Audre Lorde, Myth, and the Problem of the Other

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The presence of blacks in the United States of America today constitutes one of the most peculiar phenomena in the history of modern man. Never had such a significant abduction of a people from their fatherland been recorded. Blacks were considered beasts of burden and property but did not create the language or metaphors by which they were defined. Having neither logos nor identity, they craved the motherland. To perpetuate slavery and colonialism, the white imperialists made up fallacious philosophical arguments that negated the selfhood of blacks. The white subject defined them as the "Other" and objectified them. Racist theorists like Thomas Jefferson, Friedrich Hegel, and Comte de Gobineau posited the black person as the antithesis of the white man. In "Notes on the State of Virginia", Jefferson sets the "Negro" as an evil force within the nation. In Philosophy of History, Hegel argues that the "negro" stands outside the history of intellectual, technological, moral and cultural progress driven by reason. The history of the Negro stands outside of intellectual history, and so only by colonisation can the black be civilised. As Michelle Wright makes us understand, however, Senghor was to draw heavily from Gobineau in theorising negritude. Gobineau did concede the emotional and artistic component to blacks.

Wright shows how W.E.B DuBois, Aimé Cesaire, L.S. Senghor and Franz Fanon challenged these three fallacious and phallic arguments. In all their efforts towards renaming the black self and asserting his subjectivity, Wright analyses the contributions of these scholars and finds them patriarchal. They seek to give black men selfhood and not the black woman. As it turns out, the history of humankind has been the history of strife between men. As the "other of the other," a woman has never engaged in war or direct antagonism with man and has always been inferior to man. DuBois, Cesaire, Senghor, and Fanon, therefore, resuscitate the subject status of the black male who is believed to include the female.

In a parallel direction, Nancy Bauer shows how De Beauvoir appropriates the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre and Hegel to expose the subaltern nature of the woman. Analysing Hegel's dialectics of master and slave and applying it to the relationship between man and woman, De Beauvoir discovers that the woman is the "absolute" other (178). De Beauvoir, Bauer argues, realises that when Hegel considers the slave "the essential reality in the animal type of life" (193), it applies more to the woman. A slave can become the master because he can risk his life to gain selfhood. Since a woman cannot risk her life in the same like a slave to get freedom, something which Hegel considers spiritual, she is a real slave.

What is clear from this analysis is that in the dialectics of subject and an object relation among humans, the woman occupies a peculiar position. Whereas man would want to be recognised as the subject, woman yields easily to the position of an object. But her object position is not like that of the slave who can attain subjectivity by risking his life. The slave is master over the woman even as the master governs all. If, as De Beauvoir argues, that woman occupies a peculiar position in the master-slave dialectics, her fate seems to be sealed forever. Since she is an "Other" who never engages in battle to gain selfhood, she remains the "absolute other", for both the master and the slave have power over her. When we apply this dialectical position to the situation of blacks in America, the picture becomes more complex. The master-slave dialectic fails to accept that slaves are of both sexes, so both the male and female slaves seek to assert their subject

status. As slaves and females, Black women could dare to risk their lives in the bid for self-determination while remaining the absolute others. As Wright, the counter-discourses from black intellectuals to counter racist discourses fail to include black women. The black woman then had to speak for herself.

Audre Lorde emerges to fill this void. She seeks to create subjectivity for the black woman, for the lesbian, and, as such, for all people. As both slave and woman, she is not just the absolute other of Beauvoir. She, as a slave, risks her life and is ready to lay her life for self-determination. To challenge this dialectical philosophy that polarises society into oppositional and conflicting poles, she invokes West African myth, which offers a culture that is not characterised by dialectical strife but instead offers a world where all can mediate through dialogue. In West African society, women engaged in all kinds of professions. Independent and powerful women could even take wives. Lesbian love was an option that even heterosexual women took to have emotional satisfaction.

Lorde seeks to create a community among blacks, women, and gays by using myth. By invoking primordial history to show that blackness, femaleness, and homosexuality are not "other" but affirming qualities, she creates self-esteem in these people. Providing self-esteem is, however, not synonymous with sameness. Blacks can have a sense of community by recognising the various segments as essential to the progress of all. Adults will have to respect and dialogue with the youth, men and women with each other, heterosexuals with gays, and the secular and the religious. Only when such exchange is possible can they engage with different dominant cultures. Lorde thought creating self-esteem in the black community was necessary to fight racism. There would be no progress if the black community stayed divided. Recognising that blacks had assumed the polarised dialectics of Western culture, Lorde tries to reconnect them to the lost spiritual cord. The mythological pantheon would appeal to blacks because archetypes are innate. Invoking this pantheon and making the black community contemporary with it creates sacrality and puts an end to chaos and profanity.

