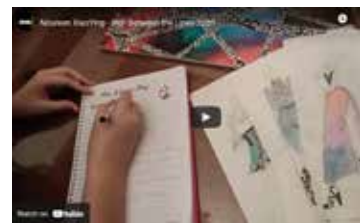


# 2020 ANNUAL REPORT





## IWP Staff

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### Director

Christopher Merrill

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### Associate Directors

Hugh Ferrer  
Josie Neumann

---

### Accountant

Sheri Mohler

---

### Admin. Services Coordinator Between the Lines Assistant

Caitlin Plathe

---

### Communications Coordinator

Allison Gnade

---

### Digital Learning Coordinator

Pamela Marston

---

### Editor

Nataša Đurovičová

---

### Fall Residency Coordinator

Shelly Criswell

---

### Fall Residency Assistant

Joe Tiefenthaler

---

### IWP Intern, Russian Nonfiction Project Coordinator, Fall

Residency Assistant  
Emily Buck

---

### Senior Program Advisor

Peter Nazareth

---

### Summer Institute Coordinator

Peter Gerlach

---

### Summer Institute Assistant

Sharaf Zia

---

### Youth Programs Coordinator

Alisa Weinstein

## Mission Statement

The mission of the International Writing Program (IWP) is to promote mutual understanding by providing writers from every part of the world the necessary space, physical or imaginative, for creative work and collaboration in an intercultural setting.

Our mission is anchored in the values of freedom of expression and inclusiveness, and in the belief that creativity has the power to shape the world.

We execute this mission by building enduring creative communities, encouraging cross-cultural dialogue, and supporting writers at all stages of their careers.

## University of Iowa Students

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### Undergraduate Research Fellows

Raghaib Al Lawati  
Joshua Balicki  
Anna Nelson

---

### Graduate Research Assistants

David Drustrup  
Kaylee Lockett  
Leigh Marshall

## Annual Report

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### Editor, Designer

Allison Gnade

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### Managing Editor

Hugh Ferrer

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### Additional Design

Cale Stelken

**ON THE COVER:** A showcase on the UI Writing University website highlights thirty short films created by some of our 2020 Between the Lines participants, giving a snapshot of their creative work and a glimpse into lives of youth around the world facing the pandemic: [bit.ly/2UMg3aJ](https://bit.ly/2UMg3aJ)

**International Writing Program  
The University of Iowa**

100 Shambaugh House  
430 N. Clinton St.  
Iowa City, Iowa 52242-2020 USA  
319.335.0128  
[iwp.uiowa.edu](http://iwp.uiowa.edu)

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

*Greetings, friends,*

Let's face it: the COVID-19 pandemic made 2020 a strange and tragic year, which profoundly shaped daily lives and institutions around the globe, including the International Writing Program (IWP), which for the first time in our history was unable to host the Fall Residency. The delights of the opening party, weekly readings at Prairie Lights and IWP's Shambaugh House, panel discussions at the Iowa City Public Library, the University of Iowa (UI) International Translation Workshop, presentations to classes in UI's International Literature Today and Senior College, the field trip to Effigy Mounds, travels to Chicago, Washington, D.C., and New York City—all were postponed during lockdown. And while the rising vaccination rates across the country promise to mark a return to some semblance of normal life, we know deep in our hearts that in certain ways nothing will ever be the same.

But during the pandemic, the IWP continued to connect writers around the world, inventing new forms of virtual exchanges—territory we fortunately had already pioneered through our digital programing in the preceding decades. Our 2020 online exchanges brought together high school students from the U.S. with countries along the Silk Road; college-aged writers from India, Pakistan, and the U.S.; writers and chore-

