest potential. Roles are society's inflictions on us. After we've assumed them long enough, we begin to confuse them with our essential beings. Furthermore, our compliance in playing roles creates an easy avoidance of our real work--vision and the pursuit of truth. Since knowledge, for Rich, means arriving at a truth that is unique to each individual, roles, by their very nature, cannot help but get in the way of that end.

This pursuit of knowledge or truth will shatter some of our illusions. Initially we will suffer alienation and a heightened sense of our own mortality. If we can accept this pain we may eventually move beyond it to create an individual system of survival, a personal vision that will serve both as our chief solace and also as a major impetus for change.

This chapter examines poems in which Rich depicts three people who are confined by roles determined by society. All three fail to develop individual visions.

As a result they are unable to formulate alternatives for themselves. Their submission to roles condemns them to lives of sorrow tinged with regret. They are, most importantly, unfulfilled.

In the first poem, "The Knight," the protagonist is hard and valiant. He cannot be otherwise. In the second poem of this chapter, "Antinous: The Diaries," Rich draws a portrait of a passive, beautiful favorite of Hadrian's court. Antinous unfortunately perpetuates the court's depravity; he embodies their lust and objectification of another human being.¹ His passivity and fear bind him to that role. The last poem discussed in this chapter is also the title poem of Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law. Rich writes about women confined by society's norms--particularly, by that of passivity. All three portraits are bleak; only the last stanza of "Snapshots" suggests hope.

"A knight rides into the noon"; he is splendid with the sun's rays reflecting off his armor. He is the embodiment of a valorous male, but it is no small price he pays to appear so formidable:

A knight rides into the noon,
and only his eye is living,
a lump of bitter jelly
set in a metal mask,
betraying rags and tatters
that cling to the flesh beneath
and wear his nerves to ribbons
under the radiant casque. (p. 14)

¹Gelpi, p. 130.

"Only his eye is living." His ability to see is still present; he understands, therefore, that his armor is a metal mask. It hides him from society and his own "living" eye. People think him dauntless; underneath the surface he is ragged and torn and nervous. He is in an untenable position. If he exposes his fears, he risks losing society's esteem. Since he is revered for what people ascribe to him rather than what he believes is his real self, he decides it is in his best interest to perpetuate their myth. Unfortunately, he becomes thereby ensnared in a never-ending duplicity. Society decrees that men remain unscathed and fearless, even in the face of death. He represents the stereotypical male in this culture. His tattered clothes are hidden as are his shredded nerves and real fears. His sole chance for salvation is that he may be unhorsed:

Who will unhorse this rider
and free him from between
the walls of iron, the emblems
crushing his chest with their weight?
Will they defeat him gently,
or leave him hurled on the green,
his rags and wounds still hidden
under the great breastplate?

(p. 14)

If he is "unhorsed," if he fails in society's terms, perhaps the knight will be allowed to be fragile. His "walls of iron" suggest the imprisonment that comes from perpetuating society's illusions. "The Knight" seems to symbolize a cultural need to believe in heroes--people who

are supra-human, who are invincible, who are without anxieties. The people cast in the role somehow receive enough rewards from it that they go on playing their parts. The illusion is thereby maintained.

In a footnote to "Antinous: The Diaries," Rich reveals: "I let the young man speak for me."² In his passivity he plays a role common to the female. Antinous is a favorite of the Emperor Hadrian. He is the favorite of the court because of his physical beauty. Antinous has accepted the depravity around him and has not yet voiced his disgust. At this juncture, however, his own self-hatred sets off a process of self-examination. His vision has begun to transcend the illusions of his court. Yet he is still unwilling to reject his role completely, to strike out on his own.

The first two stanzas form a picture of a decaying world in which the surfaces of things are embossed in gold. Poetry is banal; it is "poetry of furs and manners." Mortality is scorned; people crack their shins on opened coffins and limp forward toward "a beautiful arm/ striated with hairs of gold." Antinous grows "weary" and sickened by himself:

² Adrienne Rich, Adrienne Rich's Poetry, ed. Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi, Norton Critical Edition (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1975), p. 16, n. 1.

The old, needless story. For if I'm here
 it is by choice and when at last
 I smell my own rising nausea, feel the air
 tighten around my stomach like a surgical bandage,
 I can't pretend surprise. What is it I so miscarry?
 If what I spew on the tiles at last,
 helpless, disgraced, alone,
 is in part what I've swallowed from glasses, eyes,
 motions of hands, opening and closing mouths,
 isn't it also dead gobbets of myself,
 abortive, murdered, or never willed?

