



Still Here: Lesbian Writers Continuing on from the 70s

OLOC Zoom Presentation April 26, 2021

Detailed Author Bios

Cheryl Clarke, 1947, is a Black Lesbian feminist poet and the author of five books of poetry, chapbooks, and collected work. *Living as a Lesbian* was reprinted by *Sinister Wisdom* and Midsummer Night Presses as a *Sapphic Classic* in 2015.

Since 1979, her writing has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *Conditions*, *Sinister Wisdom*, *Callaloo: A Journal of African American and African Arts and Letters*, and *African American Literary Review*, and the anthologies *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings By Radical Women of Color*, *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*, and *The World In Us: Lesbian and Gay Poetry of the Next Wave*.

After 41 years, she retired from Rutgers University in 2013. Since then, she has been one of the co-organizers of the annual Hobart Festival of Women Writers. She now resides in Hobart, NY, the Book Village of the Catskills, where she and her partner operate Blenheim Hill New and Used Bookshop.

Dorothy Allison, 1949, was born in Greenville, South Carolina, and makes her home in Northern California with her partner Alix, and their son, Wolf Michael. *Bastard Out of Carolina*, her first novel, was a finalist for the 1992 National Book Award. *Cavedweller* (Dutton, 1998), a *New York Times* bestseller, won the 1998 Lambda Literary Award for fiction and was a finalist for the Lillian Smith Prize. A novel is forthcoming from Penguin. Her short stories have been widely published.

Dorothy was the first member of her large extended family to graduate from high school and the only one to go on to college. "It was not smart that got me to college and a life as a writer, but luck, determination, and sheer desperation ... There was also the simple fact that I was a Lesbian in a time and place where I knew no one like me and heard only violent dismissive tales about what happened to 'odd' girls and misfits."

Recipient of the Robert Penn Warren Award for fiction in 2007, Dorothy has been a member of the board of the Fellowship of Southern Writers and the Advisory Boards of the Full Frame Initiative, The Macondo Foundation, and the James Tiptree Jr. Memorial Award. She teaches in the hope that she can give back some of what she has been given.

Kitty Tsui, 1952, was born in the year of the dragon in the city of nine dragons, Kowloon, Hong Kong. The daughter and granddaughter of immigrants, she is a long-time activist, working and marching for civil rights, women's rights, and rights for LGBTQ people. A multi-hyphenate, she loves her rescue dogs as much as her work. Her poetry, drawn from personal experience, is also a celebration of Lesbian love in chaotic political times.

She is the subject of *Nice Chinese Girls Don't*, an award-winning documentary introducing Tsui, a poet-writer-activist-artist-bodybuilder. She wrote the groundbreaking book, *Words of a Woman Who Breathes Fire*, was a founding member of UnboundFeet, and is considered to be one of the foremothers of the Asian Pacific Islander (API) Lesbian feminist movement.

The Smithsonian commissioned her for a poem/video for the digital installation *A Day in the Life of Queer Asian Pacific American*.

Accolades:

- In 2017, APIQWTC (Asian Pacific Islander Queer Women and Transgender Community) honored her with the Phoenix Award for lifetime achievement.
- 2019: Inducted into her alma mater, San Francisco State University's Alumni Hall of Fame.

Irena Klepfisz, 1941—Lesbian, secular Jew, poet, teacher, activist, Yiddish translator, and scholar of Yiddish women writers—landed in NY at the age of eight with a community of Holocaust survivors, members of The Jewish Labor Bund. A founding editor of *Conditions*, she also co-founded The Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation (JWCEO) and co-edited *The Tribe of Dina: A Jewish Woman's Anthology*. She taught Jewish Studies for 22 years at Barnard College, and Women's Studies for 10 years at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. The author of *A Few Words in the Mother Tongue* (poetry) and *Dreams of an Insomniac* (essays), her new poetry manuscript is titled *Her Birth and Later Years*.



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Terry Baum, 1946, slightly world-renowned Lesbian playwright, has toured internationally as a solo performer. She has lectured at universities throughout the US and in South Africa and Morocco.

Several of Baum's plays have been translated and produced in French, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, and Swedish. *Dos Lesbos, A Play By, For and About Perverts*, (1981, with Carolyn Myers) inspired the first anthology of Lesbian plays (*Places, Please*, 1985), and offended the Pope during World Pride 2000 in Rome. Baum is politically active and ran for Congress (2004) and Mayor of San Francisco (2011). She writes frequently of politics, theater, and life on BAUMblog [terrybaum.blogspot.com/], which has 500 followers. Her play, *Hick: A Love Story*, was live streamed in 2021 and is available on <https://www.liliththeater.com/>.

Jewelle Gomez, 1948—Cape Verdean/Wampanoag/loway—is a playwright, novelist, and poet. She's the author of eight books, including the first Black Lesbian vampire novel, *The Gilda Stories*, which has been in print continuously for more than 25 years. She adapted it for the Urban Bush Women Company as a full-length theatre piece which traveled to 13 US cities. The novel was recently optioned by Cheryl Dunye (*Watermelon Woman*) for development as a television mini-series. The novel's sequel, *Gilda: Threshold*, is forthcoming.

Her essays, poetry, and short fiction have been published in more than 100 anthologies, including *Reading Black*, *Reading Feminist*, *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction by African Americans*, *No Police/Know Future*, and *Red Indian Road West*.