ographers from Kazakhstan, Latvia, and Russia; and IWP alumni from Argentina, Botswana, Colombia, Kenya, Mauritius, Mexico, Somalia, and South Africa to extend our Women's Creative Mentorship Program, which over six months instructed and inspired young women from the alumni's home countries embarking on professional literary careers. Early in the pandemic, the IWP partnered with Bowery Poetry and Rattapallax to create the [Poetry Is Like Bread Ghazal \(bit.ly/PBGhazal\)](https://bit.ly/PBGhazal) and our online journal, *91<sup>st</sup> Meridian*, devoted two special issues to IWP alumni's reflections on the pandemic, "THE SITUATION", [Vol. 10 No. 2 \(bit.ly/VTenTwo\)](https://bit.ly/VTenTwo) and [Vol. 10 No. 3 \(bit.ly/VTenThree\)](https://bit.ly/VTenThree)—more on them on page 6. In short, the IWP persisted.

Some of the virtual tools we developed in 2020 will continue to be deployed in the coming years, expanding the range of our literary engagement from this [UNESCO City of Literature](https://bit.ly/UNESCO) to every corner of the earth. Meantime we look forward to the arrival of our next cohort of writers, when once again we will have the opportunity not only to showcase the work of distinguished literary artists from around the world but to create the conditions for them to produce new works that will endure in the vast Republic of Letters we call the UI Writing University.

With gratitude,

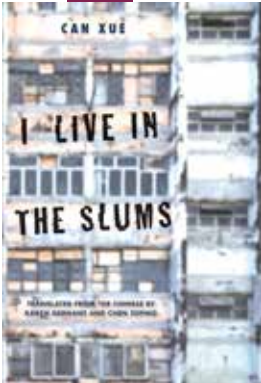
Christopher Merrill  
IWP Director



# THIS YEAR'S ALUMNI BOOKSHELF

## A SELECTION OF 2020 TITLES

### IN ENGLISH AND ENGLISH TRANSLATION

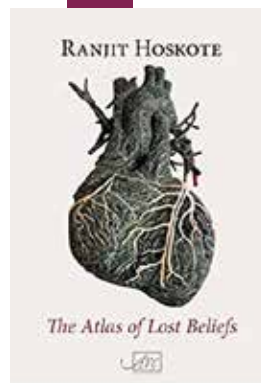


#### **CAN XUE 残雪, *I LIVE IN THE SLUMS***

(PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, FALL RESIDENCY (FR) '92)

Translated from the Chinese by Karen Gernant and Chen Zeping  
New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2020

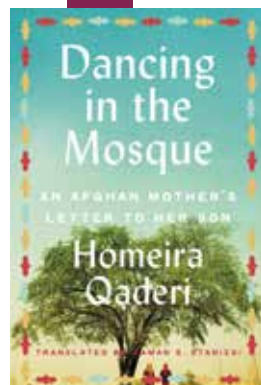
"Chinese experimental author Can Xue is like the Lady Gaga of modern Chinese literature. Both are enthroned sphinxes of world culture today. Xue has been reviled by some critics in her homeland yet celebrated by others there and elsewhere—especially in the West, to the point that she has become a global phenomenon and a recent Nobel Prize contender.... Despite the mention of "slums" in the title, the book rather more accurately evokes a resounding sense of homelessness, statelessness, and disembodiment from all fixed forms of human existence." —[Harvard Review Online](#)



#### **RANJIT HOSKOTE, *THE ATLAS OF LOST BELIEFS***

(INDIA, FR '95) Todmorden, UK: Arc Publications, 2020

"Ranjit Hoskote's [poetry collection] is an epic in three parts, the culmination of 'a twenty-year-long project of research and translation' ... which draws together dazzling meditations on history, language, colonialism, Herman Melville, Upanishadic philosophy, Vedic theology, art and the ocean." —[Arc Publications](#)



