Father Son and Holy Ghost

By Audre Lorde

I have not ever seen my father’s grave.

Not that his judgment eyes
have been forgotten
nor his great hands’ print
on our evening doorknobs
— one half turn each night
and he would come
drabbled with the world’s business
massive and silent
as the whole day’s wish
ready to redefine
each of our shapes
but now the evening doorknobs
wait and do not recognize us
as we pass.

Each week a different woman
regular as his one quick glass
each evening
pulls up the grass his stillness grows
calling it weed.
Each week a different woman
has my mother’s face
and he
who time has changeless
must be amazed
who knew and loved
but one.

My father died in silence
loving creation
and well-defined response
he lived still judgments
on familiar things
and died knowing
a January 15th that year me.

Lest I go into dust
I have not ever seen my father’s grave.

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The impassioned poetry of Audre Lorde grew out of her keen sense of injustice—racial as well as gender—and a strong desire to break through silence and politeness to unafraid illumination. Born in New York City to West Indian parents, she turned in her later work to African sources, emphasizing its oral roots and finding a model in the matriarchies of that continent for her emergent lesbian and communal consciousness.

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