Lorde's poetry raises scapegoated women into sacrificial heroines and presents strong women who function as quest heroines, paving the way to an all-encompassing worldview. By portraying patriarchally murdered women, she sacralises them by comparing them to spiritual sacrificial heroines. Being black and woman-identified, or simply being a woman in a racist and sexist society, is equivalent to difference and breeds various forms of oppression. To be a black woman is to suffer the peril of imminent destruction in all subtle and overt forms. Blacks and women meet violent death because of their colour and sex, and Lorde's role is to sanctify them, using their blood as a sacrifice that energises women toward a more united front. However, not all these women are scapegoats. Some of them are quest heroines who challenge the hegemony and risk life to overturn the imbalance. We, therefore, have two paradigms: the sacrificial scapegoat heroine and the quest heroine. The sacrificial scapegoat hero or heroine is someone with whom the welfare of the tribe or nation is identified and must die to atone for the people's sins and restore the land to fruitfulness. Bodkin analyses Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and identifies the hero as a sacrificial hero. Bodkin connects the emotions of pity and fear in the audience at the death of Hamlet as reminiscent of primitive man's cathartic experience at the offering of a sacred animal (21). On the other hand, the quest hero or heroine is a saviour or deliverer who undertakes some long journey during which he or she must perform impossible tasks, enabling him or her to overcome insurmountable obstacles to save his or her people.

LORDE'S SCAPEGOAT HEROINES

Lorde's poems that comprise sacrificial scapegoats include "Afterimages". "From the House of Yemanja", "The Day They Eulogised Mahalia", "Need…", "Martha", and "Zi Ki Tan Ke Parlay Lot". In these poems, we see women who suffer because of their sex. In the case where men die, they assume the posture of sons. The women then have to mourn the death of their children, like in the poem "Zi Ki Tan Ke Parlay Lot", which translates in Carriacou as "you who hear tell the others". This chant is sung in the streets of Grenada

to announce a funeral or burial. What is crucial here is that the funeral announced is that of children victimised by racism.

…

there is no metaphor for blood

flowing from children

these are your deaths

or your judgements (338)

By announcing the deaths of their children in the streets, Lorde uses their blood to raise awareness by creating a sacred space in which women and children unite to confront the oppressor. She states, "this is not some other cities' trial / your locks are no protection / hate chips at your front door like flint / flames creep beneath them / my children are resting in question / and your tomorrow flickers / a face without eyes / without future" (338). The killing of children by irrational hate that sets fire to the neighbourhood is annihilating the whole race because they will have no future. The bloodshed is not in vain, as the speaker raises awareness about the urgency for action.

In the poems "The Day they Eulogised Mahalia,"" Need", and "Martha", Lorde presents the death of women crushed by sexism and homophobia. "The Day they Eulogised Mahalia" offers two parallel events involving the funeral of the famous gospel music singer Mahalia Jackson and the tragic death of six black children. Mahalia is a powerful woman whose commanding eloquence threatened white supremacists:

…

the day they eulogised Mahalia

the echoes of her big voice were stilled

…

Now she was safe

acceptable (61)

Mahalia, arguably the best gospel music singer in the '60s, lent her fame to urge for civil rights, and her death meant that she became less dangerous to the status quo. Her death pleases her oppressors, who thrive through violence. However, as her sisters take to the streets, she is raised into a martyr. Her burial and the death of six black children are supposed to present the dreadful picture of American racism. The six black children die because they lack social care in what is supposed to be the wealthiest country in the world. We read: "Six black children / burned to death in a day care center / on the South Side / kept in a condemned house / for lack of funds "…(61). Mahalia's death mobilises the community towards action because the children's blood necessitates a decisive action: "Six black children found a voice in flame/ the day the city eulogised Mahalia" (62). Lorde links the tragic deaths of six black children with the civil rights activism of Mahalia to suggest that there will always be a way out.

In the poem "Need: A Choral of Black Women's Voices", victimised women are raised to the level of heroines, as Lorde uses their deaths to draw attention to the plight of black women. The poem "Martha" also captures Martha's death as the victim of a homophobic and misogynistic society. Martha is a victim of a

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ghastly accident caused by society's xenophobia. In these poems, Lorde raises scapegoats to the level of heroines and uses their painful experiences to teach race solidarity and sisterhood.

