

FROM THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *The Church and the
Second Sex, Quintessence* AND *Beyond God the Father*

AMAZON GRACE

RE-CALLING THE COURAGE TO SIN BIG



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Through this experience—involving many events and much sorting out of temporarily lost memories and insights—often by reversing reversals—we Find ourSelves in an Other and Wilder World, which is the World of the Archaic Future. We become Luckier, better connected, so to speak, and more aware of *Syn-Crone-icities*.¹² Entering this New Time/Space, Be-Witching Hags/Harpies Happen upon Lost and Found Continent.

The expression “Lost and Found” implies that some loss/ losses precede the Finding. Women under patriarchy have always suffered losses, of course, and Wicked Women have always been finding and re-finding hidden treasures. It appears, however, that the early twenty-first century is a time of heightened experiences of Losing and Finding.

AN ALARMING EXAMPLE OF THE HEIGHTENED EXPERIENCE OF LOSING AND FINDING

In my book *Outercourse: The Be-Dazzling Voyage* I discussed my experiences of the publication of *Gyn/Ecology* (1979):

I [wrote and] have always seen *Gyn/Ecology* as part of a Movement, including my own *Voyage*, which has continued since that writing and continues, because I am not a noun but a verb. When I set it free so it could *be* in the world, I did not see it as a work of perfection. For some women it could be an Awakening shock, for others a Source of information, or a springboard from which they might Leap into their own A-mazing Searches, Words, Metaphors.

Above all, I was acutely aware that I had not done or written everything. I had not written the Last Word. (Otherwise, how could I ever write again?) Rather, I had set free this book, this Thunderbird, in the hope that its Call would be Heard. I hoped that it would soar together with the works of Other women, which were coming and would come from different Realms of the Background. I looked forward to the profusion of New Creation, which

I believed could emerge from women of all races, cultures, classes—from all over this planet—speaking/Be-Speaking out of our various and vital heritages.

From my Fourth Galactic perspective I see that this has happened and is happening, because our Time has come. Particularly Moving to me, personally, is the work of women of Ireland, that Treasure Island which I recognize deeply as the wellspring of my Background, my ancestral home. Especially Gynergizing on a global scale is the New abundance of creation from women of color.

Explosions of Diversity do not happen without conflict, however. One of the responses to *Gyn/Ecology* was a personal letter from Audre Lorde, which was sent to me in May 1979. For deep and complex personal reasons I was unable to respond to this lengthy letter immediately. However, when Lorde came to Boston to give a poetry reading that summer, I made a special effort to attend it, and spoke with her briefly. I told her that I would like to discuss her letter in person so that we would have an adequate opportunity to understand each other in dialogue, and I suggested places where we might meet for such a discussion. Our meeting did in fact take place at the Simone de Beauvoir Conference in New York on September 29, 1979. In the course of that hour-or-so-long meeting we discussed my book and her response. I explained my positions clearly, or so I thought. I pointed out, for example, in answer to Audre Lorde's objection that I failed to name Black Goddesses, that *Gyn/Ecology* is not a compendium of goddesses. Rather, it focuses primarily on those goddess myths and symbols which were direct sources of christian myth. Apparently Lorde was not satisfied, although she did not indicate this at the time. She later published and republished slightly altered versions of her originally personal letter to me in anthologies as an “Open Letter.”

It continues to be my judgment that public response in kind would not be a fruitful direction. In my view, *Gyn/Ecology* is itself an “Open Book.” . . . The writing of *Gyn/Ecology* was for me an act of Biophilic Bonding with women of all races and classes, under all the varying oppressions of patriarchy. Clearly, women who have a sincere interest in understanding and discussing this book have an obligation to read not only the statements of critics but also the book itself, and to *think* about it. . . .

LETTERS: THE SURGE OF BIOPHILIC BONDING

Throughout the horrors of the academented witchcraze the letters responding to *Gyn/Ecology* came to me. They came to me like healing balm. Reading many of them was and continues to be like sampling an almost infinite variety of exquisite wines. They renewed/Re-New my Spirit.

The letters conveyed many complex things. Simply stated, they poured out love and gratitude and they told me that the long struggle had not been in vain. They gave me something back—renewed Hope, Courage, and Strength. They surged up from the Subliminal Sea, with messages of Biophilic Bonding.¹³

Profoundly differing in tone and intent from these letters is Audre Lorde's piece ("Open Letter") which, as I wrote in *Outer-course*, has continued to be assigned

as required reading by not a few professors in academentia to students in classes where *Gyn/Ecology* itself has not been assigned, or a mere handful of pages of this book have been required reading. This kind of selectivity is irresponsible. It imposes a condition of self-righteous ignorance upon students, often within the setting of "Women's Studies." This is, in my view, a worst case scenario of pseudoscholarship. It is, even if "well-intentioned," divisive, destructive. It functions, at least subliminally, as a self-protective statement about the purity and political correctness of the professor. It can be analyzed in further detail as a manifestation of the seven-point Sado-Ritual Syndrome, as described in *Gyn/Ecology* (pp. 130–33).¹⁴

My Lost and Found Letter to Audre Lorde

On September 22, 1979, I wrote to Audre Lorde responding to her letter of May 6, 1979, to me. She denied ever receiving this, insisting throughout the years, as she altered and republished her original letter to me, that I had never responded to her initial correspondence. Nearly a quarter of a century later, my "lost letter to Audre Lorde," with my last name written in Lorde's handwriting in the left bottom corner, was found amid her personal papers posthumously by her biographer, Alexis De Veaux,

and documented in De Veaux's *Warrior Poet: A Biography of Audre Lorde*.¹⁵

The text of my letter is as follows:

September 22, 1979

Dear Audre,

First I want to thank you for sending me *The Black Unicorn*. I have read all of the poems, some of them several times. Many of them moved me very deeply—others seemed farther from my own experience. You have helped me to be aware of different dimensions of existence, and I thank you for this.

