

## WHAT MAKES A COMPELLING MEMOIR?

*a virtual conversation featuring*

*Marcia Meier, author of FACE: A MEMOIR*

*Don Mitchell, author of SHIBAI: REMEMBERING JANE BRITTON'S MURDER*

*Jayne Benjulian, writing coach and author of FIVE SEXTILLION ATOMS*

*Ruth Thompson, poet and senior editor of Saddle Road Press*

Saturday, February 20, 2021

4:00 - 5:00 PM Eastern

2:00 - 3:00 Mountain

*This is a free online event but registration is required. Please register [HERE](#)*

*What makes a compelling memoir? Join the authors of two fascinating and unusual memoirs, teachers and writing coaches who work with memoir writers, and the editor of a literary press, for this hour-long Zoom conversation. Great for readers, writers, and those with memoirs waiting to be written!*

### **MARCIA MEIER: FACE**

At age five, Marcia Meier was hit by a car, losing the left side of her face and eyelid. Over the next fifteen years she underwent twenty surgeries and spent days blinded by bandages, her hands tied to the sides of her hospital bed. Scarred both physically and emotionally, abused at school, blamed and rejected by her mother, Marcia survived and went on to create a successful life as a began a journey into the darkness of her past, her true identity, her deepest beliefs - a spiritual and emotional exploration that resulted in the creation of Face.

Marcia Meier is an award-winning writer, writing coach and developmental book editor. A newspaper journalist for nearly twenty years, she holds a bachelor's degree in journalism and an MFA in creative writing, and has taught writing at the collegiate level and in private workshops for more than twenty years.

### **DON MITCHELL: SHIBAI**

In Japanese culture, shibai means "drama," or "play," but in Hawaiian slang it means "smokescreen," "bullshit," "gaslighting." Don Mitchell weaves together the brutal 1969 murder of his friend, Harvard graduate student Jane Britton, his harassment by law enforcement and the media, the language and culture of the Nagovisi people of Bougainville, the Big Island and its high barrens of the dormant volcano Mauna Kea, ultra running and walking, and the New York milieus of Buffalo and Ithaca, to explore how memory and meaning shapeshift, the way facts can shatter long-held perceptions about one's self and others, and how love and connection transcend time and culture.

Don Mitchell grew up in Hilo, on the island of Hawai'i, studied anthropology, evolutionary biology, and creative writing at Stanford and earned a PhD in anthropology from Harvard. He lived among the Nagovisi people of Bougainville for several years in the 1960s and 1970s. His stories have won a Pushcart nomination and awards from the Society for Humanistic Anthropology, New Millennium Writings and other journals. Saddle Road Press publishing his book of short fiction *A Red Woman Was Crying*, in 2013.

#### **JAYNE BENJULIAN: FIVE SEXTILLION ATOMS**

*Five Sextillion Atoms* is notable for the ways in which the poems combine stories of family history with larger matters of public history. While the concerns are often highly elegiac, the poems scrupulously avoid sentimentality and effusions. In portraits and satire, the collection unveils the making of a poet.

Jayne Benjulian is the author of *Five Sextillion Atoms* and poems and essays in numerous literary and performance journals. She was shortlisted for the James Hearst Poetry Prize and the Bridport Prize. Jayne served as Apple's chief speechwriter and director of new play development at Magic Theatre in San Francisco. She has been an Ossabaw Island Project Fellow; teaching fellow at Emory University; lecturer in the Graduate Program in Theater at San Francisco State University; and Fulbright Teaching Fellow in Lyon, France. She earned an MFA at the Warren Wilson Program for Writers and lives in the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts. Jayne is an inspired writing coach. She works as a developmental editor, coaching writers in drafting and revising their manuscripts. [jaynebenjulian.com](http://jaynebenjulian.com)

#### **RUTH THOMPSON: WHALE FALL & BLACK SAGE**

Ruth Thompson is a poet and the senior editor for Saddle Road Press. She is the author of two full-length books of poetry and two chapbooks. Her most recent book of poems is *Whale Fall & Black Sage* (2019). Ruth holds a BA in English from Stanford University and a PhD in English from Indiana University. She has been an English professor, a professional book editor, and a college dean. Her "fierce, gorgeous, sensual" poems of earth-as-body and body-as-earth have won *New Millennium Writings*, *Chautauqua*, and other national awards and have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. She started Saddle Road Press in 2011 and a new imprint, Two Fine Crows Books, in 2021.