

# FROM the PROGRAM COORDINATOR ANNUAL REPORT 1996

THE INTERNATIONAL WRITING PROGRAM enters its third decade in 1997, sustaining its founding vision of world community, and undergirding its global outreach with a university-based program of academic and literary activities that also shares its authors with other schools across the nation.

As of today, 112 member-nations are listed in the IWP. We celebrate the entry of each new nation into the IWP, and in 1996 the four new countries represented literary cultures whose diversity seems emblematic of all we try to do in the IWP: we had authors from countries where the national identity was recently restored (Latvia) and redefined (Macedonia), or with whom the United States is beginning to resume cultural exchange (Vietnam), and, completing the picture, a literature of long and richly mixed lineage (Morocco). It is also a source of particular pleasure that the connections begun last year have continued in 1996: for the second consecutive year, we received writers from Slovakia, Togo, Bolivia, and Lithuania. These writers were among the eighteen funded by the US Information Agency, whose organization and material help provides us with breadth in our reach worldwide. Because of our widening base of support, the program also enjoyed multiple representation from several countries: two writers each came from Argentina, Latvia, Poland, Mexico; the USIA sent two writers from Russia, and Singapore was represented by husband-and-wife poets on sabbatical from the National University of Singapore.

In 1996, the program experienced an almost perfect gender balance for the very first time: we had seventeen female authors and sixteen men, and we hope that this is a trend indicating that women everywhere are better positioned to leave their jobs and family responsibilities for the three-month residency abroad as writers at the University of Iowa.

These are the other highlights of 1996:

- An unprecedented amount and variety of travel to other sites in the US;
- Playwrights presented for the first time in professional theatres in New York and New England, and initiatives for presentation of future works;
- New media outlets for participants' writings and commentary; a site on the WorldWideWeb for the IWP [<http://www.uiowa.edu/~iwp/>];
- Expanded video capabilities;
- Increased volume of publication and translations;
- The participation of authors widely published in the US and abroad;
- Significant presence of children's authors;
- A high quality of student participation and response in the class, International Literature Today;
- The sustained support of the US Information Agency despite massive federal cutbacks; the continuing and expanding base of funding from cultural agencies abroad.

- These highlights will be elaborated upon in the section of this report dealing with program activities.
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## **Profile of the 1996 Participants.**

In 1996, thirty-five authors from 28 nations attended the IWP. They were in residence at the University of Iowa from August 25 through November 23, a ninety-day program designed to dovetail with the University's peak period of cultural, academic, and literary life. This year saw the participation of a higher than usual number of writers of note, authors whose reputation in this country and abroad preceded them. Among those writers whose works have already appeared in this country (in English or in English translation) were Russian novelist Viktor Pelevin (whose latest novel, *Omon Ra*, was named "best novel of the year" by Spin Magazine; and whose Random House publication of *The Yellow Arrow* was reviewed in the *New York Times* a few weeks previous to his arrival in Iowa City); New Zealand novelist William Taylor (whose Penguin and Scholastic books for children and young adults have been cited by the New York Public Library, and also hold the distinction of having been banned in one or two states!). Turkey was represented for the first time in ten years; the previous Turkish author at the IWP, Orhan Pamuk, has gone on to become his country's foremost fiction writer, and the writer who followed him a decade later at the IWP, Buket Uzuner, is described as "the next Orhan Pamuk," with publications that are currently running in their sixteenth editions in Turkey. The Argentine novelist Rodrigo Fresan completed a book at Iowa, even while he was being interviewed for his pre-publication releases of two new novels out of Gallimard in Paris. Polish poet and scholar Bronislaw Maj, whom we had been attempting to bring here for several years, was able to leave his many obligations in Krakow to attend the IWP, even as his friend Wislawa Szymborska was named the Nobel laureate.