(pp. 30-31)

His nausea rises, constricting his stomach. This constriction is the result of anxiety caused by his acceptance of society's norms; his compliance prevents him from pursuing the truth. He ends up vomiting his daily diet of false illusions--communications that say little, the "fur, manners" and "golden" overlay of the court. He is most sickened by the parts of himself that have never developed. He is a victim of his own passivity.

A footnote to the poem tells us that Antinous may have committed suicide. Like the Knight, Antinous's options remained bleak. Both men chose not to upset what was familiar and secure, if somewhat unsatisfying. Neither was convinced that he would be much happier if he were to follow a different, far riskier path.

In the last poem to be discussed, Rich writes her "snapshots" about women in this culture. Rich's first photograph is of a "belle in Shreveport" who plays Chopin and wears "dresses copied" from her days as a "belle." Rich describes this woman's mind:

Your mind, mouldering like wedding-cake,
heavy with useless experience, rich
with suspicion, rumor, fantasy,
crumbling to pieces under the knife-edge
of mere fact.

(p. 21)

The belle from Shreveport, whose hair is "henna-colored," whose skin is "like a peachbud," is guilty of perpetuating two illusions, both of which are useless, according to Rich's evolving ethos. First, she clings to the past, as though history could provide a future for her. Secondly, she convinces herself that her appearance, her perfect femininity, is all-important. If she attends to this she need not struggle with other aspects of herself. Rich's anger is manifest in her description of the belle's mind. This Shreveport lady deludes herself with "suspicion, rumor, fantasy." Facts would cause her to disintegrate. Her beauty is reminiscent of Antinous's, but she has not yet reached his level of awareness. Her future is less hopeful than his.

The Shreveport belle's daughter "grows another way." She grows "nervy" and "glowering" and "bangs the coffee-pot into the sink. Voices chide her with messages to "Have no patience." "Be insatiable." Then, "Save yourself; others you cannot save." She burns herself with hot water, and matches, and steam. It's hard to tell whether she has grown masochistic or numb.

. . . nothing hurts her anymore, except
each morning's grit blowing into her eyes.
(p. 21)

Rich's snapshot of the daughter suggests a psychotic break. The daughter hears voices which she believes to be angels. Ironically, much of what these voices say to her makes more sense to the reader than does her mother's reality.

However, the truth, or an illusionless life, eludes both of them. The belle's truth is overlaid with suspicion, fantasy and decay. The daughter, with no model for perceiving the truth, manufactures a world in which she escapes her mother's obsolete, passive experiences. She manufactures an aggressive inner world. This movement from one of passivity to a more aggressive outward style is actually more healthy than her mother's posture, but inappropriate, nonetheless. The daughter is caught between her need to move beyond her mother's decay and society's need for women to be passive "peachbud" beauties. The schism is literally driving her insane. Ironically, the daughter's hallucinations reveal a stark, almost illusionless truth, but since she is powerless, she succumbs to self-mutilation and numbness.

The daughter is evidence of how difficult it is to live with so marked an inner/outer schism. Since Rich rejects "a facile separation between the internal and the external,"³ the daughter's psychosis can almost be seen

³ Joan Joffe Hall, "A Review of Of Women Born," New Republic, 175 (6 November 1976), 29.

as a sensible escape. The only hurt left is the "morning's grit blowing into her eyes" (p. 22). The daughter tolerates her self-mutilation; this she is inured to. But the "grit blowing into her eyes" is another matter entirely. It robs her of the opportunity to see, and the promise of vision is all that has sustained her. The daughter's break with reality is, in effect, the logical refinement of the mother's neurosis--a woman whose mind is "heavy with useless experience, rich/ with suspicion, rumor, fantasy . . ." (p. 22).

Parts Three, Four and Five of "Snapshots" form hard-edged pictures of women whose frustrations are so great that they begin to attack each other. Even Emily Dickinson, as an accomplished poet of this culture, had to write poetry while waiting for the "jellies" to "boil and scum." Women, stereotyped as passive by the culture, grow to accept their lot. The daughter of the Shreveport belle "burnt herself"; the belle's delusions embraced the past and glorified her "delicious recollections." Rich seems to suggest that the roles women most often fall into may drive them towards self-mutilation, psychosis, and stagnation. Minimally, the role will lead to frustration and anger. As long as women accept societal norms of truth, women will perpetuate illusions that are not in their best interests. In Part Six, womankind, symbolized by the feminine name of Corinna, adjusts her "music and words," her messages, to suit others. She also spends her time worrying about the

way she looks and even her looks are "adjusted in reflections of an eye." Corinna has nullified her vision; she has given everything over to the illusion of love. "Pinned down/ by love, for you the only natural action" compares the illusion of love to imprisonment. Rich labels it "that cage of cages." Her statement is biting when she writes "for you the only natural action" (p. 22).

