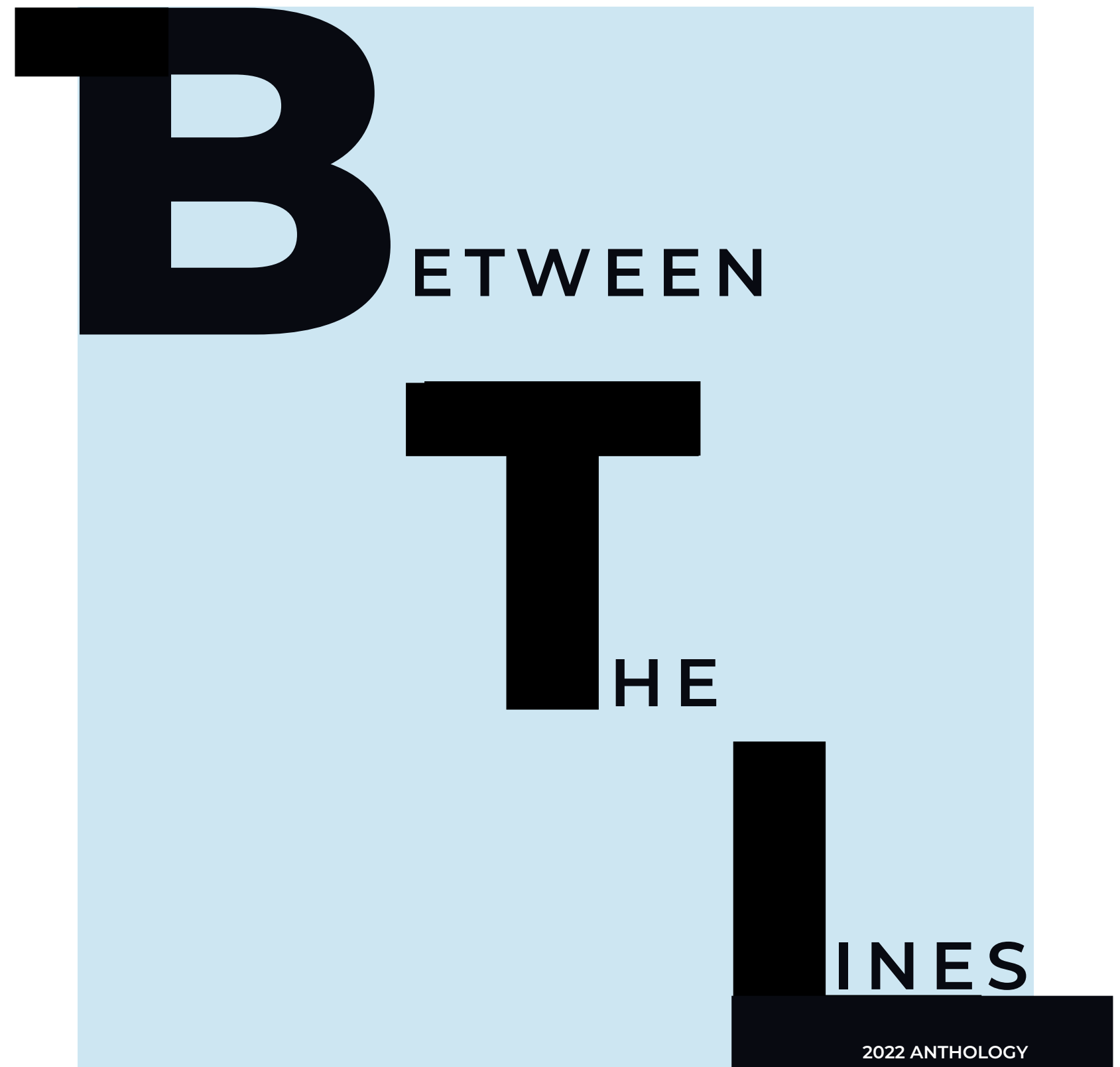


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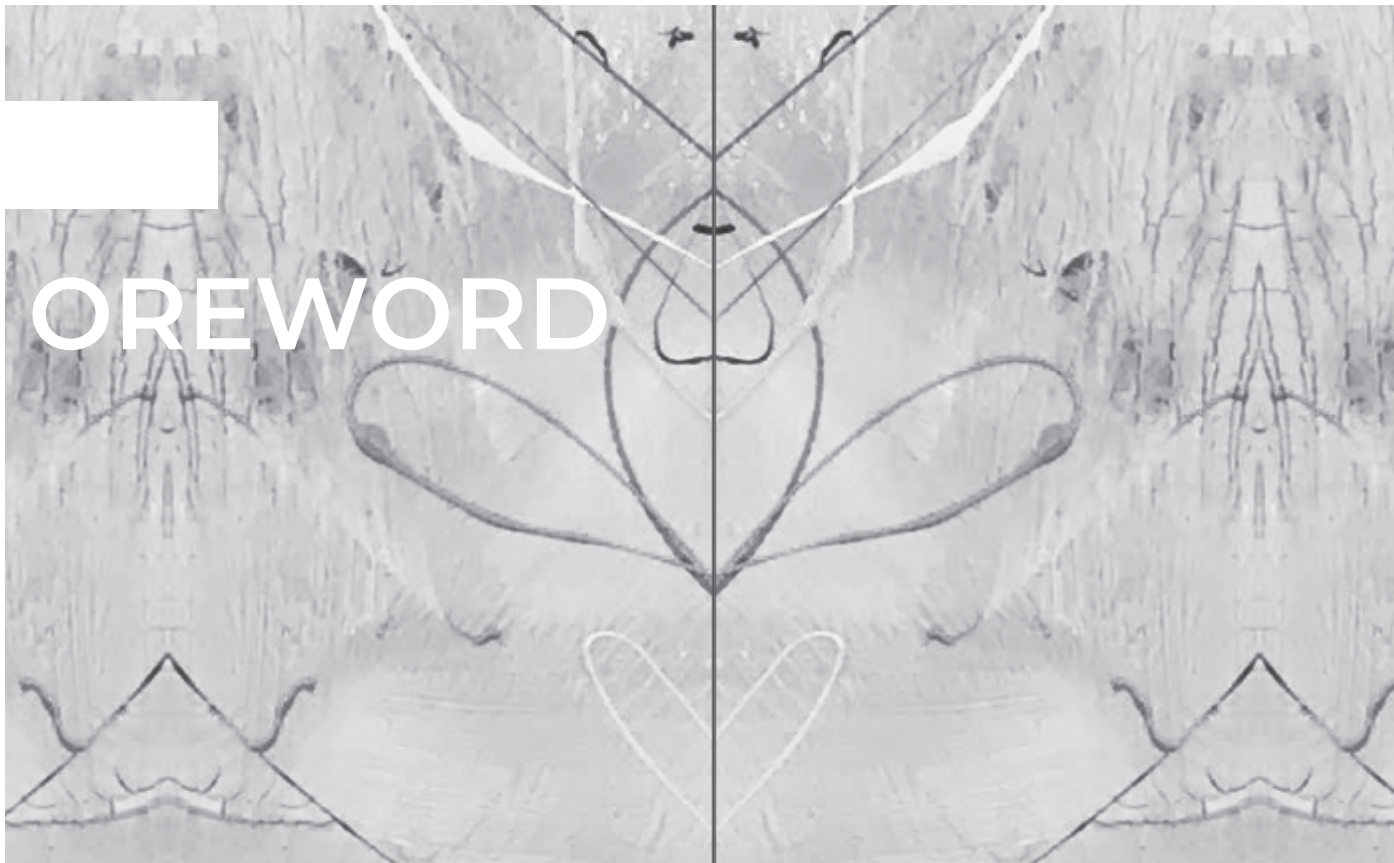


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Each year, since its inception in 2008, Between the Lines (BTL) has pursued innovation and growth. This year's program is again made possible by the generous support from the Cultural Programs Division of the U.S. Department of State, and the dedication of individuals and organizations that support the program's mission:

Christopher Merrill, International Writing Program (IWP) director; and all the staff of the IWP at the University of Iowa; Jill Staggs, Chris Miner, and Nancy Szalwinski, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State; Hannah Pell and Hiju Kim, Cultural Programs Division interns; BTL instructors: Mary Hickman, Rumena Bužarovska, Rochelle Potkar, and Vladimir Poleganov; BTL teaching assistants and seminar panelists: Sean Zhuraw, Delaney Nolan, Gyasi Hall, and alea adigweme; BTL summer assistant and seminar panelist: Mason Hamberlin; BTL anthology designer Georgie Fehringer; IWP editor Nataša Đurovičová; BTL program assistant Caitlin Plathe; BTL program coordinator Alisa Weinstein.

