Les Amies: An Epistemological Analysis of Audre Lorde's *Zami*

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I remember how being young and Black and gay and lonely felt. A lot of it was fine, feeling I had the truth and the light and the key, but a lot of it was pure Hell. [...] There were no mothers, no sisters, no heroes. We had to do it alone, like our sister Amazons, the riders on the loneliest outposts of the kingdom of Dahomey" (Lorde, Zami *178).*

Introduction

Audre Lorde[1] did not start out wanting to write a novel. She had long been a poet, teacher, and scholar. She said that learning to write prose was like learning a second language. Teaching prose to students, something she struggled to do herself, felt like a lie. "I was put in a position to have to teach something that I knew about theoretically but that I myself was not myself able to do" (Lorde, "Interview"). After years of writing poetry and being an active member of the Modern Language Association, Lorde wrote her autobiography — a biomythography as she called it — to tell her story, one she thought might be coming to an end because of a cancer scare, and to offer herself as a representative of Black, lesbian womanhood in an era when those stories were all too scarce.

Zami: A New Spelling of My Name has been reviewed exhaustively for its status as a biomythography and its similarity to epic literature. The novel has also been examined for both its commentary on race and sexuality in the mid-20th century as well as the novel's impact on LGBTQ literature as a whole. However, this novel has not yet been fully analyzed for the presence of an epistemological construction of the Black, lesbian identity. In this paper, I will be examining the novel specifically for how both knowledge and understanding of the Black, lesbian Audre/Zami are created. Audre arrives at this knowledge through both bestowed knowledge and experiential learning. The novel, and the author herself, then becomes the guide, teacher, and hero of lesbians that Lorde herself and other lesbians of her era lacked and so desperately needed.

The realization of the Audre character as a fully actualized Black, lesbian woman occurs at the very end of the text. Throughout most of the novel, we see a young Audre struggling repeatedly to understand her role in her family, school, relationships, and with

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[1] The semi-autobiographical nature of this text positions Audre Lorde as both protagonist of the novel and author. Like other scholars, I'll largely be referring to the author of the text as Lorde and the character within the text as Audre.

the world around her. Audre expresses that she senses her issues with her family and institutional classrooms stem not from some internal deficiency, but because her 'self' does not fit into the space made for her. "[M]ajor movements in the social sciences and in feminist, queer, and critical race theory have shown how identities — such as gender, race, and sexuality — are not merely innate but emerge within and are structured by particular sociohistorical contexts. That is to say, identities are produced and performed relationally between the individual and the world around her" (Wells 224). This construction of a relational identity is mediated through experiences. After her friend Gennie's death, her mother attempts to bestow some type of transformational wisdom on Audre, but Audre is left cold. She recalls: "The merciless quality of my mother's fumbling insights turned her attempt at comfort into another assault" (101). Instead, this moment becomes another experience for a grieving Audre: her mother's invulnerability in the face of a foundational tragedy in her daughter's life marks the last dialogue they share in the text.

An epistemological analysis of *Zami* places these moments in the context of the branch of philosophy most concerned with the hows and whys of knowledge acquisition. Epistemic knowledge is justified, rational belief (McNay 41-42). Audre's journey in the novel is the acquisition of knowledge through experiences. Her realization of a Black, lesbian self is empirical, occasionally dialogic, but, most frequently, crafted through episodes of experience, observation, and reflection of how those experiences have shaped her or contributed to her intersectional positionality in the world. Foucault suggests that historical periods — in the context of the novel, the 20th century — have specific frames of thinking about their acceptable discourse for era-specific knowledge (Foucault 192). Those frames, Foucault's *epistemes*, dictate behavior, language, economics, etc. on their time period (35).

Audre's childish ignorance in the early novel indicates that the character lacks epistemic knowledge of these acceptable discourses, particularly those around race, sexuality, biology, and interpersonal relationships. She, like many protagonists in coming-of-age texts, is nearly *tabula rasa.* I argue that some portion of this ignorance is the lack of language to describe her true self: Audre can hardly explain the reasons for the strife within her family, though Lorde the author posits a few reasons, and is only able to admit she is gay shortly before her first sexual encounter with a woman. Foucault states, "[A]s a result of the importance of linguistics and of its application to the knowledge of man, the question of the being of language, which, as we have seen is so intimately linked with fundamental problems of our culture, reappears in all its enigmatic insistence" (416). Audre develops knowledge through experience, through discourse, and through naming herself Black, female, lesbian Zami.