She labels love "natural" since love is the traditional panacea for curing neurosis and solitude. It is womankind's only recourse, traditionally. Love is an illusion that needs to be given up; it comforts women too much. It perpetuates women's acceptance that all will magically turn out well. It allows women the freedom not to seek the truth, not to struggle for the attainment of their own vision. The Knight was imprisoned in his "valor"; Antinous was a captive of his passivity; women are blinded by the illusion of love, by their own vanity, and by their preoccupation with the past.

In Part Seven, Rich quotes Mary Wollstonecraft, whose message is that in this "uncertain world" it is very important to have "some stay/ which cannot be undermined" (p. 23). These lines supplement those from "Double Monologue":

Sometimes, unwittingly even,
 we have been truthful.
 In a random universe, what more
 exact and starry consolation?
 (p. 34)

Rich's "stay" is the truth. But since "truth" is always individual in scope it occurs sporadically and even "unwittingly." The truth cannot be neglected because it is essential to one's being. In a random world only an illusionless life is useful. Otherwise our minds will "moulder like wedding-cake," nourished by lies. Our lies place us in a straight-jacket. Antinous was a prisoner to a decadent society against which he could not speak out. The Knight was physically imprisoned by his armor, the emblem of his role. Women are confined by a culture that labelled Wollstonecraft a "harpy, shrew, and whore" in order to denigrate the truth she spoke.

What taunts women in Part Eight is a vision of "what might have been." The reason that their "wit, taste, martyred" ambition are wasted is that their eyes still "inaccurately dream/ behind closed windows blankening with steam." Women's visions are clouded; they continue to dream rather than act.

Part Nine of "Snapshots" is a harsh vision; it is a stanza devoid of illusions; no "lapses" will be forgiven:

This luxury of the precocious child,
Time's precious chronic invalid,
Would we, darlings, resign it if we could?
Our blight has been our sinecure:
Mere talent was enough for us--
glitter in fragments and rough drafts.
(p. 24)

Women have harbored the delusion that good beginnings are sufficient. Women allow themselves the luxury of a

prolonged childhood and chronic-invalidism--all of which rob them of self-esteem and foster dependency and stagnation. All the "allowances" made for women by this culture have denigrated women's "visions." Women live on a diet of illusions. The illusions of childhood and accomplishment without work have stymied their pursuit of the truth. The truth is costly. It demands an intense commitment, Rich exhorts women, to believe in themselves and to find ways to realize themselves more fully:

Time is male
and in his cups drinks to the fair,
Bemused by gallantry, we hear
our mediocrities over-praised,
indolence read as abnegation,
slattern thought styled intuition,
every lapse forgiven, our crime
only to cast too bold a shadow
or smash the mould straight off.
For that, solitary confinement,
tear gas, attrition, shelling,
Few applicants for that honor.

(p. 24)

Rich is increasingly straightforward. Men have "allowed" women to bask in their mediocrity by over-praising their work. Here is another form of delusion--one which keeps women from the pursuit of an illusionless vision. The patriarchy robs womankind of integrity. It controls women by overpraising their efforts, condoning their shortcomings. Rich defines patriarchy in her non-fiction work, Of Woman Born:

Yet, as Mitscherlich points out, "the patriarchal structure components in our society are closely associated with magical thought. It assumes the omnipotence-impotence relationship between Father and son, God and man, ruler and ruled, to be the natural principle of social organization.

(Emphasis mine)⁴

Magical thought, I believe, is synonymous with illusion. Women accept falsehoods as the easy way out so that the questioning of their roles and the pursuit of individual vision will be curtailed. But a priority of the women's movement "has been to rebel against all such stereotyping--all assigned roles: to fight, in effect, against all processes of mythologizing."⁵

Part Ten of "Snapshots" is a vision inspired by Simone de Beauvoir's work, The Second Sex. Rich's vision suggests actively pursuing life, hence truth, and evolving a sense of merciless criticism to insure against illusions:

well,
she's long about her coming who must be
more merciless to herself than history.
Her mind full to the wind, I see her plunge
breasted and glancing through the currents,
taking the light upon her
at least as beautiful as any boy
or helicopter,
poised, still coming . . .
(p. 24)

⁴Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1976), p. 57.