My long delay in responding to your letter by no means indicates that I have not been thinking about it—quite the contrary. I did think that by putting it aside for awhile I would get a better perspective than at first reaction. I wrote you a note to that effect which didn't get mailed since I didn't have your address. Then there was a hope of trying to get to Vermont in August, but the summer was overwhelmingly eventful.

Clearly there is no simple response possible to the matters you raise in your letter. I wrote *Gyn/Ecology* out of the insights and materials most accessible to me at the time. When I dealt with myth I used commonly available sources to find what were the controlling symbols behind judeo-christian myth in order to trace a direct line to the myths which legitimate the technological horror show. But of course to point out this restriction in the first passage is not really to answer your letter. You have made your point very strongly and you most definitely do have a point. I could speculate on how *Gyn/Ecology* would have been affected had we corresponded about this before the manuscript went to press, but it doesn't seem creativity-conducive to look backward. There is only *now* and the hope of breaking the barriers between us—of constantly expanding the vision.

I wonder if you will have any time available when I come to New York for the Simone de Beauvoir conference? Since I have a lot to do here, I had thought of just flying down Friday morning and returning that night. Are you free Friday afternoon or evening? Or will you be in Boston any time soon? I called and left a message on your machine. My number is. . . . Hope to see you and talk with you soon.

[Handwritten:] I hope you are feeling well, Audre. May the strength of all the Goddesses be with you—Mary

I wrote this letter with the intention of communicating from one Feminist to another, without thinking about publishing it or preserving it for archives. So I did not focus on making a copy or saving it to prove its existence. In 1979, I saw no need to make a carbon copy or go out to a copy shop before mailing my letter to Audre Lorde.

Imagine my surprise nearly a quarter of a century later, when, on June 9, 2003, I was contacted by Alexis De Veaux, who was asking my permission to quote from my unacknowledged and apparently “lost” letter of September 22, 1979. It was astonishing after all these years to see someone—in fact, Audre Lorde’s own biographer—say that she had seen my letter among Lorde’s personal papers. It was gratifying to read that De Veaux felt it was essential to publish my letter to Lorde in order to do justice to the historical record—especially in light of the widespread public accusations and attacks resulting from Lorde’s “Open Letter.” De Veaux was also determined to correct the prevailing belief that I had not answered Lorde’s letter and to honor the truth of my reply.¹⁶

REALIZING OUR CONNECTEDNESS AND POWERS OF CREATION

Some Trivial Women, shocked by the intensity of Lost and Found experiences, proclaim that this must be the Time of Times for manifestations of Trans-spatial/Transtemporal and Intergalactic consciousness. We Sense that we are not alone in the universe. So we are not hopelessly lost. If we are Desperate and Daring we can continue to follow the Call of the Wild.

Such proclamations are most likely followed in the minds of many readers by thoughts introduced by the word “But. . . .”

There are innumerable obstacles that women contemplate when preparing to make the Quantum Leaps required to bond in Sisterhood, save Life on earth, and have fun as well. The many blocks, mostly arising from the state of oppression, include depression, anxiety, loneliness, sickness, isolation, exhaustion, poverty, and the psychic/spiritual sabotage that accompanies and is engendered by all of these conditions. The blocks are expressed in “Buts,” e.g., “But I am depressed, lonely, tired, afraid” et cetera, ad nauseam. Such blocks, real and imagined, are the sources of the “Buts,” which in turn engender more blocks. Readers are invited to add their own lists of blocks and “Buts,” thereby clearing the air.

Silly Women focusing on our Final Cause increasingly Realize our connectedness in Be-ing. We do not feel alone because we can Sense the benevolent Presences nearby. We can Leap with confidence, relaxing in the knowledge that we participate in a web of relationships within a unified whole.

This shift in emphasis from the parts to the whole has been exhibited in quantum physics since the 1920s. In the words of Werner Heisenberg, one of the originators of quantum physics, the world “appears as a complicated tissue of events, in which connections of different kinds alternate or overlap or combine and thereby determine the texture of the whole.”¹⁷ Fritjof Capra makes the point that quantum theory never ends up with “things.” It always deals with interconnections.¹⁸

This conceptual shift from the parts to the whole pervaded other fields in the twentieth century as well. In the first half of that century the ideas of organismic biologists helped to give rise to “systems thinking.” Capra explains:

According to this view, the essential properties of an organism, or living system, are properties of the whole, which none of the parts have. They arise from the interactions and relationships among the parts.¹⁹

In recent decades biologists have been forced to acknowledge the importance of cooperation in the evolutionary process. This