We also give our thanks to BTL's visiting writers and teaching artists: Melody Moezzi; IWP residents: Shehan Karunatilaka, Tariro Nodoro, Edwige Dro, Jidanun Lueangpiansamut, and Kateryna Babkina; BTL alumni Danju Zoe Liu (BTL '20) Libby Riggs (BTL '20), and Nina Ballerstedt (BTL '21); Justin Rogers, LaShaun phoenix Moore, and Shawntai Brown of InsideOut Literary Arts in Detroit; Dr. Camea Davis, Urban Word Youth Poet Laureate Network Director and Shanelle Gabriel, Urban Word Executive Director; Alyssa Gaines (Indianapolis - National Youth Poet Laureate 2022); Elizabeth Shvarts (NYC Regional Youth Poet Laureate 2022); Jessica Kim (Los Angeles Youth Poet Laureate 2022); Isabella Ramirez (South Florida Youth Poet Laureate 2022); Jan Weissmiller and Kathleen Johnson of Prairie Lights Bookstore in Iowa City; and finally, to all the participants of Between the Lines for making this program extraordinary.



“We are all the same in different ways.”

-Nita Prose, *The Maid*

Although Between the Lines: Peace and the Writing Experience 2022 “met” on Zoom for the first time at Orientation on July 15th, the journey into each other’s lives and stories began in a group WhatsApp chat in early May. I must admit that within days, I had to mute my phone. It pinged at all hours of the day and night with 45 young writers from 15 countries joining forces to exchange thousands of messages per week! Scrolling the chat, I would marvel at the personalities shining through. They discovered each other’s preferences in books and pop cultures. They asked for opinions, recommendations, and received sage advice. They even sent writing and offered up support all on their own. Whenever I saw that I missed 257 new messages, I would find: “What are your pronouns?” “Are you safe?” “How were your exams?” “What languages do you speak?” and the answers would go on in between. I had no doubt this group could fulfill the BTL mission through their care and words!

This was infinitely proved through our daily virtual gatherings as the BTL cohort radiated with appreciation and empathy. BTL is more than screens filled with first names and countries. It is zoom boxes turning yellow. It is smiles and head nods. It is leaping phrases and unmuted sentences, and silent snaps, and typed arrows pointing up in the chat. Understanding comes through a feeling that no one wants to hold back. That telling and listening to one another’s stories, choosing to be present no matter our time of day, coordinates, and national boundaries is important. We spent two weeks experiencing the ways our sameness can sit with our variances and celebrating what each participant offered through personal and cultural lenses.

With the support of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State, this 14th year of BTL: Peace and the Writing Experience enacted IWP’s [core-mission](#) of global cultural outreach—combining creative writing and cultural exchange, connecting youth to their peers and mentors around the world. We are grateful to

the public and cultural affairs officers at U.S. Embassies/Consulates for nominating their top candidates, enabling IWP to select an amazing cohort of BTL 2022 participants from Afghanistan, Armenia, Bangladesh, Egypt, Georgia, Iraqi Kurdistan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Ukraine and the U.S.

This summer fictionist, poet, and screenwriter Rochelle Potkar (IWP Fall Resident ’15, Summer Institute Mentor ’19, India) joined expert faculty from BTL ’20 and ’21: fiction writer and literary translator Rumena Bužarovska (IWP Fall Resident ’18, North Macedonia); writer, translator, and screenwriter Vladimir Poleganov (IWP Fall Resident ’16, Bulgaria); and poet and assistant professor Mary Hickman (BTL Faculty ’15, ’16, ’17, ’20, ’21, U.S.). In seven writing workshops and four literature seminars these instructors skillfully guided our participants in exploring many forms of creative writing such haiku, haibun, villanelle, free-verse, short story, flash fiction, magic realism, and taking trips into the strange and fantastic. We also explored elements of craft by writing dialogue, writing about conflict, writing about stereotypes, playing with imagery and emotion and with revision as re-seeing, and engaging with the natural world through observation, metaphor and analogy to capture both wonder and anxiety.

BTLers participated in seven special seminars facilitated by visiting artists who opened the doors of our perception on a range of topics and themes. In week one, Iowa MFA writers and BTL staff Sean Zhuraw, Gyasi Hall, Delaney Nolan, alea adigweme, and Mason Hamberlin talked us through imposter syndrome, community, messiness, and the negative outside voices that creep into our inner monologues. We heard Muslim American author Melody Moezzi discuss writing for and about mental health, the importance of sleep! and writing the stories only you can write. During public readings of their work, ideas about writing and culture bounced among the students and guesting IWP residents, Shehan Karunatilaka (IWP ’21, Sri Lanka), Tariro Ndoro (IWP ’22, Zimbabwe), Edwige Dro (IWP ’21, Côte d’Ivoire), Jidanun Lueangpiansamut (IWP ’22, Thailand).

In week 2, hailing from InsideOut Literary Arts in Detroit, Justin Rogers, LaShaun phoenix Moore, and Shawntai Brown performed and inspired us to write and speak out about home, memory, and our own redefinitions of self. Kateryna Babkina (IWP ’18, Ukraine) and Rumena Bužarovska guided us to take notice of our own unique reactions to the same influences and offered nine key ways to set up our lives to get more inspiration. Shanelle Gabriel, Urban Word Executive Director, welcomed the 2022 National Youth Poet Laureate (NYPL) Alyssa Gaines (Indianapolis), and the 2022 competition finalists Elizabeth Shvarts (BTL ’20, NYC Regional Youth Poet Laureate 2022); Jessica Kim (Los Angeles Youth Poet Laureate 2022); and Isabella Ramirez (South Florida Youth Poet Laureate 2022). The poets shared their work and answered questions about revision process, writing about trauma and marginalization, and their experiences in the spotlight. BTL ’20 and ’21 U.S. alumni and follow-on microgrant recipients Libby Riggs, Danju Zoe Liu, and Nina Ballerstedt returned to highlight their own outstanding collaborative literary projects over the the past few years in a discussion facilitated by IWP staff.

Midway through was marked by two special events. Young writers had the opportunity to perform their new works in an Open Mic Event, livestreamed on Facebook, and enjoyed a livestreamed BTL Faculty Reading, hosted by Iowa City’s iconic bookstore, Prairie Lights.

Through all of this, the brutalities of war and displacement, not to mention the challenges of unstable internet, electrical outages, COVID-19, and bouts of Zoom fatigue didn’t stop these participants from writing and exploring each others’ days and nights. Our BTLers began the two weeks sharing bedtime stories and nervous introductions, followed by sleepy or lively daily meetings, reading their work aloud for the first time, and finding inspiration. We finish our program together as a constellation of talented humans from all over the world.

With this anthology, we bring together our 2022 participants’ powerful work and words, amplifying their kindness, courage, and hope. We thank them for existing.

Alisa Weinstein, IWP Youth Programs Coordinator
Caitlin Plathe, Between the Lines Program Assistant



Bangladesh

NONE to call my own

by lfsat

I was born at a place with none to call my own
My daddy, whom I loved, never took me home,
My grandma was so kind throwing me out alone,
Hunger & respect tortured my mom for long
Amid the deep storms, when I needed her warmth the most
I was born at a place with none to call my own!

I grew up, a lonely little kid,
Never dared to see & touch the sky or the colors amid.
Books and papers had been my only feed.
Fate sowed its fiendish seed.
Beneath innocent smiles, the treachery hid,
I'd just grown up a lonely little kid!

“Life’s nothing but learning to be alone!”
Amid the terrene-chaos, you’ve to find a mind-home!
Tears shedding in winter, waiting for spring to bloom,
But the heavy howling wind could only doom!
I'd rather shrivel than feel the urge to hate the loved one
And now I believe, “Life’s nothing but learning to be alone!”

I hated life and turned to my dream,
But it was just a mirage, shining to seem
As if it were a blessing, a ray from the sunbeam.
Who knew, under the dark clouds, it'd soon dim,
And turn up into cruel faces in darkness of sham,
And then again I hated life and turned to my dream!