We were fortunate to have the participation of writers whose accomplishments (and in some cases, personal histories) reflected an interesting richness of cultural background. Emblematic of this diversity is Anatxu Zabalbeascoa, who points out that while her name is Basque, she lives in Barcelona, was educated in Madrid, London, and at the School of the Chicago Institute of Art, and came to the US as a high school exchange student. Korean author Kim In Ae majored in German, Dutch author Stephan Sanders is of Jamaican origin, Argentine author Viviana Lysyj teaches French, Turkish fiction writer Buket Uzuner did graduate work in Norway, Chilean writer Roberto Ampuero was educated in Germany and Cuba, and Brazilian author Milton Hatoum draws the themes of his fiction from his Lebanese heritage.

This was a year dominated by fiction writers; only eight of the 35 considered themselves principally poets. Children's authors were an important component as well; eight of the participants are involved in literature for children, primarily as authors (Kim In Ae, Korea; William Taylor, New Zealand), but also as editors of publications (Serah Wanjiru Mwangi, Kenya); anthologists (Monica Wanambisi, Kenya); translators (Kim In Ae). Others who have written fiction or poetry for children were the Mexican writers Beatriz

Escalante and Ana Carolina Rivera; Lithuanian poet Liutauras Degešys, and Vietnamese author Phan Thi Vang Anh. All of these authors gave several (sometimes multiple) visits at local elementary and high schools and in the state, as well as readings and workshops at farther-flung institutions like the prestigious New Trier High School in Illinois and the New York City Public Library.

Seven playwrights/screenwriters attended the program this year, and the IWP appreciates for the presence of Prof. Shelley Berc on our staff: she provided the most intensive program for IWP playwrights that we have ever been able to offer. Over the years, she has been the moving force behind the IWP's interaction with the Playwrights Workshop, and in 1996, she arranged for the playwrights to have readings of their work and meetings with stage companies in New York City and Maine, a professional opportunity for our playwrights that is truly unprecedented.

Increasing numbers of our authors are involved in the performing/visual/cinema arts as scriptwriters and video producers, a gauge of how widely literature has gone beyond the written page. Prizewinning screenwriter Catherine Zimdahl (who is the first Australian writer supported by the USIA) may return to this country following her IWP residency, as a result of the contacts she forged here. Petr Aleshkovskiy produced a video documentary of Russian village life; R. Raj Rao wrote a film on the gay community in Bombay. Mexican screenwriter Ana Carolina Rivera had to cut short her residency at the IWP because of pressing commitments at home, among them, the completion of a film, for which she later returned to the University of Iowa with her husband, filmmaker Fernando Sarinana, to show under the auspices of the Latin American Studies Program. Writers with significant career links to radio included poet/playwright Juan Carlos Orihuela (Bolivia), who also has a career as a songwriter and performer; Polish radio dramatist Lidia Amejko; Dutch radio and television cultural commentator Stephan Sanders.

While the majority of the participants arrived at the University of Iowa from academic or journalistic careers, the labors of a number of our writers blossomed from nonliterary, sometimes exotic, sources: Slovakian poet and translator Mila Haugova is a graduate of the Faculty of Agronomy in Bratislava; Vietnamese author Phan Thi Vang Anh just recently received her medical degree in neurology; Buket Uzuner earned the M.S. in biology and did graduate work in public health at the University of Michigan and in ecology in Norway; Tin Maung Than, Burmese publisher and author, is a practitioner of general medicine; Anatxu Zabalbeascoa is a leading art critic and architectural historian, and she maintained her work commitments via fax to widely spread sites around the world; Madhu Disanayaka is a professional sitar musician, in addition to teaching English at the University of Colombo.

Novels and collections of fiction were completed during the three months here: among them, new work by Rodrigo Fresan, Anatxu Zabalbeascoa, Roberto Ampuero, Milton Hatoum, Kim In Ae, Mostafa Messnaoui, Stephan Sanders, Othman bin Puteh, William Taylor. Beatriz Escalante completed a lexicon while she was here on her AT&T Foundation grant; Monica Wanambisi translated and edited a children's anthology. New

poetry was written and translated by Bronek Maj, Gundega Repse, Dan Ying, Liutauras Degesys, Lindita Arapi, and Anna Auzina.

