



# THE SITTING ROOM

## A COMMUNITY LIBRARY

SPRING 2014

POST OFFICE BOX 838, PENNGROVE, CALIFORNIA 94951

### SPECIAL EVENTS

*NOTE: All special events are free and open to everyone in the community (no memberships needed or gender excluded). Unless otherwise noted, all are held at the present Sitting Room location at 2025 Curtis Drive, just off Petaluma Hill Rd., south of E. Cotati Ave, near Sonoma State University – we are right next door to the Church of Christ; map and parking advice on our website: [sittingroom.org](http://sittingroom.org)*

**Saturday, March 1, 2pm. GEORGIA O'KEEFFE: AMERICAN MODERN KAREN PETERSEN AND RAYE LYNN THOMAS**

Join us for an afternoon exploring the sources of *Modern Nature: Georgia O'Keeffe and Lake George*, currently at the De Young Museum in San Francisco, "The body of work created by the artist at Lake George, New York, from 1918 until the early 1930s was critical to Georgia O'Keeffe's development of her signature style of modernism and abstraction. On the shores of Lake George, O'Keeffe found a place to concentrate on her work without the distractions of her life in New York City. Working in her humble studio, nicknamed the 'shanty,' she reveled in the discovery of new subjects that included landscapes, flowers, fruit, trees, leaves, and architecture." (Erin Coe, curator.) We will follow up with Raye Lynn's description of her recent pilgrimage to the O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe and an opportunity to view some of her best known paintings of the southwestern desert.

**Saturday, March 8, 10-1pm. THE NARRATOR'S TALE: ALL ABOUT POINT OF VIEW: A WORKSHOP WITH ANA MANWARING. COST: \$25** This will be a hands-on workshop that covers the "rules" and conventions of narrative voice for one or multiple points of view. Students will explore the differences between narrators in fiction and creative non-fiction, the narrative voice continuum, point of view and narrative distance, the narrator and reliability, and how to avoid the POV pitfalls. Ana Manwaring writes, teaches and connects writers with writers. See her website, [www.AnaManwaring.com](http://www.AnaManwaring.com) to learn more and email her at [anamawaring@gmail.com](mailto:anamawaring@gmail.com) by March 1 to reserve your spot.

**Tuesday, April 1, 9am-3pm. FIELD TRIP TO SEE THE GEORGIA O'KEEFFE EXHIBITION AT THE DEYOUNG MUSEUM. Cost: \$20** Karen and Raye Lynn will lead a group to see and experience *Modern Nature: Georgia O'Keeffe and Lake George*. We will leave from the Sitting Room at 9am and return by 3pm. Space is limited so please RSVP to Karen asap, [kpetaluma@gmail.com](mailto:kpetaluma@gmail.com). For more information on the exhibition, visit the website, <http://okeeffe.famsf.org/>

**Saturday, April 12, 2-4pm. CELEBRATE POETRY WITH KATHERINE HASTINGS AND TERRY EHRET** Two of Sonoma County's Poets Laureate will join us to read their work, discuss ways to bring poetry to the people, and explore the treasures of the Sitting Room's Jane Flood Poetry Room. Katherine Hastings, our newest Laureate, is the founder of WordTemple, the remarkable poetry forum now based at the Sebastopol Center for the Arts and broadcast Sundays on KRCB as part of their Literary Series. Katherine's most recent book, *Nighthawks*, was recently published by Spuyten Duyvil NYC. Her *Small Change Series* of WordTemple Press has published the anthology *What Redwoods Know — Poems from California State Parks* (all proceeds benefit the State parks). Well known to Sitting Room regulars, Terry Ehret has been teaching at the Sitting Room for over a decade. Her award winning body of work has been published by the poetry collective, Sixteen Rivers Press. From 2004-2006 she served as poet laureate of Sonoma County. *Night Sky Journey*, her newest collection of lyric and prose poems, has just been released from Kelly's Cove Press.

**Sunday, April 27, 2-4pm. PASSIONATE COMMITMENTS: THE LIVES OF ANNA ROCHESTER AND GRACE HUTCHINS JULIE ALLEN** A conversation with author Julie Allen, an old friend of the Sitting Room and many of us here in Sonoma County, as she taught in the English Dept. of SSU. Now retired, she lives in Portland, Oregon, and we are very fortunate to be on her book tour. Julie will read from her recently published biography, *Passionate Commitments: The Lives of Anna Rochester and Grace Hutchins*. Life partners Grace Hutchins and Anna Rochester developed their rhetorical skills and political acumen in early twentieth-century women's organizations. *Passionate Commitments* is a love story, but beyond that, it is a story of two women whose love for each other sustained their political work. Aside from doing readings from *Passionate Commitments*, Julie will recount some of the twists and turns in getting her book researched and published — a very interesting story in itself. Copies available for purchase @ \$29.95.

