



# THE SITTING ROOM

## A COMMUNITY LIBRARY

SPRING 2017

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](http://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.*

#### SCIENCE FICTION SALONS WITH KIM HESTER-WILLIAMS AND TERRY EHRET

You might say that women have been writing Science Fiction since 1818, the year Mary Shelley published her novel, *Frankenstein*. Certainly their numbers have been increasing in recent decades and this Spring we've invited Kim Hester-Williams and Terry Ehret to hold salons on two of their favorite contemporary authors, Octavia Butler and Ursula K. Le Guin. Please join us to learn more and bring your own favorites to share.

#### IN THE HUNTINGTON WITH OCTAVIA: WHAT I LEARNED AND WHY EVERYONE SHOULD READ THE WORK OF OCTAVIA E. BUTLER

**Kim D. Hester Williams, Saturday, March 11, 1-4 p.m.**

I am enthralled by the largess figure of Octavia Estelle Butler and have spent much time recently considering why Butler fascinates me and why she continues to touch so many lives in such meaningful ways.

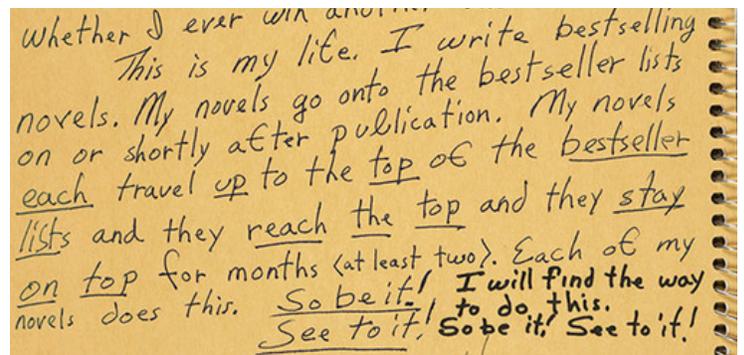
Who was Octavia Butler? As I initially explain to my students, Octavia Butler is one of the most accomplished writers in American letters especially in the science fiction genre. Her explorations of humanism, often portrayed through the lens of Black female experience, have continued to gain popularity and scholarly attention. In addition to being a 1995 MacArthur Fellow, Octavia Butler was the recipient of many distinguished awards and honors including multiple Nebula and Hugo awards and a Lifetime Achievement Award in Writing from the PEN American Center. Notably, in 2010 Butler was inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame. Sadly, she passed away in 2006 before she could fully witness her acclaim and significance, not only as a writer of increasing import, but as a feminist/womanist advocate for social justice change and her envisioning a world of equality, mutuality, and "thick" love.

To quote a reflective comment posted on the Octavia Butler Legacy website:

"To those of us...and to many others, she was not merely an author, she was an inspiration and a friend (literally, sometimes, for folks who knew her in life, metaphysically for those of us who know through her writing and archives alone). Butler's work and life speak to the need for diverse communities which support each other and challenge each other, embracing and shaping change within ourselves as individuals, within our smaller networks, and within the world" (June 2016 Shaping Change Conference" <http://octaviabutlerlegacy.com>).

Please join us as we further explore the prolific literary legacy and extraordinary life of feminist/womanist writer, Octavia Estelle Butler.

Kim D. Hester Williams teaches nineteenth-century American literature, African American literature and culture, and Women's literature in the U.S. Her current scholarship considers race, ecology, and Black eco-poetics with particular attention to the work of science fiction writer Octavia Butler. Dr. Hester Williams is co-editor of a collection of interdisciplinary essays on race and environment, *Racial Ecologies*, in which she authors a chapter entitled, "Earthseeds of Change: Post-Apocalyptic Mythmaking, Race, and Ecology in *The Book of Eli* and Octavia Butler's *Womanist Parables*." In addition to her scholarly work, she writes poetry which is grounded in the long tradition of African American womanist poetics.



*Handwritten notes on inside cover of one of Octavia E. Butler's commonplace books, 1988. Octavia E. Butler papers. The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens.*

#### "FISHING IN THE OCEAN OF STORY": THE VISIONARY WORLDS OF URSULA K. LE GUIN

**with Terry Ehret, Saturday, March 18, 2017 1-5 p.m.**

Profoundly influenced by the teachings of Lao Tzu as a small child, and growing up in the house where Ishi, last of the Yahi Tribe, once sat with her parents, Alfred and Theodora Kroeber, Ursula K. Le Guin began early to appreciate the world beyond words she has created again and again over her long career, and never twice in the same way.