For many of our writers, the residency provided the priceless opportunity to forge professional contacts in this country. John-Bosco Adotevi brought his veteran newspaperman's interest and delight in new things to the exploration of such diverse issues as urban planning, local architecture, water treatment systems. Zanina Mircevska (our first Macedonian) spent a precious two weeks' residency with the exclusive and experimental theater community, the Wooster Group. Viktor Pelevin roamed the country: he visited a Buddhist monastery near Boston and visited writing groups in Los Angeles, among his peripatetic wanderings; Petr Aleshkovskiy spent a week at a buffalo farm owned by the MacFarland family in Fredericksburg, Iowa. Lithuanian poet Liutauras Degesys and Moroccan fiction writer Mostafa Messnaoui rented a car for their optional travel period and went to the west coast, via the desert southwest. Serah Mwangi (Kenya) gave numerous talks and familiarized herself with the teaching and publishing of children's literature. Mila Haugova created important links in translation with students here. Phan Thi Vang Anh, our first visitor from Vietnam, purchased a local bus pass and rode all over Iowa City and Coralville, marveling in the surprises offered by a small town in the Midwest; she widened her travels considerably with talks at Yale, New York, and Boston. These are the unquantifiable treasures the writers receive from and bring to the program, a fresh gaze at the culture of this country in exchange for the insights from their own.

## **Activities of the IWP in 1996**

### **International Literature Today.**

Forty-four students enrolled in the seven-week class, and their participation was marked by an unusual degree of purpose and seriousness. The primary course requirement, a final paper, indicated that the students were engaged in the issues raised by the class, at a level which we have rarely seen in the years since this class was initiated. (Seven students were enrolled the first time this course was offered, by Daniel Weissbort and Fred Will, in 1986; ten years later, we are limiting the enrollment to forty, although we allow for slightly greater numbers.) Following an preliminary meeting, at which the works were distributed of the first set of presenting writers, six sessions were held on Monday afternoons from 3:30 to 5:20 in lecture hall 107 of the English-Philosophy Building. The discussions were led by Clark Blaise, Rowena Torrevillas, and Peter Nazareth.

The writers were each asked to speak for seven to ten minutes about their writing, focusing on the excerpts of their work that had been disseminated previously. Argentine fiction writer Viviana Lysyj set the tone for the first session, with her startlingly candid discussion of the philosophical, political, and literary foundations of erotic fiction. The students met Viviana's works, which are a blend of the refreshingly stark and the thematically subtle, with their own varied responses, ranging from appreciative and ironic amusement to outraged amazement. A similar strong response was evoked by her fellow

Argentine, Rodrigo Fresan, at the end of the six weeks, in his remarks about the absurdities and despair that inform his literary milieu.

We were not entirely able to avoid the inevitable polemical confrontation over the role of politics in art, a source of challenging and lively discussion that erupts at least once or twice during the six weeks. For the most part, the writers remained focused on discussion of their own writing, their artistic choices and the personal influences that shaped their work. This approach succeeded to a remarkable degree this semester, and its success may account for the intensive exploration and depth that characterized the students' own written assessments at the end. The students, many of them undergraduates in fields other than literature, were given six weeks of introduction to countries remote from their experience; they were brought into the ruptures of internecine conflict in Sri Lanka; to the harsh hinterlands of pioneering New Zealand in the nineteenth century; to the whimsical subterranean world of children's literature, by living representatives of these cultures from across the world the students themselves realized it, an experience not likely to be repeated anywhere again.

