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Lesbian Writers Series

Inaugurated on February 18, 1984, at A Different Light bookstore in Los Angeles, this trailblazing series featured an amazing range of lesbian writers

1984 was a groundbreaking year for Southern California. Mayor Tom Bradley brought the summer Games of the XXIII Olympiad to Los Angeles, the first time since 1932. In November, the newly incorporated City of West Hollywood appointed the world's first openly lesbian mayor Valerie Tarrino. A lesser known, but pivotal event also took place when L.A.'s first gay/lesbian bookstore, A Different Light Books in Silver Lake launched the first-ever writers series for lesbians – the Lesbian Writers Series – on Saturday evening February 18, 1984.

Indeed, Southern California was home to a number of women's bookstores—including Westwood's Sisterhood Bookstore near UCLA and Pasadena's Page One—that included lesbian authors. Regardless, most lesbian writers remained mute about their identities at public readings, even at the Woman's

Building in downtown Los Angeles.

A Different Light Books (named by co-owner Norman Laurila after a gay-themed science fiction novel) opened in October 1979 at 4014 Santa Monica Blvd at the Sunset Junction in Silver Lake and expanded to include stores in San Francisco, New York and West Hollywood that all thrived during the 80s and mid-90s. The flagship Silver Lake store closed in April 1992. All four former venues included robust and well-represented collections of lesbian fiction and non-fiction, expertly curated by store co-founder Richard Labonte.

Ann Bradley was the second lesbian to work at A Different Light Books, initially hired for the 1983 holiday season. She remained a store clerk through November 1985.

On Monday night January 16, 1984, writer Carolyn Weathers asked Bradley to join her for a reading of her memoir *Leaving*

OPPOSITE TOP LEFT: Friday, October 19, 1990, A Different Light Books celebrates the Lesbian Writers Series. From left to right: writer/producer and LSW coordinator Sophia Corleone, LWS founder Ann Bradley, writer Carolyn Weathers, former Los Angeles poet laureate Professor Eloise Klein Healy, LWS coordinator Gail Suber (kneeling). *Photo by Janice Porter-Moffitt.*

OPPOSITE TOP RIGHT: February 24, 1989, at the Woman's Building on Spring Street in downtown Los Angeles, Carolyn Weathers (left) and Jenny Wrenn at the publication party for *In a Different Light: An Anthology of Lesbian Writers*, edited by Carolyn Weathers and Jenny Wrenn and published by their imprint Clothespin Fever Books in 1989.

OPPOSITE MIDDLE LEFT: Ann Bradley introduces the evening at the publication party for *In a Different Light*.

OPPOSITE MIDDLE RIGHT: Saturday, August 25, 1984, staff of A Different Light Books, 4014 Santa Monica Blvd, in Silver Lake area of Los Angeles. From left to right, manager John Ruggles, co-founder Richard Labonte, co-owner George Leigh, clerk Ann Bradley, clerk Larry, and unidentified woman. *Photo by Greyson Vega.*

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Carolyn Weathers speaks at publications party for *In A Different Light*.

The lesbian writers presented in In a Different Light: an Anthology of Lesbian Writers were from those who read their works at Ann Bradley's wildly popular and influential Lesbian Writers Series, which took place every Saturday evening at A Different Light Bookstore in Silver Lake.

The LWS was eclectic. Ann Bradley's only requirement was that the writer be an open lesbian. Beyond that, there were no strictures. All forms were fine. All opinions and tone were welcome—be they funny, sad, bittersweet, profound, or angry.

Jenny Wrenn and I took this same approach at Clothespin Fever Press. Just be an out lesbian, and you could write about death and loss or about the adventures of your spacedog Molly Moon touring the galaxy.

—Carolyn Weathers

Texas at Pam Roberts' Three Guineas Bookstore in Newport Beach, California. Bradley was a fan of Weathers since meeting the Texas native and her older sister Brenda—founder of L.A.'s Alcoholism Center for Women, the nation's first recovery facility to welcome lesbian alcoholics—on September 1, 1980. That September evening Carolyn cradled the manuscript of *Crazy*, her tragicomic autobiography detailing her manic depression, published by Clothespin Fever Press in 1989. Bradley later copied Weather's delightful story "Tracking Down Vivian" from a Novem-

ber 1983 issue of the *LA Reader* and sent it with her holiday cards.