**Saturday, May 3, 10am-3pm. LOOSENING THE BOLTS: GENTLE MOVEMENT & MUSINGS TO UNHINGE CREAKY JOINTS & THOUGHTS WITH SHARON BARD** **Suggested donation: \$15-\$40, sliding scale.** Join Sharon to explore the interplay of pen and limb, and how one informs the other. This intersection of writing and movement encourages an enlivening of our rich interior landscape. With the intention of increasing mind-body awareness, we will write and move and share. Sharon has been writing for 60 years and practicing yoga for 45. That's 105 virtual years expressing mind and body through stillness, reflection and movement! A former radio producer and avid traveler, Sharon is a certified yoga instructor and has a Ph.D. in Holistic Health Sciences. She brings warmth, clarity, curiosity, passion and playfulness to her classes. This workshop, suitable for all levels, is a benefit for the Sitting Room. Suggested donation: \$15-\$40, sliding scale. Wear loose clothes, bring a notebook and a bag lunch. Please write her at [srbard@comcast.net](mailto:srbard@comcast.net) to reserve a space.

**Sunday May 18 2 to 4pm.** The Sitting Room MEMORIALIZES the women writers who have died in the past year in this annual gathering to read their words aloud and consider their importance to us. Bring your own selections or choose from the Sitting Room Collection. Doris Lessing will surely head the list (see Jonah Raskin's obit here in the newsletter). Free, of course, and no need to sign up in advance, but if you want to talk over options before, then give J.J. Wilson a call at 795-9028 any time after May 12.

**Sunday, June 7, 2 to 5.** THE WORLD FAMOUS SITTING ROOM BIRTHDAY PARTY will be happening in the backyard, with parking in the Church of Christ lot, and let's hope it is not as chilly as it was last year, when we had to hand out blankets instead of sun hats....As usual cake, cheese, fruit, and punch will be provided by a grateful management (this party is not a potluck, though guests are welcome to bring gifts of anything that is paper, ranging from toilet paper and checks to, of course, books). The tastiest fare, however, will be readings by the contributors to our 2014 publication, "When I first realized I was a Feminist..." (see notice on page 2). We'll also make time for tours of the Sitting Room itself for people not familiar with the layout and the treasures here.

# BREAKING NEWS ABOUT THE 2014 SITTING ROOM PUBLICATION

Yes, after consultation amongst the editors and pleas from would-be contributors, it has been decided to move the due date for responses to our prompt: ***I first realized I was a feminist when...*** from Valentine's Day to **APRIL FOOL'S DAY** O.K.? and you will remember from previous notices and past years, that the pieces are to be no longer than a page, 400 words, with 1" margins on both right and left sides, single or double space fine, with a title, and at the bottom your name; on a separate cover page, your name, mailing address, phone email, and title of your contribution. Please send your piece electronically as a WORD attachment to [boxcar@sonic.net](mailto:boxcar@sonic.net) or, if you prefer hard copy, mail material unfolded to Editors, 2014 publication, c/o The Sitting Room, P.O. Box 838, Penngrove, CA 94951.

All contributions will be included, if they address the theme and follow the format, and **ARRIVE ON TIME**. And all contributors will be invited to read at the Sitting Room Birthday Party in June – and will get your complimentary author's copy. Visuals that will reproduce well in b & w welcome. You do not have to be a "member" of The Sitting Room to send in your testimony, or any one gender or age. Though the topic lends itself to prose, poems are possible too, and even songs. Contributions have been trickling in and some of them are haiku length – three sentence vivid "clicks" from their vivid memories. We'll probably publish them in a kind of collage. Others have described a moment narratively and gone on to describe how that moment influenced many other choices in their lives. All takes on this watershed event in your lives are welcome; we are avoiding any dogmatic definitions of the word feminism itself.

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## DORIS LESSING'S LAST JOURNEY

BY JONAH RASKIN

Sitting in a Paris train station the other day my computer lite up with the news of the death of Doris Lessing at 94. I couldn't help but think of the journeys she made around the world and especially to the United States beginning in 1969 when I first met her. I also traveled to see her in London where she lived and wrote for most of her life. On one of my last visits to her flat, in 2007, I said that I thought that most if not all of her books were about journeys. She paused a moment and explained, "Well, I think they are. Life is a journey and narratives whether they're fact or fiction are about journeys, too."