I wished to find, face and fight for what I deserve!
“Love-Hope-Fear-Faith”... the humane traits evolve,
Love grew into hatred, hope shattered into pieces,
Fear flared like a whirlwind, sweeping my faith like ashes
Friends I thought were a blessing, but instead made my heart grieve,
I kept on wishing to find, face and fight for the love I deserve!

And again, I'm withered, with none to call my own
People just call me the misfortune dawn,
Even the one I believed to be my only boon!
But how can I blame someone?
Whereas people scrap own bodies to mourn?
Although withered, still I'm standing at a place with NONE TO CALL MY OWN!



WHAT A LOSS !

by Iryna



...Through his bedroom window ,Tom saw a strange light in the dark night sky ,full of stars and an absolute silence .After such a sudden awakening ,Tom guessed that that light went from a lantern. He already closed his eyes and was ready to calmly fall asleep again , when he realized that , as he clearly remembered , there have never been any lanterns near his remote house built far apart from the nearest city .Forced by both curiosity and strange worrying feeling , Tom sat on the bed and pulled the translucent curtain aside to look at what was going on . But as he did so , the unexpected light disappeared . It was in summer and everything was seen pretty distinctly by the shine of the full moon on the cloudless vault . Tom opened the window and the fresh , mild air ,which was full of flower scents ,the murmurous sound of a nearly flowing river and songs of cicadas . He froze ,listening to this music of the night ,and , after then returned to bed, leaving the window unlocked.

And as soon as Tom lay down,he felt that an incomprehensible light appeared again at the window for no reason at all, and that it was as if someone was watching him very closely. Slowly , trying to pretend as if he was still asleep , Tom turned to the other side of the bed so he could see the window . And then he was frightened . Perhaps the most in his whole life . The strange light turned out to be a bizarrely sparkling creature with the flames of the fire as bright as the sun in the darkness, floating in the air two meters above the ground . It didn't have legs , nor arms , but big-round red-and-black eyes , which seemed to burn everything with its sight as this creature looked at anything . Scared to death , Tom couldn't move at all . He stayed still in his bed , having no idea of what to do . So , the unwilling guest decided for Tom , as it found him awake .The monster commanded :

-Come here !

In a flash ,Tom flew out of the window ,closing his eyes in fright . When he burst his eyes again ,Tom found himself standing in complete darkness with this object in front of him ,which now loudly clicked with sharp fangs.

Tom has no option , but just keep looking at the creature ,as his body was still out of his control .The strange light went three circles around Tom's head and after all loudly hissed, looking at the guy's eyes with its own closed :

-What a mistake ! You are not him !



Ukraine

THE FORBIDDEN DOOR



Jaylen

There's a forbidden door in our house. Nobody knows what was put in it before us. The neighbors instructed us to never open it, even under dire circumstances. They wouldn't tell us what happened before, but the house came with all of the previous owner's furniture, so that told us enough.

I'm about to open the door.

I look around twice, to make sure no one's spying on this forbidden act I'm about to embark on.

I place my hand on the cold, dusty metal, hearing a small creak as I press down and pull towards me. As soon as it's cracked the slightest, I get pulled into the other side and it feels so... peaceful. It's like I'm going down a waterfall and diving into a pool of rainbows, surrounded by the warmth of the sunrays refracting off the tiny water droplets.

The feeling stops and I peek an eye open before the other. Nothing's here but white and silence. This is... strange. Where am I? Am I dead?!??

I walk forward to see if there's anything in sight. Just more white and nothingness. I start to panic, running forward to see if going any faster would help. All I see is bright white, enough to make me go blind.

I collapse on the floor in a weeping pile, banging my fist on the ground. It feels strange.

I sit up and hit it again and watch the ground ripple, the floor slightly becoming transparent. I need to keep banging. It may be my only hope.



USA

Excerpt from *GHOST SISTER*

by Jessica

Liu is not afraid. At least that's what she tells herself. Fear is for the fools, the ones who still have the time and the cash to dream. Besides, hungry ghosts are common in this side of the city and in this side of her family. It was her destiny, her lineage, the gift she never wanted. Ghosthood was like suffering, a string that tied one generation to the next. Liu still remembers her aunt's death. She was flattened by a garbage truck on an early Monday morning and it took four men to pry the remains from the street and all they managed to get was a bundle of fractured bones and a wedding ring. Three weeks later her aunt showed up at their apartment's doorstep as a hungry ghost, an ugly and bigger one than Hua, with teeth that scraped the ground, but she left as soon as winter came and rent was due.

Liu watched as life continued as usual. Hua continued talking shit about the neighboring residents and how the landlord was too fussy and how the nights were too cold. She would return late from another night shift and Hua would be there with another story about the awfulness of the city they lived in or how their neighbor got drunk and pissed outside their doorway again. Other times Hua would prepare a meal of a congee and salted mustard roots for the both of them, claiming that she had nothing better to do anyway. Day after day. Shift after shift. Bowl after bowl. Liu wouldn't call it love, more like necessity. Love was something tucked on the highest bookshelf between hair clips and that grade A beef she could never buy.



USA

AN EXPERT OF OLD SWEDISH LIFE

by Julia

Letting out a tired sigh, Lenard made his small white bed, and with the help of his lanterns guidance, picked out his church sweater, detailed with many stitches and arrows, all centered around his neck. The scratchy wool warmed him immediately, as he began to lace his leather boots up to begin the long, dark journey to the small church just down the road that ran parallel to the brewing sea. Taking one last look at his one-room home, Lenard wrapped his scarf over his coat, and placed his old newspaper boy cap on his head, the same one his father wore till he left it for Lenard. Creaking the door open, a swift and howling wind gusted through Lenard, invading the bare insides of his home. His eyes froze open, the awakening feeling of the cold preparing him for the long walk to come. But it was nothing new. For eighty years, Lenard had made this same journey.

With each crunching step, his fading memories of a life before these lonesome winters would flood back to him: The nights of Christmas when his family would walk the bustling path to the church, with “God Jul” being sung from every direction. Or the early mornings when his sisters would awaken him to surprise their Mormor and Morfar with Lucia Buns, everyone dressed in white, with candles crowning the eldest daughter’s head like a halo of light. Today was Lucia Day, wasn’t it? It was hard for Lenard to remember such things, as he had no grandchildren to wake him in the dark February morning, singing with joy and light to him with warm buns in hand. Treading along, Lenard could almost smell the Lucia buns that the neighbors would have this morning. But the smell was too distant, and was overpowered by the seizing presence of the Baltic. As he peered out into the deep, dark mass, Lenard could feel his mother, making white robes for the next morning’s Lucia costumes. He could touch the dough his sisters had spent oh so much time preparing, knotting it into figure eights with raisins braided in. His hands no longer felt the stinging pain of the cold. Instead, they felt the warmth of a hundred candles being lit, lighting the way out to sea. As Lenard followed the leading light and warmth, it took him off the road, and onto the sand that laced the freezing cold sea.



USA

OFF KANAGAWA

by Kate



netted to a heaving swell,
the eroded fishermen crouch
against the mist of sharpened ripples
a genuflection to greatness
their boats maneuver the
toss of the ocean's rough hands
mount the hungry waves and
let the water hold them like a sword
whether fish or men
the ocean is their home and
the ocean is their bounty
hostage against cascading
wisdom, swathed in a
heritage emerging around
an unknown nature, a flood
lashing driftwood against the gaping beach
the sky flushing with clouds
whitecaps pile upon themselves
at the feet of onlookers
and berate mount fuji but caress
this miniscule intrusion
and worship the human



USA



Lebanon

LEAVING HOME

by Marita

Hoping the walls won't break and shatter.
I take the step leading me out.
Feels like being a traitor, but does it really matter?

Looking back at the wall, which witnessed my first laughter.
It gave me the urge to stop looking back, and I fought.
Hoping the walls won't break and shatter.

Looking back at the pictures of my childhood, it certainly didn't make me feel better.
It made me want to unpack my suitcase, and question the reason it was bought.
Feels like being a traitor, but does it really matter?

Looking back at the memories; hoping they won't fade and be lost in clutter.
It sent me into a hopeless state, feeling completely caught.
Hoping the walls won't break and shatter.