⁵Francine Du Plessiz Gray, "A Review of Of Women Born," New York Times Book Review, 10 October 1976, p. 12.

The contrast of this woman's "plunging" into the currents while "glancing" and "taking the light upon her" to the Shreveport belle's mouldering mind is remarkable. Rich demands that roles be rejected. She urges that everyone direct himself toward an evolution into an active, fully aware, human being. The mind must be full to the wind; perhaps light will destroy the mouldering wedding-cake imagery after all. Facts, not illusions, will nurture us.

The change in Rich's philosophy becomes increasingly clear. Her personae begin to seek the truth actively and are prepared to destroy their old panaceas, driven by the need for a personal vision. This aggressiveness contrasts sharply with the previous personae, whose searches for the truth began with encyclopedias and sometimes culminated in suicide or psychosis. Rich's poems reflect a movement towards a more outward-driven mode of acquiring the truth. In the lines, "I see her plunge/ breasted and glancing through the currents," the currents may represent the obstacle of patriarchal tradition or the illusions of vanity and love. Whatever the difficulty, her persona plunges undaunted.

This poem marks Rich's emergence as a feminist writer. I believe that this evolving "vision" is the impetus for her new themes. Her own illusions end here. There is no room for Antinous's passivity or the Knight's imprisonment. She begins to speak against the old panaceas--love and

marriage. Easy answers are increasingly unsatisfactory. Books and predecessors' messages are obsolete. The tyranny of role-playing--"miming illusions for others"--has ended. Rich begins to accept her own vision. Her evolving truths are painful and, as the next chapter details, alienation is inescapable.

CHAPTER IV

DESTROYING THE ILLUSION OF LOVE

Adrienne Rich sees both love and marriage as old comforts which keep us from the active pursuit of our own vision. In exposing these two concepts as archaic illusions, Rich seems to suggest that personal alienation is inescapable. Furthermore, the suggestion is made that love and marriage may even increase our alienation.

In "A Marriage in the Sixties," the sterility of a contemporary marriage is exposed. Rich is writing a poem about "separation under the same roof."¹ This theme is reiterated in "Novella," another poem that draws a portrait of a marriage in which each person's separateness grows increasingly distinct. Finally, in "The Loser," which portrays a man with a real appreciation for another person, Rich exposes the irony of love. It is precisely this man with the capacity to appreciate another human being who ultimately loses the woman he loves. In a random universe sterility and irony haunt us; alienation is unavoidable.

The setting of "A Marriage in the Sixties" is late afternoon; a husband and a wife are reading the New York Sunday Times together. The wife recalls a time when his

¹Helen Vendler, "Ghostlier Demarcations, Keener Sounds," Parnassus: Poetry in Review, II, 1 (Fall-Winter, 1973), 16.

letters "primed my nerves." Today she recognizes other things; she envies "the perfect hour of talk" that "two strangers, thrust for life upon a rock" may share. Instead, she is experiencing the sterility of a desert. She contrasts her old passion with this new dryness. Today, the separation, the schism of "two minds, two messages," strips her of an old illusion--the belief that marriage may save her from alienation:

When
 I read your letters long ago
 in that half-defunct
 hotel in Magdalen Street
 every word primed my nerves.
 A geographical misery
 composed of oceans, fogbound planes
 and misdelivered cablegrams
 lay round me, a Nova Zembla
 only your breath could unfreeze.
 Today we stalk
 in the raging desert of our thought
 whose single drop of mercy is
 each knows the other there.
 Two strangers, thrust for life upon a rock,
 may have at least the perfect hour of talk
 that language aches for; still--
 two minds, two messages.

(pp. 45-46)

Once her husband's breath could unfreeze the confusion around her. Now, however, he is tangled in time: "Some mote of history has flown into your eye." The husband's vision has become static while the wife continues to search beyond "some mere piece of time." She asks: "Will nothing ever be the same?" It is the same problem that Rich probed in "From Morning Glory to Petersburg":

"If I could still extrapolate/ the morning glory on the gate/ from Petersburg in history--but it's too late" (p. 12). In "A Marriage in the Sixties" she comes to the same answer: it is too late. Now that her own illusions have been destroyed, nothing will ever be the same. Her old passions, her facile solutions, and comfortable marriage are replaced by alienation. Now the husband is no saviour whose "breath could unfreeze the Nova Zembla," but a "dear fellow-particle." He is as separate as a mind with a separate message. This time only the wife can save herself; her own pursuit of an individual answer can help her. Nothing else will do.