### **Panel Discussions.**

A large and diversified audience attended this year's series of weekly seminars, held Wednesday afternoons in the John C. Gerber Lounge of the EPB, from 3:00 to 4:30. The discussions were videotaped for later broadcast on public and university television. This year, we attempted to place a faculty panelist in each group, to enrich the discourse and provide a view from out of the American academe. The topics were formulated by the program coordinator in consultation with the director; Rowena Torrevillas also organized the discussions and the panel structures. Preliminary meetings were instituted this year, so that we could more closely coordinate the panelists' discussions. This year we led off with a topic new to our discussion series, "Writing a Myth: Creating a National Identity Through Literature," with Prof. Bharati Mukherjee serving as a panelist. This panel explored the ways in which nations project an idea of themselves, either by co-opting and reshaping existing myths of founding and creation, or by inventing a unifying concept that defines the nation or the regime.

The panel, "Tell Me a Poem, Sing Me a Story, and Other Shapes of Narrative," featured Juan Carlos Orihuela singing his poems to his own accompaniment on guitar and harmonica; on the same panel, Prof. Stavros Deligiorgis led a discussion of the narrative voice found in ballads from several eras. Mostafa Messnaoui provided an unusual insight into his view of Moroccan literature: that it is shaped as much by the invented perceptions of the west, via the movies, as by drawing upon an indigenous mixture of linguistic and historic sources.

The other topics were "Lost and Found in Translation," "Appropriated Voices: Writing Within, Without, and Across Genders and Cultures," "Literary Non-Fiction." The semester's last discussion, "Writing in a Non-Native Language," was co-sponsored by the Center for International and Comparative Studies, following a light supper at the International Center Lounge.

Remarkably, full attendance at these sessions was sustained throughout the semester; we are glad to report that students as well as interested members of the community showed up for the discussions.

### **Readings.**

The IWP reading series expanded in 1996. Eleven readings were held at Prairie Lights Books on Sunday afternoons at 5:00; one IWP writer each week shared the venue with a counterpart from the Writers' Workshop, each author reading for about half an hour. Juliet Barnes, a second-year student in the Graduate Fiction Workshop and the Workshop's research assistant assigned to the IWP, did an outstanding job of working with the program coordinator in matching writers from both programs, so that the readings were balanced according to genre, gender, and geographic representation: not an easy task when one is faced with selecting only eleven readers for an opportunity coveted by all.

The Arts Iowa City Center & Gallery provided the setting for another series of readings, also organized by Juliet Barnes. The art works by Johnson County artists changed from one reading to another, and provided the backdrop for three sets of readings. Again held in tandem with the Workshop, these readings were predominantly short fiction. Unlike previous experiments with readings held outside the well-established environs of Prairie Lights, this year's Arts Iowa City readings were marked by consistently high attendance.

A collective all-IWP reading, "The History of Love (told as a History of Writing)" was organized by Maria van Daalen, the 1995 representative from the Netherlands who was still in residence as an appointee of the Center for International and Comparative Studies. It was held at Shambaugh Auditorium on October 4, and drew a full house. Maria's high level of creative energy powered the engine that pulled together a well-organized event, larger in scale than the "Postcards from Iowa" reading she organized last year when she attended the program. Worth noting were the readings by writers from the Writers' Workshop. **سرخى** did not read their own work, but performed English translations of work by IWP authors; the evening also featured prominent literary figures such as Bharati Mukherjee, Clark Blaise, Mark Doty, and musical interludes in the form of African drumming by a trio of Nigerian musicians onstage.

Additionally, a number of the IWP writers read at the Cosgrove Institute Open House, and the IWP continued its presence at the Workshop-run Talk/Art Cabaret at the Mill restaurant with a reading by Lithuanian poet Liutauras Degesys.

Because one of our main goals is to create opportunities for contact between IWP writers and their counterparts in current American and international writing, we share an allocation with the Writers' Workshop to bring notable authors to the campus. The poets John Ashbery and Ann Carson gave talks and readings, under the auspices of the fund from the College of Liberal Arts. We also brought David Albahari to read at Prairie Lights Books; he represented the former Yugoslavia at 1986 IWP, and when he and his family came under increasing danger in his country, IWP director Clark Blaise was

instrumental in assisting him, through various international human rights and cultural agencies, to come to Canada. He now lives in Calgary, and his latest collection of stories was published by Northwestern University Press. We had hoped to bring Michael Ondaatje for an appearance, using our joint funding with the Writers' Workshop, during the fall semester. However, Mr. Ondaatje's heavily-booked schedule will bring him to the campus during the spring, and we will co-sponsor the event.

