



THE SITTING ROOM

A COMMUNITY LIBRARY

SPRING 2016

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). The Sitting Room is located 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. You can also reach us via Sonoma County Transit. Line 44 drops you right at our doorstep (Curtis Drive) and we are just .7 miles from Sonoma State, which is served by lines 10, 12 and 14. Check <http://sctransit.com/> for details.



Joan Brown,
The Bride, 1970

Saturday, March 19, 2-4 p.m.

MARRIAGE: IN LITERATURE AND IN LIFE

Please join our resident librarians, Karen Petersen and Raye Lynn Thomas, as we browse the Sitting Room exhibit of books and archives on the evolving subject of MARRIAGE. It is, of course, the topic for this year's Sitting Room anthology (see within for details) and the topic of countless novels, poems, plays, field studies (think Margaret Mead), history, law—you name it! In light of the June 26, 2015 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that the Constitution guarantees a right to same-sex marriage, it seems like the right moment to explore the Sitting Room's resources, whether literary, artistic (that is Joan Brown's *Bride*, by the way), or historical. Come join us to brainstorm, to get inspired for your marriage essay, and/or bring along a draft to read.

SALONS ON ADRIENNE RICH AND LOUISE ERDRICH.

Join us for conversations about two beloved contemporary feminist writers whose works are both accessible and deeply personal. Both salons will be from 2-4 p.m. with time for tea afterward. In the tradition of the delicious – in every way possible – “learn as we go” Bloomsbury and Virginia Woolf series in the Fall, come to either or both of these events. We hope to have the Rich poems and the Erdrich short story available on the Sitting Room website by mid-February. No rsvp necessary. If you have any questions, call (707-235-5582) or email Barbara McCaffry at mccaffry@sonoma.edu

Sunday, April 10, 2-4 p.m. SALON: ADRIENNE RICH

Barbara McCaffry and Susan Miller invite both long-term Adrienne Rich fans and those new to her work (or to poetry) to this salon in honor of National Poetry Month. Come join us for this lively conversation on these very accessible gifts from Rich that can be unwrapped and savored. In the first hour we'll be looking at a few of our favorite poems: “Diving into the Wreck,” “Power” and “Grandmothers.” And the second hour, in smaller groups, there will be time to share poems and snippets of Rich's prose that have moved you. And then we will come together for tea afterward and a chance to explore how Rich may have influenced you and how you think she has influenced poetry since her first volume of poetry appeared in 1951.

EXPLORING ASIAN AMERICAN AUTHORS WITH SHEILA BARE

We are fortunate to have Sheila join us once again to discover and appreciate work by Asian American women writers. For starters, Jessica Hagedorn's play, *Dogeaters*, based on her novel of the same name, will be showing at the Magic Theatre in Fort Mason the entire month of February. Winner of the 1990 American Book Award, *Dogeaters* was adapted into a play by the novel's author and is a roman-a-clef novel based on life in the dictatorial Marcos regime of the Philippines from 1950s to the early 1980s. Sheila is organizing a field trip so please contact her directly for more information, salbare@yahoo.com or visit <http://magictheatre.org/>, but tickets are going fast, so hurry!

Sheila will also hold a salon on Hagedorn and her works at the Sitting Room this Spring. A prolific writer, thinker and multi-media artist, Hagedorn has written several novels, poetry collections and plays. There are also plans for a reading of *Walls*, a play by Filipina-American, Jeannie Barroga, about Chinese American architect Maya Lin and her struggle to build the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. *Dates and times are still to be determined for all these events and more so please check our website regularly for updates or write to Sheila, salbare@yahoo.com*



Saturday, May 7, 2-4 p.m.

IRIS DUNKLE: STIRRING UP THE GHOSTS

Iris Jamahl Dunkle is the new Poet Laureate of Sonoma County. Congratulations Iris! Her latest book, *There's a Ghost in this Machine of Air*, is about the untold history of Sonoma County and you can read one of the selections, “When I die, if I go to a place where there are apples, I'll know it won't be heaven” on page 3 of this newsletter. Please join Iris for a reading of her new poems and a chance to contribute stories/poems of your own about our beautiful county. There will be time to write, read and enjoy a cup of tea in the garden. Iris Dunkle's poetry, essays and creative non-fiction have been widely published. She currently teaches writing and literature at Napa Valley College and is on the staff of the Napa Valley Writers conference.