Lessing began to travel early in life, and didn't stop traveling until near the end of her days. Her travels took her across continents and into the fictional worlds of outer space. They plunged her into the deepest recesses of her own consciousness and to the outer limits of her own imagination. An explorer in the worlds of art and politics – perhaps the two great passions of her life – she also always attended to the details of ordinary existence, like cooking and shopping and taking care of her son Peter who needed near total attention for years. I never heard her complain about Peter's infirmities or any of her obligations and responsibilities. "I always find time to write," she told me. "I write in between times, even if it's only an hour or two. It adds up."

In the 1980s and the 1990s, she visited California often on book tours and even thought about settling in California. Sonoma County with its farms and rolling hills reminded her of Southern Rhodesia, she said, as she gazed out at the landscape of mountains and valleys. She had grown up on a farm and knew farmers, such as her own parents, but she was a creature of London, London writers and artists, radicals and intellectuals, and she knew London of the twentieth-century as well as Dickens knew London of the nineteenth.

On my last visit to Lessing I arrived at her flat, had a cup of tea and a chocolate biscuit and waited until a taxi driver came to pick us up and take us to the London Review Bookshop where she talked about Anna Kavan, an obscure writer whom she adored. She was always discovering obscure writers, sometimes the more obscure better, always using her own fame to help writers much less well-know that she.

By now it's a cliché to say that she recreated English literature with books such as "The Grass Is Singing," "The Golden Notebook," "Memoirs of a Survivor" and her two stunning volumes of autobiography, "Under My Skin" and "Walking in the Shade." What is not a cliché, I think, is that she exerted a direct personal influence on several generations, including her own and mine, too. Through the 1960s and 1970s, during those heady times of sex, drugs, rock and roll and rebellion, she always urged caution, though she was supremely fascinated by everything she saw around on college campuses and in rural communes. She rooted for the counterculture even as she warned about its excesses.

Several years ago, I suggested that we take a train journey together from London to Leeds to attend a conference about her and her work. The idea struck her as rather absurd, and I suppose it was; she was old enough to be my own mother. But she never scolded or rebuked me for asking. She had good manners and tried to teach me some in the days when I rarely had any. In fact she was the best maternal figure in my life.

Soon after she won the Nobel Prize for literature in 2007, she told me that she was done writing. I had the uncanny feelings that she would not live much longer and she didn't.

I wish she were here now in the Gare d'Austerlitz ready to take the 11:57 p.m. train to Toulouse with me. I know we'd have a lot to talk about. We always did.

{The Sitting Room has many of Lessing's books carefully saved by **Thomas Fagan** who said with rueful realism, "We'll need them when she dies..."}  

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### THE SITTING ROOM BOOK GROUP

meets the third Wednesday of every month from 2 to 4 pm. In February we will be reading *The Snow Child*, March will be *The Cat's Eye* by Margaret Atwood, and Nicole Kraus' *The History of Love* will be the April choice. Book list updates (and sometimes there are changes) are posted on the website, [Sittingroom.org](http://Sittingroom.org). Email [jpage@sonic.net](mailto:jpage@sonic.net) if you wish to receive reminders of the meetings and readings. All are welcome to drop by, no fee of course.

### WRITING WORKSHOPS WITH TERRY EHRET

Terry Ehret's poetry reading and writing workshops at the Sitting Room are currently full but to learn more and sign up for the future, please e-mail her, [tehret99@comcast.net](mailto:tehret99@comcast.net).

# SITTING ROOM HAPPENINGS, PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

The Harvest Supper, our annual benefit for our partners THE LIVING ROOM who do such fine work for homeless women and children in Santa Rosa, featured, aside from Brunswick Stew every drop of which was eaten, a fascinating talk by **Jonah Raskin** based on his recent article in the *Redwood Coast Review* on women writers working in the Bay Area (Fall 2013, "Women in Charge"). There are lots of them and they are a diverse lot: **Cardiff, Chau, Liebegott, Lisick, Marcom, Wecker**, not (yet) household names but wouldn't it be good to hear from them? Jonah's quotes from their pithy commentary whetted our appetites. We began envisioning a lecture series here at the Sitting Room featuring some of these sharp wits and sharp pens. Keep tuned!

At the prodding of **Mimi Poinsett** and with the expertise of **Professor Kim Hester Williams**, we mounted an exhibit of just a sampling of the books in the Sitting Room collection by Black American writers, artists, and activists. What a stimulating experience for all of us! Kim brought her Feminist Perspectives in Literature — Slave Narratives class over to spend the afternoon with the exhibit. Others browsed the exhibit shelves remembering when they first read Zora Neale Hurston's "Their Eyes were Watching God" (and did you see her on the Google Doodle on her birthday just recently?) or paging through some of hard to find art books. There was even an anthology of Black Erotica which, of course, drew some of us! Meanwhile, hardworking Cassidy LaFee was entering every book by black authors, even the ones that could not fit on the Exhibit Shelves, into a PATHFINDER document, so that interested people can find each of the books again, even after they are all dispersed back in their locations — don't feel too sorry for her, as she was stopping to do some reading every few entries....