LORDE'S ARCHETYPAL IMAGES

Lorde's mythological and legendary poems are replete with images of the sun, the moon, the river, and the sea. As Guerin explains in *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, Jung identifies these images as archetypes that recur in myths worldwide. Jung posits water or the sea as the most typical unconscious symbol. No doubt, Lorde takes recourse to this symbol as she attempts to create racial solidarity among her people. Poems that portray this water/sea image include "Between Ourselves", "Coping", "Meet", and "A Woman Speaks". This water image is vital to Lorde because of her West Indian Island ancestry, where water and fishing are permanent images. Blacks also had to traverse the Atlantic to reach America. Many fell aboard and created a heroic archetype of rebellious sacrifice that preceding generations could use to create their unique identity.

Lorde uses the image of the West Atlantic coast as a trading centre of enslaved people in the poem "Between Ourselves" as she links the enslavement of the black folk to their greed for wealth. Slavery would not have been had blacks not participated in the trade. When she evokes the image of the slave post, "Under the sun on the shores of Elmina", we imagine the ranks of enslaved people packed in ships along the Atlantic coast. She further develops this betrayal in these lines:

> Under the sun on the shores of Elmina
>
> a black man sold the woman who carried
>
> my grandmother in her belly
>
> he was paid with bright coins
>
> that shone in the evening sun
>
> ….
>
> his tongue clicks like yellow coins
>
> tossed up on this shore
>
> where we share the same corner
>
> of an alien and corrupted heaven. (223)

The betrayal of blacks through greed displaces them from the shore of Elmina (Ghana) and takes them to "an alien and corrupted heaven". Lorde alludes to the image of the sea and the middle passage that led to the long history of African Americans. Recognising common guilt and working toward eradicating self-loathing is thus mandatory for their survival. The sea image, therefore, connects blacks to their history by telling the truth.

This archetypal image of the sea as the centre of consciousness is more manifest in the poem "A Woman Speaks". The poem opens with Lorde reclaiming her West-Indian heritage of water:

> Moon marked and touched by the sun

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my magic is unwritten

but when the sea turns back

it will leave my shape behind. (234)

As these lines suggest, Lorde reclaims an atmosphere characterised by the moon, the sun and the sea. The sea is dominant because it is what leaves her mark behind. Lorde's prose work *Zami* celebrates the independent character of island women who assume masculine roles because their men are always absent. The sea marks her, therefore, as an independent and creative woman reclaiming her roots. She will get this by connecting with her sisters in Dahomey. The sea is crucial as the route that can retrace their history. It is the very crucible of her identity as she states: "and if you will know me / look into the entrails of Uranus / where the restless oceans pound" (234). The speaker shows her affinity with the spiritual world by alluding to Uranus, the earliest supreme god in Greek mythology.

The poem "Oshun's Table" implicitly invokes the image of the river. Oshun is the goddess of the river, and the poem suggests the idea of harmony derived from her worship. In "The Winds of Orisha", we find her in a lesbian liaison with Oshun. Here, the image of "Oshun's Table" invokes a kind of kitchen table on which the speaker and her partner cook, eat, and make love:

How the fruit lay at your feet

how you dressed the wine

cut green beans

in a lacy network

…

we ate pom and fish rice

with a fork and spoon. (453)

The first stanza captures the preparation of food, which turns out to be food that can be gotten only in inundated areas — "Pom" and "fish rice". It can be argued that these foodstuffs must grow with the aid of Oshun, the goddess of the river. The second stanza becomes erotically charged as the actors move into another phase:

A short, hard rain

and the moon came up

before we lay down together

, and we toasted each other. (453)

"Oshun's Table" is used as an image to suggest Lorde's affinity with water as a resourceful and creative force that reinforces the independence of women. The moon rises after the rain as they lie together after toasting each other. The verb "toast" here suggests a heated sexual contact between the partners. Just as bread is heated to make it tasty, the speaker and her lover heat each other in a lesbian encounter. Oshun, the river goddess, provides food and engenders warmth from lesbian intercourse. Therefore, Oshun offers a

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haven to her worshippers, freeing them from patriarchal bondage.

Her South African poem, "The Evening News", also features water as an image. While describing the terrible situation in South Africa, Lorde talks about Ganvie women who are fisherwomen. She contrasts the macabre description of the killing in Soweto with the Ganvie fisherwomen, busy with their role of nurture.