Sunday, May 15, 2-4 p.m. SALON: LOUISE ERDRICH

We will gather in anticipation of Louise Erdrich's appearance at the City Arts & Lecture series in San Francisco on May 17th. Erdrich is the author of 14 novels, poetry, children's books and short stories inspired by her heritage as a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians (also known as Ojibwe or Anishinaabe). Whether you are a fan of her first novel, *Love Medicine* (1984) or *The Round House* (which won the National Book Award for Fiction in 2012) or have never read her work before, Barbara McCaffry invites all for a lively discussion of her short story “The Shawl” in the first hour. It will be followed by time for smaller groups to explore their favorite passages or for you to find new treasures to spend time with in the weeks and months to come. As with Rich, we will end with tea and a chance to share our experiences with Erdrich's work and speak to her impact on us as thinkers, readers, anthropologists and brand new explorers just dipping our toes in the water.

Sunday, May 22, 2-4 p.m. AN ALTERNATIVE MEMORIAL

CELEBRATION All welcome, free as usual, and you can come for just part of the time if you wish. Our tradition of remembering women writers who have died in the past year and reading from their writing is a surprisingly upbeat event, partly because it is good to get their words out into the Sitting Room air and partly because we intersperse these events with other obituaries of women that have caught our attention. FMI, telephone J.J. Wilson at 795-9028 any time after May 15. If this date does not work for you, do make a time to come to the Sitting Room and browse its over 30 year collection of women's obituaries — inspiring!



Isota Tucker Epes, *The Waves*

Saturday, June 25 HOW TO READ THE WAVES

Rough plans for smooth sailing on V Woolf's most experimental "novel", *The Waves*

At last October's Bloomsbury Fest, there were requests from several participants that J.J. Wilson lead a workshop in "How to Read The Waves" sometime in the coming year. How about a Saturday this summer, say in late June, and here is how it is shaping so far: Those who sign up in advance will be emailed some useful materials: excerpts from VW's diaries about the composition of this unusual book, some perceptive comments by critics, some hints for how to approach a first reading, all helpful but not essential to getting something out of the Saturday morning meeting. Then at 9:30 a.m., J.J. will start us off where the creativity shows the most: in the manuscripts themselves so that we can all trace the evolution of the novel, how Woolf's decisions about form influenced the content and v.v. A fascinating process. Then participants will be given time to

bring up any questions they had + any other books that they were reminded of by their reading of *The Waves*. We'll all be asked to do a short (anonymous) free write on what we think is the under-lying/over-arching philosophy Woolf is espousing here and whether it seem optimistic or pessimistic to you. Then we'll have a break, whew! And come back together to enjoy some ways the book's form and content have influenced the other arts, music and painting.

Sarah Baker will share with us some of her process and some of her results in composing a musical piece to celebrate and/or consider this book which is perhaps better sung than read. Poets will read tributes to this unusual prose poem of a book. And we'll finish up the in-house tributes with the original – very! – painting by the late Isota Tucker Epes. Wait, wait – there is **more**. We imagine a Bloomsbury style picnic at well not a field trip exactly, a Beach Trip out to our beautiful coast to do a reading of certain parts of the book, all of us who are left standing that is, reading aloud to the waves.

It will work, I promise.

Signed: J.J. Wilson, in anticipation

(Specific details to follow, but right now it looks as if Saturday, June 25 will be our Woolf & WAVES day.)

SITTING ROOM 2016 PUBLICATION – Marriage: in Literature and in Life

The institution of marriage has been changing along with society's needs and aspirations, sometimes dragging its heels, sometimes sprinting ahead. Based on your own experiences and observations, as well as by your reading, of course (this IS for the Sitting Room Library, after all...) — be it Cinderella and her prince, Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, Kate Chopin's *Awakening*, etc. —, write a one page (400 word) piece, be it prose, poetry, or a playlet, that makes clear where you stand now, at this moment, on this evolving issue. Think that space restriction is too limiting? Heck, Mae West managed it in one sentence: "Marriage is a fine institution, but I'm not ready for an institution!"

You may remember from 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, with an original title please, and your name at the bottom; on a separate cover page, your name, mailing address, phone, emails, and the title of your contribution. Please send your piece electronically as a word attachment to Karen Petersen, editor for this issue, sittingroom2016@gmail.com. If you prefer hard copy, mail material unfolded to Editor, 2016 publication, c/o The Sitting Room, P.O. Box 838, Penngrove, CA, 94951.

Here to get you started are two early arrivals by Marylou Hadditt and Jonah Raskin.

Change a Name, Change a Person

I'm tired of a sir name
I want a her name.
I've had my first husband's name
I've had my second husband's name.
I've have my father's name
and my grandfather's
and my great grandfather's,
all the way back to Adam's rib.

Frankly,
I've had it!

That's it!
I've got it.
My new name.
I love it.

Marylou Hadditt
That's me.