#### **HOMEIRA QADERI, *DANCING IN THE MOSQUE: AN AFGHAN MOTHER'S LETTER TO HER SON***

Translated from the Dari by Zaman S. Stanizai / New York, NY: Harper, 2020

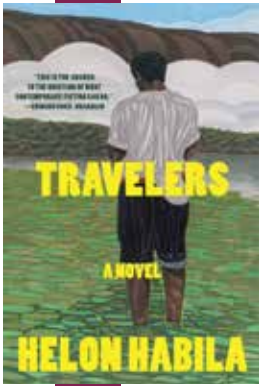
"During the 985 nights since she was cleaved from her then 19-month-old, still-breastfeeding son, Homeira Qaderi managed to escape her native Afghanistan and eventually settle in California. Her son, now four, has been told his mother is dead. With this haunting memoir, ... Qaderi literally, indelibly writes the proof of her existence into being." —[Shelf-awareness](#)



#### **ANJA KAMPMANN, *HIGH AS THE WATERS RISE***

(GERMANY, FR '10) Berkeley, CA: Catapult, 2020

"This first novel by an established poet examines the marginalized lives of European laborers. An oil-rig worker, traumatized after a friend disappears at sea, embarks on a journey of self-discovery—to old haunts in Malta, Italy, and Germany, and to his friend's home town, in Hungary. Along the way, he encounters old and new friends and lovers, who often share his sense of being left behind in the wake of supposed progress." —[The New Yorker](#)



## HELON HABILA, *TRAVELERS* (NIGERIA, FR '04)

New York, NY: Norton, 2019/Penguin, 2020

"*Travelers* refuses nostalgia for the cultural energies of African decolonization and the restorative promise of pan-Africanism. But it remains deferent to and inspired by the ghosts of Tutuola, Soyinka, and Achebe—who appear to have given this novel its recognition of how stories mine inner experiences, sketch faces, and speak the names of those who experience history, rescuing them from drowning anonymously in the sea of unrealized hopes." — [World Literature Today](#)



## WU SHENG 吳晟, *MY VILLAGE: SELECTED POEMS 1972-2014* (TAIWAN, FR '83)

*Edited and translated from the Chinese by John Balcom*

Brookline, MA: Zephyr Press, 2020

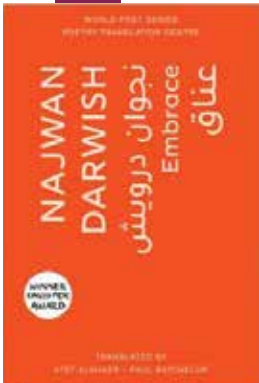
"Wu Sheng has written vivid poems about rural life and the land since the 1960s, when he became one of Taiwan's most popular poets. His poems are rooted in the soil, imbued with an unshakable affinity for the people who till it, sweat over it, and eventually are buried in it, and serve as his personal response to the industrialization, urbanization and globalization of his vanishing world.... Though well-read in modernist and other poetic styles, Wu Sheng developed a style that is ever-linked to his home and its geography." — [Zephyr Press](#)

## NAJWAN DARWISH, *EMBRACE* (PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES, FR '10)

*Translated from the Arabic by Atef Alshaer with Paul Batchelor*

London, UK: Poetry Translation Centre, 2020

"[T]he multifaceted poetry of Najwan Darwish puts us again and again in front of the contours of something immemorial, almost unspeakable. It tells us that above all else poetry is solidarity and compassion for every detail of the world: for that specific bread and oil, for that eternity at the breakfast table, for that land with its "graves by the river." The poem shows us those graves, it explicitly tells us that they are there, by the river; and for a second we see that if that image moves us, it is because—whatever our countries, origins, and histories, and whatever languages we speak and, beyond that, whatever times we have lived and died in—we have all been buried in those graves and, at the same time, we have all wept over them." — [Paris Review](#)



## PILAR QUINTANA, *THE BITCH* (COLOMBIA, FR '11, WOMEN'S CREATIVE MENTORSHIP PROJECT MENTOR '19 & '20)

*Translated from the Spanish by Lisa Dillman / New York, NY: World Editions, 2020*