"The world breathes underneath our bed/ Don't look. We're at each other's mercy too" (p. 47). This last comfort, the mercy that "each knows the other there," is put aside. Now the husband and the wife recognize that "we're at each other's mercy too." All relationships are contingent upon a common set of ideas. Here, "two minds, two messages" are what the husband and wife share. They are separate from each other in a profound way. In the midst of their Sunday newspaper, her vision has brought havoc to their door: marriage is no longer a viable method of averting her own alienation, for even the husband and the wife are at each other's mercy. Rich is grappling with a recurrent theme: a sense of human separateness stalks her.²

²"Review of Diving into the Wreck, Publisher's Weekly, 207 (3 February 1975), 74.

The schism that divides men from women is reexamined in "Novella." Rich's lines are tersely written and suggest the sterility found within marriage. The scene is an argument between a man and a woman. The man leaves; the woman washes dishes, and the children "quarrel in the attic." Everyone pursues activities which signify the separation of the members of the household.

This poem forms a microcosm in which alienation is not only shown to be inescapable but is revealed to be intensified by marriage. Rich catalogues each person's motions, which are all dry and mundane: "It gets dark outside./ The children quarrel in the attic./ She has no blood left in her heart" (p. 57). Even the sky mirrors their dilemma: "Outside, separate as minds, the stars too come alight."

The phrase "separate as minds" is reminiscent of some earlier words, "two minds, two messages." Rich's message is obvious: each of us has a separate vision of what life is. The pain in formulating our own version of the truth is that it inevitably leads to our own alienation. Separation from other human beings is the natural consequence of trying to make sense out of a random universe.

In "The Loser" Rich exposes the illusion of love. The irony of the poem is obvious: the man who is actually capable of loving a woman loses her to a man who "chafed

your beauty into use." The Loser is bitter despite his display of joviality at her wedding. He laments the loss of her beauty and her intelligence; he mourns her passivity. The Loser's knowledge of her was more sacred than society's ritual, marriage, but he must bid her farewell: "I kissed you, bride, and lost, and went/ home from that bourgeois sacrament" (p. 15). His eyes hurt at the loss of her "shimmer on the tree." He has transcended the anachronism of marriage, but his own life remains desolate. His eyes ache after her wedding:

Your wedding made my eyes ache; soon
the world would be worse off for one
more golden apple dropped to ground
without the least protesting sound, and
you would windfall lie, and we
forget your shimmer on the tree.

Beauty is always wasted: if
not Mignon's song sung to the deaf,
at all events to the unmoved.
A face like yours cannot be loved
long or seriously enough.
Almost, we seem to hold it off.
(p. 15)

Part Two describes the Loser a decade later, watching the woman he loved. He watches her hang her wash and all his "groans can do no good/ Because you still are beautiful." Her beauty has been retained but "squared and stiffened by the pull/ of what nine windy years have done." Her intelligence is still palpable but "flung into that unwearied stance." Her laundries and child-bearing have stiffened her body and wasted her intelligence. Her

marriage persists; it is another "unwearied stance." The Loser continues to envy her husband: "I turn my head and wish him well/ who chafed your beauty into use/ and lives forever in a house/ lit by the friction of your mind" (p. 16).

The husband, who is unappreciative of his wife's beauty and intelligence, enjoys the friction of her mind while the Loser lives in envious desolation. This poem highlights the irony of love. The person who understands another human being is inevitably deprived of loving him. Love is a ruse and a sham. Love is as anachronistic as marriage; both are outdated modes of communication.

Adrienne Rich concludes that neither love nor marriage staves off alienation. No other person can save us. The old passions that unfroze our pain and confusion are no longer sufficient. We are on our own at last. Previous roles have been laid aside. The rituals of both love and marriage have increased our alienation. There is little comfort left to us because the comforts of love and marriage have kept us from our work. Our work is the pursuit of truth devoid of illusions--a truth which is ultimately individual in essence. As a result, alienation is unavoidable since each mind is forming a "separate message."

CHAPTER V

TWO BENEFITS

In the poems discussed in the last three chapters, Rich lays to rest some old illusions. Love, marriage, and stereotyped roles, she labels obsolete. In their stead, an inescapable alienation has continued to flavor our lives. Some of the rewards from the pursuit of a personal truth have been alluded to previously; this chapter will finally name some of the benefits acquired in pursuing an illusionless life.

