

# Our Dead Behind Us

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In this collection, Audre Lorde gives us poems that explore "differences as creative tensions, and the melding of past strength / pain with future hope / fear; the present being the vital catalyst, the motivating force-activism."

As Marilyn Hacker has written, "Black, lesbian, mother, cancer survivor, urban woman: none of Lorde's selves has ever silenced the others; the counterpoint among them is often the material of her strongest poems."

In this collection, Audre Lorde gives us poems that explore 'differences as creative tensions, and the melding of past strength/pain with future hope/ fear; the present being the vital catalyst, the motivating force--activism.' Audre Lorde (1934-1992) published nine volumes of poetry and five works of prose. She was a recipient of many distinguished honors and awards, including honorary doctorates from Hunter, Oberlin, and Haverford Colleges, and was named New York State Poet (1991-1993).

#### Other Books

Lives of the Dead Poets. Any reader engaging the work of Keats, Shelley, or Coleridge must confront the role biography has played in the canonization of each. Each archive is saturated with stories of the life prematurely cut off or, in Coleridge's case, of promise wasted in indolence. One confronts reminiscences of contemporaries who describe subjects singularly unsuited to this world, as well as still stranger materials--death masks, bits of bone, locks of hair, a heart--initially preserved by circles and then circulating more widely, often in tandem with bits of the literary corpus. Especially when it centers on the early deaths of Keats and Shelley, biographical interest tends to be dismissed as a largely Victorian and sentimental phenomenon that we should by now have put behind us. And yet a line of verse by these poets can still trigger associations with biographical detail in ways that spark pathos or produce intimations of prolepsis or fatality, even for readers suspicious of such effects. Biographical fascination--the untoward and involuntary clinging of attention to the biographical subject--is thus "posthumous" in Keats's evocative sense of the term, its life equivocally sustained beyond its period. Lives of the Dead Poets takes seriously the biographical fascination that has dogged the prematurely arrested figures of three romantic poets. Arising in tandem with a sense of the threatened end of poetry's allotted period, biographical fascination personalizes the precariousness of poetry, binding poetry, the poet-function, and readers to an irrecoverable singularity. Reading romantic poets together with the modernity of Benjamin and Baudelaire, Swann shows how poets' afterlives offer an opening for poetry's survival, from its first nineteenth-century death sentences into our present.

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