

The Personal, the Political, and Others: Audre Lorde Denouncing "*The Second Sex Conference*"¹

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Those of us who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women; those of us who have been forged in the crucibles of difference—those of us who are poor, who are lesbians, who are Black, who are older—know that survival is not an academic skill. It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish.

—Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 112

Fifty years ago, in 1949, Simone de Beauvoir's book entitled *The Second Sex* was published in France. She did not consider herself a philosopher because, to her, a philosopher was "someone who has built a great system" (Simons and Benjamin 1979, 338). Her book, nonetheless, became a milestone in feminist philosophy, for it synthesizes elements of existentialism, phenomenology, and socialism in an account of women's situation in society. Central to this account is Beauvoir's concentration upon representations of "self" and "other." For example, Beauvoir affirmed, "The category of the *Other* is as primordial as consciousness itself. In most primitive societies, in the most ancient mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality—that of the Self and the Other. This duality was not originally attached to the division of the sexes; it was not dependent upon any empirical facts" (1993, xi). In an interview, Beauvoir stressed, "I believe that the Other is not simply an idealist relationship, it is a materialist relationship" (Simons and Benjamin 1979, 345). To develop her analysis, Beauvoir drew upon another binary, "master" and "slave." However, she concentrated on how women, as a category, had been subordinated as men's "other."

Twenty years ago, in 1979, Audre Lorde delivered her best-known speech, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," at an international conference held in honor of the thirtieth anniversary of

Beauvoir's book. According to conference organizer Jessica Benjamin and reporter Lilly Rivlin, writing together in *Ms.* magazine, "[M]ore than 800 women from all over the world gathered at a conference on feminist theory, 'The Second Sex—Thirty Years Later,' sponsored by the New York Institute for the Humanities" (1980, 48). Like most of the conference participants, Lorde was a woman, a feminist, a socialist, a public intellectual, and an activist scholar. Lorde may have participated in the conference as a "consultant," a poet at a public reading, and a speaker at a plenary session² because her feminist philosophy is of resonance to Beauvoir's. Both women rejected biology as the basis for women's situation, believing instead that material conditions are most fundamental. Both commented upon the power of symbolism, especially myths about others, in perpetuating social inequalities and failing to differentiate categories for others. Both saw the relationship between "self" and "other" as a vital and creative tension.

To understand this tension, Beauvoir drew explicitly on Hegel's ideas as they were treated in Sartre's *oeuvre* (Lloyd 1983). In contrast, Lorde may have drawn upon conceptions of double consciousness among black public intellectuals in the United States (Henderson 1989, 17–21). Unlike Beauvoir, Lorde was a lesbian, a mother, and a black woman for whom Beauvoir's analogies between the status of women and the status of "Negroes" were problematic. Confronting the conference participants on the last day, during the last panel entitled "The Personal and the Political," Lorde condemned the conference for its limited range of speakers, its substance, its very structure. Lorde examined the ramifications of failing to include others as equals. For in failing to do so, the conference had employed the same tools of oppression over others that the participants deplored in the politics of patriarchy. Lorde challenged the conference participants, who presumably understood that Beauvoir had represented woman as the "other" to man, to examine the implications of depicting "other" races, sexualities, ages, and economic classes. Subsequently, Lorde's speech was published in at least two books, thus reaching additional audiences. Initially, in 1981, the text of the speech was printed in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, which was reprinted in 1983.³ In 1984, the text was published again with minimal changes in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*.

The topic of Lorde's speech was techniques of arbitrary domination over others. Lorde devoted herself to challenging the ironies, paradoxes, and oxymora—to use euphemisms for hypocrisy, dishonesty, and collusion with others' oppression—resulting from dominating those who are different while denouncing one's own experiences of oppression. In general, an oxymoronic

quality that Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (1973) ascribed to "women's liberation rhetoric" resulted, in part, from reformists seeking to dismantle some forms of oppression and privilege across sex difference while perpetuating them across race, sexuality, age, or class because of feminists' unacknowledged desire to keep some symbolic and material privileges. Such oxymora are not unique to women's liberation rhetoric, recurring as they do along with ironies and paradoxes in the public speeches representing diverse subordinated communities. To alter the situation obfuscated by these rhetorical forms, Lorde focused upon changing economic conditions and communicative practices across social differences. Examples of such practices include silencing others, excluding others from public forums and rendering them invisible in the process, devaluing others' remarks when they do speak, speaking for and about others, misnaming others' practices in order to dominate them, appropriating others by treating them as tokens, using others for legitimation, or blaming others for their under-representation.

Because Lorde's speech risked alienating her audiences and offending potential supporters, it exemplifies a diatribe, which, instead of repudiating adversaries, expresses anger among peers (Windt 1972, 2). Judging from the speech's content, Lorde had several interconnected objectives—above all, to challenge reformist feminists to become radical feminists. To Lorde, this change required putting an end to complicity in the symbolic and economic oppression of others (on complicity, Mathison, McPhail, and Strine 1997). In addition, Lorde sought to raise consciousness among feminists about how practices of exclusion, absence, invisibility, silence, and tokenism within feminist theory weakened and discredited it. She endeavored to transform relational practices among women by demanding that equality be practiced among all social groups. Furthermore, she wanted to complicate feminist theory. She asserted, for instance, "It is a particular academic arrogance to assume any discussion of feminist theory without examining our many differences, and without a significant input from poor women, Black and Third World women, and lesbians" (1984b, 110). By representing herself as an "other" woman, Lorde connected the personal and the political in order to support her contention that these actions could strengthen feminist theory.

Lorde's speech merits attention from communication scholars because, as an instance of human liberation rhetoric, it concentrates on conundrums in the appropriate uses of power. Although Lorde focused specifically on feminism, her speech about the uses of power has abiding relevance to a range of human liberation rhetoric. By using what Lorde referred to as "the master's tools" to protest arbitrary domination, liberation advocates not

only may ironically reproduce tools of domination, but also may become "masters" undistinguishable from those habituated to that role. As one consequence, paradoxes in the appropriate uses of power is a topic of public argument among most commentators on Lorde's speech. Lorde wanted to transform the uses of power, not reproduce them ironically in the process of protesting them. Ultimately, Lorde was like Paulo Freire, to whom Lorde alluded by name in a later speech, in that Freire held that "[o]nly as they [the oppressed] discover themselves to be 'hosts' of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy" ([1970] 1993, 30; qtd. in Lorde 1984a, 30). *Hosts* referred to multitudes, to receiving the oppressors as guests or parasites, and to embodying oppressors.