…

while Ganvie fisherwomen with milk-large breasts

hide a fish with the face of a girl

in the prow of their boats. (337)

These lines directly contrast the dreadful situation of the apartheid system that unleashes death and smears blood everywhere. These lines suggest Lorde's belief that life must go on despite all that is done to stifle it. Ganvie fisherwomen will continue the struggle of catering for the young and feeding them milk from their "milk-large breast" and the fish they steal. Life must continue; women cannot resign to oppression.

In another interesting case, Lorde juxtaposes a flood that inundates Jackson and makes a white woman helpless against the murder of Emmett Till, who is killed for whispering at a white girl. The vulnerable woman, just like the weak girl who had no hand in Emmett's murder, is a victim of a patriarchal order that does not work on their behalf but works only to safeguard the fears of men. Women, both white and black, are subsumed under a common denominator. None of them decides the course of justice. Emmett Till's ghost seems to cause the flood, "now the pearl river speaks its muddy judgement / and I can withhold my pity and my bread". Lorde uses the flood here to suggest a kind of retribution that avenges the murder of Emmett Till.

"October" is another poem that captures Lorde's use of water/sea as an archetype. As an "abnormally born", Lorde seeks to have contact with other sisters like her:

Spirits of the abnormally born

live on in water

of the heroicly dead

in the entrails of snake. (346)

She invokes the goddess Seboulisa to transport her across the water to another shore where she can fit better. She urges the goddess to:

Carry my heart to some shore

that my feet will not shatter

do not let me pass away

before I have a name

for this tree

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under which I am lying.

Do not let me die

still

needing to be stranger. (346)

Lorde recognises her deviance and leadership position, leading her to connect across continents. She is familiar with water because her ancestry witnessed a traumatic passage over water. Only a reverse journey back through water can lead them to selfhood.

Another archetypal image typical of Lorde's work is the sun image. Guerin explains that the sun is creative energy, the law in nature, consciousness, and father principle, whereas the earth and moon are mother principles. Lorde merges the sun and moon image in the mythical symbol Mawulisa, which she appropriates and renders female. Poems that engender this solar imagery include "A Woman Speaks", "From the House of Yemanja", "Dahomey", "Between Ourselves", "Chain", "Oaxaca", "Timepiece", and "Oshun's Table". As we shall discover in these poems, Lorde's solar image is often used to represent Africa or other areas around the equator, like Mexico and the Caribbeans. This solar imagery contrasts America's physical winter and capitalism's metaphorical cold-heartedness. Sir James George Frazer, in *The Golden Bough,* analyses the relevance of fire festivals in primitive society. He states:

Indeed, when we consider the cold and cloudy Climate of Europe during a significant part of the year, we shall find it natural that sun charms should have played a much more prominent role among the superstitious practices of European peoples than among the Savages who live nearer the equator… (1of 5)

Lorde's adherence to solar imagery in her work springs from her attachment to these equatorial savages Frazer talks about. Her existence in the West is unnatural because she was forced to leave her territory characterised by sunshine. When she invokes solar imagery, she recalls her ancestral past and charges the sun to melt the frost that holds African-Americans hostage. Frazer notes this purificatory power of the fire festival when he states: "It remains to consider what may be said against this theory and in favour of the view that the rites of fire are employed not as a creative but as a cleansing agent, which purifies men, animals, and plants by burning up and consuming the noxious elements" (1-5). Although Frazer talks about fire here, it is good to remember that the sun can be used to signify fire, which burns and purifies while at the same time providing light. In Lorde's poem — "A Woman Speaks", she assumes the position of a priestess charged with the power of the moon and the sun. "Moon marked and touched by the sun / my magic is unwritten / but when the sea turns back / it will leave my shape behind" (234). The moon and sun charge her with the necessary vehemence to effect change. In the poem "From the House of Yemanja", she moves ahead to signify the moon and sun by assuming them. "I am the sun and moon and forever hungry / for her eyes" (235). She is like the light and the truth that must be revealed.

In "Between Ourselves", Lorde shows how her history and geographic location reinforce her affinity with the sun. The sun is not used here to mark a purifying or illuminating force but to mark her origin and ancestry:

Under the sun on the shores of Elmina

a black man sold the woman who carried

my grandmother in her belly

he was paid with bright yellow coins

that shone in the evening sun

and in the faces of her sons and daughters. (223)

Also implicit in these lines is the evidence that the slave trade was an open and accepted act of betrayal. It was not done under cover of darkness but in the open light of the sun. African-Americans do not have to treat their history as a disgrace because it is known. Instead, they should start by recognising their common guilt and retrace their history, leading them back to the sun and the truth. America is not a land of the "sun", and so is cold and hides many evils that should be apparent in a location with the sun.