Our writers were the beneficiaries of the stellar readings series offered in Iowa City by Prairie Lights Books, the Workshop, and the University's lecture committee. Among the distinguished authors they had the chance to hear and to meet were Kazuo Ishiguro, Mona Simpson, Barry Hannah, Bharati Mukherjee, Jane Miller.

### **The IWP Playwrights.**

Beginning the fall semester, the IWP acquired the services of Professor Shelley Berc, who in previous years had been instrumental in providing the IWP playwrights with access to the Theatre Department. In 1996 Prof. Berc used her comprehensive network of contacts to bring the work of our playwrights to the attention of professional theatres; this is the first time we have been able to offer our playwrights such an opportunity in an organized way.

### **Following is the report filed by Professor Berc:**

During the 1996 period, Shelley Berc and intermedia artist Alejandro Fogel met with the IWP writers who worked in playwriting (often along with work in poetry or fiction or screenwriting) and helped guide them through the theatre, video, and performance art worlds of America. In October we accompanied the playwrights to New York City and Portland, Maine to have readings and workshops of their plays and to meet playwrights, actors, directors, artistic directors, and producers.

The writers Raj Rao, Catherine Zimdahl, Madhubhashini Disanayaka, and Zanina Mircevska had readings of their work at New York Theater Workshop, which is best known for its production of the musical *Rent* and its development of new plays. After the reading, which was attended by a wide cross section of the New York arts community, there was a discussion of the playwrights' works and theatre in their native countries. The readings were done by professional actors and directors. The event led to Catherine Zimdahl's work being chosen by one of the attendees for a production at New Georges Theatre in March 1997.

The artistic directors of New York Theater Workshop were very enthusiastic about the response to the evening of IWP playwrights and asked to host one again next year, possibly including more time for development of the plays. For all of the IWP writers, it was the first time they had heard their plays in the US and for some of them, the first time they heard them in English. We all marveled over how wonderful Zanina's tough, streetwise play of Macedonia sounded in translation. Many directors and actors felt that it would transfer nicely to a US venue, offering suggestions of theatres and performers.

One of the directors of the Lincoln Center Directors' Lab, a place for prominent and upcoming directors to try out work, expressed a desire to have an annual event that would feature the work of IWP playwrights. The Lab would spend two weeks working on the plays and presenting them, during which time the playwrights could be present for the rehearsal process. Shelley Berc is currently working on this possibility with the Lincoln Center Directors' Lab board.

New Dramatists, the oldest service organization for US playwrights (participation by nomination only), hosted a reception in New York for the IWP playwrights. Invited guests shared ideas and contacts with the IWPs and we began a discussion about an ongoing exchange, with playwrights from the IWP staying at New Dramatists for a week long residency and having public readings of their works.

We were able to set up a two-week residency for Zanina Mircevska with the Wooster Group (in New York), one of the US's most respected experimental theatre companies. Zanina had seen their work in Germany recently and was thrilled to be able to watch their rehearsals develop on a new piece. We were also able to arrange a meeting for her with the eminent translator and critic, Albert Bernal (professor of theatre, City University of New York) to discuss graduate theatre programs in the US, as Zanina is interested in continuing her studies here and then bringing her knowledge back to the Macedonian university system in which she teaches.