In this essay, I will discuss how Lorde represented the personal, the political, and others in her speech, because she contended that the feminists at the conference reproduced arbitrary domination in the process of representing "others." This speech is the most frequently mentioned in Lorde's *oeuvre*, with the possible exception of "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," which she delivered in 1978 (1984e). But none of the numerous commentators on "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" have examined it in a sustained way that considers the progression and interrelationship of the ideas, possibly because Lorde's rhetoric was thoroughly embedded in the immediate rhetorical context of the conference, and possibly because some resonance depends on understanding Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Instead, most public interactions with the speech have concerned the ramifications of brief excerpts, usually focused upon endorsement, appropriation, or rejection of the famous maxim from the title. Throughout this essay, I draw upon others' public engagements with the speech to explore the speech's polysemy in relationship to Lorde's diverse audiences. My essay concludes with a survey of others' statements on the ongoing controversy about the maxim. Lorde's speech added layer upon layer through the sequencing of ideas representing the personal, the political, and others.

The personal, the political, and others

Throughout the speech, Lorde interwove the personal and the political by situating her own experiences and beliefs in relationship to others and to social structures. To Lorde, transforming oneself personally was necessary but insufficient to bring about political change because the relationships of

domination abided among people embedded in language itself, organizational procedures, and social structures, such as those at "*The Second Sex Conference*." At the same time, transforming these political elements, however necessary, would not be sufficient to liberate oneself, because of the habitual practices of domination internalized within each and every person. In these respects, the relationship of the personal and the political, exemplified by the relationship between psychological and institutional factors, were seen as complex in that both self and society must undergo change (Campbell 1973, 81, 84). The "master's tools" operated in the locations between the personal and the political in that they recurred in language, social relationships, and material conditions resulting from practices within those relationships.⁴

Lorde's introduction situated her as an "other" to the women at the conference while underscoring her belief that the conference had violated the terms of her commitment to that forum. She remarked, "I agreed to take part in a New York University Institute for the Humanities conference a year ago, with the understanding that I would be commenting upon papers dealing with the role of difference within the lives of american women: difference of race, sexuality, class, and age. The absence of these considerations weakens any feminist discussion of the personal and the political" (1984b, 110). To Lorde, just as patriarchy rendered women silent, invisible, and absent among men, the exclusion of "poor women, Black and Third World women, and lesbians" from the conference silenced, rendered invisible, and absented those women who embodied "difference" among women (110). She stated, "I stand here as a Black lesbian feminist, having been invited to comment within the only panel at this conference where the input of Black feminists and lesbians is represented" (110).⁵ Amplifying the political implications of the conference's structure, Lorde added, "To read this program is to assume that lesbian and Black women have nothing to say about existentialism, the erotic, women's culture and silence, developing feminist theory, or heterosexuality and power" (110), a listing of topics and session titles from the program.

Further, Lorde underscored the risk of being merely personal in one's politics, if only because of excluding others inhabiting the categories used to define one's own personal politics, categories such as "women." To Lorde, "survival" was at stake in recognizing and confronting these exclusions.⁶ Commenting on Lorde's insight about the necessity of rejecting the binary opposition implied by such terms as *master* and *slave*, *self* and *other*, Fadi Abou-Rihan affirmed, "The point for Lorde is to counter the structures of hierarchy and prioritization by rethinking our lives outside the binary rela-

tions of ruler/ruled and self/other rather than by acquiring a fixed majority for a particular social or economic class in order to install a new constant. Her dwelling in 'the house of difference' is premised on a rejection of the exclusionary logic of the habitual social polarities black/white, straight/gay, and man/woman" (1994, 257). Abou-Rihan added, "This dwelling is not a secure stasis but a nomadic travel along the borders, and thus outside the falsely assumed fixity, of one's sexuality, gender, race, language, class, geography, or any other seemingly discreet social construction" (257). Lorde recognized that, as a matter of rhetorical strategy, it was always a pitfall to acknowledge any other as master, but she also examined techniques of domination to identify ways to mitigate them. Lorde rejected a binary opposition between the personal and the political by a practice of endeavoring to include others.

The maxim entitling the speech, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," illustrates Lorde's rhetorical technique of employing polysemy to repudiate simplistic binaries. In addition, the title deserves careful attention to matters of rhetorical invention and style, because it is the most frequently mentioned maxim in innumerable commentaries on Lorde's extensive writings.⁷ The series of metaphors in Lorde's maxim give it an expansive and ambiguous quality: tools, dismantle, and house. In this respect, the maxim may exemplify a typical quality of black rhetoric, to judge from characterizations of it by Jack Daniel, Geneva Smitherman-Donaldson, and Milford A. Jeremiah (1987). In addition to affirming this maxim in the speech at "*The Second Sex Conference*," Lorde reiterated it a few months later in 1980 during a speech at Amherst (1984c, 123), mentioning it in association with Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which was first published in 1970.

To Lorde, "the master's tools" designate techniques of domination through the exercise of political power, moral judgment, and social privilege. As terms, "the master's tools" are layered in complex ways and offer a range of overlapping meanings because they are at once both positive and dialectical terms, in Kenneth Burke's sense (1955, 183-88). The *master* could be understood in relationships of domination over both the *mistress* and the *slave*, simultaneously focusing on sex, race, and the intersection of these embodied in black women. More important, as a matter of adaptation to the immediate audience, a white woman could be *mistress* in her relationship to the white *master* while being a *master* over *slaves* of either sex. Lorde's speech explored the ambiguities of the combined roles for white women in U.S. culture by evoking an understanding of their roles as mistresses to examine their analogous roles as masters across differ-

ences in race, class, and sexuality. As she did so, Lorde enacted a communicative process of rejecting simplistic binaries such as master and slave, master and mistress, self and other, by treating them in combination and in overlapping senses.

