

# Praise

FOR LESLIE JAMISON

*The Empathy Exams* is a book without an anaesthetic, a work of tremendous pleasure and tremendous pain. Leslie Jamison is alternately surgeon, midwife, psychiatrist, radiologist, and nurse— and in all these things she is fiercely intelligent, fiercely compassionate, and fiercely, prodigiously brave. This is the essay at its creative, philosophical best.

—Eleanor Catton, winner of the 2013 Man Booker Prize

These essays—risky, brilliant, and full of heart—ricochet between what it is to be alive and to be a creature wondering what it is to be alive. Jamison's words, torqued to a perfect balance, shine brightly, allowing both fury and wonder to open inside us.

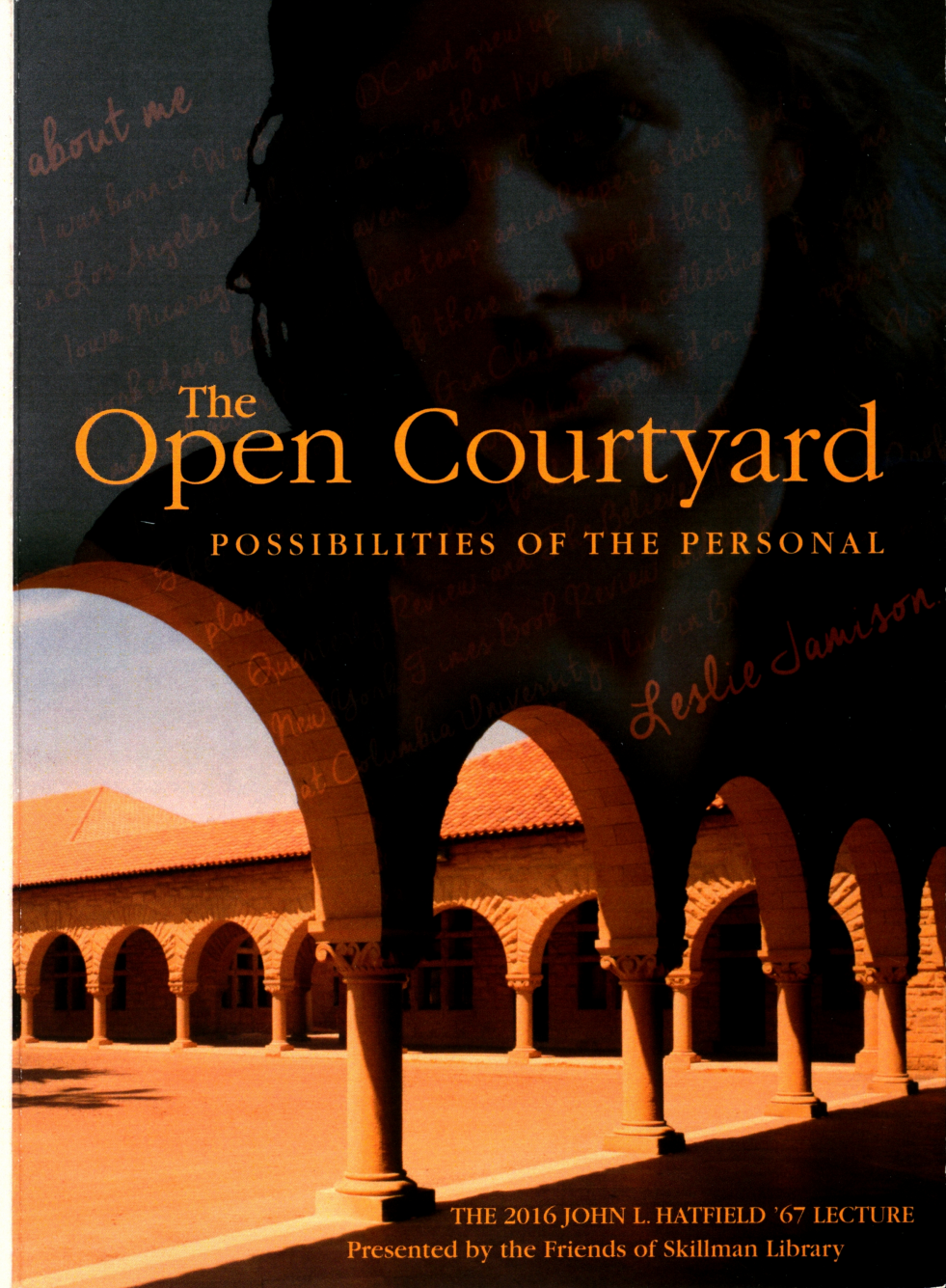
—Nick Flynn

*The Empathy Exams* earns its place on the shelf alongside Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others* and *Illness as Metaphor* and Virginia Woolf's odd but stunning essay, *On Being Ill*. Like Woolf, Leslie Jamison comes to her subject but finds nothing ready made, or, at best, a rickety, suspect vocabulary, and so, starting over, takes her "pain in one hand, and a lump of pure sound in the other" and crushes them together until a vital new language begins to emerge.

—Charles D'Ambrosio

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# The Open Courtyard

POSSIBILITIES OF THE PERSONAL

Leslie Jamison

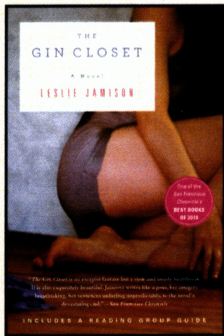
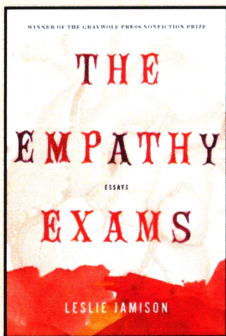
THE 2016 JOHN L. HATFIELD '67 LECTURE  
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**LESLIE JAMISON** is an extraordinarily gifted writer whose work explores the strengths and limits of our shared humanity with great insight and compassion. Her writing has been called at once “profound” and “intellectual” and then “poetic” and “philosophical.” She’s often compared to Joan Didion and Susan Sontag, the inheritor of a great American literary tradition.

Her most recent book, a collection of essays called *The Empathy Exams*, won the 2012 Graywolf Press Nonfiction Prize and spent several weeks on the *New York Times* bestseller list. It’s a book about medical acting, ultra-runners, prison, parasites, silver mines, gang tours, and — beyond and beneath all else — the possibilities, texture, and limits of compassion. *The Empathy Exams* was named one of the best books of the year by NPR, the *New York Times*, and *Publishers Weekly*.