Translator, poet, essayist, activist, short story writer, and author of more than 30 novels and novellas in the genres of young adult, children's literature, fantasy, sci-fi, historical and speculative fiction, Le Guin has something of a cult following around the world. In part, this is because the elaborate worlds she creates are richly enthralling; yet, her writing is not "escapist." Instead, she takes us deep into the inner space of the imagination to glimpse unseen dimensions of our human nature.

Join us at the Sitting Room for an afternoon reading and discussing two of UKL's most popular short stories: "She Unnames Them" and "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas." With a nod to Virginia Woolf, we'll also discuss UKL's "The Fisherwoman's Daughter," which reconsiders the question from *A Room of One's Own*: What does a woman need to write? Then we will end with her recent essay "The Election, Lao Tzu, a Cup of Water," offering her vision of the essential work that lies ahead.

Terry Ehret is the author of four collections of poetry, most recently *Night Sky Journey*. She is one of the founders of Sixteen Rivers poetry publishing collective, and from 2004-2006 she served as poet laureate of Sonoma County where she teaches writing. She regularly offers writing workshops at the Sitting Room, and in the summer, she leads writing-travel programs in Ireland, Wales, and Tuscany.



**LEVI AND THE LADIES: THE UNKNOWN STORY OF THE WOMEN IN THE LIFE OF BUSINESSMAN AND BLUE JEANS PIONEER LEVI STRAUSS** with Lynn Downey , Saturday, March 25, 2-4 p.m. Everybody knows his name, and millions of people wear the “Levi Strauss & Co.” label on their favorite jeans. The man himself, however, has been elusive for decades, but in a new biography former Levi’s historian Lynn Downey brings his extraordinary life to light. *Levi Strauss: The Man Who Gave Blue Jeans to the World* tells how this Bavarian immigrant helped create modern San Francisco, as well as the first blue jeans, and how his philanthropy changed thousands of lives throughout the Bay Area.

We think of Levi as the stern businessman in his black suit and silk tie, overseeing factories and warehouses, marshaling his male sales force to sell the jeans throughout the West. But this is just part of who he was, and in her talk at The Sitting Room Lynn Downey will tell the story of the women in Levi’s life and the parts they played in making him who he was: his mother, his sister, and the women who sewed the jeans. Downey will also have copies of her book available for purchase.

**SALON AND EXHIBIT ON ETEL ADNAN** with Barbara Lesch McCaffry , Sunday, April 2, 2-4 p.m. Etel Adnan is a significant Arab and Arab-American poet and painter who writes in both French and English. In the past few years she has at last received the international attention that she so richly deserves, but for many of us, she is also a local treasure. Barbara Lesch McCaffry will lead us in a tour of the Sitting Room’s exhibit of Adnan’s books and art followed by a discussion of a selection of her work whose subjects range from the political to the poetic to the philosophic.

Adnan was born in Beirut in 1925. In the household of her childhood, both Greek and Turkish were spoken. As Lebanon was a newly created French colony, all of the schools were run by the French Catholic Church. As the only child of mixed background in her school (her mother was Christian and her father Muslim), she had a unique upbringing with frequent visits to Damascus (Syria). “Thus,” she says, “I got used to standing between situations, to being a bit marginal and still a native, to getting acquainted with notions of truth which were relative and changed like the hours of the days and the passing of the seasons.” Adnan has published an enormous range of works: from the internationally recognized novel about the Lebanese Civil War (*Sitt Marie Rose*) to volumes of poetry (*The Indian Never Had a Horse and Other Poems*) to essays (*Paris, When It’s Naked*) to a collection of letters (*Of Cities and Women*). She has even translated her own work from French into English (*The Arab Apocalypse*) and from English into French (*Journey to Mount Tamalpais*). And in 2016 she had a major exhibition of her work at the Serpentine Gallery in London.

Please drop into the Sitting Room to view the exhibit that is currently on display and join us for a taste of the works of this most remarkable woman. No rsvp necessary. If you have any questions, call (707-235-5582) or email Barbara Lesch McCaffry at [mccaffry@sonoma.edu](mailto:mccaffry@sonoma.edu). Watch our website for samples of her work and stop by the Sitting Room where copies of *Sitt Marie Rose* are also available. With thanks to Joyce Libeu who assisted in organizing and mounting the exhibit.

