



# **'Catch if you can your country's moment': Recovery And Regeneration In The Poetry Of Adrienne Rich**

*William S. Waddell*

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The eight essays in this collection explore the work of Adrienne Rich, one of America's most significant living writers and a poet and a public intellectual with a substantial audience both inside and outside the academy. Taken together, the essays argue for a shift in the perceived center of gravity of Rich's career, from the passionate and eloquent poems of a largely personal feminist awakening, from the mid 60s to the early 80s, to the equally (if differently) passionate and eloquent poems of a more broadly public re-imagining of our country and its history, beginning with her work of the mid 1980s. Rich has remained committed to the reconstruction of poetry's place in public as well as private life, nationally and globally. From varied perspectives, accessible to the common reader as well as the specialist, the collection addresses Rich's negotiation of the boundary between these public and private spheres and the potential of poetry as a revolutionary medium and alternate epistemology, a means, as the title expresses it, of recovery and regeneration. Rich has aimed always, as the last lines of her poem *Planetarium* (1968) have it, at the relief of the body / and the reconstruction of the mind, and this collection works to describe her effort to extend the reach of that healing motive across a continent and a culture. 'In these eight keenly executed essays edited by William Waddell, we see Rich finally removing those asbestos gloves once used to handle sizzling political topics. Critics in this volume show Adrienne Rich struggling barehanded with changing poetic strategies, complex new subject positions and the relations of power and cultural practice in the constitution of history. Transformative cartographer of words and perceptions, Rich, as Waddell argues, outlines a method for redefining American space, remapping North American culture for the marginalized, the repressed and the resistant. Waddell's collection celebrates the polyphony of politics and aesthetics in Rich's work, shaping for the reader an ethical discourse intensively visible, for the first time, in volumes such as *An Atlas of the Difficult World: Poems 1988-1991*, but equally present throughout Rich's prose and poetry.' Mary Lynn Broe, Caroline Werner Gannett Professor, Rochester Institute of Technology

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