In addition, Lorde modified analogies between sex and race in Beauvoir's book by concentrating on the overlapping concerns of black women ordinarily obfuscated by white feminists' development of such analogies. For instance, Beauvoir wrote:

But there are deep similarities between the situation of woman and that of the Negro. Both are being emancipated today from a like paternalism, and the former master class wishes to "keep them in their place"—that is, the place chosen for them. In both cases the former masters lavish more or less sincere eulogies, either on the virtues of "the good Negro" with his dormant, childish, merry soul—the submissive Negro—or on the merits of the woman who is "truly feminine"—that is, frivolous, infantile, irresponsible—the submissive woman. In both cases the dominant class bases its argument on a state of affairs that it has itself created. (1993, xlviii)

Beauvoir mentioned white women's role in slavery only in passing (98–99), and she noted some difficulties with an analogy between sex and race (xlii–xliii, 83, 89), but Lorde's presence and her remarks dramatized how the analogy concealed black women's situation. Although Lorde's presence interacted with her maxim to emphasize this situation as her central rhetorical technique, Lorde never mentioned that slavery had different aspects in French and U.S. cultures.

Lorde's use of the expression "the master's tools" underscored the actual tools for production of such material goods as "the master's house"; the practices of domination employed by the master over the mistress and the slave; and, specifically in connection with sex differences, the male's sexual anatomy. In this last respect, the master's tool may have been seductive in a layered pun to heterosexual women of any race, age, or class who wanted to reside in the house as an intimate companion. Beauvoir emphasized, woman "is for man a sexual partner, a reproducer, an erotic object—an Other through whom he seeks himself" (1993, 62). In general, Lorde was concerned about the seductiveness of power exercised for arbitrary domination over others, even among feminists who deplored its operations under patriarchy. A fundamental reason that using "the master's tools" would be self-defeating was that using the tools reproduced the practices and could transform the users of them into masters. Because the practices of arbitrary domination needed to be transformed, not rehearsed, Lorde

affirmed in her opening that "racism, sexism, and homophobia are inseparable" (1984b, 110).

"The master's house" is likewise layered in its multiple meanings, not only to Lorde, but also to her auditors, to judge from published replies. It refers to the site for exercising power, judgment, and privilege, as well as to the products of these deeds. Cheryl Townsend Gilkes stated, "If feminist scholars are to overturn the hegemony," then "they must recognize the difference between the master's house and the master's illicit occupation of a house that should not be the master's to control. The racist and sexist imaginations have squatted in the spaces of cultural definition for too long" (1985, 82). Unearned entitlement to "the master's house" was salient for Lorde, but "dismantling" the "master's house" refers to repudiating anyone's unearned privilege, not just those of others. In addition, "the master's house" designates the material and/or courtship interests that bound the mistress and/or slave to the master. Emphasizing the interdependency of man and woman in biological reproduction, Beauvoir wrote, woman "is the Other in a totality of which the two components are necessary to one another. . . . Master and slave, also, are united by a reciprocal need, in this case economic, which does not liberate the slave" (1993, xliv).

"The master's house" implicitly distinguishes the reformist approach of the "house" Negro from the radical approach of the "field" Negro. In this respect, one of "the master's tools" consisted in dividing members of subordinated communities by extending privileges to some through access to the interior of "the master's house" while exploiting most others in the field to support this dwelling. An opposition between "the master's house" and the master's field, though implicit in Lorde's maxim, was vital in challenging reformist feminists to adopt radical feminism. Lorde used an analogy between racism and sexism to shape insights about distinctive reformist and radical political commitments within feminism.

Because of the strategic ambiguities in Lorde's maxim, others have interpreted it in ways that she could not have intended. To bell hooks, such appropriations reflected a racial divide among women. She objected at length to Naomi Wolf's appropriation of Lorde's maxim: "Although I would never pick this particular quote (so often evoked by white women) to represent the significance of Lorde's contribution to feminist thinking, Wolf decontextualizes this comment to deflect attention away from Lorde's call for white women and all women to interrogate our lust for power within the existing political structure, our investment in oppressive systems of domination" (1994, 97).⁸ Similarly, Elizabeth Spelman objected to scholarship in Andrea Nye's book by evoking Lorde's maxim: "If Nye hopes to

create conditions conducive to women doing theory together, she cannot describe the problems needing attention simply as the fact that men dominate women. Even if it were the case that in every race, class, nation, tribe, and community known to humankind, the men dominate the women, this typically occurs in the context of one race dominating another, one class oppressing another, and so on. . . . This is why when Lorde . . . insisted that 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house,' she had in mind a quite different warning than the one Nye might express in the same words" (1991, 238).

After affirming the maxim, Lorde asserted that the master's tools "may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change. And this fact is only threatening to those women who still define the master's house as their only source of support" (1984b, 112).⁹ Emily Erwin Culpepper amplified Lorde's concern about reformist feminism by extending the metaphors in Lorde's maxim. Replying to Lorde's observation, Culpepper commented, "I would like us to ask ourselves whether our work is aiming toward dismantling the master's house and transforming the territory—or just building one inadequate extra room or section on the back" (1988, 39). Lorde's remarks concentrated on a deep division between the personal politics of reformist and radical feminists while suggesting that a dependence on and a desire for privilege actuated the reformists. In Lorde's analysis, reformist approaches to feminism were doomed to failure, in part, because of its ironic elements.

Others in the personal politics of reformist and radical feminism

To develop her contention that the exclusion of other women weakens feminist theory, Lorde employed logical reasoning in the form of examples supporting generalizations. But she did so in a way that connected her personal experiences, as a black lesbian, with political actions, as manifested in the academic scholarship at the conference. For instance, she remarked,

The absence of any consideration of lesbian consciousness or the consciousness of Third World women leaves a serious gap within this conference and within the papers presented here. For example, in a paper on material relationships between women, I was conscious of an either/or model of nurturing which totally dismissed my knowledge as a Black lesbian. In this paper

there was no examination of mutuality between women, no systems of shared support, no interdependence as exists between lesbians and women-identified women. Yet it is only in the patriarchal model of nurturance that women "who attempt to emancipate themselves pay perhaps too high a price for the results," as this paper states. (1984b, 111)

With this example, Lorde identified specific interests that lead some women to adopt reformist approaches, how such interests are manifested in academic labor, and how they divide women by pitting them against each other for access into "the master's house." By situating the other author's paper in relationship to Lorde's personal politics, she emphasized that the paper's limitations resulted from the other author's merely personal politics, those of a heterosexual who failed to include others as an integral part of her politics. In addition, the other author's paper deflected attention from what, to Lorde, was an important insight: "For women, the need and desire to nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive, and it is within that knowledge that our real power is rediscovered" (111).¹⁰ To Lorde, including other women entailed conscious attention to difference within the symbolic category, "woman."¹¹

