



The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House

Audre Lorde

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From the self-described 'black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet', these soaring, urgent essays on the power of women, poetry and anger are filled with darkness and light.

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The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House Details

Date : Published February 22nd 2018 by Penguin Classics

ISBN : 9780241339725

Author : Audre Lorde

Format : Paperback 64 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Feminism, Writing, Essays, Politics, Classics

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From Reader Review The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House for online ebook

Ylenia says

[3.5 stars]

Finally read some Audre Lorde. Not sure if this is the best way to be introduced to her works, though.

The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House and *Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism* were especially remarkable and a timely read.

Beatrizmallow says

Interesting short collection of essays that makes a very good introduction to the style and ideas of Lorde. I will be searching more of hers.

Dannii Elle says

This slim volume is comprised of a series of essays Lorde wrote concerning topics such as poetry, feminism, and the erotic. These essays offered an often scathing insight into historical society and afforded Lorde's passion on each subject to become easily evident. The "self-described black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet" portrayed a bleak outlook on life and it was shocking to me how much of her writing was still relevant, today.

Whilst passionate and whilst certainly important, I found myself becoming disenchanted with the penmanship, of these essays. The first, concerning poetry, I wrote multiple notes on and really spoke to my soul. The second, concerning eroticism, not so much. Perhaps this a merely a case of personal interest but I found it harder to grasp the central idea each small essay was concerned with, as this anthology progressed. The metaphors bogged down each concept and, whilst still certainly containing important and powerful works I am glad to have read, I have found other feminist essays that have personally triggered my emotions more profoundly.

I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. Thank you to the author, Audre Lorde, and the publisher, Penguin, for this opportunity.

Larissa says

Some short essays were better than others and interested me more, which explains the 4 stars. There were some very interesting ideas in here, especially on intersectionality. I definitely want to try and read more by Audre Lorde, even though I was already struggling with some of these essays.

Zainab says

This small collection of five essays forms a brilliant introduction to Audre Lorde beyond her oft-shared quotes. I found myself nodding fiercely to her passionate voice, recoiling at some of her theories, and mostly, wanting to know more.

Written poetically and anecdotally, Lorde's words ring loud and relevant in 2018, from her bold self-identification as a black, lesbian feminist, to her careful vocabulary, such as her use of "women-identifying" when referring to women. Speaking in 1978, she describes fundamental inclusivity issues in academia and the inability of some white women to adequately face up to these issues – which could have easily been a headline this week.

Lorde's essay on 'Uses of Anger' makes a wonderfully compelling case for channelling and orchestrating fury to progress together, and how, in return, others must constructively listen and learn from this. Her 1982 talk at the Malcolm X Weekend at Harvard – included in this book – shows an honest and new understanding of the man, and attempts to push contemporaries to think beyond "single-issue" struggles and "one-time" revolutions.

In 'Uses of the Erotic' she spends time carefully defining the erotic as depth of feeling and the "lifeforce of women" – explaining how it is "diametrically opposed" to pornography, which suppresses true feeling and focuses on sensation. But she makes some unconvincing remarks in passing, namely, that satisfaction "does not have to be called marriage, nor god, nor an afterlife". It is these under-developed remarks which let down her writing and hint at the need for a more academic base for her ideas.

Despite this, she certainly spoke to some of my sensibilities, and she is so unbelievably relevant for our times, that I greatly look forward to reading more.

Olivia-Savannah Roach says

You can tell from the title this is going to be a good one. It's made up of different essays though, so let me talk about them individually.

Poetry is Not A Luxury – I'd read this one before. I would clarify that it isn't the beginning and end all of all poetry, but it does describe one of the ways in which I perceive poetry. I could totally relate and agree with her! It really moved me to read about why poetry isn't a luxury for some people, and what it could mean to them.

Use of Erotic – A well written embrace of female beauty and self. I've never read such a clear cut distinction between the definitions of erotic and pornographic before.