Three IWP writers, Juan Carlos Orihuela, Catherine Zimdahl, and Zanina Mircevska, had readings for their plays at the Portland Stage Company (Portland, Maine), funded by the theatre and a grant from the International Communication Institute. Two hundred people attended the reading by Equity actors and the lively discussion thereafter. Originally created for radio, this was the first time Juan Carlos saw his play about mental impairment staged. Many in the audience were weeping over the play's poignancy and lyrical dialogue. Catherine Zimdahl's *Clark in Sarajevo* was an enormous success and the audience kept telling her it must be performed in the US, especially due to her winning depiction of our mild mannered Superman. Portland State wants to host an IWP playwrights festival again next year, possibly developing it into a two day affair of readings, videos, and discussions.

### **Other news:**

Raj Rao had a viewing of his video-poem, *BomGay*, at the Asian American Writers Center in New York.

As theatre consultant to the *Journal Contemporanea* (Trieste, Italy), Berc recommended the publication of one of Lidia Amejko's plays, which will proceed this spring.

As a result of conversation with Heinemann Books, Catherine and Zanina have been invited to contribute to a new anthology of monologues. An article on the IWP is appearing in *American Theater* magazine in the spring of 1997.



The playwrights were a great group and we miss them!

### **The Travel Project.**

If there is a defining characteristic summarizing the 1996 session, it would be the breadth of the writers' travels throughout the United States, and the variety of their experiences both on and off the campus of the University of Iowa. Thirty of our writers gave approximately 105 talks and readings across the country, from Loyola University in New Orleans to Grinnell College in Iowa; they spoke at Yale and Harvard, at Georgetown University and Oberlin; at the Loft in Minneapolis, the Russian community of Chicago, the City University of New York, and the New Trier High School in Winnetka, Illinois, to name just a few of the places where our writers brought their expertise.

In general, writers' travels are determined by the invitations that are individually issued by institutions with whom we are in contact; a writer may also travel in connection with research or to consult with colleagues in translation or with editors or potential publishers. Rowena Torrevillas issues, receives, and arranges invitations between all the schools and entities that the writers visit. Over a hundred appointments and visits were processed by her this semester.

Two factors expedited the writers' unusually extensive travels. In previous years, the USIA-supported writers arranged their two weeks of domestic travel through administrative services provided by the Institute for International Education (IIE), based in Washington, D.C. Since 1994, the USIA-supported writers have arranged their travel primarily through the program coordinator who in turn worked in consultation with the travel-administration agencies assigned to us from Washington, and with the USIA project officer in charge of the IWP.

Over the past three years we have attempted to streamline this system, and in 1996, we initiated a travel project based on the purchase of travel passes by the USIA posts abroad. In most cases, these passes allowed each visitor approximately seven destinations within the continental USA, to be used during the two-week individual travel period (October 23 through November 6). More than half the participants arrived with these travel passes; issued by varying airlines, their restrictions were not uniform, and necessitated some readjustment and case-to-case renegotiation after the visitors had arrived in Iowa. Some of the airpasses required that destinations be selected in advance, and this presented the writers with a sense of latitude regarding their interests outside the University of Iowa.

The writers who attended the IWP under grants from private sponsorship, or through bilateral agreements we hold with cultural agencies abroad, also purchased airpasses; those that had travel allocations and not passes coordinated their travel with the Meacham Travel Service. The impeccable assistance provided by Meacham, through their manager Elaine Shalla, has stood us in good stead over the years, and again in 1996, Elaine and her staff gave us the painstaking and patient attention that has marked their enterprise over the years.

The second factor expediting the writers' travels was that the program again had the invaluable services of research assistant Juliet Barnes, who was the primary coordinator for this aspect of the writers' activities. For a project that logged many thousands of miles of travel for 34 writers, Juliet went many extra miles herself on their behalf. Her perseverance, imaginative solutions, and endless resources of good will provided the means for writers to see other parts of this country on a per diem allowance that would, ordinarily, scarcely cover a five-day stay in a New York hotel. The process involves far more than the two-week period designated for the writers' travel. The program coordinator disseminated and received individual travel plans; these were then transformed into airline reservations and hotel reservations, which Juliet patiently fielded with extraordinary persistence, in addition to train schedules, bus fares, car rentals, and airport pickups. Rowena Torrevillas coordinated the contacts with schools, individuals, and other institutions; IIE project assistant Angela Bond expedited grant disbursements and made travel reservations with the Washington, D.C.-based Omega Travel Agency, while International Visitor Program officer Helen Szpakowski administered the travel grant. Through their joint efforts, the visitors were able to read their works before communities and student audiences, they spoke with publishers, and saw the United States, many of them for the first time.