In Lorde's analysis, another example of using the "master's tools" at the conference was illustrated by the reformist feminists' attitudes concerning "difference" between self and "other" women. She asserted, "Advocating the mere tolerance of difference between women is the grossest reformism" (111). Commenting on this line, Culpepper inferred that "[t]he experiment of regarding difference as something that is *potentially* within one's self, that can engender creativity, that can connect us, relocates the assessment of difference" (1988, 48). More precisely, in response to Lorde's remark, Abou-Rihan commented that Lorde has "postulated a new formation and practice of identity by conceiving it as a difference which constantly re-engenders itself outside the prevailing dynamics of reciprocal assimilation, i.e., a difference which privileges singularity by repudiating the politics of the lowest common denominator and its call for reformist tolerance and approval" (1994, 257).¹²

In her speech, to reclaim "difference" as having a "creative function" for women, Lorde stressed, "[i]nterdependency between women is the way to a freedom which allowed the *I* to *be*, not in order to be used, but in order to be creative" (1984b, 111).¹³ Lorde employed such terms as *polarities*, *dialectic*, and *mutual (nondominant)* to depict this "interdependency" between self and other (111). For instance, she affirmed, "Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic" (111). Lorde reclaimed *differ-*

ence between self and other as a resource in the process of interweaving the personal and political, by asserting, "Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged" (112). Referring to Lorde's remark, Marilyn J. Legge stated, "We must, therefore, both name the real divisions among us and simultaneously approach *differences* and the *other* with the hope of seeking interdependent, nondominant, creative difference" (1992, 75). Alluding, then, to Lorde's earlier comments, Legge added, "Lorde admonishes us to recognize the gross limits of advocating mere tolerance of difference among women. A better route to discovering our authentic power/presence as human beings is to cultivate our differences as well as our similarities within communities of accountability" (75).¹⁴

Further, Lorde's speech emphasized how difference between self and other could operate as a divisive tool of domination. She observed, "As women, we have been taught either to ignore our differences, or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than as forces for change" (1984b, 112). Lorde explained, "Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist" (112). To Elizabeth Ann Bartlett, Lorde's analysis of difference underscored a tension within feminism between *liberty* and *sorority*. Bartlett commented that "the point has been made by women of color, who call for an appreciation of difference and diversity among women's lives and experiences and truths, that the unity invoked in the name of sisterhood is often a unity defined by white women, a unity in ignorance of and oppression of the lives of women of color" (1986, 524). After quoting Lorde's speech, Bartlett continued, "By the same token, when individual liberty of choice and opportunity takes precedence over the identity of women with other women and the obligation of women towards women, liberty undermines sorority" (524).¹⁵

Subsequently in the speech, Lorde rejected the ideological dynamic of difference as dominance by remarking, "The failure of academic feminists to recognize difference as a crucial strength is a failure to reach beyond the first patriarchal lesson. In our world, divide and conquer must become define and empower" (1984b, 112). Such remarks repudiated conceiving of difference as a rhetorical problem to dominant women, instead refiguring it as resource for rhetorical invention for all women (Campbell 1973, 78). Difference became such a resource by treating it as a creative tension. At the conference, Lorde's remarks enacted this transformation through her confrontational consciousness raising across the differences among women at the conference (on enactment, Campbell and Jamieson 1978, 9). To en-

act this transformation, she rejected the extremes of complete separation of individuals from groups, on the one hand, and the complete merger into an undifferentiated group, on the other.

Enacting confrontational consciousness raising across differences

The salient features of Lorde's rhetorical style in this speech are confrontation and consciousness raising, stylistic features consistent with connecting the personal and political (Campbell 1973, 78–86; Lorde 1984d, 130). These features of her style characterize her direct questions. For instance, she asked, "What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable" (Lorde 1984b, 110–11; for a commentary, Culpepper 1987, 14). Because of Lorde's concerns about racism in reformist feminism, she could have chosen not to attend the conference. Instead, through her presence, she demonstrated a commitment to transforming feminism. Lorde's presence and her advocacy of "interdependency between women" proved that she was no advocate of separatism. Despite this, Verta Taylor and Leila J. Rupp listed her speech along with several other writers' essays to justify separatism among subordinated groups. Taylor and Rupp asserted, "Lesbian women of color, working-class lesbian women, and Jewish lesbian women with an interest in working politically within their own racial, class, and ethnic communities argue for separate space to organize and express solidarity apart both from men and from lesbian women who are white or middle-class or Christian" (1993, 44). However, as Gilkes commented, Lorde was "[c]riticizing the compartmentalization and segregation that divides women against one another" (1985, 82).

Later in the speech, Lorde examined relations of class and race within feminism through confrontational consciousness raising by posing additional questions. First, she asserted, "Poor women and women of Color know there is a difference between the daily manifestations of marital slavery and prostitution because it is our daughters who line 42nd Street" (1984b, 112). Then, she asked, "If white american feminist theory need not deal with the differences between us, and the resulting difference in our oppressions, then how do you deal with the fact that the women who clean your houses and tend your children while you attend conferences on femi-

nist theory are, for the most part, poor women and women of Color? What is the theory behind racist feminism?" (112). Lorde's questions exemplify her thesis about the pervasiveness of the master's tools within feminism in that she identified specific relationships of economic domination among women. In addition, Lorde underscored that the material conditions of "other" women explained their absence from the conference and, as one consequence, being represented as "other" by dominant women in attendance. If, as Beauvoir suggested in *The Second Sex*, women's role as "other" to men resulted most fundamentally from historical materialism, analogous claims apply to race, class, and sexuality.