Epistemological analyses of queer literature are perhaps not as prevalent as we might hope. Recent texts which have attempted to unpack epistemes in mainstream Western literature, Rik Peele's *Responsible Belief* (2019) and *American Literature and the Destruction of Knowledge: Innovative Writing in the Age of Epistemology* (1991) by Ronald E. Martin have been met with no small amount of critique and reactionary support. For queer literature, epistemological analysis is even rarer. Nevertheless, this dearth of research and writing begs correction. The Postmodern era, and whatever comes after it, specifically sets out to examine and unwind the historical episteme — the Modernist, the heterosexist, the racist epoch — which has left queer literature and those who identify as LGBTQ as cultural outliers and outlaws. Zami is the perfect text with which to do this work.

Of course, we must be aware of Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet.* Sedgwick is concerned with the construction of the in/outness of queer individuals and the epistemes which guide our thinking about homosexuality and homosexual presentation. Sedgwick writes,

> "After all, to identify as must always include multiple processes of identification *with.* It also involves identification *as against*; but even if it did no, the relations implicit in *identifying with* are, as psychoanalysis suggests, in themselves quite sufficiently fraught with intensities of incorporeal power, diminishment, inflation, threat, loss, reparation, and disavowal" (Sedgwick 61).

Sedgwick's analysis identifies the relational power between the public and private, the homo and hetero relationship, and the limitation of binary thinking for examining homosexual relationships in a heterosexual world. That said, in as much as this novel is about Audre's journey toward self-acceptance, there are clear places throughout the novel where the author is naming and examining cultural epistemes through the protagonist Audre.

Zami deserves epistemological analysis because the entire novel is about the learning and comprehension of the Black, lesbian identity in a white, cis-heterosexist world. Audre's acquisition of self-knowledge, her self-actualization, and her enlightenment is predicated on bestowed knowledge. This knowledge originates both from her family and through formal schooling, then through experiential learning, the significant portion of which she acquires by leaving the family home and experiencing life. Some of this knowledge is dialogic, conversations she has with more learned individuals including Eudora, her love in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and Afrekete (Kitty) just before the end of the novel. This text is more than an excellent but common "coming out novel." Instead, reading through an epistemic lens shows us not just a young woman on the cusp of

sexual maturation but a Black, lesbian woman's epic journey for creating frames of thinking about race, gender, and sexuality.

The Text

In Lorde's semi-autobiographical text, we see a young Audre slowly transform from young, naive ingenue to an emboldened, enlightened version of herself. This novel reproduces the Homeric epic style: it is episodic in nature, contains a central character who undergoes foundational changes in temperament, battles (metaphorical) foes, and emerges a new, enlightened self. In the beginning of the story, a young Audre expresses that she has trouble seeing herself as an immigrant and how differently she feels than her parents about her cultural identity. She knows that something is different about her: her fractious relationships with her mothers and schoolteachers proves it, but she cannot articulate exactly what that difference is. Audre loses a first love to suicide early in the novel, clearly embodying the foundational tragedies that often befall epic heroes, but her familiar relationships offer her very little comfort in the face of such a loss.

Ultimately, she leaves the safety of her homeland: despite being the daughter of immigrants, her connection to her parents' home country feels ephemeral. That home country is a place she has never seen, viewed through the eyes and memories of parents who themselves are displaced from mainstream society. "Lorde's bio-text is rooted in a trio of pivotal life experiences for their respective young Black protagonists: chronological coming of age, artistic coming to consciousness, and sexual coming out. The family—headed by a dominant and conservative mother—is the sociopolitical apparatus through which collective traumas manifest for these gay teens amid obvious differences in setting and character construction" (Kang 268). These "collective traumas" do accumulate over time and with that accumulation comes the slow realizing and naming of the Zami self.

Epistemology in the Text

The character Audre exists in three states throughout the text: the ignorant, the learner, and the learned. Outside the text of the novel, there exists the writer as narrator, in a fourth state of being, who has now taken on the role of teacher both the reader and her students. This division of the self is not meant to indicate that Audre ever fully self-actualizes within the text of the novel, or that at any time Audre progresses fully from one state to another. Rather, this division indicates that Lorde, as the author, has utilized the character and her experiences to show this progression. Lorde has made frequent statements about her identity as Black, lesbian writer, and poet, and she made it plain that she inhabited these identities fully as the author external to the text.