The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House – This one was about why we need difference feminism and not equality feminism. It also discussed how there can't be racism and homophobia in feminism as it then doesn't include all women. It really begged the question of why some people believe in fighting certain types of oppression and then oppress others. I loved when she talked about how the tools used to given to us by those oppressing help us overcome the issue. It is only serving their superiority complex. We must use our own tools to overcome oppression. And I agreed so much.

Uses of Anger – Can I get an amen to this whole essay? It was about women responding to racism, and how racism is not an issue black people need to solve. It's not their problem. It's a problem to those who enact

and enable it to happen. It really was about how anger can be channelled and used for good as well, which made me think of Children of Blood and Bone.

This review was originally posted on Olivia's Catastrophe: <https://oliviascatastrophe.com/2019/0...>

Marie S. says

Classic case of "It's not you, it's me". I couldn't get into the essays, I felt that there were too many ideas and no clear point so I was lost most of the time.

Sarah says

I can't recommend Audre Lorde strongly enough?

So glad she has been included in this collection because she should be much more well-known than she is

Emma Wallace says

I adore Audre Lorde, and this small collection reminds me why. Although this initially took me a little bit longer to get into, since I have not read theory in well over a year, parts of this came back to me; whilst dense at times and loaded with some heavy, theoretical ideas, Lorde's writing drew me in and I found myself nodding along to so much in this. So much of what Lorde writes remains true to this day and her judgement and criticisms are as sharp and insightful now as they were when they were first enunciated. I particularly love her insight into what it is like as a WOC, a lesbian and a mother and the way that she touches upon and begins to articulate the idea of intersectionality. I could never hope to match Lorde's eloquence when it comes to feminism but I love falling into Lorde's work and finding the words to justify its existence and why it is necessary.

mwpm says

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.

Read the full text here:

https://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Lorde_The_Masters_Tools.pdf

Sebastian Lönnlöf says

Oerhört relevant och tänkvärt än idag, om minoritet/majoritet, likhet och skillnad, motstånd och ihärdighet.

Många borde läsa. (Och av de 50 titlarna i serien "Penguin Modern" så MÅSTE jag läsa minst hälften!)

Kirsty says

This collection of 'soaring, urgent essays on the power of women, poetry and anger' was my first taste of Audre Lorde's writing. The majority of the essays collected here were first given as conference papers between 1978 and 1982. *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House* includes the titular work, as well as 'Poetry is Not a Luxury', 'Uses of the Erotic', 'Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism', and 'Learning From the 1960s'. Throughout, Lorde writes with confidence and intelligence. The 23rd Penguin Modern is an accessible book, which explores feminism and the issues which it poses for minority women, and those whose identify as anything other than heterosexual. Lorde weaves in elements of black history and lesbianism. Each of these essays is thought-provoking, and I would definitely like to read more of her work in the near future.

Emily Gibbons says

There is no such things as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.

If I could quote this whole collection, I would.

This little book contains five essays by Audre Lorde, each tackling a different concern about revolution. The first short, introductory essay is *Poetry is Not a Luxury*. In it, Lorde argues that Poetry, far from being '*sterile word play*', is the '*skeleton architecture of our lives*', an instrumental foundation for a deep understanding of ourselves as women (specifically black women - which I am not, and I know these essays are not wholly meant for me and my experiences), and the foundation for change. This is a very short essay, but it's illuminated further by the second one, *Uses of the Erotic* which may have been my favourite essay in this collection.