In response to Lorde's questions, Christina Crosby commented, "These questions, and others along the same lines, have had profound effects. . . . 'Differences' has become a given of academic feminisms; feminism has been modified and pluralized. . . . It would seem that dealing with the fact of differences is *the* project of women's studies today" (1992, 131). Yet Crosby's later comments may raise questions as to whether Crosby recognized that Lorde saw difference as relational and comparative, not simply as innate traits or "facts." For example, Crosby claimed,

Lorde herself, in appealing to the 'fact' of 'the differences between us' as the corrective to feminist theory, is suggesting, however polemically, that facts speak for themselves. The *relationship*, then, between 'the real' and knowledge of the real, between 'facts' and theory, history and theory is occluded even as women's studies seeks to address the problem of theoretical practice. Lorde's intervention, and a host of other critiques of 'racist feminism,' have broken up an oppressively singular feminism, but much of U.S. women's studies is still bound to an empiricist historicism which is the flip side of the idealism scorned and disavowed by feminisms. (136)

Because Lorde represented difference as social, not only individual, and as actively represented, not "facts," Crosby's comments distorted and misused Lorde's insights.

In contrast, Ruth Salvaggio replied to Lorde's questions by affirming, "The theory behind racist feminism, we might say, is the same theory that excluded the experience and writing of white women for so long. Anyone who finds a comfortable place in that theory and refuses to cross over into the space of the margin runs the risk of closing off theoretical discourse once again to others" (1988, 274). Specifically, in the practice of producing feminist theory, Salvaggio amplified, "When woman writes theory, she does not simply talk about the margin, but effects transformations through marginal space. Inhabiting the 'space-off,' continually crossing back and

forth between 'here' and 'elsewhere,' this is the space where feminist theory must continue to write itself" (274; for another commentary, Thistlethwaite 1988, 85). Implicit in Salvaggio's reply is her understanding that, to Lorde, it is necessary to enact changes in practices across social differences as one outcome of consciousness raising and frank confrontations. As Salvaggio suggested, the margins and the center may, in some respects, be dynamic and changing in that people move through multiple locations in many, evolving communities (Olson 1997). Furthermore, there are no exemptions from examining and unlearning practices of domination between self and other, because every person hosts oppressive practices.

Lorde's earlier remark about "interdependency between women" foreshadowed her concerns about the conference organizers listing her as a "consultant" on the program. By again positioning herself as an other among the dominant groups of women at the conference, and, from that location, by again connecting the personal and the political, Lorde questioned,

Why weren't other women of Color found to participate in this conference? Why were two phone calls to me considered a consultation? Am I the only possible source of names of Black feminists? . . . In academic feminist circles, the answer to these questions is often, "We did not know who to ask." But that is the same evasion of responsibility, the same cop-out, that keeps Black women's art out of women's exhibitions, Black women's work out of most feminist publications . . . and Black women's texts off your reading lists. (1984b, 113)

These remarks suggest underlying, interconnected techniques of domination in use at the conference. To Lorde, the conference planners had appropriated her credibility as consultant by listing her as such on the program. Moreover, the planners' use of this consultant superficially legitimated the program as inclusive, because she was a token black feminist and lesbian. Beyond this, her role as consultant implicitly may have excused the underrepresentation of black women and lesbians in the program. Her remarks on her role as consultant intimated a pattern of blaming those who experienced discrimination for the practice of it in evidence in the limited range of speakers and structure of the conference.

In this context, Lorde sought to have members of dominant communities assume responsibility for self-education about black people, instead of assigning such responsibility to members of black communities. Lorde mentioned, "as Adrienne Rich pointed out in a recent talk, white feminists have educated themselves about such an enormous amount over the past ten years, how come you haven't also educated yourselves about Black women and the differences between us—white and Black—when it is key to our survival as a movement?" (1984b, 113). Such questions emphasize

underlying relationships of power among women because they expand a *topos* of difference as domination that is familiar among feminists. Such questions also underscore dangers of being merely personal in one's politics by omitting others or assigning them responsibility for working across social differences. Personal politics would have limited prospects if it amounted to assigning responsibility to subordinated others to do such work. Lorde demanded that personal politics transform such arbitrary practices of domination.

Having focused upon these uses of her as a consultant as a personal instance illuminating political uses for others, Lorde extended this example of academic feminists' using "the master's tools." First, she mentioned an underlying power relationship between men and women, a relationship in which women are expected to educate men. Lorde commented, "Women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance and to educate men as to our existence and our needs. This is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns" (113). Then, by parallel phrasing, Lorde mentioned a similar tool of domination employed by white women in dealing with "women of Color": "Now we hear that it is the task of women of Color to educate white women—in the face of tremendous resistance—as to our existence, our differences, our relative roles in our joint survival. This is a diversion of energies and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought" (113). As a matter of rhetorical technique, Lorde discredited the relational, symbolic practice by first promoting identification among women in opposition to patriarchy as a means of bringing those insights in a vocabulary familiar to most feminists to perhaps less consciously examined social practices of racism in an analogous relationship of "women of Color" to white women.

Strategic sequencing and parallel phrasing were among the strongest aspects of Lorde's rhetorical style and disposition. But, at the same time, her use of the expression "women of Color" strategically obfuscated differences among women of diverse races to telescope the argument into a binary opposition with white women, as though white is not a color. The expression "women of Color" renders invisible diversity among women of diverse races—indigenous, Pacific Asian, black, Chicana/Latina—just as the term *women* renders invisible diversity of race, age, sexuality, and economic class among women. In a later speech, "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism," delivered in 1981, Lorde acknowledged a conscious concern about this aspect of "women of Color" (1984d, 127–28). Such reductive word choice reproduces an unfortunate irony as a result of a liability of language known as essentialism (Olson 1998). Ironically, in challenging white women to educate themselves about race and, by impli-

cation, sexuality, age, and class, Lorde educated them about working collectively with others.

Even though her confrontational approach emphasized domination across differences, Lorde endeavored to build identifications with the women at the conference by focusing upon commonalities as women, as feminists, as socialists, as academics producing feminist theory, as public intellectuals interested in Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and the relationship between the personal and political. To transform feminism, Lorde urged every member of her audiences to examine sources of discomfort across differences among women. She framed her demand in terms of honoring Beauvoir by quoting her: "It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our lives that we must draw our strength to live and our reasons for acting" (1984b, 113). Lorde concluded, "Racism and homophobia are real conditions of all our lives in this place and time. *I urge each one of us here to reach down into that deep place of knowledge inside herself and touch that terror and loathing of any difference that lives there. See whose face it wears.* Then the personal as the political can begin to illuminate all our choices" (113).

