

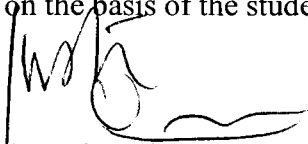
Opponent's Report on BA Thesis
THE POETRY OF ADRIENNE RICH: THE SOURCES OF FEMALE POWER
by Volha Lolita Karpenka

This thesis outlines the development of Adrienne Rich's career in the second part of the twentieth century. The prose is clear and relatively error-free. The student's sympathy with her subject is flagged as early as the Acknowledgements, and it allows her to present the issues and preoccupations of this American poet. Rich's career has spanned some of the most interesting times, both in American poetry and in America, and her work has often been at the centre of the transformations of the period.

However, the student's sympathy with Rich is perhaps the greatest weakness of the thesis, as it forecloses any debate about the nature of Rich's achievement. The measure of this last is taken purely from the poet herself, and well-disposed critics. It is unfortunate that none of the negative criticism of her work was engaged (Robert von Hallberg, for instance, raises some very salient points). This reduces the thesis to a work of advocacy. Moreover, the thesis, in an effort to emphasize Rich's intellectual bravery, does not acknowledge how she herself has become an establishment figure (one index of this is the endowed chair which Rich held at Stanford University for many years).

Also, at times the student's sympathy with Rich provokes her to out-Rich Rich. For instance when she says that 'women have been and still are *expelled* [*sic*] from the most important executive processes. No man ever had to deal with such restrictions' (41). This elides, among others, the history of black men in the U.S. Also, on the same pages, she says 'women have almost no history', thus eliding much of the feminist-oriented scholarly work in history of the last thirty years. Such overstatements sap the reader's confidence in the student's judgement.

Some details: names of certain critics are given inconsistently in the text and notes (Willard Spiegelman, Thomas Byers/Byars). Also, I see that in quoting Albert Camus, Ludwig Wittgenstein and even Rich herself, the student uses websites of questionable reliability. I do not think this is acceptable, and I do not think the thesis should be accepted until proper references are furnished (these can be added in the manner of an errata sheet). For the purposes of the defence, I recommend the grade 2-3, **dobře-velmi dobře**, to be decided on the basis of the student's responses.



doc. Justin Quinn Ph.D.
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