

The Sentence Is the Story: Reading, Writing, and Revising for Style and Sound  
Friday, 9-10:15 am  
Terrace Suite II, Summit Building, Seattle Convention Center, Level 4

## Event Description

Five writers enamored with sentences will discuss the pleasure and power of line-level reading, writing, and revision. We approach sentences in terms of musicality, mouth feel, the “felt quality” of sound, syntactic symbolism, and the physicality of sentences (musculature, torque, momentum.) We’ll talk about first and last sentences, the one-sentence paragraph, the way prose can evoke a story through close-focus description, and the underlying idea that poetic devices are also at work in prose.

## Welcome:

Welcome to The Sentence Is the Story: Reading, Writing, and Revising for Style and Sound.

A few reminders before we begin:

- For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let the moderator of the panel, (identify moderator), know, and a printed outline will be delivered to you.
- Please make sure that spaces marked for wheelchairs remain clear of chairs or other barriers.
- Treat service animals as working animals and do not attempt to distract or pet them.
- Be aware of those with chemical sensitivities and refrain from wearing scented products.
- Please be aware that your fellow attendees may have invisible disabilities. Do not question anyone’s use of an accommodation while at the conference, including for chairs reserved for those with disabilities.

## Introductions--bios:

Matt Bell is the author of the novels *APPLESEED*, *SCRAPPER*, and *IN THE HOUSE UPON THE DIRT BETWEEN THE LAKE AND THE WOODS*, the story collection *A TREE OR A PERSON OR A WALL*, and two works of

nonfiction, REFUSE TO BE DONE and BALDUR'S GATE II. He teaches Creative Writing at Arizona State University.

Alexander Chee is the author of the novels *Edinburgh* and *The Queen of the Night*, and *How To Write An Autobiographical Novel*, a collection of essays. He is a recipient of the Whiting Writers Award and a NEA in Fiction, and is an associate professor of English at Dartmouth College.

Allegra Hyde is the author of the novel *ELEUTHERIA* (Vintage 2022) and the story collection *OF THIS NEW WORLD* (U Iowa Press 2016), which won the John Simmons Short Fiction Award. Her second story collection, *THE LAST CATASTROPHE*, is forthcoming from Vintage. She currently teaches at Oberlin College.

Dantiel W. Moniz is the recipient of a National Book Foundation “5 Under 35” Award and a Pushcart Prize. Her debut collection, *Milk Blood Heat*, is a finalist for the PEN/Jean Stein Award and the PEN/Robert W. Bingham Prize, and she teaches fiction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Miciah Bay Gault's debut novel *GOODNIGHT STRANGER* was a finalist for the Shirley Jackson Award and longlisted for the Center for Fiction’s First Book Prize. She's faculty in the MFA in Writing program at VCFA and coordinator of the Vermont Book Award.

Moderator questions:

1. When we first started emailing about this panel idea, it quickly became clear that we all had a lot to say about sentences—that there was a deep appreciation, or really an excitement, for this unit of writing. So here we are—five prose writers—and can we start just by talking about our relationship with sentences? In other words, why is this topic interesting, important, thrilling, for each of you?
2. Alex, will you talk more about something you said when we were emailing about this panel idea, this idea of “immersive writing, the way prose can both evoke a story as well as tell it through close focus descriptions.” (then others can dive in as well)

3. Dantiel, you said so beautifully in our email correspondence that you think of sentences in terms of “musicality and rhythm, white space and mouth feel.” Will you elaborate on that?
4. And Matt, will you talk about syntactic symbolism here? (And then we’ll all weigh in. I’ll talk about the Mary Oliver idea of the “felt quality of sound”—which is more or less the same thing as syntactic symbolism)
5. Another idea that came up in our initial conversations about this panel was the idea of the sentence as an almost physical object. Allegra, you wrote about “how readers might experience the sensation of musculature, torque, and, certainly, momentum.” And I loved the idea of the sentence as having the properties of an object with mass, with density. Will you talk a little more about sentences in that way? (then open to all).
6. Teaching: Our students often know how to proofread but not how to rigorously line-edit for musicality, beauty, and meaning. It’s a skill with many approaches. Any specific exercises that have worked in the classroom to inspire students to read and write and revise with sentence-level sound and style in mind?
7. I’ll ask about first sentences (Allegra—some ideas from that great essay on openings?), last sentences, and the one-sentence paragraph (Alex, I’ll ask you about this for sure).