In the beginning of the novel, Audre frequently expresses a sense that she is unsure of her identity, her role within the larger context of the world, or her role within the family. She feels that it is not that her family cannot love, only that they cannot love her for who she is: someone who does not know the rules and cannot follow them. Audre is both out of sync and unsuccessful with bonding with the family unit. If Audre cannot be who they want, then she will leave and become who she is meant to be. Once Lorde has established protagonist-Audre as ignorant of her identity and how that identity meshes with a thoroughly confusing and oblique outside world, the reader then walks alongside Audre as she experiences the mythical moments which enlighten her.

Places of Learning

The school system acts as both a place of learning and of oppression for young Audre and for other Black students. Nearsightedness has made it extremely difficult for young Audre to learn her numbers or learn to read, so she teams up with a fellow outcast student who knows his numbers but not his letters. Frequently relegated to the "Brownies," the dunce-like students who cannot follow directions, the system these two students have works well: her classmate flips to the correct page in the text, and Audre whispers to her classmate the words on the page. Later injustices of the school system would include running for class president: Audre is knocked out of the running because she is a Black girl, despite being the smartest in the class. Frequently, Audre runs in with Sister Mary of Perpetual Help, the young nun quick to punish and snipe. High school-aged Audre confides in a guidance counsellor who promises to make things better between Audre and her mother, but the woman makes things worse. Even later in the novel, Audre attends college, a secret from her friends, as college is not accepted by the working-class lesbians she calls her friends.

All of these examples point to a school system incapable of or unwilling to properly educate Audre. She does not quite fit in with the rest of her classmates and cannot conform to their rules, most of which privilege whiteness: therefore, she is the problem. Sometime before Lorde, W.E.B. Du Bois asked it perfectly: "Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. How does it feel to be a problem?" (Du Bois). Audre, as a Black girl, struggles to fit in both individually with her white peers and with the racist systems designed by white people for white people. As a lesbian, she is a problem for heterosexual women with whom she rarely identifies. As the daughter of Caribbean immigrants, herself a first generation American, she does not quite fit in with Black Americans. She is a *problem* in her own spaces, and her experiences make that very clear.

The Home

Much of her early knowledge, incomplete though it is in Audre's childhood, is acquired through her family. Her older sisters, themselves storytellers, possess secrets between them that they will not share with their youngest sister Audre (Lorde, *Zami* 47). Her mother and father have secret, closed-door conversations amongst themselves in which they discuss the day's business and disciplinary issues of the children (Lorde, *Zami* 16). Family psychologists have repeatedly stated that arguing in front of young children is harmful if not disagreement is destructive or improperly mediated for confused audiences (Harold, Markham). However, the total obfuscation of conflict mediation between her parents leaves parts of their relationship shrouded in mystery. Knowledge itself is hoarded and meted out carefully as Lorde's parents periodically lapse into French-based *patois* of their homelands in the Caribbean.

Learning a new language is a significant theme of the novel. Unable to speak for most of her early childhood, Audre is tested for learning disabilities. She barely speaks until she turns four years old, and due to extreme nearsightedness, Audre struggles to read well into school age. Even her parents' language remains a mystery: her parents often converse in *patois,* a Carriacou language that Audre cannot speak. This metaphorical tonguelessness severs a communicative route between them. It also deprives Audre of a portion of her identity: the titular Zami is derived from the *patois "les amies"* which means "the friends;" in Carriacou, "Zami" is a word for "women who work together as friends and lovers" (Lorde, *Zami* 255). It is only after she has appropriated and understood this language of her ancestors that Audre, and by extension the author herself, can truly realize who she is. Audre desperately craves some type of understanding of her parents and their contextual relationships with the world. Her prideful, authoritarian mother maintains a distinct distance from herself and her children. She also carries some cultural superiority: several times there is concern about Audre calling her "Mommy" on the street in front of strangers. Audre recalls that "only 'other people' used margarine, those same 'other people' who fed their children peanut butter sandwiches for lunch, used sandwich spread instead of mayonnaise and ate pork chops and watermelon" as opposed to cultural dishes (Lorde, *Zami* 20). These experiences leaves Audre with a sense that she is to maintain appearances for a hostile outside world.