**SEARCHING FOR GOLD SPOT: BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKERS AND THE WILD AFTER WILDFIRES** Film and conversation with Maya Khosla, Saturday, May 6, 2-4 p.m. Three years ago, Sonoma County poet and wildlife biologist Maya Khosla joined a team of scientists studying the rapidly recovering post-fire forests of the Sierra Nevada-Cascades Region. She



observed how modern fire management practices of logging and seeding interfere with an ecosystem’s ability to restore itself. Her film, “Searching for Gold Spot,” is devoted to the brighter side of wildlife after wildfire. “To discover the rapid comeback of life after wildfire is to realize what the natural world has grasped for eons: wildfires of the American west are agents of rejuvenation and restoration.” Maya’s essays, films and poetry include *Web of Water: Life in Redwood Creek*; *Tapping the Fire*, *Turning the Steam*; *Securing the Future with Geothermal Energy*; *Keel Bone*, a book of her poetry, and films for the Turtle Diaries Project.

**AN ALTERNATIVE MEMORIAL CELEBRATION** with J. J. Wilson and Marie McNaughton, Sunday, May 21, 2:00-4:00 p.m. The Sitting Room’s annual and surprisingly cheerful version of Memorial Day, when we remember and read from women writers we admire who have died since last year this time. And there are always some pop up obituaries from our Collection to provide laughter and tears and admiration. All are welcome, no need to rsvp, no need to stay the whole time (though I wouldn’t miss a minute of it myself...).

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO US!** Sunday, June 4, 2:00-4:00 p.m. Let them eat Cake! Not reason enough? Come then to hear the always poignant and telling readings from the Sitting Room’s annual publication (see Page 2) which will stimulate conversations among us all on the curiously real relationships we have established with literary characters. And, of course, the Sitting Room, vain as she is and greedy, loves any gifts so long as they are on paper....

No rsvp necessary, unless you are one of the contributors to this year’s publication and wish to read your piece at the event. All guests should park in the Church of Christ parking lot, our good neighbors right next door, but if you need easy access, do park in Sitting Room driveway. See you there – and if you want to come dressed as your favorite literary character, all the better!

**COME GET TO KNOW TILLIE AND MERIDEL!** with J.J. Wilson, Saturday, June 10, from 9:30 thru lunch time Tillie Olsen and Meridel Le Sueur will get our attention in an interactive workshop which will remind us of their active political and literary lives. Who knows what they would have said/done/written about the present administration....

Both women were unabashed fans of the Sitting Room and so we have extensive collections of their writings, of writings of writers they admired, and then bulging archives of their communications with us. It will be a treat to explore these rich holdings by two – and I rarely use the word – *unique* writers. To sign up, please email J.J. Wilson after **May 10** at [boxcar@sonic.net](mailto:boxcar@sonic.net).

**SHAKE, RATTLE AND WRITE** with Sharon Bard, Saturday, June 17, 10-3 p.m. for another exciting movement and writing workshop. In this ½ day event we will explore the vibrations that live in us from cradle to grave. Whether utter trepidation, sheer excitement, or something in between, this pulse can be felt as a heartbeat or lie undetected as a neurological firing. It’s the “juice” which moves us, both physically and mentally. Let’s drink this elixir of tremble and thunder, engaging in gentle creative movements and literary expressions. All levels welcome. Contact Sharon at [srbard@comcast.net](mailto:srbard@comcast.net) to register or for more information. Suggested donation: \$20 - \$40, proceeds to benefit the Sitting Room.