Marylou Shira Hadditt
October 1975

*FYI: I took my new name when
my second husband and I separated.*

"My Anna Karenina" by Jonah Raskin

I read Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* for the first time in 1969 at the same time that my wife had an affair with a fellow revolutionary, or so they dubbed themselves. I've never been the same person since then, though my wife and I were divorced not long afterwards and have since become friends. In 1969, when I was 27, I was still consuming and inhabiting novels as though I were all the major characters. I lived through Anna's affair with Vronsky. I experienced the crack-up of her marriage much as I experienced the crack-up of my own marriage. The novel echoed across my life and my life echoed across the novel or so it seemed. It also shredded most of my illusions about marriage as an institution, and persuaded me for a time that marriage led inevitably to the kind of tragedy that befell Anna, her friends and family.

It's nearly fifty years later, and, after a period in the 1960s and 1970s when marriage was viewed as a pit to be avoided at nearly all cost, marriage is back in style again. My old friends who have been married for 30 or 40 years would never think of ending their marriages or having an affair. All my young friends want to get married; they do get married. As a minister in the Universal Life Church, I officiate at their wedding ceremonies. It doesn't help to lend young couples my dog-eared copy of Tolstoy's novel and suggest that they take it to heart. No one seems to read with the same kind of intensity that I read fifty years ago. No one seems to live novels as I lived *Anna Karenina*.

This might be a good thing. After all, novels are novels and life is life, and reading fiction can be dangerous to one's mental and physical health as it was to Don Quixote and Emma Bovary, that other nineteenth-century married woman who had an affair and who also committed suicide. Sometimes, the two women, Emma and Anna, fold into one another in my imagination. Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* seem now to me to be cautionary tales in which the two male authors urge women readers to stay married to their husbands and not to have affairs. After all these years, I've come round to the idea that marriage is a good thing, at least for some couples. I don't think I'd ever want to marry Anna, but I might want to plunge into an affair with her. No doubt Tolstoy would disapprove of my plans.

When I die, if I go to a place where there are apples, I'll know it won't be heaven



Hannah Cohoon, *Tree of Life*, 1845

After the tractor cooled and dust settled
come into house gone cold. Stoke fire's coals.
Peel and slice the windfalls thin, brown sugar,
a lemon plucked yesterday from the bough.
Roll dough cold. Cover. Bake an hour. Gather
the children. Coax. Read words or written. Stir
pot hot on iron stove. Wash the earth from
crooked carrots and beets. Slice thin into
caste-iron skillet. Stir and fry with yesterday's
slaughtered chicken. Wash the young faces.
Scold the ones who know better. Divvy chores: set,
serve eat, clear, wash, scour, hot steam boiled.
Lay the children down. Look for quiet enough.
Sit beside the glowing coals, song pouring
back into the fire what's burned out.

Iris Dunkle

ADVANCE PLANNING FOR ADVANCE PLANNING is my tricky title for a useful and yes, difficult program The Sitting Room is getting involved with here in Sonoma County during the summer and early Fall. You may have heard of the *MyCare/MyPlan: Speak Up Sonoma County and its Advance Care Planning Community Initiative* which has been giving programs based on Atul Gawande's wonderful small book, *Being Mortal* and showing his documentary by the same name. These programs make the case vividly for continuing "The Conversation" in small groups and they even offer to send one of their trained (and brave and kind) counselors to guide the process. They are equipped with the most up to date forms for the Advance Health Care Directives also. Doesn't The Sitting Room seem a good place to have a few of these conversations? We will set them up and publicize them, so keep tuned; if you want to be notified specifically of the dates etc. (they will be free, by the way), please send us your email and/or phone # to sittingroomlibrary@gmail.com with the subject heading "The Conversation". I might add that the program leaders all emphasize that these conversations ought to start early; *young people will be especially welcome to these events!* In the interim, prepare the ground by reading Dr. Gawande's book and or viewing his video, available on PBS.

THE SITTING ROOM BOOK GROUP meets the third Wednesday of every month from 2 to 4 pm. Spring lineup as follow: February 17, Patti Smith, *M Train*; March 17, Chaim Potok, *Davita's Harp*; April 20, Oliver Sacks, *On the Move*; May 18, Nina George, *Little Paris Bookshop*. Be sure and check the website for additional info, <http://www.sittingroom.org/events.html> and email jpage@sonic.net if you wish to receive reminders of the meetings and readings. All are welcome to drop by, no fee of course.

NEW SATURDAY BOOK GROUP Beginning this Spring, a new Saturday afternoon book group is assembling. We began in the footsteps of the Virginia Woolf and Bloomsbury series with *Mrs. Dalloway* and will follow this with E. M. Forster's *Howard's End*, Saturday, March 3, 2-4 p.m. All welcome.