Let's have Kim sum up the experience by quoting from her recent email: "The exhibit and responses to it have buoyed me and my work. I am glad you invited me to participate."

And let that be the transition to our plans for future exhibits:

**This Spring's Historical Lesbian Literature Exhibit** These early writings are in themselves interesting, but our emphasis in this exhibit is to remind us all that they were there, sometimes tentative, sometimes outrageous, but always brave, writing about who they were. For those of us who read them back in the day, they were an introduction to a life we could not easily imagine; as **Tina Dungan** from the Lesbian Archives of Sonoma County group says of her first reading them, they were "an important 'prequel' to my life as a lesbian."

These authors influenced later writers too, of course: Adrienne Rich, Pat Parker, Judy Grahn, Susan Griffin, Audre Lorde, June Jordan, and many others, so it is important to be reminded of them or indeed, for younger readers, to be introduced to them. The exhibit will be up sometime in February and before it closes, we'll designate a day to do a read-aloud, picking sections from some of these early stories almost a random, just to get their words out into the air again. The theme fits well with Julie Allen's book event here on April 27 and with Luci Friesen's call for a Susan Griffin reading group. Please come to these events and also, even more important perhaps, just browse through the Exhibit Shelves.

LOOKING AHEAD, our wonderful volunteer **Sheila Bare** is planning an Asian American Literary Exhibit in the summer, with some art on display also and maybe music too for a special event, benefitting those affected by the typhoon in the Philippines. Keep tuned. If you are not on Karen Petersen's e-list which keeps us informed of upcoming events — between our two newsletters a year — you should be: write her at [kpetersen@gmail.com](mailto:kpetersen@gmail.com).

**Sonoma County Book Festival Folding its Tents.** After 13 fabulous years the Book Festival is coming to a close, at least in its current form. We have simply run out of funds and labor and need to find a new way to celebrate books and readers and writers in Sonoma County. The very successful Free Bookmobile will continue their work under the auspices of the Sonoma County Library Foundation. There is much to celebrate in our history: the panels, authors, children's programming, our delicious fundraisers at Windrush Farm, and much, much more. Thanks to all for your faithful work on our behalf, and particularly the hard working directors who led the festival: Katy Dang, Lote Thistlethwaite, Maureen Jennings, Justin Higgs, Nadja Masura, Melissa Kelley, Frances Caballo, Toni Bodenhamer and Jennifer Verdon.

**Susan Griffin Reading Group forming** We had the good fortune in 2013 to have Susan Griffin amongst us in Sebastopol at WordTemple. It was inspiring to hear her read from her poetry and her play, *Canto*, and to speak about her life as a feminist. One wished for more time with her thoughts. So a proposal that we form a monthly group to read and discuss some of her other works; she has written many fine books, essays, poetry and plays. If you are interested in being part of this group, which would culminate in a live reading/maybe performance for others of her play *Voices*, please contact me, **Luci Friesen**, [luznieve@gmail.com](mailto:luznieve@gmail.com). Particulars will be worked out in the meantime, and if you have a favorite work by Susan you would like to suggest, let me know that as well.

**A Book Recommendation from J.J. Wilson** This brief piece is not a review — it would be hard to do, given the variety of topics and tones covered in **Ann Patchett's** recently published collection of short nonfiction pieces entitled improbably "**This is the Story of a Happy Marriage.**" That title is one reason I wanted to write a notice for the newsletter — it would not have appealed to me had I not known and admired Patchett's novels ("Bel Canto", "State of Wonder", etc.) and indeed, it does not describe the contents of her new book. One piece, for instance, is on what Patchett calls "The Sacrament of Divorce" and it is quite telling, but though she does include also an account of her present "happy marriage", she devotes much more space to "A Practical Memoir about Writing and Life" which applies to so many of the Sitting Room writers and want to be writers that we have copied it and left it prominently displayed in the Writers Room — have a look. My favorite essay is, of course, her account of opening a new independent bookstore in Nashville, her hometown — business is booming and she finds, or makes up, reasons for its surprising success. Everyone will find "words in this book that speak to you", as one of the many enthusiastic reviews promised — and I promise that too.