In *Uses of the Erotic* Lorde posits that the 'erotic' is the deep understanding and knowledge of all facets of ourselves, our beings, what brings us true joy and satisfaction, and how to live in that wholly in everything we do. This force allows us to stop coasting through life and break away from what is expected of us and what paths society lays out for us. Lorde explores how the 'erotic' has had its meaning changed to something sexual, something of which we should be ashamed, which allows us to be subjugated further as a result of this shame, both as women, and as tools in a capitalist system. *The erotic has often been misnamed by men and used against women. It has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, the plasticized sensation.* Lorde argues that in fact, the erotic is directly the opposite of the pornographic, which is simply sensation with no feeling. This essay is a manifesto on how we should seize the 'erotic' joy in our lives and our actions, and feel these actions '*fully and acutely*', and from that '*sharing of joy*' we can demand that our life brings us joy, as well as build community and bridge our differences on a larger scale. The erotic joy of our lives becomes a revolutionary force.

The last three essays are the most important in the collection, as they deeply investigate racism on every level, and how revolutions can only come about through unity, and a complete dismantling of the powers that be. *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's*

House is another short essay exploring how the capitalist white heteropatriarchy structures and reinforces its power through the academy, only making minor changes and allowances to act 'progressive'.

'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 argues that liberation cannot rise from tolerance, but instead we must accept, understand, and support each others differences to achieve unity, as well as take actual steps to continually educate ourselves about those other groups whom are also oppressed, and also need liberation.

'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... Now we hear that it is the task of women of colour to educate white women...'

Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism is another manifesto on how anger, and the response to anger should both be encouraged, harnessed, and manifested to created change. Lorde interrogates the use of the stereotype of anger to tone police black women, as a tactic so that white people (largely white feminists) can deflect away from any critical understanding of their prejudices.

I speak out of direct and particular anger at an academic conference, and a white woman says, 'Tell me how you feel but don't say it too harshly or I cannot hear you.' But is it my manner that keeps her from hearing, or the threat of a message that her life may change?'

Lorde continues to examine how the refusal to critically question our own beliefs stunts the growth of community and liberation, and how guilt and defensiveness about oppression simply reiteratesit. Lorde also investigates the ways in which black women are disenfranchised and covertly manoeuvred out of academic spaces, or preventing from entering then in the first place, using case studies.

The final essay, *Learning from the 1960s* expands most fully on the theme of communication, unity, discussion, and liberation, by using the black liberation movement in the 60s as a case study. Lorde explores the conflicting views of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr and how focus on arguing with others simply redirects our anger and energy from the true oppressor. She also identifies the constraints of 'Blackness' as a set of prescribed rules, and the conflicts that result from that and serve to estrange people more.

'...any future vision which can encompass all of us, by definition, must be complex and expanding, not easy to achieve. The answer to cold is heat, the answer to hunger is food. But there is no simple monolithic solution to racism, to sexism, to

homophobia.'

Usually in an essay collection the quality varies to a large degree between each essay, but every essay in this collection is brilliant, passionate, and insightful.

As a final note, this is a great book to read in conjunction with James Baldwin's *Dark Days* in this collection, which deals with some similar themes of liberation and guilt in the final essay *The White Man's Guilt* .

Christina says

When we view living in the european mode only a problem to be solved, we rely solely upon our ideas to make us free, for these were what the white fathers told us were precious.... [instead] we learn more and more to cherish our feelings, and to respect those hidden sources of our power from where true knowledge and, therefore, lasting action comes.

This connects to the idea propagated by sociologists on modernity that explain our need to rationalize our lives in a mode of linear, organized progression. Our understandings of our lives are linear in nature, as we explain our own life events in succession of one another, attached to each other by some sense of meaning we assign. If something doesn't make sense within our lives, we claim it to have meaning by allowing us "to grow and learn." When in reality, it is all random and has no destined line of progression. We get to decide how we make sense of our completely random, messed up days and sometimes this activity leaves us in confusion when we can't make sense of it. Thus, it might be more useful to partake in a alternative form of interpretation, as Lorde proposes.

For there are no new ideas. There are only new ways of making them felt - of examining what those ideas feel like being lived on Sunday morning at 7 am, after brunch, during wild love, making war, giving birth, mourning our dead - while we suffer the old longings, battle the old warnings and fears of being silent and important and alone, while we taste new possibilities and strengths.

