Paul Kalanithi — a Stanford neurosurgeon, philosopher, and literary enthusiast — wrote a memoir in his final years, When Breath Becomes Air, as he faced lung cancer at age 37. It was shortlisted as a 2016 finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

The book, posthumously published in 2016, received high critical acclaim, evoking extraordinary worldwide interest. The event brings into conversation Paul Kalanithi’s wife, Lucy Kalanithi with writers Rebecca Soffer, Elizabeth Percer, and Elizabeth Scarboro to discuss a profound work filled with wisdom and meaning. The panel weaves together ideas of love, hope, mortality, survival and loss in the modern age.

Lucy Kalanithi, Rebecca Soffer, Elizabeth Percer, moderator, Elizabeth Scarboro

In Conversation

What Makes a Life Worth Living: Powerful Memoirs of Love and Loss

In his final year of life before dying of cancer, the young neurosurgeon Paul Kalanithi wrote the bestselling “When Breath Becomes Air,” probing how the mind makes meaning and why our lives matter. Now his widow, Lucy Kalanithi, is joined by Rebecca Soffer, editor of the new anthology “Modern Loss”, and writers Elizabeth Percer and Elizabeth Scarboro, to discuss mortality, survival, and navigating grief in the modern age.
Lucy Kalanithi, MD
Dr. Lucy Kalanithi, M.D., FACP, is the widow of the late Dr. Paul Kalanithi, author of the New York Times bestselling memoir, “When Breath Becomes Air,” for which Lucy wrote the epilogue. She completed her medical degree at Yale, where she was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society, her residency at the University of California, San Francisco, and a postdoctoral fellowship training in healthcare delivery innovation at Stanford’s Clinical Excellence Research Center. She is now an internal medicine physician and faculty member at the Stanford School of Medicine.

Elizabeth Percer
Elizabeth Percer is the author of the novels “All Stories Are Love Stories” and “An Uncommon Education.” She is a three-time nominee for the Pushcart Prize and has twice been honored by the Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Foundation. She received a PhD in arts education from Stanford University, and completed a postdoctoral fellowship for the National Writing Project at UC Berkeley. She lives in Northern California.

Rebecca Soffer
Rebecca Soffer is cofounder and CEO of Modern Loss, which offers original essays, resources and community and which the New York Times hailed as “redefining mourning.” She is also coauthor of “Modern Loss: Candid Conversation About Grief. Beginners Welcome.” Rebecca is a former producer for the Peabody Award-winning “The Colbert Report.” Her writing has appeared in outlets including The New York Times, Marie Claire, Cosmopolitan and Refinery29 and she has presented at Chicago Ideas Week, Kripalu, The Commonwealth Club, and HBO. Rebecca holds a degree from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and lives in New York City with her husband and two children.

Elizabeth Scarboro
Elizabeth Scarboro is the author of the memoir “My Foreign Cities,” which was chosen by the San Francisco Chronicle and Library Journal as a Best Book of 2013. She is also the author of two novels for children. Her essays have appeared most recently in The New York Times, The Millions, and the Bellevue Literary Review. She lives with her family in Berkeley, where she works as an elementary school literacy coach.

Bay Area Book Festival
Over the weekend of April 28-29, 2018, the Fourth Annual Bay Area Book Festival will fill downtown Berkeley with a literary extravaganza that offers pleasure to anyone who has ever loved a book.

Whether you’re a fan of science fiction or history, of fiction or memoir, of poetry or food writing, of children’s literature or science, experience one of the nation’s premier book festivals right here in the Bay Area!

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SACHI extends grateful appreciation to Jadeja Family Foundation for generous program support.