"Reflecting the increasingly complex and multifaceted depictions of the Pacific in Colombian cultural production, *The Bitch* refuses to either celebrate the natural beauty of the coast or reinforce a folkloric or idealized image of its inhabitants. Instead, it expertly weaves its politics into a psychologically complex story that centers a character, and her desires, frustrations, and emotions, who is not commonly represented in either Colombian or international literature." — [Full-Stop](#)

# IWP'S 91<sup>ST</sup> MERIDIAN VOLUME 10



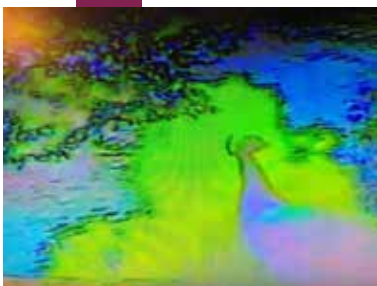
[91<sup>st</sup> Meridian Vol. 10.1](#)



[91<sup>st</sup> Meridian Vol. 10.2](#)



[91<sup>st</sup> Meridian Vol. 10.3](#)



[91<sup>st</sup> Meridian Vol. 10.4](#)

The first two issues of the tenth volume of IWP's 91<sup>st</sup> *Meridian* Journal reached out to alumni to gauge the rising COVID temperature even just as the virus was beginning to spread worldwide. The responses, from more than thirty countries, yielded some surprising insights—for instance [a sense in some of the “global South” countries](#) that the rapid spread of an infectious disease is already so familiar a phenomenon that it would cause less disruption and damage than in the “global North,” or early reports of [vaccines-for-votes](#) manipulations. The second COVID issue then asked an array of alumni to look ahead to the “lessons learned” from the pandemic. There, too, were some prescient insights, for instance regarding [confrontations of democracy with the constraints necessary](#), or pieces highlighting the politics of ignorance, be it [social](#) or [religious](#)—as well as a [lovely piece](#) by a writer in Delhi observing a single tree leaf. Together, these thirty-five pieces give a remarkable global mosaic of the astonishing 2020.

The two non-COVID issues of 91<sup>st</sup> *Meridian* made up for thematic constraint by going all out. Find there: two equally magical but radically different *kitsune* stories—[one by a Japanese](#), the other [by a Venezuelan writer](#); a [homemaker in Algiers](#) realizing that the baby cockroaches in her kitchen sink offer her more intimacy than her family; the sharply honed account of a writer living with [a condition of chronic tremor](#); a pseudo-fictional account of [life on the edge in the jade-rich borderlands](#) between Burma and China; a story an immigrant son tells of [his dad, a people smuggler](#) between north Africa and Italy; three [grandly irate](#) poems by a Lithuanian poet and a [powerful poetical allegory](#) of Hong Kong as a “quagga”—neither horse nor zebra, unique, vulnerable, and on the verge of extinction.

Last but not least, there are two fragments of IWP's history: [a 1983 essay by IWP co-founder Nieh Hualing Engle](#), translated from the Chinese, in which she gives lyrical form to the first gathering of Sinophone writers after three decades of separation, and [a collage piece](#) accounting for the emergence of translation as a standalone academic endeavor from its “service status” in the Iowa Writers Workshop in the mid-1960s.

— 91<sup>st</sup> *Meridian* Editor Nataša Đurovičová



# GROUNDING: WRITING KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES

In March, 2020, the Iowa Board of Regents suspended university-sponsored international travel for all faculty, staff, and students, as a safety response to the global pandemic; and classes at all levels of Iowa schools—from pre-school to grad school—went online with little to no warning, leaving instructors scrambling for materials. We were glad the IWP's toolkit still had plenty to offer, in spite of these truly substantial setbacks. To instructors and writers around the world, we offered the [IWP's MOOC-packs](#) (course materials for our past Massive Open Online Courses, available at [distancelearningiwp.org](#)) and an online library of hundreds of videos on the craft of writing: years' worth of ready-made lessons with diverse topics and authors.










