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Autobiography and Audre Lorde's Matriarchal Sphere

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Abstract

Audre Lorde, one of the most prominent black women poets of the 21st century, is concerned about the horrors of racism, sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia and genuinely attempts to erode them through the power of art. Audre Lorde's life and work are inspired by an arsenal of powerful women, both cruel and kind, who give her the energy to strive in a world wrought with suffering, pain, and ostracism. Lorde celebrates women of her immediate maternal descent: her mother's sturdy female relations; she celebrates her friends and lovers; seeks sustenance from a pantheon of mythic goddesses from West Africa; and finally celebrates legendary women who have stood for the women's cause. This paper explores how these women influenced her poetic production. Her predominantly maternal and matriarchal influences become evident when one places her within the political and intellectual background. Her life and work are not generated by the normative patriarchy that permeates Western institutions but by a self-proclaimed matriarchy.

Keywords: Lorde, racism, sexism, heterosexism, homophobia, matriarchy