

T164. (12:10 p.m. – 1:25 p.m.)

Rooms 343-344, Summit Building, Seattle Convention Center, Level 3

WELCOME STATEMENTS:

Welcome to “Playing the Long Game: Novels and Memoirs Ten Years (or More) in the Making.” Thank you all for being here. I’ll offer up some basic reminders, deliver some remarks, and then introduce the panelists.

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 know—that’s me, Katie Cortese, and a printed copy 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.

Opening Remarks:

My motivation for proposing this panel was entirely selfish. I’ve published two short story collections, but I’m just recently submitted my fourth full novel draft to my agent—and so far, I have published zero novels. Intellectually, I think most writers understand that writing takes time, sometimes a lot of time, and those of us laboring on long-form

books have often saved up a stable of comforting anecdotes about other writers who took their time when publishing first or sophomore efforts (my favorites are Laura Ingalls Wilder, who didn't publish her first book until she was 65, and Marilyn Robinson, who published *Housekeeping* in 1980, and then came out with *Gilead* in 2004). Still, even though we can generally offer grace and boatloads of understanding to other authors, it's often hard to extend it to ourselves, and that can make it demoralizing to return to our drafts and keep the faith about our own projects, especially when we start aging out of the 30 under 30 category of achievement. However, the truth is that persistence is often the prime determinant of success in our line of work, and while writers who publish early and often do sometimes get the lion's share of attention, there are plenty of writers who have found publication, acclaim, and a dedicated readership after pouring many years into a project, overcoming a variety of struggles, self-doubt, pandemics, the demands of families and careers, and other difficulties. Four of them are with us this afternoon, and I will introduce them one by one, after which each of them will briefly speak about their own various paths to publication before answering a few questions from me and then more from some of you out in the audience.

After everyone's introduction, I'll throw out a few questions for discussion, and then we'll open up the conversation with some questions from the audience.

So, in the order in which they are seated, our panelists are ...

V.V. Ganeshananshan: V. V. Ganeshanathan's debut novel, *Love Marriage*, was longlisted for the Orange Prize and named one of *Washington Post Book World's* Best of 2008. Her work has appeared in *Granta* and *The New York Times*, among other publications. A 2014 NEA and Radcliffe Fellow, she teaches at the University of Minnesota.

Melissa Duclos: Melissa Duclos is the author of the novel *Besotted*. Her work has appeared in the *Washington Post*, *Salon*, and *The Offing*, among other venues. She is the cofounder of Amplify Writers and has an MFA from Columbia University.

Deborah Taffa: Deborah Taffa is the director of the MFA creative writing program at IAIA in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Winner of the PEN Jean Stein Grant, her memoir *Whiskey Tender* is forthcoming from HarperCollins Harper in 2023. A Public Space, MacDowell, Hedgebrook, Tin House, and Kranzberg Fellow, she's from the Quechan Nation and Laguna Pueblo.

Jai Chakrabarti: Jai Chakrabarti is the author of the novel *A Play for the End of the World*, which won the National Jewish Book Award, was the Association of Jewish Libraries Honor Book, was short-listed for the Tagore Prize and long-listed for the PEN/Faulkner Award. He is also the author of the story collection, *A Small Sacrifice for an Enormous Happiness*.

Katie Cortese: I'm Katie Cortese, the author of *Girl Power and Other Short-Short Stories* (ELJ Editions, 2015) and *Make Way for Her and Other Stories* (University Press of Kentucky, 2018). I teach in the creative writing program at Texas Tech University where I also serve as the faculty director for Texas Tech University Press and the series editor for the Iron Horse Prize.

MODERATOR QUESTIONS:

We will plan to leave at least ten-fifteen minutes for questions. The moderator will kick off the Q&A period by asking panelists the following three questions, after which, she will open up the session to the audience.

- 1) What kept you going on your book? Did you ever consider abandoning it?
- 2) What kinds of support did you seek out while working on your projects? Which were the most or the least helpful?
- 3) What advice do you have for other authors working on long-form projects for a long period of time—both in terms of sustaining their efforts, and in terms of seeking publication when the project feels finished?

QUESTIONS WILL NOW BE TAKEN FROM THE AUDIENCE UNTIL THE TIME ALLOTTED FOR THE PANEL ELAPSES.