With no possibilities for overseas tours, the IWP sought fresh avenues for cultural exchange by experimenting within the virtual space. Through funding from the Arts Envoy Program, the IWP piloted a four-week creative writing course entitled "Crafting the Future: Writing and Workshopping in Speculative Forms." Featuring a faculty of seven award-winning authors, and designed to promote imaginative resiliency during the pandemic, this new course brought together seventy college-aged participants from eight countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Ghana, Guatemala, Iraq, Mexico, Poland, and Russia). The goal was for participants to imaginatively construct a better future through creative writing. Three of the cohorts were taught largely

in Spanish, demonstrating our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility, and brought us a new group of writers—both students and instructors! Read more about this course on page 21. The success of this program led to an increase in funding from our sponsor and plans for subsequent iterations in 2021-2022.

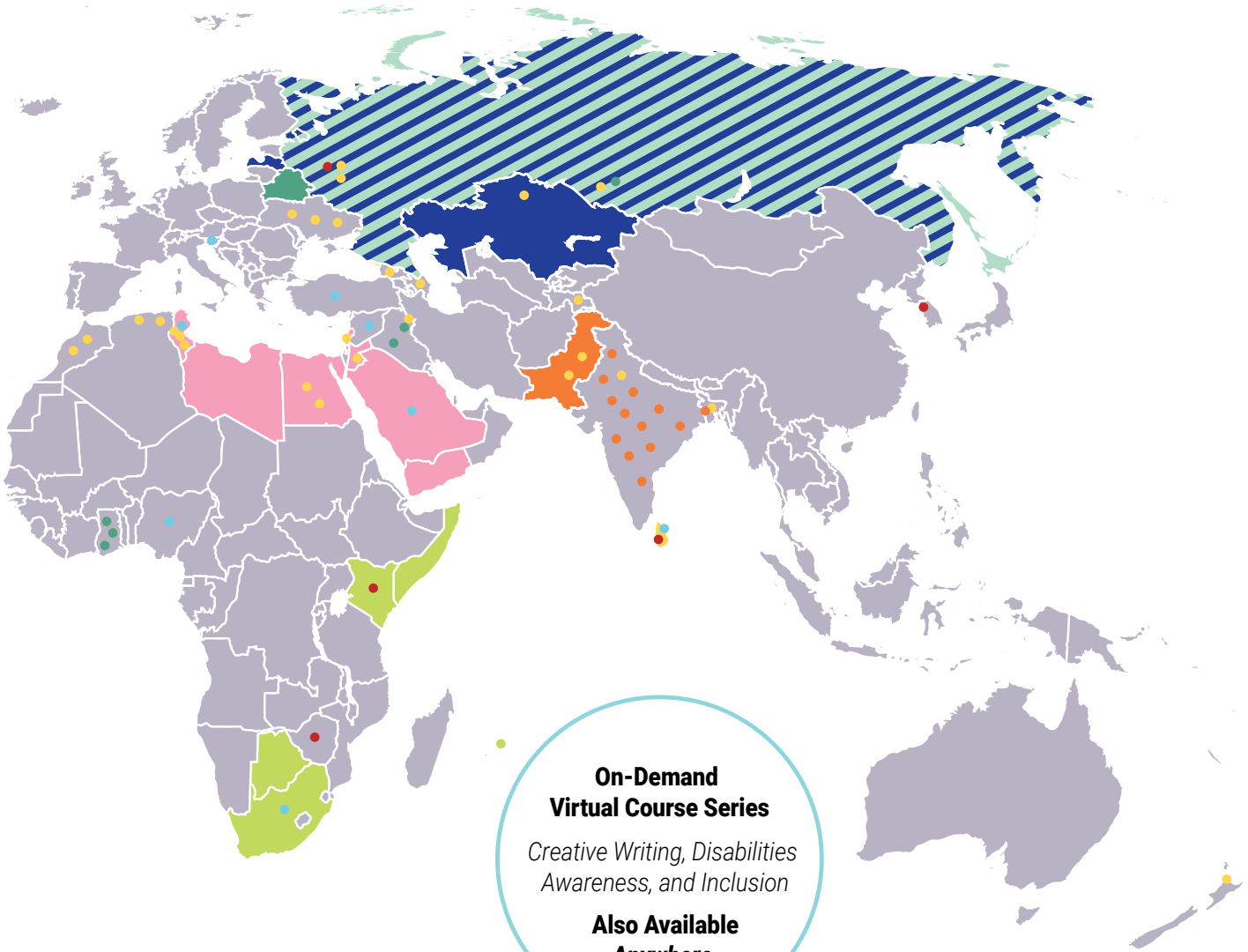
Another 2020 innovation was a creative writing course in English for Russian young people, ages 18-25, developed in partnership with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. Demand for the program was strong, and IWP secured two renowned nonfiction writers as instructors: IWP alumna Alisa Ganieva based in Moscow, and Jennifer Percy based in New York City (more about them on page 20). The class featured six lessons on six different facets of nonfiction writing: Truth in Nonfiction, Experimental Nonfiction, Travelogues and Immersion Journalism, Writing Dissent, and Gonzo Journalism. Students were thrilled to benefit from the attention and wisdom of internationally celebrated writers, asking many questions about their respective careers. The readings and assignments opened new worlds to some students, with one sharing: "I like that we are shown the materials we would never find on our own even if we wanted to." Read more about this course on page 20. We look forward to bringing more nonfiction and reportage to Russian audiences, as well as more creative writing and opportunities for intercultural experiences around the globe when we can visit again, in-person.