Looking back at my parents, who are everything that matters.
"Maybe it will be alright!" they said, trying to show support.
Feels like being a traitor, but does it really matter?

BULLYING IN SCHOOL

by Miral



A 13-year-old Faris and his family were reluctant to go to another school, so he was admitted to the school he chose, but Faris was a little hesitant because he did not have any friend in this school, so he told his family with concern, but his family encouraged him, it is better than his old school.

The school is going to open soon, faris and his mother came to the library to buy stationery and then came home and started preparing the bag.

On the first day of school , Faris woke up excited to go to his new school.

He arrived in school and his heart started beating quickly from anxiety, he entered his new class and tried to talk to the students, but all the students were ignoring/alienating him! But what is the reason? The dialogue took place in Faris' mind: Why does no one want to talk to me? Why? Is it because I'm fat? I don't want to stay in this school because I don't have any friend.

There is a girl named Raneem who is an outstanding student and is a beloved and social girl as well. Raneem decided to talk to Faris because she noticed that no one talks to him, so she realized that he is a very wonderful and well-treated person and Raneem became one of the best friends of Faris.

The next day, Fares noticed that students were also bullying Faris , a very good student who likes to read books in free time and from outstanding students as well.

Faris thought between him and himself: Are they bullying me because of my excess weight?

Then by chance came a young man named Laith and started bullying Faris because of his weight and on Musheer because of his intelligence and love studying .

Then Laith said to Faris: We will call you the bear and the fat, so everyone started laughing and Faris felt very sad

Raneem yelled at everyone and said: I don't see where the flaw is, is it all because of his excess weight! He should be treated like us and not by distinction! He is a normal person! Everyone has a problem and there is no perfect person, his life is free of problems! But everyone should be respected! But Raneem's words didn't affect anyone, especially Laith, Laith loves problems and loves bullying, but this is wrong. Then Faris said: What do you want from me, I didn't do anything for you, I just want to have friends, what's wrong with this!

Musheer and Faris became friends and decided to do something to prevent this bullying and told each other: We will become strong together, and they told the school principal to take the appropriate action against these bully students.

But their colleague Aoun had another opinion, and he said to them: I have another solution for these bullies, and they said to him: We do not need your help, you may also be like them.

Aoun said: Of course not! In my opinion, try to avoid Laith, and be satisfied with yourself, if he says or does something to you, learn to defend yourself in front of bullies not only Laith.

Then she came with her opinion from Aoun's and said to Faris and Musheer: I know that you have the "right" not to be bullied. And you should not be harassed, you, like everyone else, deserve to feel safe, and then Aoun said: Yes, this is definitely about your words for actions and so they will stop bullying.

After a while, Fares and Musheer overcame bullying and also with his help Aoun and Raneem.

They started spreading their story and sensitizing people about how hard it was bullying. And they became significant in society, the will works miracles.



Jordan



China & Ukraine

THERE IS NO WAY BACK

by Nina

He was locked in prison fifty years ago
He killed, regretted, and shouted to the sky
He misses his home and family
But it is thousands of miles away.

He walked out tonight, with pale whiskers
Walking through the cold and wet concrete road
Suddenly confused like drinking fake wine
He wants to find out the code.

A narrow street with red, green, and red lights,
The lights shine, people laugh, and a variety of cars.
Where is he going, losing his way home
Everything has changed, except his scars.

The uncle opposite is drunk
Dancing and circling on the street.
Auntie's barbecue stall is always patronized on the corner
They have a leisurely look, they steal whose sweet?

Sadness does not fit the night
Or the strength of the night against him
He himself walks alone all tomorrow,
Said how variable the world would be.

Tonight he walked out of the foggy confusion
Sat down on the asphalt road in the dark.
Can the world give him a second chance?
The sound around his mind, "there is no way back."



THE CLIFF AND THE CLEF

by Omar



Mr. Ebenezer, I have fallen to the same curse. I thought that the dystopian clerk(y)-dramatized society would at least leak by throwing the past off a cliff. Except for, it didn't. Perhaps, it's the wrong cliff, or maybe it's not even one. Still, that doesn't jump off my senses. Did I throw the past? Did I get over it? Who does? The ghosts of the upper world in a carol game are themselves stuck warning us about the world falling. You won't learn—the yet-to-come amigo will tell. But I read your story, and your book is a good metaphor after all.

This is when serotonin hits. I didn't throw the past, but instead, I jumped myself. But who's talking anyway? That's the shifting chapter where you read the first and last two chapters of a book. Still, we, humans, are always reading the book inversely. Beginning with the drug(y) happiness and ending with the least impressive similes.

Pause. Hush. Not a word. Jump. In the Dickensian era, we represent the three hopeless ghosts. The Cliff who wishes everybody jumps—Ghost of Christmas Past. The Clef, a drunk deaf writer who sets an entire opera in chaos—Ghost of Christmas Present. And a life model that pretends to control both The Cliff and The Clef, but it's much like a man who goes back in time to tell Bret Easton that being a psycho is like composing poetry in a sunflower field—Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come.

Some wordy titanic messages. Nobody dies in that chapter. It's a frame for those who are less reminded that the overly dramatic stories they compose are—by far—the least concerning to this world. That is when exactly they get trapped in their heads waiting for both; the sunset and the sinking of their dreams. This chapter seems devilish after all. It's never been about jumping because nobody will, in the watch of the most welcoming; The Cliff and The Clef.



Egypt

AFTER MITSKI

by Ramzi



So darling, play your violin
I know it's what you live for
Darling, play your violin
We will manage somehow
Maybe, soon, if you'd like, I can be your violin
Darling, let me be your violin
Oh, darling, maybe you can be my bow, too
I know it's what you live for, that violin
So darling, let my hair be the strings
Let my silky, pearly, long hair be your strings
And maybe my lap can be the chin rest
Rest your burdens on my shoulders
And when my spine crumbles under all that weight
I'll know you meant well
And when the mirror cries cold condensation
Just know that once you choose to wipe it, I'll be there, crying, too
So darling, play your violin
And we will manage somehow
Forever and always



Jordan

Reem



THE SONG OF SUNDOWN

It was a long day. So, I sit in my balcony after everyone in the world goes away. Off to sleep. And finally, I can hear the silent song of the world. I can hear without interruption. The sounds of peace and quiet.

rustling leaves--
freedom to breathe
the dawn's breeze

The stars twinkle above. Almost saying goodbye before the sun comes and engulfs us in light and warmth. The few hours from night through dawn are not nearly enough. Yet, I try to make the best of them. Close my eyes. Fill my lungs with cool air. Fill my ears with the sound of that same air caressing the trees. As the sun begins to rise, I silently hope for peace and quiet to visit us sooner. And I prepare myself for another long day.

THE QUEEN OF RIDES

The allure of the amusement park at night never fails to capture me. The lights. The sounds. The people. Every inch of this magic-infused land engulfs me in a new kind of joy. The colors. The laughing children. The rides that send my heart racing. The foods that cover my face in sugar and my heart in glee. twinkling lights..

warming our hearts
with sugar and laughter

But all the enchanting sparkle of the amusement is minuscule next to the queen of all rides. The Ferris Wheel sits right in the middle of the park, staring from above at us like a queen would her subjects. We run toward it and wait patiently for our turn to get on this ride of quiet magic.

shrinking world--
muffling sounds as we rise
give peace

After getting off the Wheel, every other ride's magic tastes different. After taking a break from the sounds and lights that flooded my senses, every excitement has more place to encompass my heart.



Egypt

DANCE OF THE DEAD



by Sara

Duke Benjamin III was generous. Rumor has it that his father's mistress' taught him such mannerism, for his late mother would never allow charity for those beneath her. She preferred using all extreme measures of torture available when it came to them. Duke Benjamin didn't carry out her legacy. Instead, he held an annual ball and sent invites to all of France. Of course, words from a powerful man shook the country to its core. Streets were flooded with families rushing from store to store months before the dance was due. Women stood in loose fabrics, men struggled to find the perfect tie, and children lounged around- for the boredom of shopping had severely infected them.