The fierce rain that January evening limited Weathers' audience to about eight intrepid souls who were so captivated by her story-telling that they begged her to read the entire twenty-five-page plus memoir of vignettes on growing up in a small Texas town with her adored older sister. Driving home, Bradley told her that she felt compelled to create a wider showcase for Weathers' literary luminescence. The next morning, Bradley asked store manager Ruggles, co-founder Labonte, and

owner Laurila whether she could launch the Lesbian Writers Series with Weathers and hold subsequent monthly readings on the third Saturday night of the month. Literary history began.

The Lesbian Writers Series debuted with Carolyn Weathers on Saturday, February 18, 1984, at A Different Light. Bradley was helped by numerous individuals including literary mavens Eloise Klein Healy—who would go on to become L.A.'s first poet laureate appointed by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa in December of 2012—and longtime Woman's Building executive director, writing teacher and poet/playwright/author Terry Wolverton.

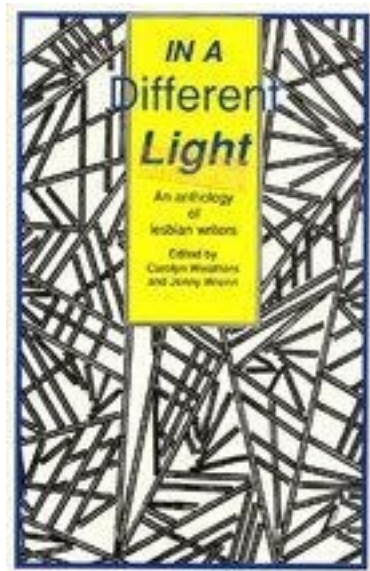
In an April 1990 interview for *L.A. Magazine* Bradley remembered, "I started the series because I had been a supporter of women writers and I was aware as a lesbian that we'd been silenced." She had one rule: writers appearing on the Lesbian Writers Series would be listed on fliers, news releases, and promotional material. No closets. Labonte, a former Toronto Star reporter and gay/lesbian literary aficionado greatly assisted Bradley in the first year of the Lesbian Writers Series. Initially, the Los Angeles Times Book Calendar listed the Series as the "Women's Writers Series," until Labonte called and graciously insisted on the correct title for future listings.

As a publicist at Cal State L.A., Bradley also had the exceptional backing of California State University Los Angeles Public Affairs director and former Santa Monica

Mayor Ruth Goldway who generously supported Joan Nestle's January 1989 appearance and the CSULA-sponsored March 30, 1989, appearance by acclaimed African American lesbian poets Cheryl Clarke and Pat Parker for Women's History Month. Parker's reading at A Different Light with Clarke on Friday, March 31, 1989 would be her last public appearance before her sudden and untimely death from cancer the following June.

Bradley produced the series from 1984 through the end of 1990. She introduced series writers for the first six years and then Gail Suber introduced the writers for the 1990 season and coordinated the 1991 lineup. Suber collaborated with Sophia Corleone on the 1992 season and assisted with later years. When the Silver Lake store closed in April 1992, Suber moved the Series to the West Hollywood store, also on Santa Monica Blvd. Writer/producer Sophia Corleone, who first read publicly on the series in 1988, became series coordinator in 1993 and would later incorporate the series as a stand-alone event, designating the series as a 501(c)3 and establishing a Lesbian Writers Series mentorship program. When the series took place at Plummer Park and other locations, Corleone worked with photographer Janice Porter-Moffitt who brought a book trolley to supply copies for author signings.

Carolyn Weathers and then-partner Jenny Wrenn launched Clothespin Fever Press, which was dedicated to lesbian authors, in



..... To acknowledge a lesbian culture has too often been met with disdain, distrust, and disbelief as the quoted library catalog cards have manifested when they repeatedly used the words "so-called" for conceptions about lesbians being anything but sexual deviants....The Lesbian Writers Series has given voice to the multifaceted lesbian community....Several great women writers are just beginning to appear in literature anthologies used in universities. Interestingly, the first Book of the Month selection, Lolly Widdowes, a very well-received book in 1926, was by Sylvia Townsend Warner, a lesbian. The work, forgotten by the dominant culture today, has been reissued and is known to those who keep this hidden culture alive....Instead of maintaining our culture through public libraries, civic arenas or galleries, lesbians have gravitated toward private centers, initially bar rooms, small community centers, and private homes, finally bookstores.

