

## On meeting Audre for the first time

*Susan Hawthorne*

### **Première rencontre avec Audre Lorde**

*Tu es sortie des douanes habillée en jaune vif, ton unique sein mis en relief par ton pull serré. Tu as la réputation de confondre toutes les attentes, toi avec ton grand-père marin écossais. Amazonienne aussi ma dernière image de toi, maigre comme une Africaine affamée, souriante comme si tu te fichais du monde avec tant de vitalité que je te croyais victorieuse de ta sœur, la mort.*

You walked out of customs  
in glaring yellow, your

one breast outlined by  
your tight jumper.

We talked over coffee and  
afternoon tea, and found

a common point: we  
both had Scottish sea-

faring grandfathers.  
This is not what I

had expected. But then you  
had a reputation for

throwing expectations  
into confusion. And you

had your arrogances,  
your misjudgements

and an unacknowledged  
imperialism. In spite

of this I have admired your  
tenacious vitality.

The last image I have of  
you is also Amazonian.

Photographs in which you  
are as thin as a starving

African, your face sharp  
with pain, your head bare.

And yet, in the midst of that  
a cheeky defiant smile,

a vitality so strong I wondered  
if you might vanquish sister death.