READERS WITHOUT BORDERS
Sunday, March 3, 2-4 p.m.
This year’s anthology takes us into new territory—literally and figuratively. We focus our reading and writing on work by women from other lands and languages. Sharon Bard and Karen Petersen will begin by touring the exceptional collection of international fiction here at the Sitting room, assembled and donated by Barbara Lesch McCaffry. By special arrangement, the books from this collection will be available for checking out, for the duration of the project. We will share some of our favorite writers with you and a sampling of essays written thus far. Join us. There is no charge for this event, but please do email us at sittingroomlibrary@gmail.com to reserve your space.

QUILTEXHIBITRECEPTION and OPEN HOUSE
Saturday, March 16, 2-5 p.m.
Sitting Room volunteers and members of the Santa Rosa Pointless Sisters Art Quilt Group have joined forces to curate an exhibition of their work with the environment as theme. Please come by to meet the artists, have a cookie, and tour your friendly Sitting Room Library. The perfect time to (re)acquaint yourself with our space, our collections and our mission.

MAYA KHOSLA: LOCAL LEGACIES
Sunday, April 28, 2-5 p.m.
The Sitting Room and Poet Laureate Maya Khosla are celebrating poetry month and the conclusion of three Fall 2018 teatime events with a reading event featuring Sonoma poets. Part of Maya’s Local Legacies Project, the event will be held outdoors if weather permits, and will include plenty of time for informal exchanges before and after the readings. Refreshments will be served! The event is free and open to the public. With permissions from participants, parts or all of the celebration will be filmed.

OUR VERSION OF MEMORIAL OBSERVATIONS
Sunday, May 19, beginning at 2 p.m.
Let’s get an early jump on this annual tradition of honoring women writers and artists who have died since our last memorial gathering. We read from their obituaries and also from their writings, in order to get their voices out in the room. Certainly this year we will be reading poems by the late Mary Oliver – bring one of your favorites. And Francine du Plessix Gray’s death will be an opportunity to find out more about the writing of this “cultural amphibian” as she is described in the obituary. Diane Althill has finally (at 101) called it a day from her quietly scandalous life and her elegant, truthful writing. This ritual, or is it an anti-ritual?, has always turned out to be a surprisingly positive time together, healing and sometimes LOL. Please come. No need for reservations but if you have any questions, call J.J. Wilson at 707-795-9028 or email: sittingroomlibrary@gmail.com.
2019 SITTING ROOM PUBLICATION READERS WITHOUT BORDERS

The idea came from Bridey Heing, a freelance critic who lives in Washington, D.C. (in a recent BOOK MARKS blog) “We are at such an interesting and exciting time when it comes to reviving forgotten women’s voices, so I hope that curiosity extends to works in translation.”

We hope so too and look forward to reading your appreciations of a book or some poems you have read by a woman writer from another country and culture. Take only one (or two) pages to tell us about your reading experience. What did you learn from stretching past the familiar and what insights did you gain from reading from a woman’s point of view?

Let’s grow from being too provincial in our reading habits — a political act in a way. What an interesting list this 2019 Sitting Room book will provide for all who want to live and read beyond borders. The Sitting Room’s International Collection, curated by Barbara Lesch McCaffry, has been OPENED UP FOR CIRCULATION FOR THIS SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY (UNTIL APRIL 1, 2019), so come find YOUR book to write on. Some of the names will be familiar: Etel Adnan, for example, and Buchi Emecheta, just read in the Book Group. Bharati Mukherjee, whose obituary outlined her many awards, Yiyun Li who lives now in the Bay Area, Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, whose novels and “Why We Should All be Feminists” have garnered much positive attention. Some will be enticingly UN-familiar: Jumpha Lahiri, Irene Nemirovsky, Nawal El Saadawi, Clarice Lispector, etc. The Sitting Room also has anthologies that can introduce you to new names: for example, there is one on Ukrainian Women Writers, Caribbean writers, Surrealist Writers, etc. Terry Ehret recommends Woman Who Has Sprouted Wings to look for Latin American poets, but of course the translation problems with poetry can complicate the reading experience. Some poets translate more easily than others, for example: Wislawa Szymborska and Anna Akhmatova.

These lists are meant to be suggestive, not prescriptive, of course. Have fun hunting around for YOUR international writer to describe to us for the 2019 Sitting Room publication.

JJ has essayed a sample, included here in the newsletter, though she tells me she plans to do something quite different for the 2019 book. And don’t forget the March 3 workshop (listed above) for some expert guidance.

BY SPECIAL FIAT, the usual one page limit has been enlarged -- for this topic only-- to 750 words. Details are on our website, www.sittingroom.org/publish.