# 2020 IWP PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

## Map Key

-  Crafting the Future: Writing and Workshopping in Speculative Forms
-  Summer Institute
-  Women's Creative Mentorship
-  International Literature Today
-  Between the Lines
-  91<sup>st</sup> Meridian
-  Word/Movement
-  Creative Writing, Disabilities Awareness, and Inclusion
-  Russian Nonfiction Writing



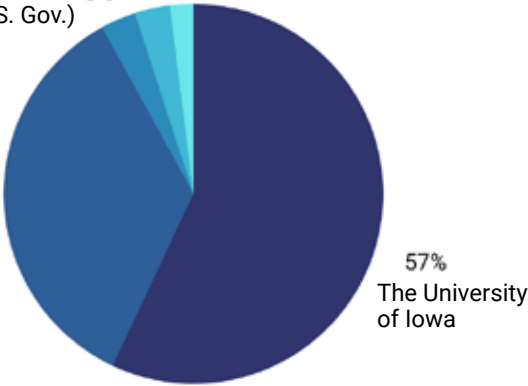


**On-Demand  
Virtual Course Series**  
*Creative Writing, Disabilities  
Awareness, and Inclusion*  
**Also Available  
Anywhere  
Online**

2020 IWP SUPPORT

Partner Funds & Fees  
Grants 3% 3% 2% Gifts to the IWP  
(Non-U.S. Gov.)

Grants from the  
U.S. State Dept.  
35%



@UIIWP  
ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook

Instagram

Twitter

21,752  
followers

2,393  
followers

4,626  
followers

# BETWEEN THE LINES



“Our program just makes every day that much more enjoyable; it’s easier to wake up knowing I have something to look forward to... I’ve never had this much fun learning.”

– Shurouq (Jordan, BTL: Peace and the Writing Experience '20)

The 13th year of Between the Lines (BTL) was not stopped by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through constant innovation, the BTL team supported teens around the world during this turbulent time.

BTL took our two, two-week long summer sessions for young writers (ages 15-18) and transposed them to a virtual experience, creating support networks that grew even stronger than we had hoped for.