On the night of the ball, carriages lined up in-front of the estate. Couples dressed in silk floated out of them. Alfred, the butler, stood at the gates and took their invites. He'd read the guests' names and welcome them into the best night of their lives. The walls were covered with gold detailing, twisting and turning with the scars of their surroundings. The ceiling had 5 chandeliers hanging from it. But what truly blew everyone away were the tables. Rows of rotten roast beef, moldy baguette, and disgusting deserts were all available. It was truly a king's feast. Mold of such high quality was only found up north, where only the luckiest ghoul could experience it.

The duke began his night by standing in the nosebleeds, watching the ghosts entertain themselves. Eventually, he'd have Alfred signal for the orchestra to begin. Ghouls and ghosts would line up on each side of the dance floor before floating away with their beloveds into a complicated dance. Twists and turns with stolen kisses in-between. Eventually, the duke would join the ghosts in their ecstasy and bliss.



Lebanon

BLACK AND WHITE

Sasha



My soul fills light and dark,
In rhymes, and sentences, and commas,
Its pain I shall remark.
The world is tight and in its cracks, everyone is chained inside.
Bits of lies spread and hover, tears echo the world of memories all over,
In rhymes and In futures of the past, wont of joy turns into wont of ache, our wishes cast away.
Waking up at noon and cursing early morning, what's right and moral left behind,
Everything is wrong and nothing left to hide.
Always striving to deceive, waiting for the victory, hiding madness into sleeve.
Plunge the knife into my spine and hear confessions of your sins, our wishes turned pathetic lies.
I'm unseen, ensnared, by lack of darkness,
I pray in hands you hold despair.
Better live than pass without fighting,
And to exist near someone just like me.



Ukraine

SEARCH FOR FREEDOM

by Sofie



The search for freedom has caged me,
it's not me cutting lives in the mirror,
"mom I swear I'm doing it all for love,"
I say as I hope my sadistic smile
escapes your chaotic memory garden faster,
so I can cry myself to sleep without worry,
only hope not to see bars in the morning.

And the day comes, embrace me in your arms,
tell me you love me as I don't feel it anymore,
just smile, show your shiny teeth, not your scars.
"Are you okay?" the family asks,
"You can talk to us" inmates continue.

Something I never thought I would ever mutter,
to kill the woman who framed me for murder.

The chase brings me to being taken away again,
drowning in memories of happiness rare
as a father's hand in a complicated marriage.
The weapon is put against my head-
"What do you feel knowing your death?"

"Peace," I say as I shut my eyes
and quiver before the gun.



Georgia

DEATH IS ALL BUT THE END OF LOVE

Sova

The silence between us stretched for the length of galaxies. I felt the words lining up in her head, building up to form sentences that I never could predict.

“If I were to ask any question, would you answer?”

“Without hesitation.”

She hummed from behind me. “Alright... what’s your biggest fear?”

“Losing you.” I replied, not wasting a second. “I’m being serious!” came the defensive answer to her gleeful laughter.

“I know, I know.” Her breath on my neck made me shiver. Her chest pressed against my bare back. Her arms wrapped around my shoulders, my left hand holding her right one.

Her warmth was unmatched. The hottest fires couldn’t compete. Looking at her face felt as familiar as looking into a mirror. But unlike in the mirror, I loved what I saw.

“What’s your second favorite thing in the whole universe?” She said softly.

“The stars.”

“But I thought they’d be the first,” Her confused tone sparked adoration in my heart. “You love them so much, no?”

“I do love them, but there is something else I love more.” I said.

“Oh? That’s a lot of love.” She was amused.

“They come second only to you.” I brought her right hand to my lips. I wanted to kiss her while I could.

“Careful, they might get jealous.”

“They won’t. They know you too well,” I wanted to turn in her arms and look at her. “You’re their friend.” But she didn’t reply.

“I wish you came to me more often.” It sounded pathetic, even to my own ears. Her hand slipped from mine. Her warmth leaving me.

“Please ask me something else, I want to hear your voice one last time.” I was pleading in vain.

I could tell she was gone. Her side of the bed felt empty behind me. I still felt the phantom sensation of her fingertips softly grazing my back, tracing the patterns of constellations.

“I wish you weren’t dead.” I said, but there was nobody there to hear.



Iraq

DRAGONS AND FAIRIES

by TJ



USA

I watch him, the wind carding through my hair and letting it fall in wiry strands against bare skin, flushed despite the way the seabreeze bites at the tender of my stomach and the small of my back. His heels are scarcely touching the ground as he moves, ebbing and flowing with a grace that belies his strength like a river cutting a glacier, balancing on nothing but toes and a prayer as his arms crane up, reaching for the sky.

My fingertips try to trace the path he carves, nails pointed and pulling towards him as I try to reach out for the teasing glimpses of skin. The upper muscle of his thighs teasingly bared, he knows, flexing and shifting under rice paper, his face so small and round, a porcelain doll that smiles with its eyes and perfectly small blood red lips, the way his arms reach up as if to grab the stars in his hands and use them as craggy footholds to the moon and fall like he is weightless in the arms of the air.

I can't tell if I want to writhe under his skin or tear him to pieces. Maybe both. He is a whipcord of strength, back flexing and chest bared as his spine arches, black hair like silk strands. He's like a dragon, and his eyes are a piercing blue as he locks his gaze onto mine and I feel an unearthly heat like the oceans boiled by the sun as he pulls and I am caught.

I know now, why he won't let me touch him, stumbling and lurching forward. My hands rake against nothing with air, clutching and grasping at laughter and whispers, my face flushed like I'm drunk on everything. I can feel his mouth, tracing the shape of my jaw, down the bob of my throat and the curve of my breasts where I let no one touch, and lower still.

I was wrong. He will be the one to tear me to pieces, in the way the sea sands at a cliffside and leaves nothing but rubble. The way a seaside will crumble, without warning or pause, just to embrace the corrosive salt and acidic water, the mundanity of it underwhelming to smaller things and overwhelming to bigger things. His mouth is gaping and his flattened molars, hidden under a wiry smile like the rest of him, are curling fangs that walk the line of breaking skin. Wings, thinner than the stiff crunch of morning frost, do not break or shatter. They simply crumple with little fanfare and they are ripped, glass from skin.

IT WAS RAINING



by Tsovinar

It was raining.

Countless droplets of water hammered down on the trees as if someone had turned on a huge shower over the ancient forest. It started suddenly, but judging by the heavy, dark clouds, would go on for quite a while.

It was raining.

She didn't care. Without fear of potential sickness, she ran through the forest. The smell of damp soil, the music that the water was playing on the trees, and the way her clothes, completely soaked, clung to her body were all familiar. It was relaxing. It made her feel alive.

It was raining.

She didn't care. She was in her element. This was her life. This was her forest. This was her home. She has lived here for countless years. And would continue to do so for centuries more

It was raining.

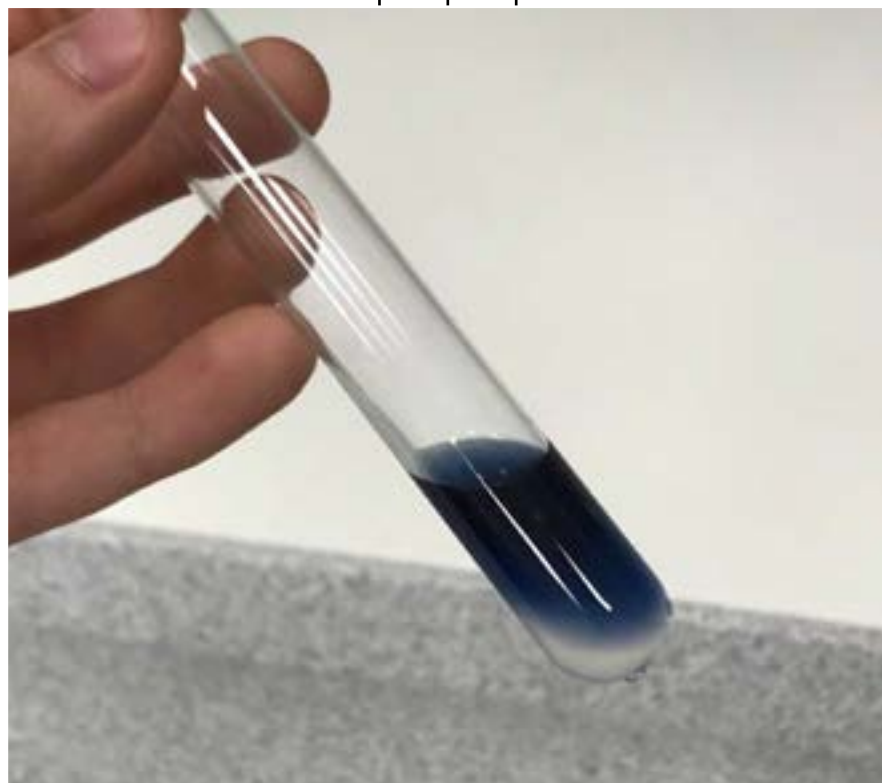
She didn't care. One with the wind and water. One with the green surrounding her. One with the very essence of the forest. Untouched by the passage of time, She ran. Where? No one, not even herself, knew. She was the forest herself. They were two parts of the same coin. Similar, yet different. There was no need for directions.