NATIONAL PARKS@PETALUMA ARTS CENTER

Sixty plein air paintings of each of the U.S. National Parks are the product of a 72,000 mile, 3 ½ year journey by Sonoma County artist and gallery owner Mary Fassbinder and the centerpiece of an exhibition at the Petaluma Arts Center opening in January, 2019. The exhibit will be accompanied by an important lecture series on our precious natural resources.

Maya Khosla, Sonoma County Poet Laureate and Sitting Room Writer in Residence, will lead a day long program February 28 “From The Land To The Page—Writing About Rejuvenation After Fire” at Annadel Park. For details, www.petalumaartscenter.org/upcoming-events
People may think that all we do here at The Sitting Room is sit — and that is a lot true…. However, aside from reading and talking and taking tea & crumpets, if there are any around, we sometimes ACT. (Not just act up, but act with purpose.)

You might be surprised to know that we have reached out to a women’s organization in the Ukraine as well as, of course, to our wonderful local so similarly named Living Room. The National Women’s History Month organization, run by our good friend, Molly MacGregor, comes to The Sitting Room for support when needed — and even sometimes for a little rest and refuge from her busy life. For many years the Sonoma County Book Festival gave us all a chance to rally round books — heck, we even supplied free books to their PortaPotties as Gaye Le Baron was amused to report in the P.D. And now the Petaluma Poetry Walk counts on our non-profit status for grant support for its charming annual celebration of poets. And there are other fragile treasures we have managed to give a little help too, through our volunteers or $$. But now we are wanting to join forces with the expanding Public Library Adult Literacy programs. Their valuable training is offered in their beautiful space at the Main Branch in Santa Rosa, but then you can branch out, if you will excuse the excruciating pun, and do your tutoring at a library branch near you. The commitment is for 2 hrs a week with an English speaking adult who wants to improve reading, writing, and critical thinking skills. The informative website: literacy@sonomalibrary.org gives orientation dates and times, or you can call 707 544-2622. There is a useful Adult Literacy Newsletter posted also. What a good way to reach out from our comfortable seats here and learn how to help others take some steps toward their literacy goals!

THE SITTING ROOM BOOK GROUP meets the third Wednesday of every month from 2 to 4 pm. On February 20, we focus on Black History with a discussion of Hannah Crafts: The Bondwoman’s Narrative. As a special treat, Hollis Robbins, Ph.D., Dean of Arts and Humanities at SSU will come to add her expertise to the conversation. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. found the manuscript of the novel, believed to be the first written by an African-American woman. Once it was authenticated, he edited and published it. Research since then has identified her as Hannah Bond, a slave from North Carolina who escaped to New Jersey in 1857. You will find a copy of the book on our New and Noteworthy shelf. (Also available on Audible) Book Group updates are posted on the website, www.SittingRoom.org. Louisa May Alcott’s classic, Little Women, will be our March title. Email Joanne Page, jpage@sonic.net if you wish to receive reminders of the meetings and readings. All are welcome to attend, no fee of course.

PUBLISHING NEWS
Longtime Sitting Roomer, Lauren Coodley is pleased to announce that her book Sinclair Lewis: California Socialist, Celebrity Intellectual, published by the Univ. of Nebraska Press in 2013, is coming out in paperback in March (such a boon for readers). Lauren, of course, gives illuminating attention to Lewis’s feminism.

The Living Room is the only day center in Sonoma County specifically serving homeless and at-risk women and their children. Each year the Sitting Room Harvest Supper is dedicated to raising funds for their programs and in 2018 over $1,000 was donated, increased no doubt by the generous gift of proceeds from the sale of Armando Garcia’s books. Our donation was then DOUBLED thanks to a matching grant from the Peter E. Haas Jr. Family Fund. If you would like to learn more about the Living Room, become a volunteer or donate to their mission, visit their website www.livingroomsc.org.

FROM THE ARCHIVES
Eloise Van Tassel

Hello from the depths of the paper treasure that resides at the Sitting Room, most of it sharing space in the Poetry Room. The archives contain materials from publications dating back to the 1960s, maybe some from even earlier. There are files for individual authors (women, of course) and other persons of note, A-Z. There are categories for files on location, century and topics of interest (i.e. a recently growing file titled “Gender Fluidity”). As times change, so do the archive files, some deleted, some consolidated, some added. An index to the archive files is updated yearly.

A question comes up in this year of 2019: Why keep paper files when information for research and general interest/curiosity is readily available online. There are several angles from which to answer this most practical query. One is that there are bits of arcania residing in the paper archives that one will simply not find online—just do an experiment, Google in someone like Dorothy Bryant or Pauli Murray, click around and read what is on the screen, then make a visit to their files in the SR archive.