–Jenny Wrenn, Introduction,
In a Different Light: An Anthology of Lesbian Writers

LESBIAN WRITERS SERIES 1989

JANUARY 21



MORGAN OWENWALD

JOAN NESTLE
CO-SPONSORED BY UCLA'S
WOMEN STUDIES DEPARTMENT & THE
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN

FEBRUARY 18



JILL POSENER

SUSIE BRIGHT

MARCH 18



JILL POSENER

KITTY TSUI



KITTY TSUI

WILLYCE KIM

APRIL 15



MYRA FOURWINDS

DOROTHY ALLISON



LAURA AGUILAR

ROBIN PODOLSKY

MAY 20



MYRA FOURWINDS

MICHELLE CLIFF



AYOFEMIE STOWE

JUNE 17



JENNY WREN

CAROLYN WEATHERS



MAY MC FALL

GEORGIA COTRELL

JULY 15



BIA LOWE

ALEIDA RODRIGUEZ



JESSIE LATTIMORE

AUGUST 19



BIA LOWE

TERRY WOLVERTON



TERRY WOLVERTON

BIA LOWE

SEPTEMBER 16



CHERRIE MORAGA



BERND BOHNER

ANA CASTILLO

OCTOBER 21



JOE DOHERTY

KATHERINE FORREST

NOVEMBER 18



MARY McARTHUR

ELOISE KLEIN HEALY



SHARON STRICKER

DECEMBER 16



NORMAND VAUGHAN

MARIE-CLAIRE BLAIS
CO-SPONSORED BY THE LOS ANGELES
QUEBEC GOVERNMENT OFFICE

ORGANIZER



ANN BRADLEY

A DIFFERENT LIGHT BOOKSTORE
4014 SANTA MONICA BLVD.
LOS ANGELES, CA 90029
(213) 668-0629

**ALL READINGS ARE ON THE
THIRD SATURDAY OF THE
MONTH AT 8 P.M.**

1986. In its 10 years, the imprint published twenty-three books. On February 24, 1989, Clothespin celebrated the publication of a volume featuring the first five years of the Lesbian Writers Series, *In a Different Light: An Anthology of Lesbian Writers*, at a party at the Woman's Building. Bradley contributed the preface to the book and introduced the evening as the "best prom we've never been to!"

Sophia Corleone with assistance from Gail Suber expanded the reach of the series, featuring such preeminent authors as June Jordan, Cherrie Moraga, Joan Larkin, and Angela Davis and bringing Joan Nestle back for two more appearances, which included the last Southern California public reading of the Lesbian Writers Series on Saturday, November 14, 1998, at Plummer Park in West Hollywood. Nestle had made her Southern California debut in January of 1989 during a week of events scheduled by Bradley with the assistance of Suber and Corleone, including readings at UC Irvine on January 18, at the UCLA Center for the Study of Women on January 19, at CSULA on January 20, and in the Lesbian Writers Series at A Different Light Books on Saturday, January 21, 1989.

At Bradley's suggestion, the UCLA Women's Studies Program and UCLA Center for the Study of Women cosponsored Nestle's 1989 visit with additional funding from CSULA librarian Morris Polan. Mary Margaret Smith of the Women's Studies Program produced a 1988-89 series of readings

by lesbian historians and writers after UCLA students founded the nation's first lesbian sorority Lambda Delta Lambda in February of 1988 (http://articles.latimes.com/1988-02-24/local/me-11690_1_lambda-delta-lambda-sorority). yet were largely unaware of their city's lesbian history. Smith agreed to include Nestle among those legendary voices in a series that included Audre Lorde.