In the poems "Chorus" and "Coping", Lorde uses the sun image as a regenerative force. In "Chorus", she demands the sun to empower her so that she can triumph over the limitations of her society:

Sun

make me whole again

to love

the shattered truths of me. (266)

This power she gets from the sun will empower her to acknowledge the truth:

When I am done

Each shard will spring up

Complete and armed

Like a warrior woman

Hot to be dealt with. (266)

The sun image here is thus one that can offer determination and courage in a limiting society.

In the poem "Coping", Lorde again presents the sun in its reproductive and regenerative role. The poem recounts a situation where rain inundates the earth: "the world is / a round puddle / of sunless water" (267). As a young boy tries to bail water from the garden, he pessimistically states, "young seeds that have not seen the sun / forget / and drown easily" (267). The sun must come then to provide the heat that seeds need to germinate. Lorde's sun is not the patriarchal sun but a female-male union in the goddess Mawulisa.

Apart from the sun and the sea images Lorde employs, the colour black also dominates her poems. Lorde uses black as a primordial primary image, like in her famous poem "Coal". The colour black is considered chaos, mystery, and the unknown. It is also considered death, primal wisdom, the unconscious, evil etc. Lorde uses the colour black to signify primal wisdom and essence. Her poems that use this mythological image include "Coal", "The Black Unicorn", and "From the House of Yemanja", among others.

In the poem "Coal", Lorde sees the colour black as more essential than the white colour, which is thought to be superior. Here, she reverses the connotations popularly attributed to the black-and-white image. Blackness is like coal, a fuel essential for energy, while whiteness is decorative and superfluous, like a

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diamond. Diamonds are hardly used for anything except decorations, while coal is more critical as an energy source. Blackness is the need to examine the real issues that undergird society, which are not always pleasant but crucial, like hunger, thirst, poverty and death. As she states:

Some words are open

Like a diamond on glass windows

Singing out with the crash of passing sun

Then there are words like stapled wagers

In a perforated book–buy and sign and tear part

And come whatever wills, all chances

The stud remains.

An ill-pulled tooth with a ragged edge.

Some words live in my throat

Breeding like adders. Others know sun

Seeking like gypsies over my tongue

To explode through my lips

Like young sparrows bursting from shell

Some words

Bedevil me. (6)

Lorde here posits two colours–black and white. Whereas one is good and acceptable, one is difficult to accept and is in the process of coming out. Blackness is therefore not easily acceptable because it carries a history of guilt and shame both for the whites and for the blacks, as captured in the simile "some words live in my throat / Breeding like adders" and in the metaphor which compares words to "An ill-pulled tooth" (6). She emphasises her blackness in the last stanza by stressing this connection between blackness and truth:

Love is a word, another kind of open–

As a diamond comes into a knot of flame

I am black because I come from the earth's inside

Take my word for jewel in your open light. (6)

These lines suggest Lorde's desire to portray the essential nature of blackness. It offers truth and is a kind of jewel because it is the truth that must be examined if the world has to shine like a diamond. Blackness is the energy that lends beauty to a diamond.

"The Black Unicorn" furthers the exploration of the importance of blackness. It suggests the primary notion

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of black female eroticism that has been repressed over time. Whereas the Unicorn as a mythological animal is characterised by its horn representing a phallic symbol and its white colour, Lorde positions a black unicorn that is neither in the form of a horse nor of phallic representation. Lorde's "black unicorn" is distinguished by its horn, which rests not on her lap but deep in her moon pit, growing:

> It is not on her lap where the horn rests
>
> but deep in her moon pit
>
> growing. (233)

The black unicorn is the female clitoris that has suffered all forms of patriarchal control in the hands of patriarchy. The "moon pit" here stands as a symbol of the female genitalia. Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology: A Metaethics of Radical Feminism* captures the dimensions by which men have tried to control this mythic centre of women. Since "the black Unicorn was mistaken for a shadow / or symbol / and taken / through a cold country", it becomes "Restless", "Unrelenting", and "is not / free". Lorde posits the erotic centre of the black woman as an essential aspect that can engender her creativity and independence. Her essay "Uses of the Erotic" expresses this erotic consciousness as a gateway to female liberation.

