

B.A. THESIS
AMERICAN LITERATURE SPECIALISATION
The Poetry of Adrienne Rich: The Sources of Female Power
Volha Lolita Karpenka

The thesis is devoted to the writings of Adrienne Rich, primarily the poet's "sources of power." It begins with a discussion of Rich's departure from the traditional, male-dominated ways of living and writing, and her search for language and art that would offer "a valid reflection of her own perception of life, of her own experiences" (10). The second chapter points out the poet's insistence on revising male-created myths and knowledge even at the cost of suffering, which is exemplified for instance in the poem "Power." In the third chapter, Ms. Karpenka finds another source of female power in Rich's redefinition of love. She contrasts "Twenty-One Love Poems" with Pablo Neruda's *Twenty Love Poems and A Song of Despair*, and then identifies various aspects of lesbian love described in Rich's sequence. Finally, the last chapter highlights the courage with which Rich continues to face sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression.

Ms. Karpenka's thesis is outspoken but uneven. It raises issues worth raising even given the century and a half of feminism. However, the discussion of Rich's poetry ignores nuances that add depth and complexity to the poet's prose. Even though I tried to draw the student's attention to details, she disregarded the "unruly images" (to use Rich's own words) and made her thesis unnecessarily intellectually vulnerable. We also disagreed over several issues, including the authentic female language and art, Rich's "redefinition" of love as "compassionate, giving, and, what is important, selfless" (36), and the hard-core second-wave rhetoric about patriarchy and the absence of women's history.

The process of writing the thesis was complicated by the fact that, after a verified accusation of plagiarism, Ms. Karpenka rewrote the text. The number of references doubled, but I believe she did her best. At the same time, I need to say that the submitted version includes some footnotes and changes that I have not seen, which were added without my awareness.

For all these reasons, I suggest that the thesis be graded as "very good" (velmi dobře).



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Sept 6, 2009