Lorde's analysis is based heavily in feelings and emotions, which at times is beyond me given my lack of poetical feelings. This quote though is beautiful, as it captures the fact that all of us in our lives go through mutual events and experiences. But the way we feel these situations is limitless, and it's a comfort to think that we can be in the same situations many times over and get varied feelings each time.

The principal horror of any system which defines the good in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need, or which defines human need to the excursion of the psychic and emotional components of that need - the principal horror of such a system is that it robs our work of its erotic value, its erotic power and life appeal and fulfillment.

For once we begin to feel deeply all the aspects of our lives, we begin to demand from ourselves and from our life-pursuits that they feel in accordance with that joy which we know ourselves to be capable of.

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. If white american feminist theory need not deal with the fact that the women who clean your houses and tend your children while you attend conferences on feminist theory are, for the most part, poor women and women of color? What is the theory

behind racist feminism?

THIS!!! Coming into feminist theory and activism, I had a white-centric view of the situation. So much of feminism is targeted around issues that privileged, white women experience. Only, from an objective standard they aren't the ones facing the real hurdles that a gendered society implicates. Seriously, white women (including myself) need to get off the pedestal at times and give the microphone to those that our society has cast off.

There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives. Malcolm knew this.

To refuse to participate in the shaping of our future if to give it up. Do not be misled into passivity either by false security (they don't mean me) or by despair (there's nothing we can do). Each of us must find our work and do it. Militancy no longer means guns at high noon, if it ever did. It means actively working for change, seethes in the absence of any surety that change is coming. It means doing the unromantic and tedious work necessary to forge meaningful coalitions, and it means recognizing which coalitions are possible and which coalitions are not. It means knowing that coalition, like unity, means the coming together of whole, self-actualized human beings, focused and believing, not fragmented automatons matching to a prescribed step. It means fighting despair.

As soon as I read this quote, it seemed like Lorde phrased my thoughts that I have had since childhood. I have always conceived my own life, as taking up the air of this statement. For the longest time, I have feared leaving this world without helping a single soul and vanishing into an oblivion that isn't marked by the attempt to elevate others. In the large-scale view, I want to impact others and fight the injustices within my own career. But I also know that I must not limit this line of thought just to the job description I will have in the future. Instead, my everyday interactions with people can have an affect on how others are doing and I must work to ensure that my interactions are leaving people better off.

This reminds me of the quote from Fitzgerald that says, "she was beautiful, for her ability to make other people smile even if she was sad. No she wasn't beautiful for something as temporary as her looks. She was beautiful, deep down in her soul." These words are probably one of the best things I would hear from anyone, and is exactly how I would want to be perceived.

And we must fight that inserted piece of self-destruction that lives and flourishes like a poison inside of us, unexamined until it makes us turn upon ourselves in each other. But we can put our finger down upon that loathing buried deep within each one of us and see who it encourages us to despise, and we can lessen its potency by the knowledge of our real connectedness, arcing across our differences.

Lauren (Cook's Books) says

This little book has the most sticky tabs and notes in it of any book I've ever read. I've been wanting to read about intersectionality for ages and this is what I've been looking for. I'd only heard of Lorde as a poet, so I'm really glad I stumbled into this essay collection.

it discusses the need for unity and respect of intersectionality as inclusive, not exclusive, ideals through which which skills and varied experience can be pooled to act upon. She forwards the necessity of confronting your own ignorance and educating yourself to compensate for it, rather than demanding those voices take time out of their own activism to babysit and spoon feed you knowledge. It's not their

responsibility, it's yours. This idea of inclusivity is also explored by dispelling the need for united groups to be homogeneous at the risk of damaging infighting. A really fantastic read if you're wanting to learn about someone else's experience of feminism, race or sexuality, although I do wish it could have considered gender as one of the systems of oppression it was arguing against.