To fully appreciate the breadth of the Sitting Room’s archive holdings, the first-time visitor is encouraged to schedule an orientation tour from a host who is familiar with the territory. Part of the charm of the collections is that they have (inevitably) grown and are spread beyond the neatly alphabetized bins in the Poetry Room, and that too can be addressed via a tour.

Finally, a word of advice. If you are fearful for back or shoulder or other musculoskeletal issues, request help in lifting or replacing the heavier bins. Watch for more archival chatter in the next Sitting Room newsletter.

COMING ATTRACTIONS: Rescuing Rumer Godden

A team of enthusiasts (Meredith Sabini, Rosemary Manchester, and J.J. Wilson) from The Sitting Room are inviting all even mildly interested to join in preparation for a project ambitiously entitled “Remember the Ladies”, in which we shine the light on women writers who have been neglected, forgotten, or abandoned. This coming Fall we will celebrate/resuscitate RUMER GODDEN (1907-1998), a British citizen who grew up in colonial India, returning again and again throughout her long life to that beloved land, which influenced almost everything she wrote. Her work is rich in cultural diversity and explores the nuances of human relations, including especially sensitive treatment of the anguish of youth and childhood. Her book “The River” became a movie, directed by Jean Renoir, with Godden as a consultant. The film will be shown during the Godden Gala, along with her film of “Black Narcissus.”

It’s time to rescue Godden from obscurity. She wrote more than 70 books, fiction, non-fiction, poetry and children’s books. Perhaps you are familiar with “Black Narcissus,” or “Kingfishers Catch Fire”. Her sister, Jon, joined her in writing “Two Under the Indian Sun”. Two of her best-known works of fiction, “Greengage Summer” and “The Battle of Villa Fiorita”, are set in Europe.

We plan to assemble a collection of her books. Search your shelves for Godden books. Search the web, search the Friends of the Library book sales, the Thrift Shops. Lend them or give them to the Sitting Room. There will be quite a display. If you like, you can choose a title and prepare a short presentation of the book.

Take your sari out of mothballs, prepare to deck your brow with spangles and sequins, and get ready for celebrations. Dates and events will be announced in the next newsletter and of course on our website. Any questions or suggestions even this far out, do email J.J. Wilson at boxcar@sonic.net.
THE PEN AND INK CLUB
Thursday, February 21—April 11, 7-9:00 p.m.
Please join us for the Sitting Room “Pen and Ink Club”, a writing group for new and experienced writers. All genres are welcome: poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, drama. The emphasis will be on the collaborative nature of writing, learning from reading published writers and from reading each other’s work. We will meet for 8 weeks with a concluding open reading tba. The “Pen and Ink Club” is FREE and open to all. Please contact Sheila Bare (salbare@yahoo.com; 707-537-6835) for more information and to reserve your seat.

SPRING NATURE JOURNALS
with Krista Anandakuttan
Saturday May 18, 10 a.m.—1 p.m. Free
Celebrate spring with your own nature journal! See a variety of examples and develop your own unique style. Create your own pages of studies and see how much more you notice the world around you. Part outdoor exploration, sketching and note-taking, Krista will introduce some of her favorite tips for drawing insects and butterflies. For all ages, beginner to experienced; Children with an adult are welcome. Please bring a journal or sketchbook, a pen and pencil. Optional: watercolors and colored pencils, and a sack lunch.

Krista Anandakuttan loves to explore the outdoors with a journal. See illustratescience.com for examples of her work. Questions? email Krista: krista.anandakuttan@gmail.com

WORKSHOPS WITH TERRY EHRET AND DAN COSHNear
Terry Ehret’s very special workshops on Contemporary Women Poets continue at the Sitting Room, beginning in late February. These are popular and fill up well in advance. Terry reserves space for Sitting Room members, so if you are interested, please write to her, tehret99@comcast.net.

Dan Coshnear will return in the Spring to offer his popular writing workshop. Precise time and date tba. If interested, or if you have questions, contact Daniel Coshnear at coshn@sonic.net, or call 707-869-0329.

SUMMER WORKSHOP
with Sharon Bard
Sharon Bard returns to the Sitting Room this summer for another writing and body awareness workshop. Through group discussion, gentle movement and writing we’ll explore how discrete body systems work in harmony to create enlivened, healthy organisms. We’ll then expand this awareness to the macrocosm, using it as metaphor for observing the role of diversity and cooperation to insure wellness of our communities and planet. Date to be announced a bit later...stay tuned.

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/thesittingroomlibrary. If you would like to receive email reminders of events at the Sitting Room and regionally, or if you would like to schedule a tour, please contact sittingroomlibrary@gmail.com