

Authentic Friendships Between Women in Literature & Life

No one breaks your heart like a woman, especially when a woman breaks another woman's heart. Female friendships make or break us in ways no other relationship can. How do we draw from these experiences that reverberate through lifetimes? How do they impact our work?

Four critically acclaimed authors dynamically engage with one another, drawing from their multi-genre works as well as their own experiences, to discuss the role of authentically crafting these friendships in literature and in life.

Welcome & Introductions in no particular order:

Dantiel W. Moniz is the recipient of a Pushcart Prize and the Alice Hoffman Prize for Fiction. Her debut collection, *Milk Blood Heat*, is an Indie Next Pick and her work has appeared in magazines such as the *Paris Review*. Moniz is an Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Amy Jo Burns is the author of *Cinderland*, a memoir, and *Shiner*, a novel that was a Barnes and Noble Discover Pick and an NPR Best Book of the Year. Her writing has appeared in *Elle*, *Good Housekeeping*, *The Paris Review Daily*, *Electric Literature*, *Literary Hub*, and the anthology *Not That Bad*.

Alisson Wood's award-winning writing has been published in the *New York Times*, *The Paris Review*, *The Rumpus*, *Vogue*, and *Vanity Fair*. She is the founder and Editor in Chief of *Pigeon Pages*, a literary journal and reading series. Alisson is the author of *BEING LOLITA*, from Flatiron Books / Macmillan.

Steph Auteri has written for the *Atlantic*, the *Guardian*, *Pacific Standard*, *VICE*, and other publications. Her more literary work has appeared in *Poets & Writers*, *Creative Nonfiction*, *Under the Gum Tree*, and elsewhere. She is the author of *A Dirty Word* and the founder of *Guerrilla Sex Ed*.

Krystal Sital is the author of the critically acclaimed memoir *Secrets We Kept*. A PEN Award finalist, her essays have been anthologized in *A Map Is Only One Story* and *Fury: Women's Lived Experiences of the Trump Era*. Her work can also be found in *Elle*, *The New York Times*, and *Catapult*.

Q&A

Little intro to the conception of the panel:

Let's talk about female friendships. When I came up this panel it was alongside the development of an anthology I'm working on with Steph Auteri—here today—and the need for female friendships in real life but also as a focal point in literature.

Few more points:

-isolation, loneliness, pandemic

-scope of female friendships
-the need for it now

The term female can be problematic for some. In fact, Alisson asked me to change it to women so before we even get to female friendships can we contextualize the word female, how we interact with it, what it means to us when we talk about our girlfriends, what the limitations are on the word, what it includes, excludes, pressures, baggage, and/or liberation associated with it?

What are the roles of women writer friends vs their male counterpart? And what do you think is the importance of these female friendships for us as women writers?
Readers, cheerleaders, co-publicists, space for emotional support

What is the importance of writing/recreating female friendships on the page?

What are some techniques you use whether it's research, reflection, interviews, etc. that you use to write female friendships in authentic ways. I'm talking about ways in which you try to actively avoid female friendships that come across as corny or contrived. And if you don't try to avoid that in any way be it in writing or real life and embrace it instead, please elaborate either way.

How do our female friendships differ from our romantic relationships? And is that distinction important?

What is one unique takeaway about having female writing friendships/partnerships?

How do you find female friendships in your writing community?