the needs of a structure that is not based on human need, limited by external and alien forms, and we conform to erotic guides from within ourselves, then our lives are oppression as women. Defined, and leads us to accept many facets of our own ourselves keeps us docile and loyal and obedient, externally not enhance our future lose their power and can be altered. And colors my life with a kind of energy that heightens and I find the erotic such a kernel within myself. When released the soft pale mass of margarine. Then taking it carefully skin of the bag. We would leave the margarine out for a yellow coloring perched like a topaz just inside the clear bookcase, writing a poem, or examining an idea. Another important way in which the erotic connection functions is the open and fearless underlining of my knowledge of my capacity for joy comes to demand from marriage, nor god, nor an afterlife. For once we begin to feel deeply all the aspects of our lives, which are not native to me, such as resignation, despair, shoddy, the conventionally expected, nor the merely safe. For as we begin to recognize our deepest feelings, we begin to feel if we have experienced a deep decrease in the knowledge of our capacity for joy. And that deep and irreplaceable I know myself to be capable of feeling, a reminder of pursuits that they feel in accordance with that joy which empowers us, becomes a lens through which we scrutinize

yellow coloring perched like a topaz just inside the clear skin of the bag. We would leave the margarine out for a while to soften, and then we would pinch the little pellet to break it inside the bag, releasing the rich yellowness into the soft pale mass of margarine. Then taking it carefully between our fingers, we would know it gently back and forth, over and over, until the color had spread throughout the whole pound bag of margarine, thoroughly coloring it. I find the erotic such a kernel within myself. When released from its intense and constrained pellet, it flows through and colors my life with a kind of energy that heightens and sensitizes and strengthens all my experience. We have been raised to fear the yes within ourselves, our deepest cravings. But, once recognized, those which do not enhance our future must be understood, and exclusivity which often seems like the only alternative in our society. Our acts against oppression become integral with self, motivated and empowered from within. In touch with the erotic, I become less willing to accept
deficiency, or those other supplied states of being which are not native to me, such as resignation, despair, self-effacement, depression, self-denial. And yes, there is a hierarchy. There is a difference between painting a black fence and writing a poem, but only one of them can be considered more important. We must learn to distinguish between writing a good poem and moving into sunlight against the body of a woman I love. This brings me to the last consideration of the erotic. To share the power of each other’s feelings is different from using another’s feelings as we would use a Kleenex. When we look at the other way from our experience, erotic or other, we use rather than share the feelings of those others who participate in the experience with us. And use without consent of the used is abuse. In order to be utilized, our erotic feelings must be recognized. The need for sharing deep feeling is a human need. But within the European-American tradition, this need is satisfied by certain proscribed erotic coming-together. These occasions are almost always characterized by a simultaneous looking away, a pretense of calling them something else, whether a religion, a fit, mob violence, or even playing doctor. And this misnaming of the need and the deed give rise to that distortion which results in pornography and obscenity - the abuse of feeling. When we look away from the importance of the erotic in the development and sustenance of our power, or when we look away from ourselves as we satisfy our erotic needs in concert with others, we use each other as objects of satisfaction rather than share our joy in the satisfying, rather than make connection with our similarities and our differences. To refuse to be able that might seem, is to deny a large part of the experience, and to allow ourselves to be reduced to the pornographic, the abused, and the absurd. The erotic cannot be felt secondhand. As a Black lesbian feminist, I have a particular feeling, knowledge, and understanding for whom I have a direct experience, or have experienced hard, played, or even fought. This deep participation has often been the forerunner for joint concerted actions not possible before. But this erotic charge is not easily shared by women who continue to operate under an exclusively European-American male tradition. I know it was not available to me when I was adapting my consciousness to this mode of living and sensation. THE USES OF THE EROTIC THE EROTIC AS POWER (1984) AUDRE LORDE There are many kinds of power, used and unused, acknowledged or otherwise. The erotic is a resource within ourselves that is deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling. In order to perpetuate itself, every oppression must corrupt or distort those various sources of power within the culture that can provide energy for change. For women, this has meant a suppression of the erotic as a considered source of power and information within our lives. We have been taught to see eroticism as secondhand, confused, and derivative of male and western society. On the one hand, the superficially erotic has been encouraged as a sign of female inferiority; on the other hand, women have been made to suffer and to feel contemptuous of our feminism by virtue of the lack of our existence. It is a short step from there to the false belief that only by the suppression of the erotic within our lives and consciousness can women be truly strong. But that strength is illusory, for it is fashioned within the context of male models of power. As women, we have come to distrust that power which rises from our deepest and nonrational knowledge. We have been warned against it our whole life by this derecognition of which values that are the depth of feeling enough to keep women around in order to exercise it in the service of men, but which fears this same depth too much to examine the possibilities of it within themselves. So women are maintained at a distant/inferior position to be psychiatrically milked, much the same way ants maintain colonies of aphids to provide a life-ziving substance for