

*Content note: Discussion of deconstructing relationship to Christianity*

## **The Man in the Moon: My Journey of Healing Through New Kinship**

I grew up in a family that fits close to the definition of the nuclear family. My mom and dad got married before having my two sisters and I, and we were raised attending Christian churches. Kim Tallbear describes her Indigenous family system in the piece “Making Love and Relations Beyond Settler Sex and Family” as large gatherings with grandmothers, uncles, children, and everyone in large family circles as one unit, which sounds beautiful (Tallbear, 149). It is the exact opposite of my settler family. It has always been the five of us, as I have never had a close relationship or kinship with any of our extended family.

I believe this separation in my family is one of the reasons I loved attending church as a child. Church was a place of community, familiar faces, and relationships with Christians that I looked up to. Even though I could feel how superficial these Sunday interactions were as a child, grappling with why I could not connect with God at a young age and pretending I could feel his presence to fit in, it all still felt meaningful. As I grew up, I began to notice the intentions of the church and saw the prejudices the congregation was willing to uphold for the Lord. I realized I no longer fit in. Losing one’s religion is an extremely strange and difficult process, especially in Christianity where I lived my life trying to stay in God’s good light. Realizing that this figure I had been taught to idolize no longer meant anything to me left an empty space in my heart.

High school is when I first began talking to the moon, I mean really talking to it. Late nights when I would be driving home from work in the dark, stressed from school and life, I would pull over on the empty country roads near my house, get out under the stars and speak to the sky. Our conversations are usually quite simple, I typically give little updates on how things are going, and I say my gratitude. Sometimes I don’t speak at all, just spend time being conscious in the moon’s dull light.

I have never been interested in astronomy or astrology, I don’t complicate the moon in those ways. There is just a feeling I have toward the moon that is one of comfort and quiet guidance. No matter what is happening in life, I know that most nights I can have a quick look, a simple nod, or have a short chat with the moon.

Perhaps my religious background and the routine of praying is what guided me to begin looking up for something to speak with. The physical sign of seeing the moon each night, whether it is listening or not, creates a comfort of dependability that I think I always sought when I was younger. My love for the moon could also be because of *The Little Grey Rabbit*, a children’s show I adored when I was little. The show had a character called the Man in the Moon that

watched over the animals. I think I have always looked up to the Man in the Moon in some ways. I even have a tattoo of him.

I have been nurturing my relationship with the moon for years now, yet it is difficult for me to describe it to someone. I really appreciate the quote from Audre Lorde “[b]eyond the superficial, the considered phrase, ‘It feels right to me,’ acknowledges the strength of the erotic into a true knowledge” (Lorde, 89). This beautifully encapsulates my kinship with the moon, as it does not have to make sense to those around me.

I have come to understand the erotic from Lorde’s work. Like many others, I first thought of the erotic as different forms of intimacy. I now know the erotic as a deep source of self-trust and knowledge; as a source of power that one must learn to listen to in a colonial world that has taught us not to. A purposeful move away from expectations of what “normal” relations, sex, and understanding are, and filling it instead with what feels right to each of us as individuals (Lorde, 88). Through my own erotic understanding, I can see the power the moon holds for me and know I have a valid, innate attachment to such a huge star in the sky.

Kim Tallbear focuses on the reclaiming of Indigenous practices that colonization attempted to strip from peoples such as their community-based family groups, and spiritual relationships through different forms of kinship. Kinship in a Western perspective typically only refers to family of blood relation. Tallbear writes “by focusing on actual states of relation—on being in good relation with, making kin—and with less monitoring and regulation of categories, might that spur more interactions” (Tallbear, 161). This sentiment is meaningful for any relationship, but also notably for mine with the moon. It is a kinship that is unique and does not fit a social norm, and that is fine because I know my interactions and relation to this entity are strong and significant.

What I have learned about erotics from Lorde and kinship from Tallbear is that the terms can be completely individual and independent of anyone else's definition. Erotics and kinship are places to find power and intention, and that is what the moon helps me do.

## References

Audre Lorde (1984), "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" *Sister Outsider*. Freedom, CA: Crossing Press. 87-91.

Kim Tallbear (2018). "Making Love and Relations Beyond Settler Sex and Family" *Making Kin Not Population*. Eds Adele E Clarke and Donna Haraway. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press. 145-209.