*The Gin Closet*, Jamison’s first book was a finalist for the 2010 *Los Angeles Times* Art Seidenbaum First Fiction Award and one of the *San Francisco Chronicle*’s best books of the year. *Booklist* called the novel “hauntingly beautiful.” A columnist for the *New York Times Book Review*, Jamison’s articles, essays and fiction have also appeared in *Harper’s*, *The Believer*, *Oxford American*, *Tin House*, and *Virginia Quarterly Review*.



Jamison is a graduate of Harvard College and the Iowa Writers’ Workshop, and she is currently finishing her PhD at Yale University, where she is writing a dissertation on addiction narratives. She has taught at Iowa, Wesleyan, Yale, and NYU, and in 2015 she was appointed an assistant professor at Columbia University’s School of the Arts Writing Program.

Jamison was born in Washington, DC and raised in Los Angeles. Her aunt is the noted psychologist Kay Redfield Jamison and her husband is the novelist Charles Bock. Jamison’s biography lists baker, office temp, innkeeper, tutor, and medical actor among her experiences. “Every one of these was a world,” she writes, “they’re still in me.”

# The Open Courtyard

POSSIBILITIES OF THE PERSONAL

Leslie Jamison

Author

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4

4:30 pm

104 Kirby Hall of Civil Rights

Reception and book signing following in lobby

Personal writing gets accused of being many things: solipsistic, narcissistic, claustrophobic, apolitical, sentimental, self-serving, or all of the above. In this talk, I’ll think about how personal writing can move beyond the parameters and particulars of an individual life in order to seek broader resonances. How can personal experience be deployed in the service of broader questions? How can it not? How can narratives interweave personal experience with other kinds of inquiry—like criticism and reportage? What are the ethical and aesthetic complexities of blending these modes? How can formal innovation open individual narratives outward in compelling ways? How can individual narratives help to shape and sustain communities?