In 1974 Joan Nestle co-founded the nation's first lesbian archives, the Lesbian Herstory Archives with her then-partner Deborah Edel. Housed for many years in Nestle's Manhattan apartment, the Archives moved to its permanent Park Slope building in Brooklyn in June 1992. (<http://www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org/>) Nestle's 1989 week-long Southern California appearances helped raise funds for the Park Slope building including more than \$800 collected from at the UCLA/CSW event in January 1989.

In 1987, while on the board of L.A.'s gay/lesbian Celebration Theatre, Bradley created and launched the Lesbian Writers Series II to showcase the talents of lesbian playwrights, film makers and performance artists. The year showcased the talents of Robin Podolsky, Jere Van Syoc and film maker Martha Wheelock among others.

On Friday, October 19, 1990, A Different Light Books manager Jim Morrow celebrated the 11th anniversary of the bookstore at an event thanking Bradley for founding the Lesbian Writers Series. Bradley invited Carolyn Weathers,

Eloise Klein Healy, and Sophia Corleone to read on a program that also celebrated the numerous individuals who had attended the series since its inception, including June Mazer Archives board member Angela Brinskele.

A letter to Bradley from United States Representative Henry Waxman said in part, "It is vital for every literate American to be aware of the monumental literary contributions made by lesbian writers throughout history. It is also imperative to appreciate the barriers they have overcome."

On Sunday, March 28, 2004, ONE Archives director Stuart Timmons, also a former clerk at A Different Light, celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Lesbian Writers Series and Clothespin Fever Press. Covering the event, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote in part, "Ann Bradley was working as a clerk at the gay and lesbian bookstore A Different Light when she founded the series in 1984. At the time she was frustrated by the fact that women writers reading their works would not acknowledge their homosexuality...."

Also in the March 29, 2004, *Los Angeles Times* feature, LWS coordinator Sophia Corleone noted "For many years the Lesbian Writers Series was absolutely the only place where lesbian-themed authors could safely share their work. In many ways, this is still true."

Ann Bradley, founder and coordinator of the Lesbian Writers Series from 1984 to 1990, compiled this history. For information, she can be reached at ann.bradley@sbcglobal.net.

Speakers in Lesbian Writers Series, 1984 to 1990

Ann Bradley, Founding Coordinator

A Different Light Books
4014 Santa Monica Blvd.
Silver Lake, Los Angeles, CA

1984

February 18 Carolyn Weathers
March 19 Alice Bloch
April 21 Jacqueline DeAngelis,
Aleida Rodriguez,
Terry Wolverton,
Bia Lowe
May 19 Robin Podolsky,
Lynn McGee,
Karen Dalyea
June 19 Louise Moore,
Pauline Moore
July 21 Stacey Sloan,
Ruchele ZeOeh
August 18 Eloise Klein Healy
September 15 Marilyn Cruz,
Eileen Pagan
October 20 Katherine Forrest
November 17 Chaney Holland,
M'Lissa Mayo
December 15 Winter Solstice
Celebration

1985

January 19 Stacey Sloan,
Carolyn Weathers
February 16 Bia Lowe,
Terry Wolverton
March 16 Alice Bloch
April 20 Gay Male Poets:
Peter Cashorali,
Kenny Fries,
Ron Carillo,
Bernard Cooper
May 18 Eloise Klein Healy
June 15 Dorothy Love,
Synthia Saint James
July 20 Karen Minns,
Louise Moore
August 17 Ann Erb,
Grace Huerta,
Robin Podolsky
September 21 Savina Teubal,
Jess Wells

October 19 Peggy Collen,
Carol Schmidt
November 16 Katherine Forrest,
Elizabeth Nonas
December 21 Winter Solstice
Celebration

1986

January 18 Marcella Aguilar,
Judy Best
February 15 Katherine Forrest
March 15 Paula Gunn Allen
April 19 Judy Grahn
May 17 Cheri Pies
June 21 Pauline Moore
July 19 Marylyn Donahue,
Lynn McGee
August 16 Marc Cugini,
Claudia McMullen
September 20 Eloise Klein Healy
October 18 Robin Podolsky,
Carolyn Weathers
November 15 Valerie Miner
December 20 Winter Solstice
Celebration