## SITTING ROOM 2017 PUBLICATION THE NEED TO READ: MY BLF, BEST LITERARY FRIEND

Are there times in yr life when you have turned to a literary character for comfort and company – an imagined friend who sticks with you through thick and thin? Or indeed, an adversary, someone who gets under yr skin, reminds you of some of the shapes of evil. For this year's one page essay, revisit this literary relationship, mining it for meaning and showing readers how this fictional character helped you in trying times. Firmly base it in the book using quotes, points of view, philosophies of life, actions, etc. so that we can all experience the gift of this friendship and feel the need to read. Send us your tributes, preferably from your adult years of reading, be they on Morrison's *Sethe*, Lily Briscoe in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, *Demian* in Hesse's eponymous book, Adichie's *Efemelu* or indeed, *Lady MacBeth*.... We look forward to reading them and to publishing all who follow the guidelines, which are the usual:

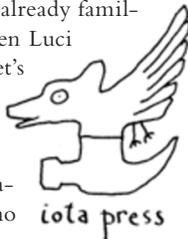
The pieces are to be no longer than a page, 400 words, with 1" margins on both right and left sides, single or double space, with an original title please, and your name at the bottom; on a separate cover page, your name, mailing address, phone, emails, and the title of your contribution. Please send your piece electronically as a word attachment to [sittingroom2017@gmail.com](mailto:sittingroom2017@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.

**All contributions will be accepted**, if they address the theme and follow the format and arrive by **April 1, 2017**. You do not have to be a "member" of the *Sitting Room* to contribute or indeed any one gender or age.

And in case you missed it, our 2016 Anthology, *Marriage in Literature and in Life*, is still available. Stop by for a copy or write [SittingroomLibrary@gmail.com](mailto:SittingroomLibrary@gmail.com)

**SAPPHO UPDATE** Sappho, the Sitting Room's online catalog, is constantly growing, now containing over 5,200 titles. 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](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](mailto:kpetaluma@gmail.com). Of course nothing compares to an "in-person" browse, but Sappho can keep you company until you make a trip to the Sitting Room, and/or can direct you to specific books once you're here!

**IOTA Press Tour Coming Soon** Many of you are already familiar with IOTA Press in Sebastopol. You may have seen Luci Friesen's beautiful letterpress broadside of Terry Ehret's poem, "Infinite Rocking", in the Jane Flood Poetry Room. Eric Johnson, proprietor and guiding light of IOTA, will lead us on a tour of the press, tell a little of its fascinating history (Don Emblem was an inspiration) and introduce us to some of fine printers who work there regularly. If interested, please let Karen know and we will set a date later this year ([kpetaluma@gmail.com](mailto:kpetaluma@gmail.com)).



**THE SITTING ROOM BOOK GROUP** meets the third Wednesday of every month from 2 to 4 pm. Booklist updates (and sometimes there are changes) are posted on the website, [www.SittingRoom.org](http://www.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.

**ARCHIVES WORKSHOP WITH LYNN DOWNEY Coming Soon** Archivist and historian Lynn Downey (see Levi Strauss above) will join us for a special look at the world of archives and how the treasures of the Sitting Room's Women Writers Archive fit into this larger world. What exactly IS an archive? And how can we share the rich treasures in the Sitting Room with readers? We'll look at some examples for inspiration: the Tillie Olsen archive at Stanford, the Meridel Le Sueur Papers at the Minnesota Historical Society, and the Sitting Room's own Women Writers Archives right here. Attendance is limited to do justice to the material, so please rsvp ([kpetaluma@gmail.com](mailto:kpetaluma@gmail.com)) if you are interested in attending. Likely time is late May or June.

"Spreading Clouds"

I see the Greek eyes of my  
mother looking over the  
agony of my Arab father  
  
two civilizations were dying  
together  
two strange lovers were  
saying goodbye to the  
world

I don't want to watch our  
planet go the way they did:  
reluctantly having learned  
the great secret at the moment  
of the Great Journey.

Etel Adnan

*The Indian Never Had a Horse*

**WORKSHOPS WITH TERRY EHRET and DAN COSHNEAR AT THE SITTING ROOM** Terry will be offering one workshop at the Sitting Room in the spring of 2017. 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, [tehret99@comcast.net](mailto:tehret99@comcast.net). Dan Coshnear regularly offers workshops here as well. For latest, contact him, [coshn@sonic.net](mailto:coshn@sonic.net)

**VOLUNTEER@THE SITTING ROOM Web Editor Needed!** After many years of service, web editor Clarice Stasz is looking for someone to replace her. The website uses Weebly, an easy, free program for anyone at ease on the computer. If you use Word, you can Weebly. The assignment does not take much time and brings creative rewards as well. Clarice will train the new editor and share the duties through 2017. If you are interested, contact her for more info at [cmstasz@gmail.com](mailto:cmstasz@gmail.com).

