

AMAZON POETRY

an anthology
edited by
Joan Larkin & Elly Bulkin



We dedicate this book to women of every race,
of every class,
of every age;

We dedicate it to the 300 women from nearly forty states and four
countries who sent us their poetry;
to those who didn't sign their poems or asked us to
publish them anonymously;
to those who have long been out as lesbians and as
lesbian writers;
to those who found in this book the right place to come
out publicly.

We dedicate it to the women who felt too frightened to send us their
poetry;
to the silent women who have not yet begun to write;
to all of the women who find something of themselves
in it.

We dedicate it to the women we love who make possible our lives and
our words;
to our daughters—and to other women's daughters and
sons—that they may grow up to understand.

PREFATORY NOTE

The appearance of this book raises the question—what is a “lesbian poetry anthology”? Some expect only love poetry; others, a collection of poems specifically about our oppression as lesbians. Instead, we have put together a book of poems that show the scope and intensity of lesbian experience. They were all written by women who define themselves as lesbians. And who have chosen, by publishing their poetry here, to affirm publicly that identity.

With us, they—and their poems—belie a simple sexual definition of lesbianism. Our lives have many sides. The poetry expresses them—growing up, sisterhood, sexuality, family, motherhood, work, dying, Myth, Racism, Old age, war, ritual. For us, this range says something essential about the nature, the complexity, the full humanity of our lives.

The poetry also reflects our belief that, while we suffer special oppression as woman-identified women within a patriarchal society, our oppression does not stop there. Our lives are further circumscribed when we do not meet other standards of contemporary American society—when we are not white or middle class or young.

For us, putting together this book combines the personal and the political. The poems convey both private joy and pain and humor, and a larger context of racial, economic, and social inequality. For many of these poets the two points touch where there is a deep consciousness of the interrelatedness of women's experiences. Our decision to edit and publish this book grew out of our awareness that, as Susan Griffin has written:

...the risks other women take in their writings, casting off the academic shroud over their feelings, naming the unspeakable, moving with courage into new forms and new perceptions, make me able to write what before could not be written. In every sense, we do not work alone.

Jean Little Elly Bulkin

*Brooklyn, N.Y.
October 1975*

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