

**Title:** Girl, Writer, Crone: The Creative & Professional Value of Community

**Event Description:** The romanticized masculine myth of the isolated writer has long defined the popular conception of writing life, but in this panel writers at different stages of their careers explore the essential, creatively generative, and personally sustaining nature of cultivating intergenerational artistic relationships, particularly among women writers. How has the influence of other writers shaped our work? In a culture that prizes individualism, this panel explores the richness of connection in the writer's life.

**Event Category:** Artistic and Professional Development

**Event Organizer:** Kirsten Sundberg Lunstrum

**Event Moderator:** Kristen Millares Young

**Event Participants:**

**Amber Flame** is an artist and performer, whose work has garnered artistic merit residencies with Hedgebrook, The Watering Hole, Wa Na Wari, Vermont Studio Center, and Yefe Nof. Flame served as the 2017-2019 poetry Writer-in-Residence at Hugo House in Seattle and is a queer Black dandy mama who falls hard for a jumpsuit and some fresh kicks.

**Puloma Ghosh** is a fiction writer living in Chicago, IL. Her work has appeared in *One Story*, *CRAFT* as a 2020 Flash Fiction Contest Winner, and elsewhere. She is a 2021 Tin House Summer Workshop Scholar and received her MFA from Bennington College, where she was the Spring 2020 Teaching Fellow. Puloma's debut collection of stories, *MOUTH*, is forthcoming from Astra House Books.

**Kirsten Sundberg Lunstrum** is the author of three short story collections: *This Life She's Chosen*, *Swimming With Strangers*, and *What We Do With the Wreckage*, which won the 2017 Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction. She teaches fiction writing at Hugo House and lives near Seattle.

**Kelly Sundberg** is the author of the memoir *Goodbye, Sweet Girl*. Her essays appear in *Best American Essays 2015*, *Guernica*, *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *The New York Times*, and elsewhere. She has a PhD in Creative Writing and is an Assistant Professor of English at Ashland University.

**Kristen Millares Young** is a prize-winning journalist, essayist, and author of the novel *Subduction* (Red Hen Press). Named a *Paris Review* staff pick, *Subduction* won Nautilus and IPPY awards. The editor of *Seismic*, a Washington State Book Award finalist, Kristen reviews books for the *Washington Post*. She is the 2023 Distinguished Visiting Writer at Seattle University.

### **Housekeeping Notes:**

Welcome to “Girl, Writer, Crone: The Creative & Professional Value of Community.”

A few reminders from AWP:

- For those needing or wishing to follow along to a written text, please let the moderator of the panel know, 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.

We want to note that because of a health concern, Patricia Henley is unable to join us on this panel. We wish her well. In her absence, we’re delighted to have Amber Flame stepping in to share in our conversation.

This panel will begin with brief introductions of the panelists, followed by the moderator’s framing remarks. We will then open conversation about the panel theme of cultivating community as a creatively generative and sustaining practice for an artist. Our moderator will integrate audience questions into the discussion throughout our panel’s conversation.

### **Moderator Opening Remarks:**

Kristen Millares Young, moderator, will open our conversation by sharing and discussing the following passage from Carl Phillips’s essay “Community: Finding Company On and Off the Page” (published in *The Yale Review*, 2022, <https://yalereview.org/article/carl-phillips-community>). Phillips writes:

“The subject of community comes up a lot among writers. The idea seems to be that because we are all writers (or substitute here any form of making), we have even more than that in common, we share a mutual respect and empathy for each other’s work, and we are there for each other, as a support system, for when we flounder in doubt, as we each sometimes do—as we must. But in its origins the word ‘community’ has to do mostly with shared physical space, and a community consists of people who have in common the buildings they’ve erected, from the Latin *munio*, to build or fortify. This latter idea of fortifying does seem a likely link to thinking of community as a form of support, *for* a group from *within* that group. But with the professionalization of the writing community has come the idea that such a community is required, even as an advanced degree increasingly can seem to be required to be an artist, when it is not. If I could impart to my students only one thing, it would be that there is no single right way to do any of this business of making a life as a writer. How can there be—why should there be—given differences in individual temperament and, when it comes to community, the different ways to define and think of it?”

### **Moderator Questions:**

- 1) What does community mean to you?
- 2) Can you name specific moments in your literary career that would not have happened without community?
- 3) What does it mean to build community, rather than receive its benefits passively?
- 4) Has there ever been a time when community became draining, rather than nourishing? How did you rebuild your relationship with that concept, and the people, to remain in community happily?