In **BTL: Peace and the Writing Experience**, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 50 participants from 19 countries and the U.S. came together online for synchronized writing workshops, special seminars with guest writers and artists, an ‘open mic’ event, and an online faculty reading open to the public hosted by Prairie Lights Bookstore. Participants exchanged writing in private BTL groups via *Write the World*,

an online global writing platform for teens, and shared glimpses of daily life and their home cultures through writing and images posted on BTL’s new Instagram, [@btl\\_uuiwp](https://www.instagram.com/btl_uuiwp). A graduation ceremony featured a showcase of participants’ digital stories and an anthology of their new work, which you can read at: [bit.ly/3qzUcPz](https://bit.ly/3qzUcPz)



“My most favorite thing is getting to know the instructors! [I]t’s heart-warming getting to meet someone who you want to be in the future.” — 2020 BTL participant

The instructors leading the session’s creative writing workshops and global literature

## 2020 BTL: PEACE AND THE WRITING EXPERIENCE MICROGRANTS:

Funds that had been earmarked for travel were competitively awarded to support seven literary projects created by BTL: *Peace and the Writing Experience* 2020 alumni. Learn a bit about all seven impressive projects here:

[adobe.ly/2Thv7wA](https://adobe.ly/2Thv7wA)

***“BTL is the best thing that’s ever happened to me. I would forever recommend it.” – 2020 BTL participant***

seminars were Rumena Bužarovska (North Macedonia, IWP Fall Resident (FR) ’18), Vladimir Poleganov (Bulgaria, FR ’16), Shandana Minhas (Pakistan, FR ’13), and Mary Hickman (U.S., BTL faculty ’15, ’16 & ’17). While participants were of course initially upset they wouldn’t be able to travel to Iowa, the online program did not disappoint: “My interactions and connections with my international peers have definitely exceeded my expectations—I was worried that I would feel disconnected from them because we weren’t together in person, but talking with them over Zoom and Zoom chat made me feel so close to them in a way that I’ve been missing throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.”

*“I learned so much about different people from different backgrounds, and how we all share similar things and how we don’t—and how that is all ok.” – 2020 BTL participant*

Sponsored for its second year by the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, **BTL: Identity and Belonging** also pivoted to a virtual format. The two-week program emphasizes community-building and intercultural exchange through creative writing, and this year it featured a diverse group of 20 Muslim-American and non-Muslim-American young writers, ages 15-18, hailing from 16 U.S. states.

In this online format, in addition to the program’s core instructors, U.S. authors Poupeh Missaghi and José Olivarez, we



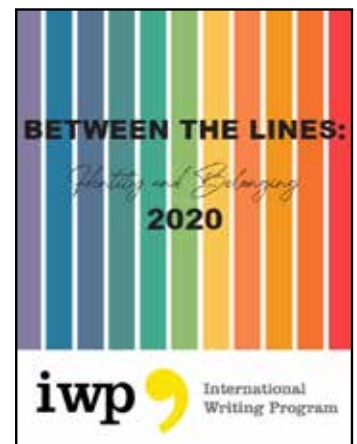
A few participants share their experiences in this short video by Zoe Liu (BTL ’20, U.S.): [bit.ly/3hm9a7A](https://bit.ly/3hm9a7A)

were able to bring the students together with an expanded roster of guest poets and artists on the following topics: Razi Jafri and Joumana Altallal (‘Visual and Poetic Documentary’); Kiki Petrosino (*White Blood: A Lyric of Virginia*); Marwa Helal (‘What are you going to do with all that IDENTITY?’); Caroline Meek, UI ICRU Fellow ’18 & ’19, with BTL Alumni (‘Beyond BTL’); Razi Jafri and Justin Feltman, filmmakers, (Hamtramck, USA); and Lauren Haldeman (‘Making Poetry Films’).