Her trilogy of plays, *Words and Music*, explores the mythology of African American artists in the first half of the 20th century and was developed by the New Conservatory Theatre Center where she was playwright in residence. The trilogy includes: *Waiting for Giovanni*, *Leaving the Blues*, and *Unpacking in P'Town*.

She was on the founding boards of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD); the Astraea Lesbian Foundation; and Open Meadows Foundation. She has been a grant maker for the NY State Council on the Arts, the San Francisco Arts Commission, and Horizons Foundation.

Follow her on Twitter and Instagram @VampyreVamp.

Elana Dykewomon, 1949, is a long-time social justice activist, editor, and teacher living in Oakland, California. She's published eight award-winning books foregrounding Lesbian heroism, including her Lambda-winning *Beyond the Pale*, and received the 2018 Lee Lynch Classic Award from Golden Crown for her first novel, *Riverfinger Women*. She was inducted into the Saints and Sinners Hall of Fame in 2018.

Sinister Wisdom has just launched a special issue Elana co-edited with Judith Katz, *To Be a Jewish Dyke in the 21st Century*. Currently, she is working on a full-length play about Lesbian love, dementia, right to die, caretaking, and community, honoring her late spouse, Susan Levinkind, 1942-2016, with Alter Theater in San Raphael.

During this internet winter, she has participated in a Lesbian Widows reading (available at vimeo.com/519216822), the Jewish Lesbian Literature and Activism panel for Saints and Sinners (archived on the Saints and Sinners YouTube channel), and "Swimming in the Lesbian Depths" for the Gulfport LGBTQ Resource Center's Festival of Lesbian Literature: Lesbian Voices Persist and Prevail.

She is grateful for all these years of Lesbian inter-connection that have led her to a useful old age.



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Writings by the Presenters—A Short List

Cheryl Clark

Poetry

Narratives: Poems in the Tradition of Black Women (Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1982), Digitized at the Lesbian Poetry Archive, www.Lesbianpoetryarchive.org/Narratives
Living as a Lesbian (Firebrand Books, 1986)
Humid Pitch (Firebrand Books, 1989)
Experimental Love (Firebrand Books, 1993)
By My Precise Haircut (Word Works Press, 2016)

Chapbooks and Collections

Your Own Lovely Bosom (2014) and *Targets* (2018)
After Mecca: Women Poets and the Black Arts Movement (Rutgers Press, 2004), a critical study
The Days of Good Looks: Prose and Poetry 1980-2005 (Carroll and Graf, 2005)
To Be Left with the Body, Co-edited with Steven G. Fullwood in 2008, a literary publication of AIDS Project Los Angeles

Dorothy Allison

Bastard Out of Carolina (Dutton, 1992)
Cavedweller (Dutton, 1998)
Two or Three Things I know for Sure (Penguin, 1995)
Trash: Stories, first published in 1987 (Firebrand Books), was republished in an expanded edition in 2002 (Penguin)
Her short stories have been widely published.

Kitty Tsui

The Words of a Woman Who Breathes Fire (Spinsters Ink, 1983), the first book by an Asian American Lesbian
Breathless: Erotica (Firebrand Books, 1996)
Sparks Fly (Bad Boy Press, 1997)

Forthcoming Books Include

Nice Chinese Girls Don't
Battle Cry: Poems of Love and Resistance
Fire Power: Poems of Love and Resilience

Irena Klepfisz

The Tribe of Dina: A Jewish Woman's Anthology (*Sinister Wisdom* 29-30, 1989). Edited with Melanie Kaye Kantrowitz
A Few Words in the Mother Tongue: Poems Selected and New, 1971-1990, (Eighth Mountain Pr., 1993)
Dreams of an Insomniac: Jewish Feminist Essays, Speeches and Diatribes, (Eighth Mountain Pr., 1993)
Her Birth and Later Years, forthcoming poetry manuscript

Terry Baum

Places, Please: The First Anthology of Lesbian Plays (Aunt Lute Books, 1985)
Tough Acts to Follow: One-Act plays on the Gay/Lesbian Experience (Alamo Square, 1992)
Intimate Acts: 8 Contemporary Lesbian Plays (Brito and Lair, 1997)
One Dyke's Theater: Selected Plays, 1975-2014 (Exit Pr., 2019)

Jewelle Gomez

The Gilda Stories (Firebrand Books, 1991)
Forty-Three Septembers (Firebrand Books, 1993)
Oral Tradition (Firebrand Books, 1995)
Don't Explain: Short Fiction (Firebrand Books, 1997)
Gilda: Threshold (forthcoming)

Elana Dykewomon

Riverfinger Women (1992) is available from Open Road Media as an e-book: openroadmedia.com/search/Riverfinger%20Women
Beyond the Pale (1997) Open Road Media, e-book and downloadable pdf: openroadmedia.com/ebook/beyond-the-pale/9781480434226
Risk (2012), a novel, is available from Bywater Books: www.bywaterbooks.com/product/risk/
What Can I Ask: New and Selected Poems 1975-2014, (2015) is available from *Sinister Wisdom* at sinisterwisdom.org/whatcaniask and/or A Midsummer Night's Press amidsummernightspress.com/WP/2015/03/08/what-can-i-ask-by-elana-dykewomon/
Moon Creek Road (short stories) is available from Elana Dykewomon. Write dykewomon@yahoo.com.