**Fresh New Interns** are finding their way to the Sitting Room, thanks to encouragement from **Heidi Lamoreau, Barbara McCaffry, Wo Chingling, Charlene Tung, Tim Wandling, Kim Hester Williams**, and others at Sonoma State University. Last Fall **Patience Foster** set a wonderful example of what these extra hands/minds/hearts/eyes/energies can bring to the work-in-progress that is The Sitting Room: note the Writers Room bulletin board, the framed works on the Poetry Room wall, the better organized Circulating Shelves to the right as you enter, and many other improvements she accomplished before graduating in December. Thanks, Patience! Welcome even if not so perfectly named interns as Patience will be working away during the Spring Semester, so do introduce yourselves and get to know them. Patience described as one of her best "take-aways" from the internship experience, aside from learning about so many new writers and artists, was the expanding sense of community past that of the campus itself.

**Book Donations For The Sitting Room.** The SR is now lifting its embargo on donations of books, in certain limited areas: All must be books by or about women, of course, and in good reader-ready condition. Our present special needs: art/architecture/dance/music related books; current literary fiction; international fiction and poetry in translation; current non-fiction; plays; biography and feminist history and theory; and, of course, we are always interested in recent works by local writers (male and female here) which showcase on an ever changing bookshelf in the front room. Donations may be left on the Sitting Room's front porch any time AFTER MAY 1 — and be judicious, as our space is limited. Other excellent places for book donations are the Friends of the Library in yr towns and the wonderful Sonoma Free Bookmobile (check their website, [www.freebookmobile.org](http://www.freebookmobile.org), for drop-off locations near you.)

REMINDER: The Library is open to all readers whenever the red lamp is on (9 am to 9 pm) and the individual reader is always welcome even when events or programs are going on. To get an introductory tour and info on key codes, you will need orientation from **Cassidy Lafee**, our Sitter in Residence. Cassidy is regularly here Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons, but to be sure of her hours, or to arrange a special meeting or tour, email her at [LaFee@seawolf.sonoma.edu](mailto:LaFee@seawolf.sonoma.edu). Aside from the large main rooms AND the handy kitchen, there is the Writing Room for quiet work and the Poetry Room for cozy reading, and yes, there is wireless.



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## COMMUNITY EVENTS

All lectures free and open to the public

### SANTA ROSA JUNIOR COLLEGE

***Crossing Borders: Reyna Grande on Immigration and the "American Dream"***



Monday, March 3, 12:00 pm,  
Newman Auditorium  
Author Reyna Grande, *The Distance Between Us*, will speak about her life before and after crossing the border from Mexico.

***Mariachi Femenil Orgullo Mexicano***

Saturday, March 8, 7:00 pm,  
Newman Auditorium  
Back by popular demand, the exceptional all-women Mariachi group will perform in honor of International Women's Day.

### SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

**Writers At Sonoma**

March 4, 7:00 pm, Weill Hall, Green Music Center  
**Gillian Conoley** will read from *Peace*, her latest collection of poems.

**Holocaust Lecture Series**

Tuesdays, 4 pm, Warren Auditorium  
April 8, **Gender and Genocide, Professor Carol Rittner**

**Queer Lecture Series**

Presented by the Women's and Gender Studies Department  
Thursdays, 12:00-12:50, Stevenson 1002

### BELLA FELDMAN "FLASKS OF FICTION"

**Hammerfriar Gallery**, 132 Mill St., Healdsburg, through March 1  
Oakland sculptor Bella Feldman is a pioneer among women sculptors and a master of fusing glass and steel.

### YOGA: THE ART OF TRANSFORMATION

**Asian Art Museum**, Feb 21-May 25  
This acclaimed exhibition goes beyond postures and delves into how yoga has evolved into a global phenomenon through an exploration of its visual history.

**WORDTEMPLE POETRY SERIES** takes place third Saturday of the month at the Sebastopol Center for the Arts, 6780 Depot Street, Sebastopol, CA.

### LITERARY SUNDAYS ON KRCB

Tune in every Sunday @ 3 p.m. to KRCB, FM91, for literary programming:  
***Word by Word; A Novel Idea; Word Temple***

HOW TO KEEP YOUR FINGER ON THE  
PULSE OF THE SITTING ROOM  
Clarice Stasz's jazzy website, of course: [sittingroom.org](http://sittingroom.org);  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/thesittingroomlibrary](http://www.facebook.com/thesittingroomlibrary);  
Twitter: [sittingroom2](http://sittingroom2);  
and be sure to get your name on Karen Petersen's well-curated elist  
of cultural events: [kpetersen@santarosa.edu](mailto:kpetersen@santarosa.edu).