Race

One significant event Audre recalls happening during the family's trip to Washington D.C., one that their oldest daughter Phyllis could not go on with the rest of her class because they were staying in hotels that would not admit Black patrons. The family pack

up a basket of food and go on their own. Audre's mother intimates it is because food is outrageously expensive on passenger trains, but Audre realizes that it's unlikely they would have been served at all. The family experiences a similar issue in an ice cream parlor in D.C. At the counter, the server will take their order to go, but they cannot eat at the counter. Audre is horrified. One lasting memory remains, the metaphorical and literal blinding whiteness of the sidewalks, monuments, and sunlight of the nation's capital leaves Audre with a terrible headache and a sense that their visit was not worth the trip. And yet, the journey leaves Audre with a better understanding of race relations outside of the careful control of her family and the public school system, which sustains her for quite some time.

Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

Unlike other lesbian novels, *Zami* does not dwell on gender dysphoria or over much about female socialization. Most of the characters are female, and men rarely have any dialog. Audre is a woman-oriented woman. Instead, what we can draw from this is a universality of the female experience, sexualized at a young age by predators, judged harshly by women and the authorities for living alone, aware of sex in a general way, but not as a source of pleasure. Only the pounding of the spice flares her sexual awareness, thought it sexual pleasure remains largely unknown until she leaves home for Stamford and meets white divorcee Ginger. By this point, she is on her journey of self-discovery. Her roommate, not a lover at all, who works in mass media is forced to leave New York for her job: she is known to be living with a Black lesbian, and it is devastating to her career. Her roommate, perhaps in meaning to be kind to her friend, keeps this information secret as well, thus depriving Audre of additional context about her place in the world. Audre's intersectional label identifies several ways in which women are oppressed by individual and systemic sexism. Audre's Blackness only makes this more obvious and acute.

The Learner

Audre gains knowledge of the body from her mother, her "milky mother smell" (Lorde, *Zami* 33), then later in an incestuous yearning for physical connection with her mother (77). References to Oedipal or misplaced sexual desires aside, what we can see here is a burgeoning awareness of young Audre as a sexual being. "Readers may or may not interpret this passage as Audre's literal desire to have sex with Linda, but it certainly reveals her hunger for Linda's love, which Audre associates with sexual love and her own blossoming womanhood" (Jacobs 112). This awareness comes in starts and stops, slow trickles first and then uncomfortable deluges. She has a brief encounter with another young girl — prepubescent Audre wants a little person her own so badly that she fixates

on discovering whether another young girl is like Audre herself or smooth between her legs like a babydoll (38). Later, she is molested in public by a man who sells comic books (Lorde, *Zami* 49). She is raped by a classmate at 10 or 11, but she has little understanding of menstruation or pregnancy at nearly 15 (75). When Audre is nearly fifteen, she finds herself aroused through the pounding of spices in a heavy mortar and pestle (78-80).

Audre's understanding of race is also disjointed and incomplete. "My teachers were racists; and my friends were that color I was never supposed to trust" (Lorde, *Zami* 81). As a child, she is unclear whether she is "*Colored*" like her father or what race to label her mother, and decides ultimately to "tell them I'm white same as Mommy[,]" much to her sister's consternation (58-59). Her mother is extremely concerned with the appearances of herself and her children in public. "Being Black and foreign and female in New York City in the twenties and thirties was not simple, particularly when she was quite light enough to pass for white, but her children weren't" (17). It is debatable whether Audre gains perspective on ableism or racism first, but she is clear that she is mistreated because of her race in primary school, even as she continues to learn throughout the novel the ways in which system racism and violence will affect her.

It is through these experiences that Audre has gained this perspective. Each of these events, in the sense of the novel as a biomythography, represents a small battle to be won or lost on Audre's journey toward knowing. This isn't to excuse or condone the violence, racism, or homophobia Audre and her peers experience, rather to position Audre as someone whose very identity puts her at risk if not totally under attack. As Audre survives these moments, she internalizes the external and crafts a knowing self.