It was raining.

She didn't care. She was free.



Armenia



Russia

FORMULA

by Vasilisa

A dark centered lab
Some math just to stick
And old buried weight of the wounds that still sick

A wish and a pray but just not to the gods
To science, to realm of the knowledge above
With dreams and with praise of the schrodinger cat
Becomes something more that we'll never forget

So tell me now pal?
What the secret behind
you're truly subnormal eternal tough life.

A look in the mirror, a glance from behind
Here comes in the future, obligatorily light
A scientist as simple as his name v.h
Looks up in the bloom of an unburied rage

This dark, silent island is his working home
He spends days and night in here cold and alone
Some dorado fish and mollusk dna are his only friends and companions today

His newly adventitious inventing lab state
Required by the government in some old estate
An ode to a scientist to never be perished
And his only project forever be cherished

So tell me now traveler what hides behind, your wanting to search for an eternal life?

Money stolen by those who are always just right
Never come back to the true science side
You can't go cry or just go forget
No one has known the right way round yet

But if you insist, your finances spike
And here you are dear V in your lab but the night
The secret in front has an ethical shtick

Would you move the path or just die on it?
Quick, make your choice, your future awaits
Will your mommy just stay in her positive state
A future solution, just don't step aside, here's your way to your own eternal life

I SPENT FIFTY DAYS OBSERVING THE SUN

by Yasmina

I wake up as the last few stars disappear from the sky and I see their bleak shining dissolve in the sunlight as I get ready. It frightens me how the world changes from one stage to another while I simply take a shower and cook myself breakfast. What else have I missed doing these mundane tasks?

Chasing the sun on my bike, I overlooked many years of hard work being crushed in an outburst of rage and carelessness. I swooshed by with wind flowing through my hair and a fly in my eye. Our soldiers died so that we could see our country once again, as close to what it was before the 24th of February. It's said their sacrifice was for a much greater cause, but I believe that they died for thousands of careless bike-riding kids.

Watching the evening take hold through the blinds feels surreal. The sun slowly sets and the shadows elongate, gradually painting my bedroom into a cool, dark color. What's even more surreal is the realization that my father wakes up while I turn on my meditation to fall asleep. While I think about how important it is for me to get my eight hours of rest, he thinks of another way to make the lives of his family and co-citizens easier. While I struggle to fall asleep to the sounds of the TV screaming in the living room, he wakes up to sirens and goes to work. It's much easier to keep up with the sun than with Zelenskiy's posts. There's something about its predictability and consistency that's way more appealing than the flux of information that often contradicts everything I believe in. The earth keeps spinning us, though, it seems to spin some a bit smoother and quicker than others.



Ukraine



UNTITLED

by Zuyena

Crack

Black eyes, scrutinized, cowering behind your gaze
Your melanin skin filled with marks, losing all its glaze
Hollow eyes with dimming blaze, looking beyond a mirror's gaze
Skin, untouched and unloved, it's not your own beauty that you start to crave

Crack

Seeking consolation from a mirror, you turn your face away
Hiding your face in your hands, you whisper the words, "It's okay".
However, thoughts not in array, contorted with dismay, tearing you apart every day
A futile realization; words like felt, wanted, and needed do not always stay.

Crack

Crying, weeping, and hurting as your reflection is stranded off on a plain surface
Simply a mirror, but why does it hurt so much as I force myself to brace;

Crack

Words you scream, phrases you hurl, and thoughts you speak
As time passes, your broken soul is something you do not bother to pick

Crack

Simply a mirror, I convince myself, though I feel quite sick
Maybe it's my heart or the glass you break with your bare hands
That I slowly lose myself and engulf in your sounds of

Crack.



Bangladesh



MARY HICKMAN was born in Idaho and grew up in China and Taiwan. She holds an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop, where she was an Iowa Arts Fellow. Hickman is the author of two books of poems, *This Is the Homeland* (Ahsahta Press, 2015) and *Rayfish* (Omnidawn Publishing, 2017), which won the James Laughlin Award, given by the Academy of American Poets and chosen by Ellen Bass, Jericho Brown, and Carmen Giménez Smith. An assistant professor at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln, Nebraska, she also teaches in (and loves!) the University of Iowa International Writing Program's Between the Lines exchange program.

**WORKSHOP
INSTRUCTOR**



ROCHELLE POTKAR Fictionist | Poet | Screenwriter, Rochelle is an alumna of Iowa's International Writing Program (2015) and a Charles Wallace Writer's fellow, University of Stirling (2017). Author of *Four Degrees of Separation* and *Paper Asylum*, which was shortlisted for the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize 2020. She had her poetry film *Skirt* featured on Shonda Rhimes' Shondaland. Her short story collection *Bombay Hangovers* was released in 2021. Widely-anthologized, a few of her poems and stories have won prizes. Her first screenplay was a quarter-finalist at the Atlanta Film Festival Screenwriting competition 2020.

**WORKSHOP
INSTRUCTOR**



RUMENA BUŽAROVSKA is a fiction writer and literary translator from Skopje, North Macedonia. An author of four volumes of short stories translated into more than ten languages, her book *My Husband* has been adapted into three stage productions in Ljubljana, Belgrade and Skopje. A 2018 resident of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa, she is a professor of American literature and translation at the Ss Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. She is the co-author and co-organizer of the women's storytelling initiative PeachPreach.

**WORKSHOP
INSTRUCTOR**

VLADIMIR POLEGANOV (b. 1979, Sofia) is a Bulgarian writer, translator, and screenwriter. He is the author of one collection of short stories, *The Deconstruction of Thomas S* (published in 2013 by St. Kliment Ohridski University Press) and one novel, *The Other Dream* (2016, Colibri), which won the Helikon Award for Best Fiction Book of the Year in 2017. His short stories have appeared in various literary magazines in Bulgaria and abroad. "The Birds", a short story, was featured in Dalkey Archive Press' anthology *Best European Fiction 2016*. In 2016, he participated in the University of Iowa's International Writing Program. This was followed by residencies in Shanghai and Sun Yat-sen University in China. He has translated novels by writers such as Thomas Pynchon, George Saunders, Octavia E. Butler, and Peter Beagle into Bulgarian. In 2020, his translation of George Saunders' *Lincoln in the Bardo* won the Association of Bulgarian Translators Prize. He is currently working on a PhD in Bulgarian literature at Sofia University where he also teaches courses on creative writing and fantastic literature.



**WORKSHOP
INSTRUCTOR**



ALEA ADIGWEME is an anti-disciplinary Igbo-Vincentian-U.S.-ian cultural worker who utilizes the mediums of creative writing, book arts, performance, community engagement, installation, video, and other visual media. She is based in Tovaangar, the metropolitan area commonly known as Los Angeles, where she just graduated from UCLA with an MFA in Interdisciplinary Studio Art. She also earned an MFA in Nonfiction Writing, an MA in Media Studies, and a graduate certificate in Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies from the University of Iowa.

**TEACHING ASSISTANT
& PANELIST**



DELANEY NOLAN got her MFA in fiction from Iowa Writers' Workshop in 2016, and is currently a teacher and editor located in New Orleans. She has taught online classes with Catapult, and was a BTL counselor last summer. She's also taught writing with IYWP in Iowa, with IWP in Morocco, as a Fulbright specialist in Moscow, and elsewhere.

