



THE SITTING ROOM

A COMMUNITY LIBRARY

SPRING 2019

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 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. All of these events are FREE and no reservations are needed, but if you have any questions, telephone 707-795-9028 or email: sittingroomlibrary@gmail.com.

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.



QUILT EXHIBIT RECEPTION 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.

"Verdant Velvet". Lindamay



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.

Previous readings in the series were dedicated to the fires and evacuations, and to returning to Sonoma. The April 28th readings, will express a shift towards healing, rebuilding, renewal at personal and landscape levels, and to the ways that the ancient, astonishing post-fire rejuvenation of the natural world can create a path for healing.

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 any time after May 1, or email her at boxcar@sonic.net.

SITTING ROOM BIRTHDAY PARTY

SUNDAY, JUNE 3, 2-5 P.M.



What are we really celebrating at this event?

Maybe mainly Persistence – not only that The Sitting Room itself has lasted so long (almost 40 years) but that the achievements of women in literature and the other arts have continued to thrive and now almost crowd us out, at The Sitting Room. There is ALWAYS

room here on our birthday to celebrate Creativity and Conversation and, as we hardly need to mention, Cake. So please come by to enjoy the three Cs. No need to RSVP, no need to bring comestibles, but anything on paper is considered an appropriate birthday gift for your Sitting Room. CU there.

WHY I LIKE/NEED TO READ INTERNATIONAL FICTION BY WOMEN

It was Barbara Lesch McCaffry who suggested that I read Ahdaf Soueif's "The Map of Love" (published in an Anchor Book paperback in 2000) and I will be forever grateful. Though it is an historical novel, ending just before the millennium, somehow when the Arab Spring broke out on Tahir Square in 2011, I felt better prepared to understand why it had come about – and even why it had come to nothing...

I did wonder, however, whether I should write on this author as a sample for the 2019 Sitting Room prompt which emphasizes reading in translation because the author writes in English, but her long glossary of Arabic words used in the book reassured me that there was much to learn about this different culture from Soueif who, as the scholar Sabina D'Allesandro says, "works at several crossroads."

She has four heroines, one from England, two from Egypt, and one from America, and these women find their way to one another, across time and geography, through the accounts not just of the men they fall in love with but also through warm friendships they form with one another. We see into the "haramlek" as well as the "salamlek". This is a book that could not have been written except by someone who crosses gender and national boundaries. Indeed, as the title explains, her theme in this novel is that love can transcend these divides

And here I come to the deepest lesson of my reading experience and it is through the many Arabic translations of our quite inadequate English word "love" as follows:

'Hubb' is love, 'ishq' is love that entwines two people together, 'shaghaf' is love that nests in the chambers of the heart, 'hayam' is love that wanders the earth, 'teeh' is love in which you lose yourself, 'walah' is love that carries sorrow within it, 'sababah' is love that exudes from your pores, 'hawa' is love that shares its name with 'air' and with 'falling', 'gharam' is love that is willing to pay the price. (pp 386-7.)

I look forward to reading another book by Ahdaf Soueif to learn more about love and about life.

– J. J. Wilson

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 Adichie, 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 proscriptive, 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 exhibition 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

VOLUNTEER TRAINING AT OUR PUBLIC LIBRARY

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.

SUPPORT THE LIVING ROOM

The Living Room



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 category files for 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 arcana 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 anguishes 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 childrens' 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.



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WORKSHOPS

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