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*Uses of the Erotic:
The Erotic as Power*

Audre Lorde

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Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power Audre Lorde

"There are many kinds of power, used and unused, acknowledged or otherwise." Thus begins this powerful essay; *Uses of the Erotic* defines the power of the erotic, names the process by which women have been stripped of this power, and considers how women can reclaim it.

Uses of the Erotic shines among Audre Lorde's powerful legacy of speeches and essays, and has influenced feminist thinking for more than 15 years. The false dichotomies that Lorde debunks persist in our cultural imagination: the separation of the erotic from the spiritual and political. Now, Kore Press brings this essay into stand-alone focus, reprinting it in a fine, handbound pamphlet illustrated with photographs by Tucson photographer Camille Bonzani. Designed by book artist Nancy Solomon, the essay is offset and letterpress printed in an edition of 1000.

Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power Details

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From Reader Review Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power for online ebook

Kelly Magee says

A new way of thinking about the erotic as that which gives us both pleasure and power.

Dylan Tomorrow says

Was pointed to this (or excerpts of it?) online :-): <http://www.metahistory.org/guidelines/EroticUses.php>

Currently reading through it, really intriguing and matches some of my own experiences. A whole lot of mysterious, undiscovered countries of the sexual, the sensual and the erotic out there for all of us, methinks :-).

Fatima says

CHAI 3/2010

Hugh says

This has very consequential ideas wrapped up within its few pages. That everything starts with the erotic, though she expands the term from merely a sexual connotation. That only the erotic encourages us to embrace the depth of our feelings. That the erotic is the opposite of the pornographic, which is objectifying instead of celebrating the sharing of feelings with the other. The erotic therefore should be a presence in all of our activities with others, because its like a compass that can inform us on the orientation of a relationship. Are we staying with the sensationalistic or moving towards an authentic relationship with the other (sexual or not..). Anyways, I'm reading it this morning and just beginning to digest the repercussions of this small pamphlet.

Rosa Ramôa says

"Tendemos a pensar que o erotismo é a excitação sexual como primariamente esta é conhecida. Eu falo do erótico como a força mais profunda da vida, aquela que nos move de uma maneira fundamental à existência."

SallyHaq says

to the anti-erotic societies

Chanelle says

Definitely will have to re-read. Lorde has a lot of good stuff here. Uses of the erotic reminds me of bell hook's All About Love, but Lorde is compact and coming from a sort of different place. A more sensual and self-actualized place, if that makes any sense at all. I would recommend this essay to everyone everywhere especially those from marginalized communities.

Kristy says

"Beyond the superficial, the considered phrase, 'It feels right to me,' acknowledges the strength of the erotic into a true knowledge, for what that means is the first and most powerful guiding light toward any understanding."

Thank you, Audre, for being the most important philosopher in my life.

Emily Reynolds says

important

Michel says

Found out about Lorde from "quote of the day" — look forward to reading this essay, and some of her poems.

courtney says

porn vs. eroticism. try that on for size.

Kristen says

Completely and utterly life changing.

Troy says

I was absolutely blown away by the ideas presented in what was, in fact, a brochure.

What really resounded with me were two things; the postulation that the erotic lives in all of us and cannot be tapped because of its reformatory powers in regards to setting our goals and life purpose, thus getting co-opted into something that's dirty, immoral, and to be avoided, and the notion that what we do and enjoy and can share is erotic.

The erotic, Lorde writes, has the potential to give us an idea of something bigger than mediocrity. If we find huge joy and fulfillment in doing something, then that starts to affect the rest of our lives because we want that feeling again. We WANT to stretch our limits, or to find them in the first place. If we're not encouraged to do so, and never really find our limits, we have lives of mediocrity and settle for what life gives us instead of exploring what we can get out of life. The erotic is larger than just sex or what happens in the bedroom.

I really enjoyed the notion that, well, what I'm doing right now is erotic. I'm putting into words and sharing with you what the meant to me on an intellectual level. A new idea that I'm excited about. The erotic can be formed out of things I draw, things I do, places I go, things I see and can't wait to tell someone else about. It's a tribute to a culture that doesn't really want me stepping outside the box that views this with suspicion and, in terms of naming it, has sought to co-top "erotic" as sensuality of only the sexual kind.

So, yes. Read the book.

The finding of Judith Shakespeare says

Audre Lorde escribió uno de esos ensayos que cambió mi vida, mi percepción de mí misma en el mundo, del sexo, y mi concepto de revolución. Precisamente porque supo poner las palabras adecuadas (no en vano, Lorde es poeta) que definieran aquello que yo ya estaba construyendo por mi cuenta, junto con otras personas. En definitiva, se trata de un manifiesto brillante.

«The erotic has often been misnamed by men and used against women. It has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, and plasticized sensation. For this reason we have turned away from the exploration and consideration of the erotic as a source of power and information, confusing it with the pornographic. But pornography is a direct denial of the power of the erotic, for it represents the suppression of true feeling. Pornography emphasizes sensation without feeling [...] Of course, women so empowered are dangerous. So we are taught to separate the erotic from most vital areas of our lives other than sex [...] The principal horror of any system which defines the good in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need, or which defines human need to the exclusion of the psychic and emotional components of that need - the principal horror of such a system is that it robs our work of its erotic value, its erotic power and life appeal and fulfillment [...] The very word erotic comes from the Greek word eros, the personification of love in all its aspects - born of Chaos, and personifying creative power and harmony [...] There are frequent attempts to equate pornography and eroticism, two diametrically opposed uses of the sexual [...] I find the erotic such a kernel within myself. When released from its intense and constrained pellet, it flows through and colors my life with a kind of energy that heightens and sensitizes and strengthens all my experience [...] We have been raised to fear the yes within ourselves, our deepest cravings. But, once recognized, those which do not enhance our future lose their power and can be altered [...] The fear that we cannot grow beyond whatever distortions we may find within ourselves keeps us docile and loyal and obedient, externally defined, and leads us to accept many facets of our own oppression as women [...] When we live outside ourselves, and by that I mean on external

directives only rather than from our internal knowledge and needs, when we live away from those erotics guides from within ourselves, then our lives are limited by external and alien forms, and we conform to the needs of a structure that is not based on human need, let alone an individual's. But when we begin to live from within outward, in touch with the power of the erotic within ourselves, and allowing that power to inform and illuminate our actions upon the world around us, then we begin to be responsible to ourselves in the deepest sense».

Courtney Trouble says

i wonder how this essay would be different in 2015, knowing how much pornography has changed. would she agree that the power of the erotic has been funneled into feminist art that operates as pornography?