**TEACHING ASSISTANT
& PANELIST**

GYASI HALL is a Writer of Stuff™ from Columbus, Ohio. Their essay "Alas, Poor Fhoul" was the runner up for *the Black Warrior Review* 2020 Nonfiction Contest, and their debut poetry chapbook, *Flight of the Mothman: An Autobiography*, was published by The Operating System in spring 2019. They recently graduated from the University of Iowa with an MFA in Creative Nonfiction, and they are the lead nonfiction editor for The BreakBread Literacy Project. They currently reside in Iowa City where they're working on what they hope will be their first book, an essay collection about Black people and comic books.



**TEACHING ASSISTANT
& PANELIST**

SEAN ZHURAW Sean's writing has appeared in *Boston Review*, *Handsome*, *New Session*, *Tin House*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Defunct*, and elsewhere. He has earned degrees from Columbia and the Iowa Writers' Workshop where he won the John Logan poetry prize. His translation of Theodor Däubler's *The Starchild* was a finalist for Ugly Duckling Presse's 2021 open reading period. He teaches at the Community College of Philadelphia and Widener University and lives in West Philly with his husband and two cats.

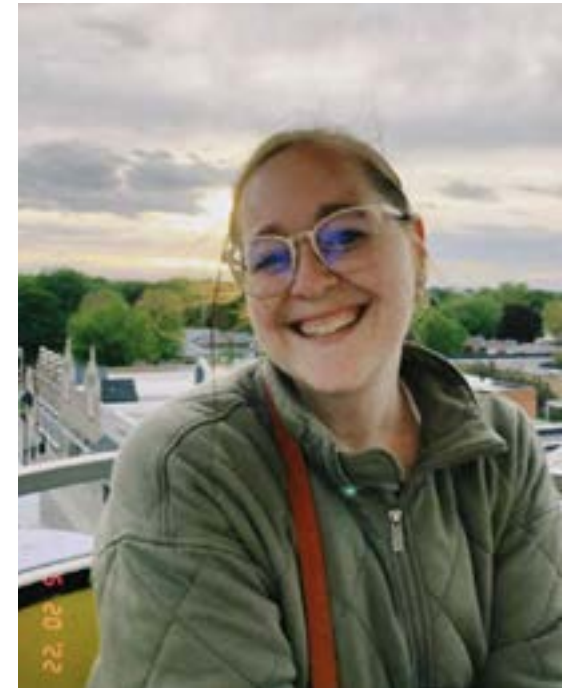


**TEACHING ASSISTANT
& PANELIST**



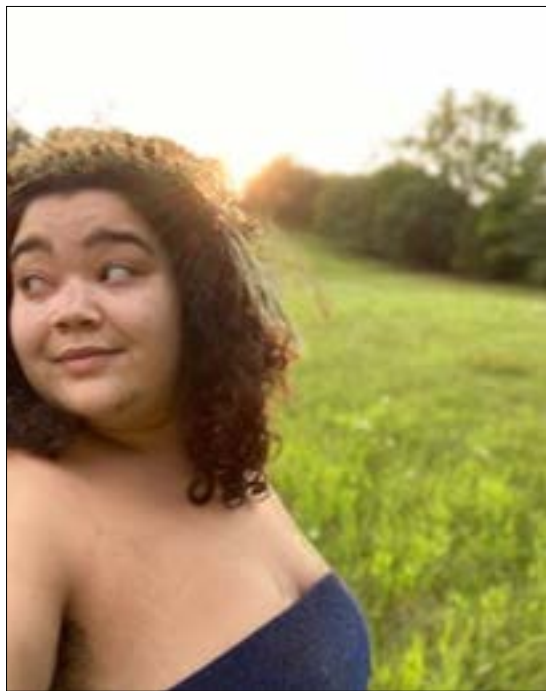
ALISA WEINSTEIN received a BFA in Drama and MA in Educational Theatre from New York University, and a PhD in Anthropology from Syracuse University; she also studied at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, and conducted dissertation research on a Fulbright-Nehru scholarship. Among her other writing, she authored scripts for India’s Sesame Street, *Galli Galli Sim Sim*, and is currently at work on an ethnography on tailors working in Jaipur, India. A co-founder of Home Ec. Workshop in Iowa City, she often teaches knitting and sewing to crafters of all ages.

**YOUTH PROGRAMS
COORDINATOR**



CAITLIN PLATHE received her BA in English and Creative Writing from the University of Iowa. An alumna of IWP’s Between the Lines program, she has held several assistantship positions at IWP. She is also the author of *I Am No Plath*, a volume of poems.

PROGRAM ASSISTANT



GEORGIE FEHRINGER is a Black queer artist and writer, originally from Seattle, WA. An Iowa Arts Fellow and MFA Candidate at the University of Iowa’s Nonfiction Writing Program, their work has appeared in *The Black Warrior Review*, *The Chicago Review*, *TIMBER*, and *Brink* among other places. You can find their work at GeorgieFehringer.com

**ANTHOLOGY
DESIGNER**

MASON HAMBERLIN is a queer writer, designer, bookseller, and educator from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, located on unceded Occaneechi territory. An MFA candidate at the University of Iowa’s Nonfiction Writing Program, they’re the winner the 2022 Roxanne Mueller Essay Prize, as well as a recipient of a Marcus Bach fellowship. You can find their writing at *Ninth Letter*, *The Adroit Journal*, *Entropy*, *Shenandoah*, and more. There, or along the shelves of Chapel Hill’s Epilogue Books, where they wrote maybe one-too-many of those recommendation cards.



**BTL SUMMER
ASSISTANT**



JUSTIN ROGERS is a Black poet, educator, coach, and editor from Detroit, Michigan. Rogers shares poems surrounding living and praying as a Black man in America and explores fantasy through Pop Culture. He most recently has work published in *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, *The Metro Times*, *Detroit Action*, and is the author of the micro-zine “Nostalgia as Black Matilda” (Rinky Dink Press 2017). He released his chapbook *Black. Matilda.* in 2019 with Glass Poetry Press. He is the coordinator of InsideOut’s award winning after school program, Citywide Poets and part of the 2021/22 MACC Rising Leaders Cohort.

**SPECIAL SEMINAR
INSTRUCTOR**



KATERYNA BABKINA is a Ukrainian poet, prose writer, columnist, screenwriter, and playwright. She’s the author of four poetry collections (*Lights of Saint Elm*, 2002, *The Mustard*, 2011, *Painkillers and Sleeping Pills*, 2014, *Charmed for Love*, 2017, *Does Not Hurt*, 2021), a novel (*Sonia*, 2013), a novel in short stories (*My Grandfather Danced the Best*, 2019) and two collections of stories (*Lilu After You*, 2008 and *Happy Naked People*, 2016). She has also written 3 books for kids (*The Pumpkin Year*, *The Hat and the Whale*, and *Girls Power* [co-authored with Mark Livin]), which are extremely popular in Ukraine. Her writings have been translated into English, Swedish, Polish, German, Hebrew, French, Spanish, Romanian, Czech and Russian.

**SPECIAL SEMINAR
INSTRUCTOR**



LA SHAUN PHOENIX MOORE is a Detroit-based vocalist, spoken word artist, activist, culture creator and wife. Moore’s interdisciplinary work is infused with her love for the city of Detroit, hip-hop, God, social justice and her black momma. She is currently working on her first memoir exploring the complexities of the Mother Wound and how it is rooted in her immediate family. Moore is the coach of the Youth Performance Troupe for InsideOut Literary Arts. She is the recipient of the 2020 and 2021 Creators of Culture Award by CultureSource.

**SPECIAL SEMINAR
INSTRUCTOR**

MELODY MOEZZI is an Iranian-American Muslim author, attorney, activist, and visiting associate professor of creative writing at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. She is the author of *War on Error: Real Stories of American Muslims*, *Haldol and Hyacinths: A Bipolar Life*, and most recently, *The Rumi Prescription: How an Ancient Mystic Poet Changed My Modern Manic Life*, which earned her a 2021 Wilbur Award. Moezzi’s writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *NBC News*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *Al Arabiya*, *The South China Morning Post*, *Hürriyet*, *The Straits Times*, *Parabola*, and many other outlets. She’s also a United Nations Global Expert and an Opinion Leader for the British Council’s Our Shared Future initiative. You can follow her on Twitter at @MelodyMoezzi and on Instagram at @Melody.Moezzi.