### **The Video Project.**

Thanks to a grant through the University of Iowa Foundation that funded the acquisition of equipment, the video project expanded the range of its coverage and services, and also dramatically increased the turnover time in editing a vastly increased volume of documentation.

Because of its enlarged output, the video project acquired the services of two work/study assistants in 1996, Don Prabish and Julie Fall, who were majors in broadcasting and film and had some previous experience in camera work and film editing. They received some hands-on training as well from their work with the program. We also had two part-time assistants, Heather Weinman and Rachel Fall, who worked with subtitling and set-up. The crew assisted with the technical set-up, the videotaping of program events, recording this year's series of video interviews, and putting together a series of clips shown at the end of the program. Lem Torrevillas, the audiovisual coordinator, files this report:

We were able to complete work faster and more efficiently this year because we owned much of our recording and post-production equipment. The skill level of our current crew improved over the previous year, and they reached a level of proficiency where we were able to train them in the use of our desktop video (computer) editing, in addition to our conventional video editing. The increased staff expertise, and our enhanced technical level, helped us to accomplish these new things, which we hadn't been able to do in previous years:

We taped more program events, from start to finish, including the opening session of the orientation, and many of the field trips.

We taped and aired six two-hour panel discussions. Our new equipment facilitated a wider range of camera angles, and our new system of switches made it possible to edit a live presentation (for future broadcast) even while the event was going on.

One week after the writers arrived in Iowa City, our video documentation on their activities and presentations began airing on Iowa City Public Access TV (PATV, channel 2) and on the University of Iowa cable TV (UITV, channel 12). In previous years, we would accumulate footage and begin editorial work after the program had started, with the finished product being broadcast after the writers had returned home.

No longer restricted by in-studio production, we taped a number of our writers' interviews outdoors, to take advantage of the autumn trees as a natural backdrop. Our newly-acquired wireless microphones allowed the writers and their interviewers freedom of movement on the set, indoors, or outdoors on location.

Each of the thirty-five writers brought home a copy of his or her video interview, for possible rebroadcast in their home countries. This marks a significant change from the early years of the video project, when the video coordinator had to negotiate for editing time from local studios and personal contacts known to him. In the past, he scrambled for studio time from a diverse range of facilities, among them the School of Broadcast and Film, Public Access TV, and the Video Art Department, whose studios gave priority to their students. Thus the editorial work on the interviews was completed long after the writers returned home, and copies of their work would be mailed to them. In 1996, the video interviews were filmed, edited, and transferred to the video standard appropriate to each writer's country, and made broadcast-ready in time for their return home.

We tried out a new interview format, with writers interviewing each other. We feel this format was interesting and the results were quite engaging, and we hope to continue using it in some of our future interviews. This one-on-one interview style will not, of course, supplant our present, very successful format, which features the program director and other staff as moderators and interviewers. At present, Clark Blaise is the host of the interview series, with supplementary interviews handled by Peter Nazareth, Shelley Berc, and Winston Barclay.

We undertook a new project in subtitling the movies and videos that the writers brought with them from their countries. IWP staff support person Heather Weinman was a major in Russian language and literature, and she worked with the audiovisual coordinator in providing English subtitles for Petr Aleshkovskiy's documentary on Russian farmers and rural life. Subtitles were provided for several other projects, including films from Albania and Poland.

We provided copies of the subtitled materials for the writers to use and show in the other parts of the country to which they traveled.