With reference to Lorde's conclusion, Martha Minow explained, "This is not sympathy, tolerance, or even compassion, each of which leaves the viewer's understanding fundamentally unchanged," but rather a call for a fundamental transformation of human relationships at the level of practices (1987, 79 n. 324). To enact the transformation sought by Lorde, Minow commented, "Two exercises can help those who judge to glimpse the perspectives of others and to avoid a false impartiality. The first is to explore our own stereotypes, our own attitudes toward people we treat as different—and, indeed, our own categories for organizing the world" (79). After then quoting Lorde's conclusion, Minow explained, in legal terms, "This is a call for applying 'strict scrutiny' not just to a defendant's reasons for burdening a protected minority group, but also to ourselves when we judge those reasons. It is a process that even we who see ourselves as victims of oppression need to undertake, for devices of oppression are buried within us" (79). In another context, with reference to Lorde's conclusion, Minow observed, "Stereotypes help people manage enormous fears by depositing them on the category described as 'other' in comparison with the self" (1990, 235; for another commentary, Moraga 1983, xvi–xvii).

There is a deep irony in Lorde's conclusion, since Beauvoir argued that "woman," as a category, should always be differentiated in terms of an ethnicity and class. In Lorde's estimation, the conference honoring Beauvoir's book was dishonoring one of her intellectual insights. In fairness to the conference planners, it should be mentioned that, according to Elizabeth Spelman (1988), Beauvoir failed to practice what she urged about

differentiating the category "woman." Lorde may likewise have reproduced this practice by referring to undifferentiated "women of Color." Further, the conference participants displayed some concern for inclusiveness by attending the panel. In addition, some conference participants' writings before the conference affirmed concern about the racial schism among feminists (e.g., Simons 1979). The planners probably featured Lorde prominently at a session immediately before showing a documentary film on Beauvoir's life to maximize attendance and the likelihood of Lorde's being heard. Innumerable commentaries prove that Lorde's speech has had a hearing, though there are deep divisions among feminists about endorsing, appropriating, or repudiating Lorde's maxim.

Endorsing, appropriating, and repudiating Lorde's maxim

Innumerable public interactions with Lorde's speech provide ample evidence that it has deep and abiding significance in feminist philosophy and rhetoric. Commentators on Lorde's speech have examined the insight that language as a tool of arbitrary domination may be unable to dismantle language reinforcing symbolic and material privilege. Donald C. Goellnicht commented on a question "posed by Audre Lorde for all minority writers: 'Is it possible to dismantle the master's house with his own tools [words]?' " (1989, 294; for additional commentaries, Winter 1992, 747 n. 13; Aphthorp 1992, 3). Goellnicht applied Lorde's insight about arbitrary domination to language by inserting "words" in brackets and by converting her assertion into a question. Abena P. A. Busia commented with reference to Lorde's speech that, "in the dynamic of reading colonial literature, the already problematic place of women in that literature is further problematized because of the submerged nature of that literature's engagement with that same subject which lies at the very heart of the debate about criticism and interpretation: the subject of power. In all its ramifications, colonial discourse remains a discourse of power relations, both in the 'strategic locations' of the authors and in the 'strategic formations' of the texts themselves" (1990, 100).¹⁶ Kathleen Weiler remarked that Lorde "is seeking a perspective from which to interrogate dominant regimes of truth; central to her argument is the claim that an analysis framed solely in the terms of accepted discourse cannot get to the root of structures of power" (1991, 465).

Additional comments about the maxim focus specifically upon using undifferentiated categories for demographic groups or human qualities as

instances exemplifying the "master's tools." To Teresa De Lauretis, for instance, "to ask whether there is a feminine or female aesthetic, or a specific language of women's cinema, is to remain caught in the master's house and there, as Audre Lorde's suggestive metaphor warns us, to legitimate the hidden agendas of a culture we badly need to change. . . . [C]osmetic changes, she is telling us, won't be enough for the majority of women—women of color, black women, and white women as well" (1985, 158). These remarks suggest that De Lauretis was aware of complicity as a problematic aspect of essentialism in undifferentiated categories such as "feminine" and, presumably, "masculine." Subsequently, again evoking Lorde's maxim, De Lauretis commented in another essay about the danger of "domestication or reappropriation within the 'master's house' of white male culture (Lorde 1984)" (De Lauretis 1987, 259). Ironically, this essentialist language representing undifferentiated others as "white male culture" reproduces in mirror image what De Lauretis recognized accurately as problematic in a "feminine or female aesthetic." Representing any "other" as a master may result, in part, from essentialism in language.

For Joan M. Martin, one answer to the concerns about language as a tool of capricious domination is Lorde's practice of reclaiming language. Referring to Lorde's speech, Martin commented that, for Lorde, difference "is a tool that enables one to stand over against the distortions within the paradigms of oppression and domination" (1993, 46). Martin noted, "The knowledge of true difference is the fundamental tool for dismantling the master's house." She explained, "Difference potentially permits us to more accurately see the nature of seduction by the master and his power—if we are oppressed, we are not, and never will be, truly equal to the master in the present scheme of things. So, we have the opportunity to build work and social relationships on alternative, long-term goals with others rather than on short-term gains exploitative of ourselves and others" (46). Lorde's own practice suggests that she sought to reclaim language, exemplified in other speeches by "the erotic," "difference," and "anger." But whether Lorde believed this activity would dismantle the privileges embedded in language is speculation because she may have engaged in reclaiming language despite insights about its abiding ideological dimensions.

Because essentialist language is the medium through which law is formulated and enforced in the U.S. system of justice, understood in terms of verdicts, punishments, and economic outcomes, some commentators on Lorde's speech considered the implications of understanding law as a tool serving the interests of dominant groups. Minow observed, "There is a risk that claims made in established legal forms can never adequately challenge

oppressive practices at the heart of the legal or political system. Audre Lorde analyzed this problem in her powerful essay, "The Master's Tools." Minow added, "Yet, just as her own prose transformed inherited language and ideas, . . . , an emphatic claiming of differences through rights language could help transform existing legal and social structures. To continue the metaphor of the Master's House, the tools may be used to make new tools, which then can help renovate the house for others" (1990, 297 n. 115; for another legal commentary, Roberts 1993, 616). Similar concerns about using the "master's tools" recurred in theology among such diverse writers as Emily Erwin Culpepper (1987, 14; 1988, 39, 48), Toinette M. Eugene (1992a, 92; 1992b, 140–41), Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1989, 3–4), Cherly Townsend Gilkes (1985, 82), Janet Kalven (1989, 142), Joan Martin (1993, 46), and Letty Russell (1988, 17).

