



## **WHOM DO YOU WRITE FOR? A COLLAGE**

First published in Sinister Wisdom 13 (spring 1980); © with individual au

I write for people who feel that they are alone with their feelings. I also write for my friends, lovers and strangers. Right now I am writing for myself

- Stephanie Byrd

My «audience» has been women, in most cases, women who identify themselves as feminists, but also women who respond to the Judaism or the suburban experience in my work. Finally, I write for myself, from a need to grapple with my sister, my friends, my lover, my job. Though I'm certain I want my work. to reach BEYOND my own typewriter.

**-Robin Becker**

Basically, I've always written for myself My lifetime attempt to make sense out of a situation that makes very little sense, i. e., life under white boy patriarchy. When I began my journals my first year of college, I was creating a voice that understood somewhat better than I did the destructive chaos around me.

I write for other Black women who know first hand the chaos of which I speak and who are struggling in beautiful ways to change it. I also write for the Black women in my family who raised me and who did not have the chance to write themselves. Although I know that they would not necessarily agree with what I write, I am sure they would feel proud that I am a writer.

**-Barbara Smith**

I write for myself five years hence, as a critical guard against fine sounding images and impressive general statements that will make no sense to me later. My mother keeps saying plaintively, «I wish you'd write one book I could give my friends . . . I suspect my ideal reader is one who is already giving my books to her friends. I have no ambition to be socially acceptable or politically correct since the job of fiction is to deal with what is rather than what ought to be.

**-Jane Rule**

I write for anybody who elects to read my work. I do this with the hope that the message I am trying to impart, for there is always one, will come through clearly, and cause readers to think more perceptively, try to initiate changes, and learn to accept different races, as well as individuals within them.

**-Ann Allen Shockley**

«If God IS a curious green cat-then She shall see what She shall see “ I write for a curious green cat, I think. I write for a part of the self Since words can be received by different parts, I speak to a special part of the self-even when I am angry, remonstrating or some such- a self that is most pure, most honest, most sensuously aware or sensibly aware. An intermittent self; idealized perhaps but there somewhere in all us green cats. I'm pretty sure that in writing to this self I don't write for women only. But if I write for men it is not to please them.

**- Jane Gopen**

I feel I know Renee Vivien deeply from her poetry and am obligated to try to translate her work as well as possible. This I do for Her and for Lesbians who do not read French, and for anyone else who enjoys beautiful poetry.

**- Margaret A. Porter**

A long time ago an English teacher warned my class that we shouldn't think about going into writing seriously unless we craved it as much as we craved food and sleep. Hal I crave it as much as I crave vacuuming.

I honestly never intended to become a writer, but then I never intended to become a lesbian either, so it's interesting that one has followed from the other. I'm a writer because I'm a lesbian.

**-Ruth Baetz**

I write now for myself and for my sisters. If a few men can hear what I write, I am glad. Why do I still talk with men at all? (as in my book of dialogues, Remembering Who We Are). Because they sometimes put to me questions which I want to know my answers to. And because I do persist in believing that there is «a ghostly woman in every man» (as Adrienne Rich once wrote, though she now questions the term). It is a ghost unbelieved in by most men, of course. But when that ghost seems to me to put in an appearance, I talk with it.

**-Barbara Deming**

I write for other members of the various oppressed groups that I identify with .I write for women, primarily. Perhaps some of my writing is also for gay men. Among women, much of my writing is specifically for lesbians, some is specifically for black women, and some specifically for black lesbians. Sometimes I write a poem that is just for one other person. And of course I write for me,too.

I don't mind being read by people who are not members of the oppressed groups I am writing for, but they will have to make the effort. I'm not so concerned with trying to raise their consciousness as I am with providing material for us, for our culture, for our creation of a lesbian-feminist reality.

**- Becky Birtha**

I write for the woman who sent me a letter saying, «Your poems make me work so hard, but it's always worth it. «

**-Susan Wood-Thompson**

I write for my daughter. I know no fiercer demand for truth than hers, and through hers, my students› and all our children›s instinct and demand for it. I write for my responsibility to her: a strategy of words, that earth and life and difference continue.

**- Joan Larkin**