Nearing the end of the program, we held a "Film and Food Night" for the program and the general public at the Mayflower Multi-Purpose Room. We showed short films and

video excerpts from the works of the writers, among them: Catherine Zimdahl's prizewinning film; Lidia Amejko's dreamlike video poem; television footage from Sri Lanka of Madhubhashini Disanayaka's sitar performances; Raj Rao's film, *BomGay*; television footage about William Taylor (*Zealand*) and Lindita Arapi (*Albania*). The video staff, primarily Don Prabish, also put together a series of outtakes and bloopers from this year's video documentation, and we showed a brief highlight film featuring this year's writers. The event was combined with international dishes, brought potluck style by the writers, and the event was well attended.

The new equipment has freed us up to work on another feature-length documentary on the program during the spring semester. We are in the process of cataloging our extensive archival collection of tapes (both source tapes and master tapes of previous interview series), accumulated over the ten years we've run the video project. Perhaps a lengthier documentary, culled from these materials, can be assembled in celebration of the IWP thirtieth anniversary, or looking toward the millennium. We are also pursuing avenues of further distribution for our completed series, in libraries and other schools. Our most exciting ongoing project is three 30-second television spots, featuring the IWP, to be shown at half-time during nationally televised Hawkeye games. The Office of University Relations has seen and approved our draft of this ad, and we are completing it during the spring semester for submission.

### **The Translation Workshop.**

The IWP Translation Workshop is taught by Professor Daniel Weissbort each Friday, from 2:30 to 4:30 PM. In this setting, which we believe to be unique in the annals of university-based literary translation, students of translation can sit down and work face to face with writers to bring the authors' works into idiomatic English. In a number of cases, the translator does not necessarily know the source language, but works through a literal translation into English provided by the author.

### **Following is Prof. Weissbort's report:**

Twelve of the 34 IWP members collaborated with students in the Translation Workshop this year. These were Viviana Lysyj (Argentina), Juan Carlos Orihuela (Bolivia), Miklós Molnár (Hungary), Kim In Ae (Korea), Liutauras Degesys (Lithuania), Zanina Mircevska (Macedonia), Ana Carolina Rivera (Mexico), Beatriz Escalante (Mexico), Stephan Sanders (Netherlands), Mila Haugova (Slovakia), Anaxu Zabalbeascoa (Spain), and John-Bosco Adotevi (Togo). Translations, some quite substantial, were completed of all these writers, including short stories by Escalante and Lysyj, a short play by Mircevska, children's stories by Kim In Ae, poetry by Degesys, and part of a novel by Adotevi.

A number of the writers other than those above also made presentations to the Workshop, even though they did not work with translators. Among these was Dr. R. Raj Rao, who himself writes in English and who talked about the position of the English language writer in the Subcontinent, and Ms. Madhubhashini Disanayaka from Sri Lanka who discussed the translation of Sinhala writers' works into English. The Workshop has

proved an excellent forum for presentations of this kind, dealing with matters of intercultural traffic and relations between languages in a post-colonial context.

Mila Haugova, from Slovakia, proved one of the mainstays of the Workshop. On several occasions, she led the class in lively discussions, providing literal English versions of her poems, which were discussed in class, with all contributing toward a "final" version. Beatriz Escalante, too, actively participated in Workshop sessions, and made a presentation in which she talked about the translation of American short fiction into Spanish, for a Latin American audience. This led to some stimulating discussion regarding the relative merits of "foreignizing" and "domesticating" translations.

It seems likely that some of the partnerships that were inaugurated through the Workshop will prove lasting ones. In general the standard of the translation or translational editing was high. The students were themselves all talented writers, either from the MFA Program in Translation or the Creative Writing Graduate Fiction or Poetry Workshops.

Some of the work done this semester will be published, bilingually, in the Translation Program's journal *Exchanges*, which is now quite widely circulated in the USA and UK.

It is to be hoped that, in future, IWP participants will receive earlier and more detailed notice of the unique opportunities available to them for the translation of their work during their residence at the University of Iowa.