The Learned

Audre's sexual knowledge comes much slower. Her early rape as a young girl and the sexual assault she experiences are troubling, but largely acontextual for young Audre. Bestowed knowledge, either from her mother or from texts, is also incomplete. Even as she attempts to educate herself by reading a book about anatomy in a public library, which gives her a basic vocabulary and sense of biological processes, to a degree, she still finds herself struggling to contextual sex and her assault. Audre's romantic education is one of the central focuses of the text. Granted, sex and love an inexorably linked to a young, Black lesbian. However, Lorde as the author makes is clear that it is not merely the craving and subsequent attainment of sexual pleasure that constructs knowledge for Audre: if anything, these early sexual encounters leave her confused and traumatized, even a consensual sexual relation that leaves her pregnant and resorting to a $40, illegal, kitchen-table abortion. Rather it Audre's relationships with women that aid Audre in constructing the lesbian layer of her mythological self.

Early in the text, Audre has some awareness of the appeal of women through a series of arguably incestuous thoughts about her mother. Some scholars think that this is true misplaced sexual desire. Others contend that this is a desire for physical affection and acceptance by her austere mother manifested in precocious interest in the soft, yet secret places of her body. Whichever it is, Audre's relationship with women is largely the forefront and focus of Audre's romantic development.

Her first relationship is with the doomed Gennie, who commits suicide after having been assaulted by her own father. Audre expresses her burgeoning romantic interest, though the relationship never becomes sexual. In Stamford, this relationship is with white, divorcee and coworker Muriel, who desires a sexual relationship with Audre, though Audre struggles to act upon it. In a fit of frustration, Muriel asks, "Well, are you or aren't you?" Here Lorde uses this woman to enact, not just a realization, because Audre is aware of her interest, but in speaking it aloud. It is the act itself that is significant. Woman in Mexico, girlfriend in New York. "The most significant of these [lesbian relationships] is the black lesbian Kitty, short for Afrekete. During Zami's climactic love affair, wherein Afrekete awakens Audre's belief in her own womanly power, Lorde roots this power in all women, in the West Indian tradition of her mother, and in motherhood itself" (Lorde, *Zami* 111).

That journey does not require anyone to be a primary resource to another but rather to find her own power, moving forward with the erotic in mind. Thus, although Kitty provides healing for Audre, Audre does not require a long-term commitment to make this healing complete. Indeed, Kitty eventually leaves without any goodbye, and the two never see each other again. Audre's contentment with this signals that she is becoming Afrekete, finding strength within (Jacobs 124-125). In *Zami*, a young Audre discovers and crafts her own narrative. Because Audre struggles to define herself because she lacks some crucial context about who she is but is ultimately successful through both experiencing life and recalling them later as the self-actualized author, Lorde leaves a metatext for the Black, gay, lonely lesbian with few heroes in sight.

The Teacher

In an early reading for radio at Hunter College, Lorde said,

> "We were not the first Black women and white women to try and alter course in some way. We were not the first Black women to get together. We were not the first women to live communally. But we never saw the stories. We never even

> knew the dreams or possibilities. We just never knew them. We had nothing to bounce off of, and that's kinda what I wanted *Zami* to be: Something to bounce off of. It's not a Bible, it's not a how-to book, it's something to bounce off of" (Lorde, "Interview" 33:44).

Through the novel, Lorde identifies multiple cultural epistemes: the hierarchical social structure that prioritizes whiteness, maleness, heterosexism, and conformity over intersectional identities that will never fill these molds. If these are epistemes, truths, or perhaps even Truth, we have to ask, as Lorde asks herself, what can we do with someone the archetypal Black, lesbian woman in this world? Lorde's novel unflinchingly presents the events in her life as a series of trials which Audre must overcome on her way to an enlightened self. These trials represent lessons which Audre in her late adolescence must acknowledge, examine, and fit into a self of sense which is at odds with the epistemes of the mid-20th century world. *Zami* then forces us, her audience, to ask ourselves if these epistemes are Truth or merely convention, something to be overcome to create a new social structure.

We must not let this positioning develop into moral relativism or eventual nihilism. The episteme is temporally situated in historical epochs. They are a way to explain what is true for sweeping points in history, not to convict or excuse doers of bad deeds or thinkers of bad thoughts. Instead, Lorde presents the readers, themselves representatives of the society which determines epochal epistemes, with an opportunity for growth. Lorde, as the author, presents us with the episodic conflicts, and Audre shows us how she navigates them. These moments provide empirical knowledge, lived experience, for Zami's fully-actualized self. The novel is our "something to bounce off of." It tells us that we can experience this novel as something that can change us.