1987

January 17 Brenda Weathers
February 21 Ann Bradley,
Nancy Glenn
March 21 Katherine Forrest
April 18 Maria Jose Delgado,
Gloria Ramos
May 16 Carolyn Weathers,
Jenny Wrenn
June 20 Tamu,
Elaine Hall
July 18 Louise Moore,
Robin Podolsky
August 15 Chaney Holland,
Karen Minns
September 12 Celebration of
Jewish
Women's Culture:
Alice Bloch,
Savina Teubel
October 17 Peggy Collen,
Marylyn Donahue
November 21 Terry Wolverton
December 19 Eloise Klein Healy

1988

January 16 Jacqueline
DeAngelis,
Gloria Ramos
February 20 Chaney Holland,
Robin Podolsky
March 19 Judith McDaniel,
Ayofemie Stowe Folayan
April 16 Alice Bloch,
Eloise Klein Healy
May 21 Marilyn Cruz,
Eileen Pagan
June 18 Marylyn Donohue,
Louise Moore
July 16 Carolyn Weathers,
Jenny Wrenn
August 20 Katherine Forrest
September 17 Peggy Collen,
Patricia Murphy
October 15 Janice Lerma,
Kris McHaddad,
Karen Sterling,
Savina Teubel
November 19 Sophia Corleone,
Sharon Stricker
December 17 Elizabeth Nonas,
Terry Wolverton

1989

January 21 Joan Nestle
February 18 Susie Bright
March 18 Willyce Kim,
Kitty Tsui
March 31 Pat Parker and
Cheryl Clarke
April 15 Dorothy Allison,
Robin Podolsky
May 20 Michelle Cliff,
Ayofemie Stowe Folayan
June 17 Georgia Cotrell,
Carolyn Weathers
July 15 Aleida Rodriguez,
Jessie Lattimore
August 19 Bia Lowe,
Terry Wolverton
September Cherrie Moraga,
Ana Castillo (Cancelled)
October 21 Katherine Forrest
November 18 Eloise Klein Healy,
Sharon Stricker
December 16 Marie Claire Blais
(Cancelled)

1990

January 20 Terry de la Pena,
Carolyn Weathers
February 17 Ashley Black,
Lynette Prucha,
Sharon Sumpter
February 22 Sarah Schulman
March 17 Willyce Kim,
Kitty Tsui
April 20 Susie Bright (Cancelled)
April 21 Teresita Bosch,
Karen Sterling,
Terry Wolverton
May 19 Ayofemie Stowe Folayan,
Merle Woo
June 15 Jeanne Cordova
June 16 Patricia Murphy,
Jeanne Simonoff,
Sharon Stricker
July 21 Robin Podolsky,
Savina Teubel
August 17 Carla Tomaso
August 18 Jacqueline de Angelis,
Regina Meister,
Karen Minns
September 15 Deborah Bergman,
Trisha Harper,
Janice Porter-Moffit
October 20 Sophia Corleone,
Kris McHaddad,
Rebecca Roberts
November 16 SDiane Bogus
November 17 Dorothy Allison,
Louise Moore,
Mariah Richardson
December 15 Katherine Forrest,
Eloise Klein Healy
(held at ONE Archives
in West Adams)

Speakers in Lesbian Writers Series, 1991 to 1994

1991

Gail Suber, Coordinator

A Different Light Books
4014 Santa Monica Blvd.
Silver Lake, Los Angeles, CA

January 19 Paula Gunn Allen,
Aleida Rodriguez
February 16 Barbara Wilson,
Vicki McConnell
February 17 Sabrina Sojourner,
Lauren Wright Douglas
March 16 Ayofemi Folayan,
Margaret Sloan-Hunter
April 13 Judy Grahn
April 20 Sophia Corleone,
Bia Lowe
May 11 Eloise Klein Healy
May 18 Teri de la Peña,
Jewell L. Gomez
June 8 Ann Bannon
June 15 Suzanne Selby,
Kris McHaddad,
Terry Wilson
June 23 Rachel Guido deVries,
Rose Romano
July 12 Katherine Forrest
July 20 Jacqueline de Angelis,
Jeanne Simonoff
August 17 Karen Marie
Christa Minns,
Robin Podolsky
September 21 Robbi Sommers,
Tee A. Corinne
September 22 Louise Moore,
Toni Garcia
October 19 Beth Brant,
Carolyn Weathers
November 15 SDiane Bogus,
Sharon Stricker
November 16 Margaret
Cruikshank,
Teresita Bosch
December 21 Elizabeth Nonas,
Terry Wolverton