In "Readings of History" Rich discovers that her ancestral identity is enriched through the destruction of her belief in her own immortality. Her feelings towards Pirandello and a Civil War uncle illustrate her increased tenderness towards her fellow human beings. Consanguinity--figurative and literal--softens some of the old alienation. "Prospective Immigrants Please Note" provides the perfect metaphor for Rich's struggle between the pursuit of an illusionless existence and the acceptance of a more comfortable and static life. This poem's central image is a door. We are left at the threshold; whether to go over the threshold or not is our own choice. This poem epitomizes the struggle we have seen throughout Snapshots: whether to transcend our "selves long past" or to cling to the old errors.

In "Readings of History" Rich traces her search through her ancestry, through history, through old photographs, and, finally, through her mirror image. In "Prospective Immigrants Please Note" she leads us to a junction. We need to choose between maintaining our traditional misconceptions and searching for individual vision. "Readings of History" highlights the fact that we are all mortal and therefore historically determined. Our solace lies in realizing that others have endured before us. Since we are all victims of an unplanned obsolescence, a second comfort comes with the awareness that we are all sharing our fragile, time-limited humanity.

"Readings of History" begins with an "Evil Eye." The eye is a stereopticon which shows "genre views of 1906." The Evil Eye also describes the vision of the person watching the genre view. Since she is without the buffer of illusions and since death is in the foreground, death is difficult to ignore:

. . . till suddenly, gazing straight into
that fringed and tasselled parlor, where the vestal
spurns an unlikely suitor
with hairy-crested plants to right and left,
my heart sank. It was terrible.
I smelled the mildew in those swags of plush,
dust on the eyepiece bloomed to freaks of mould.
I knew beyond all doubt how dead that couple was.
(p. 36)

The speaker, sensitive to that couple's mortality, experiences a decaying scent. The mildew and the mould heighten the sense of decay. Later, she is caught like her

ancestors by the camera, which makes her aware of her own mortality. She realizes that no one is exempt from death and aging:

Your camera stabs me unawares,
right in my mortal part.
A womb of celluloid already
contains my dotage and my total absence.
(p. 36)

Her own senility is captured for her progeny by the camera. Her mortality is contained by celluloid. Just as she witnessed and laughed at the "genre views of 1906," so her photos will be subject to the same laughter from her descendants. She is inescapably locked in time.

In Parts Two and Three of "Readings" Pirandello and a Civil War uncle serve as examples of individuals locked in time. Pirandello is the illustrious genius, while the uncle is "not much of a mind." Their pairing suggests another theme: death makes our successes and our brilliances perfectly meaningless. We are all ultimately reduced to artifacts, to memorabilia. History is merely a collection of predecessors' lives, of personal visions buried. History draws us out; it seduces us with the promise that we may understand everything at last or that an ancestor's vision will do, will serve us also. Rich seems to ask: Will our ancestors' knowledge provide shortcuts to our own pursuit of knowledge? "What, in fact, happened in those woods/ on some obliterated afternoon?" (p. 38).

Solace lies in our consanguinity. History brings us back to ourselves and others by illuminating everyone's mortality. We are all blood brothers and sisters in the light of our finite place in history. Our kinship is realized from the awareness that we are time-limited beings.

"Can history show us nothing/ but pieces of ourselves, detached,/ set to a kind of poetry,/ a kind of music, even?" These lines parallel those in an earlier poem of Rich's, "Double Monologue," in which she affirms that the search is "to know/ simply as I know my name at any given moment, where I stand" (p. 33). Now Rich begins to acknowledge the benefits to be gained from absorbing our ancestry while continuing to pursue independent answers. The simplicity of "knowing one's own name" suggests that each person needs to form an individual answer. But, while we are pursuing knowledge, in the hopes of creating a personal vision, consanguinity is our chief solace. We can grow kinder when we recognize the affinity between past and present:

Those angry giantesses and giants,
lately our kith and kin!
We stare into their faces, hear
at last what they were saying
(or some version not bruited
by filial irritation.)

(p. 38)

Her own arrogance is reduced once she begins to realize we are time-limited creatures: "I, too, have lived in history."

Knowledge, which is initially brutal because it destroys our illusions, also brings with it a resurgence of tenderness. If we can envision our own fragility and mortality, then we can sympathize with the human race at large. This bond of sympathy is the solace that Rich writes about in the two poems discussed in this chapter.