As Minow's public interaction with Lorde's speech exemplified in legal theory, some responses have called for making "new tools." Culpepper asserted, "Moving freely among these [traditional] disciplines and beyond, creating our own tools for scholarship is essential for finding the truths about women that have been excluded from academia" (1987, 14). Subsequently, Culpepper mentioned by way of example, "In my work, the ideas of women of color are transforming what I do. These ideas are major 'new tools'—resources of primary importance for developing theory in contemporary theology, theology [sic], philosophy and ethics" (1988, 39). Another well-developed discussion of "new tools" was Eugene's suggestion:

Viewing relations of domination for Black women in any given sociohistorical context as structured through a system of interlocking race, class, and gender oppression expands analysis beyond merely describing the similarities and differences between these systems of oppression to focus greater attention on how they interconnect. Assuming that each system needs the others in order to function creates a distinct theoretical stance that stimulates the rethinking of basic concepts in social science. These concepts are *definitely not* the "tools" of the classical or systematic theological "master." To rephrase Audre Lorde, these are tools that will help to dismantle the house of bondage that insists on normativeness of Eurocentric patriarchal categories and experiences. (1992b, 140–41; for another commentary, Ice 1989, 123)

Others who commented on Lorde's speech questioned whether repudiating the tools would leave one vulnerable to techniques of domination employed by others. Additional commentators stressed that these tools are the only means likely to bring about change. Hilde Hein mentioned that "Audre Lorde has cautioned against the use of the 'master's tools' to dismantle his house. Henry Louis Gates, on the other hand, argues that these

are the *only* tools that are likely to work" (1993, 302). Similarly, referring to Lorde's maxim, Amy Ling commented, "Much as I enjoy the ring of this line, however, and admire the fierce independence behind it, I find myself finally doubting its veracity. After all, a claw-foot hammer, even if it was made by a man, can both drive nails in and pry them out, depending on your purpose and which side of the head you are using." Ling added, "Tools possess neither memory nor loyalty; they are as effective as the hands wielding them. And, furthermore, why shouldn't women use tools? . . . On the other hand, if Lorde was referring to the impossibility of the established system's ability to police itself, then I would, from experience, agree with her" (1987, 155; for another commentary, Heller 1993, 30). Such commentary suggests, perhaps, that one should distinguish capricious domination from other elements of social hierarchy because all social systems have elements of domination among people and because such systems themselves are dominating.

Some writers have extended the metaphor of the "master's tools" by focusing upon seizing the "tools" rather than transforming them. Although Jane Marcus did not explicitly mention Lorde's speech, the title of Marcus's essay was suggestive: "Storming the Toolshed" (1982). With respect to race, Joyce A. Joyce affirmed, "I cannot fathom why a Black critic would trust that the master would provide him or her with tools with which he or she can seek independence" (1987, 379; for additional examples, Kaminsky 1993, 218; Ling 1987, 155). Lillian S. Robinson observed, "It is hard to disagree with Audre Lorde's much-cited dictum," adding, "[b]ut people have to live in a house, not in a metaphor." She emphasized, "Of *course* you use the Master's tools if those are the only ones you can lay your hands on. Perhaps what you can do with them is to take apart that old mansion, using some of its pieces to put up a far better one where there is room for all of us" (1987, 34).

To Susan Stanford Friedman, appropriating the "master's tools" for "mimicry" to expose them may represent a "new tool," but she suggested ambivalence. To Friedman, Lorde's maxim "suggests that feminists should remain outside the hermeneutic circle of the discourse they would critique. Luce Irigaray's strategy of 'mimicry' represents an opposing method. . . . Irigaray, in other words, would repeat the crime in order to expose it, thereby 'suspending its pretension to the production of a truth'" (1993, 72). In this context, Friedman asked, "Can a strategy for detection be devised that negotiates an inside/outside position, one that both uses a discourse to expose its crimes and yet resists the discourse's 'dire mastery' and theological seductions to belief?" (72). Subsequently, Friedman remarked, "Use of his [Freud's] hermeneutic of detection is itself testimony to his authority,

to the fact that his 'house' still stands firmly on the cultural landscape. In Audre Lorde's terms, I have not dismantled the master's house; perhaps I am also subject to her warning" (89). "However," Friedman added, "use of Freud's tools of detection does not mean that I define 'the master's tools as [my] only source of power.' Rather, operating out of a feminist base, I see myself using Freud's hermeneutic to understand the processes and consequences for women of its construction. Such revisionist interpretation is a necessary precondition to transformation of the symbolic order. It is what Adrienne Rich calls 'an act of survival' that allows me to move outside Freud's texts—beyond the repetitions of reactive parody or mimicry" (89).

Remarks about mimicry of "the master's tools" recurred with another resonance in Shirley Geok-Lin Lim's comment, "We were caged in British colonial culture and like the mynah learned to repeat the master's phrases. . . . The Asian woman writer, once the colonial screen has been lifted, is not still a free individual, for colonial education has shaped both the spirit of independence and the language of independence which is to free her, and, as Audre Lorde asks, how is the master's house to be dismantled by the master's tools?" (1990, 171). Although Lorde's maxim was an assertion, not a question, Lim accurately underscored the necessity of unlearning dominant practices internalized within the self. Friedman and Lim underscored an irony in which using the master's tools, whether to expose them through mimicry or to repeat them as a result of socialization, merely reproduced the social role.

