

## Introduction

More than twenty-five years ago, on November 17, 1992, the internationally acclaimed writer, poet and activist Audre Lorde died from cancer in her home in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, at the age of 58. Only a few weeks before she had said farewell to her friends in Berlin, Germany, many of whom she had inspired in so many ways. For the Black German women's movement which she had initiated in the early 1980s, her death meant a great loss. But a quarter of a century later, her wisdom and her words are still here, and her influence and her legacy have been documented in books, essays and films which have been published in recent years in the U.S., in different European countries and in Germany, too. Over the years, my German and English publications have included interviews with Audre Lorde, essays on her books and translations of selected poetry into German. Having shared many years of friendship with her, I feel committed to honor her with this selection of essays. Five of these texts are based on so far unpublished manuscripts, and the others were written and published between 1995 and 2015. The interview in this volume has meanwhile become a classic and has been reprinted in English and in German several times. It was conducted in Berlin in the spring of 1986 and marked the beginning of a lasting friendship in sisterhood.

This collection opens with an essay on difference and sameness. It was first published in *The Wind Is Spirit*, written and edited by Gloria I. Joseph in 2015. "re-reading *Sister Outsider*" is a new essay which examines the present validity of Audre Lorde's philosophy in her groundbreaking collection of essays. It was first published in 1984 and has continued to be a source of inspiration and empowerment for many people around the world. "Between Aversion, Alibi and Acknowledgement: White Feminism and Black Women's Literature in Germany" is the transcript of a paper I presented at the Third International Feminist Book Fair in Montreal in 1988. It was very much inspired by Audre Lorde with whom I attended this event. The speech was later published in *Trivia – A Journal of Ideas*. The analysis of *Zami – A New Spelling of My Name* was first published in my dissertation *The African Continuum* in 1995. Re-reading *Zami* after more than twenty years, I was once more

captured by its brilliant composition, its poetic language and its political and historical importance. My analysis of this book also mirrors the insights of important Black woman critics of the time and reflects the Black feminist discourse of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the new essay, “A Source of Power: Transcultural Translations,” I deal with the difficulty of transcultural translation and the importance of popularizing Audre’s work this way in Germany. “Re-defining the Dream of Europe” addresses the issue of translation, too. At the same time, it documents Eurocentric notions and Audre’s visions of change, of the overcoming of boundaries and the building of coalitions. “Building Cross-Cultural Bridges: Audre Lorde’s Liaisons with Black Germany” was published in the collection *Continental Shifts, Shifts in Perception*, edited by Sharmilla Beezmohun in 2016. In a discussion of Dagmar Schultz’s documentary *Audre Lorde – The Berlin Years 1984-1992* it underscores Lorde’s importance for the Black German movement. “Bonds of Sisterhood/Breaking of Silences” was first published in *Audre Lorde’s Transnational Legacies*, edited by Stella Bolaki and Sabine Broeck. It is a memory of different encounters with Audre Lorde and of many moments of inspiration. The interview which follows, “The Creative Use of Difference,” was held with Audre during our first encounter in 1986. It sums up Audre’s philosophy on poetry, teaching, difference, the emotional and the rational, and the empowering impact of ancient African spirituality. For me, it has always been a lasting source of inspiration. “Audre Lorde: Making Her Meaning Known” is my contribution to the “Celebration of Life” memorial service held in Berlin, *Haus der Kulturen der Welt*, on February 6, 1993. For those less familiar with the life, work and legacy of Audre Lorde or with her great influence on the Black German movement it may be used as a starting point or basis for further studies. “Audre Lorde’s Living Legacy in Germany” is the shortened and slightly altered version of an essay first published on the website *the feminist wire* in February 2014, on which an international community of feminist writers, scholars and activists honored Lorde and celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. “*The Wind Is Spirit: A Review Essay*” discusses a bio/anthology published in 2016. This brilliant book, written and edited by Gloria I. Joseph, Audre’s partner during her final years, provides a holistic portrait of her life, work and legacy. It includes diverse voices of people from around the world who have been inspired and empowered by this great writer. While writing

the review essay in this collection, I was moved and empowered by the various reminiscences of so many activists, writers and scholars, many of whom I have had the privilege to know personally and who continue to keep the flame of Audre Lorde's wisdom alive.

This collection allows for some overlapping aspects in the different texts. However, I have made only a few abridgements since the different essays demonstrate how valid Audre's philosophy and influence have remained over the years. The closing essay in this book deals with my memories which re-surfaced while re-reading private letters from Audre, in which she reflects on personal aspects, international (Black) women's conferences, teaching Black women's literature, the women's movements, Europe and Germany, her struggle against cancer and her visions for the future. These letters will be later donated to the Audre Lorde Archive at the Free University of Berlin as a contribution to sources for further research work. They are related to the other essays in this volume and are an example of bonding beyond borders by women of the African diaspora.

Marion Kraft, Bielefeld, Germany