Part Five, "The Mirror," shows Rich's persona preoccupied with history. This person, who appears to speak for Rich, is questioning her identity: "Split at the root, neither Gentile nor Jew,/ Yankee nor Rebel." The mirror reflects her image back to herself. In pursuing the past she wonders if she is finding the truth through her ancestry or simply evading her present:

Is it in hopes
to find or lose myself
that I
fill up my table now
with Michelet and Motley?
To "know how it was"
or to forget how it is--
what else?

(p. 39)

Her identity is that of a "good reader of histories"; she compares herself to Morris Cohen, who traces "Judaic chronicles," and she asks the same question again: "do you read to shut out the tick-tock of self,/ the questions and their routine answers?"

"Readings of History" forms a microcosm of Rich's evolving vision. Initially she is struck by the mould and mildew she sees through her stereopticon viewer; this

mildew parallels the wedding-cake imagery in "Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law." But the two poems present contrary views--one a false, the other a true vision. In "Snapshots" the mould suggests a passive decay that the "Shreveport belle" allows to diminish her because she persists in her own illusions of romanticism and the past. In "Readings" the mould symbolizes Rich's awareness that we are all mortal; we are all bound to die. In "Snapshots" Rich's tone is angry; in "Readings" she first expresses a fear, which is later replaced by a kind of tenderness toward her dead ancestry. The Evil Eye is a vision without illusions; it "stabs me unawares." It captures our future senility, our imminent deaths; it leaves in its wake a deeper humanity.

In "The Confrontation" Pirandello represents the learned writer who, ironically, is depicted as insane. Rich is questioning the role of writers generally. Through Pirandello Rich comes to grips with her older, more constricted identity and her newer, more active self. She is confronting herself in "The Confrontation"; she utilizes a fellow-writer, Pirandello, to depict her own dilemma:

The present holds you like a raving wife,
clever as the mad are clever,
digging up your secret truths
from her disabled genius.
She knows what you hope:
remembers
what you're sick
of forgetting.

She takes the advice she offered to Pirandello and goes out, "walk(s),/ think(s) of selves long past."

In the next section, "Memorabilia," she recalls "Civil War letters of a great-grand-uncle." She becomes engrossed in her ancestral tradition; this search parallels the one in "Merely to Know." There she wanted to "spongelike press my gaze/ patiently upon your eyes,/ hold like a photographic plate/ against you my enormous question." Rich's pursuit was to "Change nothing. Have no need to change./ Merely to know and let you go" (p. 28). In "Readings" her enormous question remains unanswered but her tone is more patient. In "Merely to Know" her question is framed in a fashion that suggests that there might be an absolute version of what people could know. But by the time she writes "Readings" she asks a different question: Are we "Prisoners of what we think occurred, or dreamers dreaming toward a final word?" Is the truth merely a set of our own dreams? Rich's tone grows less absolute; it grows softer.

In the last stanza of "Readings" Rich writes about a covenant, a covenant representing a pact she is making with her present and her past. "The present breaks our hearts"; only memory will restore us as "when we sleep at home again." The memories and memorabilia of her ancestors provide some consolation in the consanguinity that will soften her isolation. Consanguinity requires the knowledge that we are finite, historically determined mortals.

The illusions of a dauntless, infinite existence are laid to rest along with our ancestors. What we are left with is a kindred tenderness. Rich is no longer pressing her gaze and taking photographic plates, regardless of the cringing and weeping of her ancestors, as she did in "Merely to Know." This stanza from "Readings" verifies the notion that her pursuit of an illusionless life, one which incorporates death as a reality, will bring us two benefits: an ancestral identity and a heightened gentleness. Her last lines in "The Covenant" are written to a "dying man who heaves the true/ version at last, now that it hardly matters": "Here's water. Sleep. No more is asked of you./ I take your life into my living head" (p. 40). Rich comforts a "dear fellow-particle"; her sensitivity is the result of pursuing knowledge in the wake of destroying illusions. This last illusion, a sense of personal immortality, is a crucial awareness. In destroying the illusion that the past could provide answers for the present, Rich provides answers to questions posed at the beginning of this chapter. What does one gain through the destruction of illusions? What do we receive from pursuing the truth?