Lorde becomes the reader's teacher, the Black, lesbian mother-figure for other Black lesbians, denied to young Audre by the austere authoritarianism of her mother and missing from Lorde's contemporaries. Zami is their hero. Her role as teacher is open to all who wish to understand more about Lorde and the conditions of the retooling of her name. This text also reflects the heterosexist, racist episteme of the mid-20th century, a legacy with which we continue to struggle more than a half-century later. "To argue that *Zami* can only reflect Lorde's own experience is reductive; however, insisting that she is more than a writer for black lesbians has its own problems. [...] Demanding that Lorde's work can or should speak to a mainstream readership, however, recalls a history of asking black women to improve white feminism and other white discourses through their unique wisdom" (Jacobs 113). It is important that we understand that this text operates as more than queer literature, more than an autobiography, or a novelization of a life of an activist or and English teach or a scholar. It is a collection of experiences which iterate

to the reader an intersectional identity and a cultural bequeathal that informs a cultural present. The text describes the type of knowledge creation that happens observationally, by considering the contextual outside, and creating an enlightened internal self.

Nancy Kang argues that "Audre's daughter: Black lesbian steganography in Dee Rees' *Pariah* is a reimagining of Lorde's *Zami*. She writes:

> "This debut film envisions Zami as an intertextual model, resulting in a kind of cinematic palimpsest, a visual text signifying upon a written precedent. With historically rooted and subtly camouflaged similarities as well as differences, a hidden language of connection—what I term Black lesbian steganography—can be excavated by the reader/viewer. This concept assumes that the mere inclusion of Black lesbian characters in popular media and culture does not adequately acknowledge the complexity of their stories" (267).

Here we are able to see one way that Lorde extra-textual author becomes the teacher for future generations. The film borrows the biomythographic style and characterization to craft another hero-role model for Black, lesbian culture. According to Kang, "Artistic inheritance is a key trope that enables Black lesbians to participate in an ongoing hermeneutic project vital to collective resilience and survival" (290). This creates another opportunity for learning: yes, the experience of watching the film, but also a type of bestowed knowledge. The learned Lorde and director Rees now have knowledge to pass onto the next generation of women who need a mother, sister, or hero to guide them toward a new cultural episteme which will one day include them fully.

Conclusion

Lorde stated the following in her paper "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action" to the 1977 MLA conference: "I am standing here as a Black lesbian poet," she says, in her paper which she delivered at the 1977 MLA conference. (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 40). In 1979 at the Second Sex Conference, she offers: "I stand here as a Black lesbian feminist" in her speech "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (Lorde, *Sister Outsider* 110). "Lorde constantly reminds her audiences that her intersectional identities are just that—intertwined and inextricable. To White lesbian feminists, she says: you cannot only take the "lesbian feminist" of me and leave out the "Black." To Black heterosexual feminists, she says: you cannot only take the "Black feminist" of me and leave out the "lesbian." Lorde's self-identification is insistently holistic. It is also explicit, unafraid to proclaim her allegiances and her location in a racialized and gendered world (Wells 235). Lorde wrote *Zami* to provide that hero, that

jumping off point, but also as an exercise in claiming a woman-oriented self. Her very name labels her friend and lover of women, daughter of immigrants, and experientially educated self.

If, as Foucault discusses, the episteme is the known, factual, the provable for a specific historical era, then *Zami* literature labels that episteme through Lorde's words and the character Audre's experiences. The racism, sexism, violence, and homophobia she experiences speaks to the universality of the Black, lesbian, feminine experience of the early to mid-20th century. She constructs a knowledge of self from ignorant, to learner, to learned, and finally to a teacher of future generations of Black, lesbian women through the experiences she faces. In preserving these experiences, she is able to claim and identity and name it. "Self-identification is also a key step in the dialogue necessary for political and social change" (Well 236). "Audre understands much of her identity in relationship to those women. As she embraces her woman-centered sexuality, the 'legend' of 'how Carriacou women love each other' (14) is pertinent to Audre's growth into a woman. Like her Carriacou ancestors, she embraces a life among 'women who work together as friends and lovers' […]" (Jacobs 117). By leaving a text for future generations, film makers, authors, and other Black, lesbian women which preserves these experiences, we are left with a hero, like the "sister Amazons, the riders on the loneliest outposts of the kingdom of Dahome" (117) which will help us alter the next cultural episteme to something more inclusive of those previous eras have left out.

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