1992

Gail Suber and Sophia Corleone, Co-Coordinators

A Different Light Books
4014 Santa Monica Blvd.
Silver Lake, Los Angeles, CA

January 18 Paula Gunn Allen
January 25 Sara Levi Calderon,
Jacqueline de Angelis
February 8 Minnie Bruce Pratt
February 15 Becky Birtha,
Canyon Sam
February 29 Monique Wittig
March 14 Lillian Faderman
March 28 Marie Cartier,
Janet Silverstein,
Carolyn Brigit Flynn
April 11 Karen Sterling,
Teresita Bosch
April 25 Joan Larkin,
Eloise Klein Healy
May 16 Dorothy Allison,
Karen Marie Christa Minns
May 30 Joan Nestle
June 13 SDiane Bogus
June 20 Terri de la Pena,
Sharon Stricker
July 11 Katherine Forrest
July 18 Patricia Murphy,
Jeanne Simonoff
August 15 Rose Romano,
Pamela Gray
August 22 Susanne Justice,
Kris McHaddad,
Angela Counts
September 12 Mafalda Barberis
Edouardo,
Yvette Padilla,
Martha Tormey
September 19 Janet Capone,
Kyle Anne Bates
October 17 Aleida Rodriguez,
Janice Gould
October 24 Alison Bechdel
November 14 Margaret Randall
November 21 Carolyn Weathers,
Nisa Donnelly
December 12 Lauren
Wright Douglas,
Vicki McConnell
December 19 Terry Wolverton,
Elizabeth Nonas

1993

Sophia Corleone, Coordinator

A Different Light Books
4014 Santa Monica Blvd.
Silver Lake, Los Angeles, CA

January 23 Janet Silverstein,
Adele Renault
February 6 Sarah Schulman,
Carla Tomaso
March 6 Jacqueline de Angelis,
Sandra Scoppettone
April 3 Terri de la Pena,
Canyon Sam
April 24 Monique Wittig
May 15 Jane DeLynn,
Jennifer Levin
May 22 June Jordan
June 5 Lori Anderson,
Eloise Klein Healy
June 12 Mary Wings,
Anna Livia
July 10 Olga Broumas,
T. Begley
July 31 Pamela Gray,
Robin Podolsky
August 21 Maureen Seaton,
Bia Lowe
September 11 Terry Wolverton,
Eileen Myles
September 18 Aleida Rodriguez,
Michelle Cliff
October 16 Jewelle Gomez,
Dorothy Allison
October 23 Marilyn Hacker
November 6 Nicole Brossard
November 13 Elizabeth Nonas,
Diane Salvatore
December 4 Judy Grahn
December 11 Julia Penelope

1994

Sophia Corleone, Coordinator

Plummer Park, Fiesta Hall
7377 Santa Monica Blvd.,
West Hollywood, CA

February 19 Cherrie Moraga
March 5 June Jordan
March 18 Nisa Donnelly,
Jacqueline Woodson
March 19 Chrystos
March 25 Sky Lee,
Rebecca Brown
April 16 Shani Mootoo,
Makeda Silvera
April 23 Eileen Myles,
Ana Maria Simo
April 29 Donna Minkowitz,
Sara Miles,
Robin Podolsky
May 6 Paula Gunn Allen
May 7 Angela Davis
May 14 Bia Lowe,
Carole Maso
May 13 Jane Miller
May 21 Margaret Randall
June 3 Kim Vaeth,
Aleida Rodriguez
June 10 Terry Wolverton,
Elizabeth Pincus
June 11 Jacqueline de Angelis,
Joan Larkin
June 18 Katherine Forrest
June 25 Suzanne Gardinier,
Michelle T. Clinton
July 9 Sarah Schulman,
Jennifer Levin