SAPPHO UPDATE Sappho, the Sitting Room's online catalog, is approaching her third anniversary, and most of the Sitting Room collection is now listed there. We've recently added the titles from the Woolf collection, and our new graphic novel collection, bringing the total of searchable Sitting Room titles to over 5,100! Sappho is searchable by author, title or keyword; or you can browse particular collections. Check it out at home: http://www.librarything.com/catalog/sitting_room or use the Mac located in the non-fiction area of the Sitting Room. You are also welcome to request a one-on-one tutorial. For more information/questions contact Karen, kpetaluma@gmail.com. A couple of newsworthy tips on searching Sappho.....

When you first login, if set to browse all collections, you will see all the newest titles acquired by the Sitting Room.

Also, there is now a "main page" for each author--if you click on an author's name you are led to a main page for that author, which contains photos and a complete bibliography of that author's works.

For those of you who have been curious about Sappho, there will be user-friendly "get acquainted, become expert" opportunities this Spring—all Fridays in April from 1:30 to 3:30, accompanied by tea & treats. Learn how to search for specific titles or authors; how to create bibliographies; how to write reviews; and how to do all this from home. No need to sign up, just drop in. For those interested but unable to drop by on Friday afternoons, a session can be arranged by email to kpetaluma@gmail.com

WORKSHOPS WITH TERRY EHRET AT THE SITTING ROOM <http://www.terryehret.com/> Terry will be offering two workshops at the Sitting Room in the fall of 2016. These are very popular and fill up well in advance. Terry reserves space for Sitting Room members, so if you are interested, please write to her, tehr99@comcast.net

WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF THE SITTING ROOM NEWSLETTER? In the changing digital/print landscape, some have asked what the future of the Sitting Room newsletter will be. We have published a print version for over thirty years and it continues to serve as an important connection between us all. Does the website, email and facebook distribution suffice? (The newsletter is always available as a pdf on our website.) Is there a new form for our content? Might we consider an expanded version, with reviews, articles? We want to hear from you on this important subject. Please send your comments to sittingroomlibrary@gmail.com

A HOST OF LECTURES AT OUR LOCAL COLLEGES WILL FOCUS ON WOMEN'S HISTORY. Here is just a brief sampling:
Sonoma State University.
Queer Studies Lecture Series, Mondays@Noon, Ives Hall 101.
Free and Open to all.
<http://www.sonoma.edu/wgs/lectures/>

Santa Rosa Junior College.
Celebrating Women's History Month with an extensive series of lectures, films, on both the Santa Rosa and Petaluma campuses. Details: www.SantaRosa.edu

Holocaust Lecture Series@SSU meets Tuesdays@4pm, Warren Auditorium. Full details@ <https://www.sonoma.edu/holocaust/>
Of particular interest: March 22, Carol Rittner, Gender and Genocide and May 3, Wendy Lower, Hitler's Furies.



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WE SHOULD ALL BE FEMINISTS
Lauren Coodley, who does so much for the Sitting Room Archives, has sent us notice that "free copies of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's manifesto We Should All Be Feminists, will go to every sixteen-year-old in Sweden...to galvanize 'discussion about gender equality and feminism'... More than 100,000 copies of the book will be sent to Swedish secondary schools, according to the Washington Post." One copy only, alas, is available for reading at the Sitting Room — you'll find it on the New & Noteworthy shelves. It is a small book, adapted from Adichie's 2012 TEDx-Euston Talk of the same name. Do stop by and have a look. We have other books by Adichie also, as you will see if you go online to Library Thing and look at our Saphro data base.

CHANGES & STAYING IN TOUCH
We are now open Monday-Saturday, 9am to 5pm, and by appointment. Be sure to check our website for up-to-date info on book groups, events and publications, www.SittingRoom.org; You can also "follow" us on Facebook, www.facebook.com/the-sittingroomlibrary. If you would like to receive email reminders of events at the Sitting Room or to arrange a tour, please contact sittingroomlibrary@gmail.com

Whatever your motives, please come and celebrate with us. No RSVP necessary unless you are one of the authors on the marriage project and want to read yr essay at the event. Please park in the Church of Christ Church Parking lot, our good neighbors right next door.



A recent survey done by our statistician/web mistress/etc., Clarice Stasz discovered that this Sitting Room Birthday Party is the primo event for us, the biggest attendance and the best reviews. It has become an annual occasion for people to demonstrate their loyalty to the idea(l) of our community library, talk with one another, and listen to the creativity of the writers in the Sitting Room publication. People will also enjoy perusing our special Exhibit assembled from the Sitting Room Collections on that sweet/sour topic of MARRIAGE. All of which sounds quite high minded, but we suspect the main draw is our humongous BIRTHDAY CAKE.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!
Sunday, June 5, 2-5 p.m.