

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - JUNE 2015

# *White Matter*

*A Memoir of Family and Medicine*

“It ripped a hole through my heart and left me bare.” - Joan Didion, author of *The Year of Magical Thinking*

“Full of questions, this memoir is a story of a young woman struggling to accept her mother’s mistakes.” - Howard Dully, author of *My Lobotomy*

“Stunning. The writing is gorgeous and the story, rife with sadness and with hope.” - Susanna Kaysen, author of *Girl, Interrupted*

*White Matter: A Memoir of Family and Medicine* is a story of a Jewish family of siblings, how two had lobotomies, and how that impacted the next generation. When Bennie, Janet Sternburg’s uncle, became violent toward his sisters, he undergoes a newly popular technique called a “prefrontal lobotomy.” The sisters tighten their hold on one another to keep their family safe, but when Francie, the youngest of the five, suffers a blow to her personal life, the sisters decide to have her have a lobotomy as well. Another story is woven throughout Janet’s, the scientific discovery of the lobotomy and how it became popular in the early 1950s then fell out of favor in the 1970s. The lobotomies impacted Janet’s childhood and skewed her vision of her mother and her aunts, even though the sisters truly believed the lobotomies would help the mental illnesses their siblings faced. Every generation must make difficult decisions, but what happens when that generation lives long enough to see the error in their choices? What happens when the next generation needs to deal with their consequences?



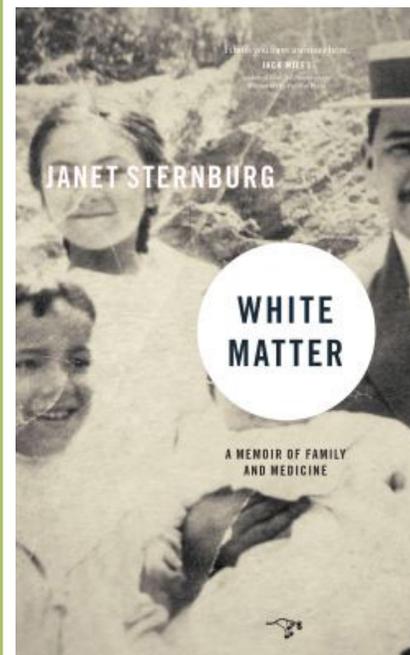
Janet Sternburg is a writer of memoir, essays, poetry, and plays, as well as a fine-art photographer. She lives and works in Los Angeles and San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. Her books include the memoir *Phantom Limb* and *Optic Nerve: Photopoems*. Janet has been awarded many fellowships and residencies, among them from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Embassy in Berlin, The MacDowell Colony, and the Djerassi Resident Artists Programs.

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*Janet struggles with her mother and aunts’ decision to lobotomize two of their siblings.*

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