Rich suggests that we can appreciate each other more and thus heighten both our sensitivity and our gentleness. Furthermore, a stronger ancestral identity is possible if we pursue the truth without "filial irritation." A deeper

empathy is one possible benefit from destroying our old illusions.¹ And, lastly, it is possible to make a personal covenant which could unify our past with our present if we come to accept our own finite nature.

In the last poem to be discussed, "Prospective Immigrants Please Note," Rich writes that "Either you will/ go through this door/ or you will not go through" (p. 59). This poem characterizes the choice one needs to make between perpetuating illusions and seeking the truth. The poem's title suggests a new departure to a newer land. Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law is indeed a transitional volume in Adrienne Rich's poetry, and this particular poem epitomizes the choices she is making. Margaret Atwood seems to have captured Rich's internal dilemma when she writes, "the truth, it seems, is not just what you find when you open a door; it is itself a door, which the poet is always on the verge of going through."²

Either you will
go through this door
or you will not go through.

If you go through
there is always the risk
of remembering your name.

Things look back at you doubly
and you must look back
and let them happen.

¹ Erica Jong, "Visionary Anger," Ms., II, 1 (July, 1973), 31.

² Margaret Atwood, "Review of Diving into the Wreck," New York Times Book Review, 30 December 1973, p. 2.

If you do not go through
it is possible
to live worthily

to maintain your attitudes
to hold your position
to die bravely

but much will blind you
much will evade you,
at what cost who knows?

The door itself
makes no promises.
It is only a door.

(p. 59)

The cost one pays is living with illusions that perpetuate a simplistic version of truth. The cost consists of constricting, stereotyped role-playing and the perpetuation of obsolete rituals such as love and marriage. If we do not go through this door we may lose a gentler view of our own humanity and a richer ancestral identity. Consanguinity may elude us.

"Things look back at you doubly/ and you must/ look back/ and let them happen" (p. 59). One risks alienation from others, yet, to achieve a personal answer, one must let things happen. When life's ironies will stare at us, we must "let them happen." Rich posts a casual note to us "prospective immigrants," but there is nothing easy-going about her search, or ours. Comforts, such as love, marriage and roles, are no longer available to us. Rich's vision has placed us at a threshold of choice. Either we will sustain the old fantasies or we will create a newer, and probably braver, personal vision.

Rich has taken pains throughout Snapshots to catalogue the costs of not going to the other side of the threshold. But the choice to go through is always an individual decision. Rich posts a final warning at the door: if we choose to embark on this voyage there is no going back because the price we pay is the destruction of our old, comfortable illusions.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law is a crucial event in the career of Adrienne Rich; here for the first time she wrote about her own life "very directly and nakedly." The poems in this volume reveal her at a crossroads in her life where she must choose between pursuing an illusionless, personal version of truth--her own "vision"--and perpetuating the anachronistic rituals which comforted her--the old, outmoded illusions which suggested that life is simple and may be easily mastered. Snapshots marks Rich's conversion from believing that life can be manipulated ("I felt experience was no longer something manageable and malleable . . .")¹ to an acceptance of a wilder, "random universe" ("I just had to take it [experience] as it came and try to deal with it").²

This thesis has traced Rich's rejection of all her old illusions: the belief in personal significance, personal infinity, and role-playing. Rich further rejects all simple panaceas: marriage, love, facile solutions, passivity, truth as an absolute, and pure logic. Out of

¹David Kalstone, "Talking with Adrienne Rich," Saturday Review, 17 (22 April 1972), 56.

²Kalstone, p. 59.

the chaos which ensued, she begins to accept her inescapable alienation as a necessary human condition. She persists in forming a personal version of truth; an illusionless existence is her ultimate goal. She embraces her predecessors and other kindred mortals; she begins to accept her ancestral identity; she grows more tender. Out of this tenderness, out of this destruction of illusions, out of her own alienation, she develops a vision.

Rich's vision is always personal, always flexible, and always solitary. It grows from her own desolation, from her own destruction of myths; it flourishes despite the enmity of a patriarchal regime. Her messages continue to crystallize: reject the facile and the absolute. Accept the humane and the fragile. Persist with personal strength gained from a new aggressiveness. Continue this new searching for answers which fit us as individuals.

Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law is a dramatization of Adrienne Rich's poetic and personal growth. This thesis has traced the stages of change from her destruction of anachronistic illusions, through her unavoidable alienation, into a final awareness that we are all human beings, connected by our fragile mortality. In accepting her own version of the truth, Rich has created a personal vision. In Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law, she reaches beyond her old self to find, on the other side of the threshold, a newer person--a wiser Adrienne Rich.

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