There are many other ways to volunteer at the Sitting Room, from shelving books, organizing our Archives, giving tours and serving tea. Check our Volunteer page on the website for more info: [www.SittingRoom.org/volunteer](http://www.SittingRoom.org/volunteer)

**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](http://www.SittingRoom.org). You can also "follow" us on Facebook, [www.facebook.com/thesittingroomlibrary](http://www.facebook.com/thesittingroomlibrary) If you would like to receive email reminders of events at the Sitting Room, please contact [sittingroomlibrary@gmail.com](mailto:sittingroomlibrary@gmail.com)

**THANK YOU!** We would like to acknowledge a generous gift to the Sitting Room by **Lisa Goben** in memory of her dear friend, **Ginger Clemons** who loved books and who "always always supported me in my writing."

**SITTING ROOM INTERNS** Regulars at the Sitting Room will be happy to know that two of our Fall interns will be back this Spring - Amelia-Marie Alstadt and Katelynn Jasper - to give tours, take on projects, keep the calendar up to date, and to make you a cup of tea to match your mood or the mood you want to have. Do drop by to give them a sense of purpose - and of course to thank them for all they do to improve the Sitting Room and to liven it up.



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### COMMUNITY EVENTS

*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.  
[www.sonoma.edu/wgs/lectures/](http://www.sonoma.edu/wgs/lectures/)

##### Holocaust Lecture Series

Tuesdays@4pm, Warren Auditorium.  
Full details at [www.sonoma.edu/holocaust/](http://www.sonoma.edu/holocaust/)

#### SANTA ROSA JUNIOR COLLEGE

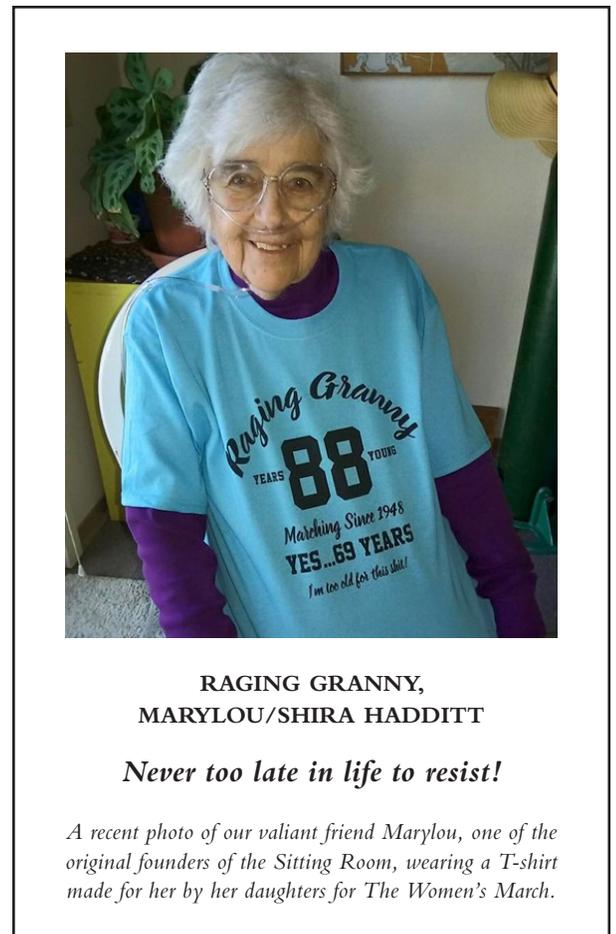
Celebrating Women's History Month with an extensive series of lectures and films, on both the Santa Rosa and Petaluma campuses. A special emphasis this year on **Women in STEM**.

Monday, March 6, Noon, Newman Auditorium  
Dr. Dawn Kernagis: **NEEMO 21, the NASA underwater habitat.**

Thursday, March 9, 3:30, Bertolini Student Center

##### **CODE: Debugging the Gender Gap.**

Film and panel exploring lack of women and minorities in computer science.  
Details: <https://events.santarosa.edu/event/womens-history-month-2017>



**RAGING GRANNY,  
MARYLOU/SHIRA HADDITT**

***Never too late in life to resist!***

*A recent photo of our valiant friend Marylou, one of the original founders of the Sitting Room, wearing a T-shirt made for her by her daughters for The Women's March.*