In "From the House of Yemanja", Lorde once more puts the black colour at the centre of her poetics. African-Americans must accept their blackness to be able to develop self-esteem. She captures her family conflict in which her mother had a forlorn desire for light-skinned children. Lorde, as black-skinned, was alienated, but her acceptance of her colour made her more successful than her two sisters. When Lorde invokes the goddess Yemanja, she accepts her history and develops an identity her sisters lacked. This acceptance of her blackness comes with her willingness to know her cultural history. Blackness is thus necessary to the construction of black self-esteem.

Another mythological image Lorde uses in her work is that of the serpent. Lorde invokes the archetypal image of the serpent in one of her most characteristic mythological poems –"Call," in which she summons the rainbow serpent Aido Hwedo in an incantation. Guerin sees the serpent as an archetypal image symbolised by pure force; evil, corruption, sensuality, destruction, mystery, wisdom, and the unconscious. Simone De Beauvoir likens the serpent to the lunar image, spiritually associated with women's creativity. As she states: "The moon is a source of fertility; it appears as a "master woman"; it is often believed that in the form of man or serpent it couples with women. The serpent is the epiphany of the moon; it sheds its skin and renews itself, it is immortal" (149). This positive image of the serpent as a spiritual and metaphysical animal was distorted by patriarchy to reduce the credibility of women. The book of Genesis uses Eve's bold liaison with the serpent to downgrade her. Lorde captures this in her poem "All Hallows Eve". A close analysis of Genesis portrays an Eve who is assertive and ready to break new ground. Whereas Adam is described as dormant and malleable by Eve (he accepts to eat the fruit without question), Eve is a character who dares to break ground. She is the first human who desires to be like "God" to know good and evil. The serpent's relationship with women is, therefore, primordial. Biblical history records it, although, as feminists argue, this esoteric relationship is distorted by patriarchy. Lorde uses the serpent's image in her poem "Call" as energy: pure force, mystery and wisdom. It can be invoked to give women the strength of independence and proffers an erotic sphere.

In the poem "Today is Not the Day", the speaker imagines herself uncoiling like a serpent and swimming away into the next world. She uses the image of a coiled snake uncoiling to capture her flight into the next world. Her death will be a transformation from a mortal into an immortal world. We read:

> I would slip anchor and wander

to the end of the jetty

uncoil into the waters

a vessel of light moon glade

ride the freshets to sundown

… (472)

To return to the sea is to return to the mother. Cirlot presents the sea "… not only as the source of life but also as the goal" (281). By taking the form of the serpent, the speaker moves into everlasting life, which is the goal of life itself.

In the poem "Solstice", the speaker assumes the image of a serpent to build racial solidarity. Black people have abandoned their gods and are thus experiencing profanity. The speaker assumes the image of the snake to reconnect with the gods and recover their lost spirituality. We read:

My skin is tightening

soon I shall shed it

like a monitor lizard

like remembered comfort

…

like the snake that has fed the chameleon

for changes

I shall be forever. (218)

The image of a sloughing reptile gives her the power to overcome powerlessness. The anaphora reinforces "like" in successive phrases to capture the act of transformation. Like the moon and the serpent, cosmic forces constantly renew women. Women are, therefore, central to humanity and not marginal.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, this paper captures Lorde's mythopoetics as she attempts to create a spiritual arena for her audience. By invoking the mythological and legendary pantheon of West Africa, she creates sacred space and offers an alternative worldview to her people. Lorde identifies the void of a spiritual link with the black archetypal consciousness as the root cause of the black lack of selfhood. Slavery and colonisation severed black people from their sacred. Only a reconnection with this spiritual past can offer blacks self-esteem. This spiritual reconnection applies equally to all blacks on the continent and in the diaspora. When the Puritan fathers immigrated to the New World, they cherished and put their "God" first. Building society on their religion was possible because the community shared the same consciousness. On the contrary, Blacks were forcefully estranged from their culture and had no solid foundation on which to base their community. Lorde connects with the mythological typologies of Africa as a means of uniting blacks within a sacred space. A new religion for Africa, based on their mythical past, can go a long way towards creating a sense of

togetherness among the people of African descent. There has been a recent surge in African Americans visiting Africa to reconnect with their roots and forge an authentic identity. In 2019, Ghana hosted "The Year of Return" inviting Africans in the diaspora who wished to reconnect with the motherland to come home. Lorde's wish, therefore, is being followed remarkably.

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