**SPECIAL SEMINAR
INSTRUCTOR**



SHAWNTAI BROWN is a Detroit writer, media commentator, literacy coordinator and teaching artist. Her work centers on empowering communities through experiences that educate, challenge and entertain. She has a Bachelor of Arts in creative writing from Western Michigan University and a Master of Arts in Literacy Learning from Marygrove College. Her plays have been performed in New York, Chicago and across Michigan, including her episodic series *eLLe*, centering queer women experiences, now in its 10th year. She co-hosts a web show *Woman Crush Everyday*, reviewing Black woman-centered queer media and interviewing content producers, and co-founded Black LGBT+ Plays, a creative development network for film and theatre creatives. Currently, Shawntai serves as the School Coordinator with InsideOut Literary Arts where she previously taught poetry as a teaching artist. She is a board member and playwright with Extra Mile Playwrights Theatre and a 2020 Krege Live Arts Fellow.

**SPECIAL SEMINAR
INSTRUCTOR**



EDWIGE-RENÉE DRO is a writer, literary translator (French and English) and a literary activist from Côte d'Ivoire. She is one of the laureates of the Africa39 project and her writings have been published by Bloomsbury, Ankara Press, Myriad Editions, Popula and many others. She has also judged for prizes like the 2015 PEN International Short Story and the 2016 Etisalat Prize for Literature. Edwige was the translator for "Moon Dog", the winning short story for the 2015 PEN International Short Story Prize into French. She's finished translating the short stories for AfroYoungAdult.

**IWP RESIDENCY PANELIST
CÔTE D'IVOIRE '22**

JIDANUN LUEANGPIANSAMUT จิดานันท์ เหลืองเพียรสมุท has published more than 20 novels, largely in the sci-fi and romance genres. The youngest-ever winner, in 2017, of the Southeast Asian Writers Award, she specializes in dystopian and LGBT themes, and YA literature. Her novel *เพื่อนนคร (City of Stars)* has been translated into English and Chinese, and will be the basis of a TV series. Her participation was made possible by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.



**IWP RESIDENCY PANELIST
THAILAND '22**

SHEHAN KARUNATILAKA has authored the novels *Chinaman: The Legend of Pradeep Mathew* (2010) and *Chats with the Dead* (2020) as well as the children's book *Please Don't Put That in Your Mouth* (2019). The recipient of the 2008 Gratiaen Prize, the 2012 Commonwealth Book Prize, and the 2012 DSC Prize for South Asian Literature, he also writes on sport, music, and travel for major newspapers and magazines. His participation was made possible by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State.



**IWP RESIDENCY PANELIST
SRI LANKA '22**



TARIRO NDORO is the author of the poetry collection *Agringada: Like a Gringa, Like a Foreigner* (2019), which won the inaugural NAMA Award for Outstanding Poetry Book from Zimbabwe’s National Arts Council. A finalist in several other poetry competitions, she has had her work anthologized and translated. Ngoro, who has a BSc in Microbiology and an M.A. in Creative Writing, lives in Harare. Her participation in the 2022 Spring Residency is made possible by the U.S. State Department.

**IWP RESIDENCY PANELIST
ZIMBABWE '22**



ALYSSA GAINES is an 18 year old writer from the eastside of Indianapolis. She serves as the Inaugural Youth Poet Laureate of Indianapolis, a program sponsored by Voices Corp. Writing about issues such as gun violence, intersectionality, and racial injustice, and celebrating history, culture, and language, Alyssa emphasizes the balance between hardship and triumph with attention to natural and religious images and the musicality of language from a desire that her communities are documented and represented. She has worked in her community to increase fine arts access, working with local youth writing organizations, leading workshops, and developing courses to intentionally bring in more diverse students. Alyssa prioritizes educational equity and arts education. She has received many Scholastic Gold Medals, was a National Student Poets Program Semi-finalist, a recipient of both the national Best in Grade Award and American Voices Award, and has had the opportunity to perform her work at the Library of Congress and accept awards for her writing in Carnegie Hall. Gaines has been published both locally and nationally. In addition to her poetry, Gaines has won awards for her one-act play *Fireworks*, a production of which she directed at a local theater.

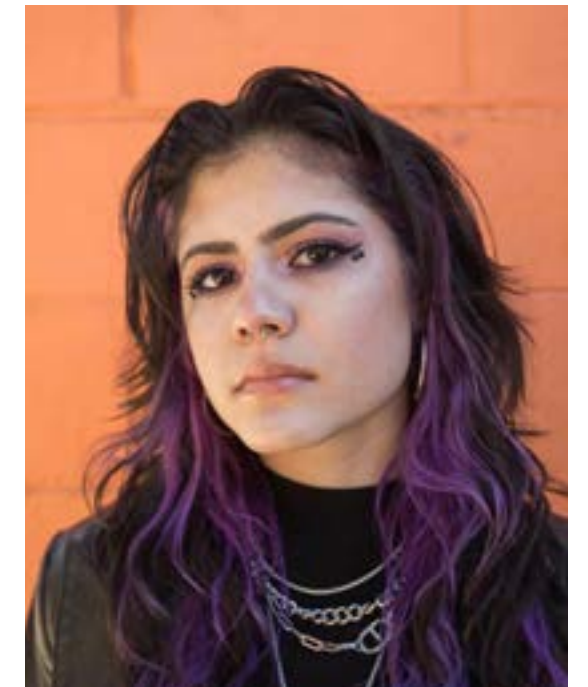
**NATIONAL YOUTH
POET LAUREATE 2022**

ELIZABETH SHVARTS performance artist, entrepreneur, and writer hailing from Staten Island, NY, Elizabeth is the 2022 NYC Youth Poet Laureate, a program sponsored by Urban Word, and the 2022 YPL Northeast Regional Ambassador. A fierce advocate for educational equity, she is a Daily Point of Light Award-nominated, co-founder/co-director of Bridge to Literacy, a global, UNESCO-recognized U.S Department of State-funded nonprofit that fosters a love of language through literacy-based mentorship in 150+ youth across 6 continents. A 2021 National YoungArts Finalist in Play/Script and Urban Word NYC Slam Winner, Elizabeth is an avid writer with work recognized by or featured at *The New Yorker*, *PBS*, the United Nations, the Apollo, Lincoln Center, *NY1*, *Grist Magazine*, the MacDowell Foundation, *NPR*, *WNYC*, The Earth Institute at Columbia University, Alliance for Climate Education, and more.



**NYC YOUTH POET
LAUREATE**

ISABELLA RAMIREZ is a queer, Latinx poet and spoken word artist from Lake Worth, Florida. She is the 2022 National Youth Poet Laureate South Regional Ambassador, a program of Urban Word NYC, and the Jason Taylor Foundation’s 2021 South Florida Youth Poet Laureate. Other recognitions include her previous literary ambassadorship as the 2020 National Student Poet of the Southeast and her title as 2021 Louder Than A Bomb Florida Individual Grand Champion. Her work has been awarded nationally by the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards and the YoungArts Foundation, along with being featured in Mass Poetry’s “The Hard Work of Hope” and the Alliance for Young Artists & Writers’ “The Best Teen Writing of 2020.” She has collaborated on projects for the NFL Pro Football Hall of Fame, the Florida Department of State, and the School District of Palm Beach County, among others. As a freshman at Columbia University, she works as a University News Staff Writer for the *Columbia Daily Spectator* and serves on their DEI Committee. Through her work, she hopes to create a platform for self-reflection, social justice, and challenging the status quo.



**SOUTH FLORIDA
YOUTH POET LAUREATE**



JESSICA KIM (she/her) is an 18 year old global citizen who has lived in South Korea, Singapore, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. She is the Western National Youth Poet Laureate Ambassador and the 2021-22 Los Angeles Youth Poet Laureate, a program of Beyond Baroque. Having discovered poetry when the pandemic hit, Jessica has since been named a Youngarts Finalist in Poetry, Commended Foyle Young Poet, and Gregory Djanikian Scholars Finalist. Poetry has empowered Jessica to confront her invisible identities as a visually-impaired and Korean-American teen, and she hopes to inspire youth all over the country to write their stories into existence. When she isn't writing about her disability and immigrant experiences, she serves as the founding editor of *The Lumiere Review* and one of the Editors-in-Chief of *Polyphony Lit*, both literary magazines that shed light to youth and other overlooked voices.

**LA YOUTH POET
LAUREATE**



IOWA | International Writing Program
Between the Lines