Conclusion

Simone de Beauvoir commented upon the conundrums posed by power in interviews about her work. In the *Ms.* article reporting on "*The Second Sex* Conference," Benjamin and Rivlin remarked, "De Beauvoir also has cautioned against the illusion that women can have a share in men's power" (1980, 51). They quoted her as saying, "I do not think that women should take up power against men thinking that they will then be able to avoid what men did against women" (51). Benjamin and Rivlin explained, "Power itself is the problem, she claims, not who holds it. This view raises for her the tricky question of whether women should individually try to attain positions in the world of men" (51). They quoted Beauvoir asking a series of summary questions: "Should women entirely reject this masculine universe or make an accommodation with it? Should they steal the tool or change it? All the values are stamped with the seal of masculinity. Must we, because of that,

completely reject them and try to reinvent something radically different from the very beginning? Or should we assimilate these values, take possession of them, and use them for feminist ends?" (51). At "*The Second Sex Conference*," Lorde repudiated "the master's tools," and, by implication, the master's role, taking a position on these options in the ongoing controversy among feminists about uses of power. In general, Beauvoir remarked, "I have already stated that when two human categories are together, each aspires to impose its sovereignty upon the other. If both are able to resist this imposition, there is created between them a reciprocal relation, sometimes in enmity, sometimes in amity, always in a state of tension. If one of the two is in some way privileged, has some advantage, this one prevails over the other and undertakes to keep it in subjection" (1993, 65). By implication, Lorde's rejection of simplistic binaries between "two human categories" was integral to her repudiation of "the master's tools."

Because Lorde presented herself as black and woman, she was positioned in terms of her personal and political experiences when she affirmed, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House." Coming from her, the maxim aimed at transforming arbitrary domination. Ironically, such efforts entail using language as a tool of domination. When I note this, speaking as a critic who is white and male, yet subjected to acts of domination across sexuality and, in some measure that has changed with time, class, ironies enter into the complex relationships among author, text, and critic. My personal and political interaction with Lorde's speech may, at once, transform an understanding of her maxim and be vulnerable to definition by others as acts of appropriation and domination. In these respects, I am both master and mastered in my relationship to the author, her speech, and our audiences. But Lorde's speech moved beyond such simplistic oppositions between self and other, master and slave, or master and mistress, along with an infinite regress in relationships of power among groups, by demanding personal politics characterized by an ethic of care about others. Like Paulo Freire, Lorde recognized the self as a host for oppressive practices in dealing with others and, like Freire, she called upon every person to engage in personal change of his or her practices. This entailed recognizing the self as both master and mastered, by collapsing the simplistic binary within the self and by rejecting its simplistic application to others. To Lorde, movement toward a utopian society entailed an ethic of care across difference, not only as an altruistic action, but also in a conscious recognition that, by reproducing the practices of domination over others, these practices remain available for use in one's own subordination. In this respect, perhaps self-interest in personal politics would transform agonistic oppositions between self and other.¹⁷

For all the brilliance of Lorde's strategic use of polysemy in the famous maxim, the rhetorical strategy was not without limitations. The metaphoric ambiguities that generated multiple insights about domination over others also made it possible for creative readings, which deflected understanding of her maxim. In addition, on the one extreme, an emphatic rejection of the maxim was so strong that it exposed a provocative irony in some feminists' philosophy and rhetoric—power is only problematic if you have it and I do not. On the other extreme, acceptance of her maxim left difficult questions about the appropriate uses of power, especially questions about survival in a culture in which capricious domination is endemic. In legal theory, for example, feminists have tried to use the legal system to experience justice, only to find that they have been used by it instead. In general, polysemy makes it possible to transform the meanings for whoever may respond to them through dialogue, dialectic, and debate. These communication practices remain vital in a process of social change, however much they may deflect attention from material conditions. Finally, Lorde underscored that speakers need to perform their messages in the symbolism of everyday actions, not merely deliver them discursively to others. In the absence of living the messages, they may be merely academic in Lorde's estimation.

At the conference, Lorde honored the achievements in *The Second Sex* by extending, modifying, and challenging Simone de Beauvoir's insights. These actions continued a development in evidence in Lorde's poems, such as "Between Ourselves" and "Outside," both of which were published twice before "The Second Sex Conference." In the former poem, "Between Ourselves," Lorde wrote, "if we do not stop killing / the other / in ourselves / the self that we hate / in others / soon we shall all lie / in the same direction" (1997, 225, 325). In the latter poem, "Outside," she situated herself as the other in order to connect the personal and the political:

who do you think me to be
that you are terrified of becoming
or what do you see in my face
you have not already discarded
in your own mirror
what face do you see in my eyes
that you will someday
come to
acknowledge your own?

(226, 279)

Notes

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2. I want to thank Lori B. Finkelstein, archival assistant at the New York University archives, for sending me copies of the conference schedule, a 1979–80 pamphlet for the New York Institute for the Humanities, and a five-year report mentioning *The Second Sex Conference* (Letter to the author, 10 July 1997).

3. *This Bridge* reported an inaccurate speech date because the conference schedule listed Lorde's speech on 29 September, and so did Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* (1984c, 110).

4. Similarly, Lorde (1984a, 123).

5. Presumably, Lorde used the term *panel* to designate a session, because at least one workshop included black feminists Camille Bristow and Bonnie Johnson, who later spoke in the session with Lorde, and because Lorde herself participated in an earlier poetry reading.

6. For a commentary on the line about survival, Thistlethwaite (1988, 85).

7. In addition to essays and books quoted in this essay, the following persons have commented on the maxim/title: Abbandonato (1991, 1108), Brown (1993, 16–17), Huffer (1995, 37), Ono and Sloop (1995, 42 n. 11), Phelan (1990, 177).

8. Similarly, Aune (1998, 72, 74 n. 29). Wood mentioned this use of "the master's tools" in Wolf's writing, but without noting Lorde's speech (1996, 172).

9. For comment on this line, Collins (1991, 110).

10. This reiterated an idea from "The Uses of the Erotic" (1984e, 54). For comment on Lorde's remark, Gibson-Hudson (1991, 49).

11. For discussions of "difference" in feminist communication scholarship, see Dow (1995) and Flores (1996).

12. For additional commentary on this line, Kalven (1989, 141–42) and Holmlund (1994, 44).

13. For comments on this line, Gilkes (1985, 82) and Eugene (1992a, 92).

14. For additional comments on this line, Williams (1990, 702, and 703 n. 15) and Howard (1987, 8).

15. For another comment on Lorde's line, Brown (1993, 10).

16. The political implications of translating language in relationship to other cultures and perspectives recurred in responses to Lorde's maxim; for example, Lawrence (1992, 2276).

17. The qualifiers about self-interest combined with Lorde's emphatic stress on differentiating "woman" distinguish this "ethic of care" from that of Carol Gilligan as represented by Wood (1992, 3–5).

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