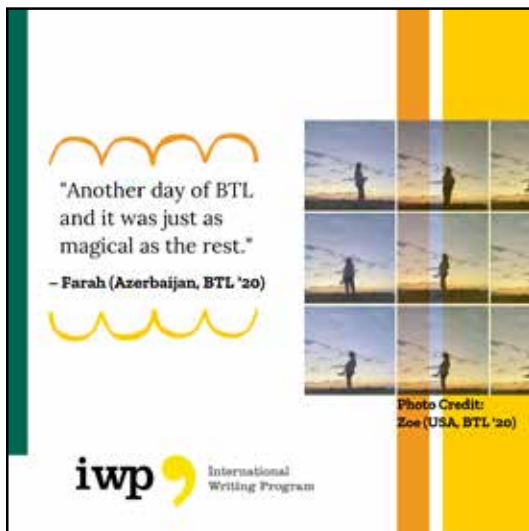
It was great to see our participants adapt to virtual programming: “I would say, I have accomplished more than what I had expected.

My goals were to just show my face and smile and write. I was an extremely introverted person, always shy, especially on virtual platforms. Now I see myself speaking up, putting [forth] my opinions—it’s just amazing! Thanks to BTL for allowing me to step out of my comfort zones and helping me to realize my potentials!”

— IWP Youth Programs Coordinator Alisa Weinstein



Read the BTL: Identity and Belonging anthology at: [bit.ly/2UfYrUg](https://bit.ly/2UfYrUg)



LEFT: **FOLLOW BTL ON INSTAGRAM** [@btl\\_uuiwp](https://www.instagram.com/btl_uuiwp)

**ON THE COVER:** A showcase on the UI Writing University website highlights thirty short films created by some of our 2020 BTL participants, giving a snapshot of their creative work and a glimpse into lives of youth around the world facing the pandemic: [bit.ly/2UMg3aJ](https://bit.ly/2UMg3aJ)

### 2020 Between the Lines Participants:

Nafira AHMAD, Bangladesh

Tekle ALAVIDZE, Georgia

Shadi ALI, Iraq

Huseyn ALILI, Azerbaijan

Aisha ALNAQBI, United Arab Emirates

Maryam ALWAN, U.S.

Zahara ANVER, Sri Lanka

Achref BENNANI, Tunisia

Nour El Houda BERKANE, Algeria

Shrouq BUSTANJI, Jordan

Ian CAVANAUGH, U.S.

David CHEN, U.S.

Miguel Betran CUESTA, U.S.

John FREDERICKSON, U.S.

Caroline GAO, U.S.

Paris GITOBU, U.S.

Hana HAFEEZ, U.S.

Farah HAJIZADA, Azerbaijan

Ethan Ji-hoon HAN, U.S.

Zainab HASAN, Pakistan

Arshveen HORA, India

Samira HOSSAIN, Bangladesh

Omar IBRAHIM, Egypt

Hesandi JAYASEKARA, Sri Lanka

Amir KABALAN, Lebanon

Mariam KHAN, U.S.

Aleksandre KHUNDZAKISHVILI, Georgia

Roman KOLISHENKO, Ukraine

Kevin Stanley KONG, U.S.

Pavlo KOROL, Ukraine

Fiona KUBALAK, U.S.

Harper Layne KUCIK, U.S.

Catie KUEHL, U.S.

Celine KRAITEM, Lebanon

Quinn LANDER, U.S.

Danju Zoe LIU, U.S.

Serafima LITVINENKO, Russia

Noureen MAHMOUD, Egypt

Norma Mohamad MAKKI, U.S.

Rebekah MITCHELL, U.S.

Debkanya MITRA, U.S.

Haroun MOUDEN, Morocco

Ibaa Hadj MESSAOUD, Morocco

Vardaan PANDEY, India

Libby RIGGS, U.S.

Madeleine RUSSELL, U.S.

Judy SAAFEIN, U.S.

Samandar SAMANDAROV, Tajikistan

Drew SHINOZAKI, U.S.

Elizabeth SHVARTS, U.S.

Zelda SIEGEL, U.S.

Danielle Marie SIPP, U.S.

Anya Jacqueline TANG, U.S.

Ruth Catherine THOMAS, U.S.

Eleanor WARD, U.S.

Finn Otis YETPLÉ, U.S.

Clara YUSTE-GOLOB, U.S. & Spain

Sahar ZAR, Tunisia

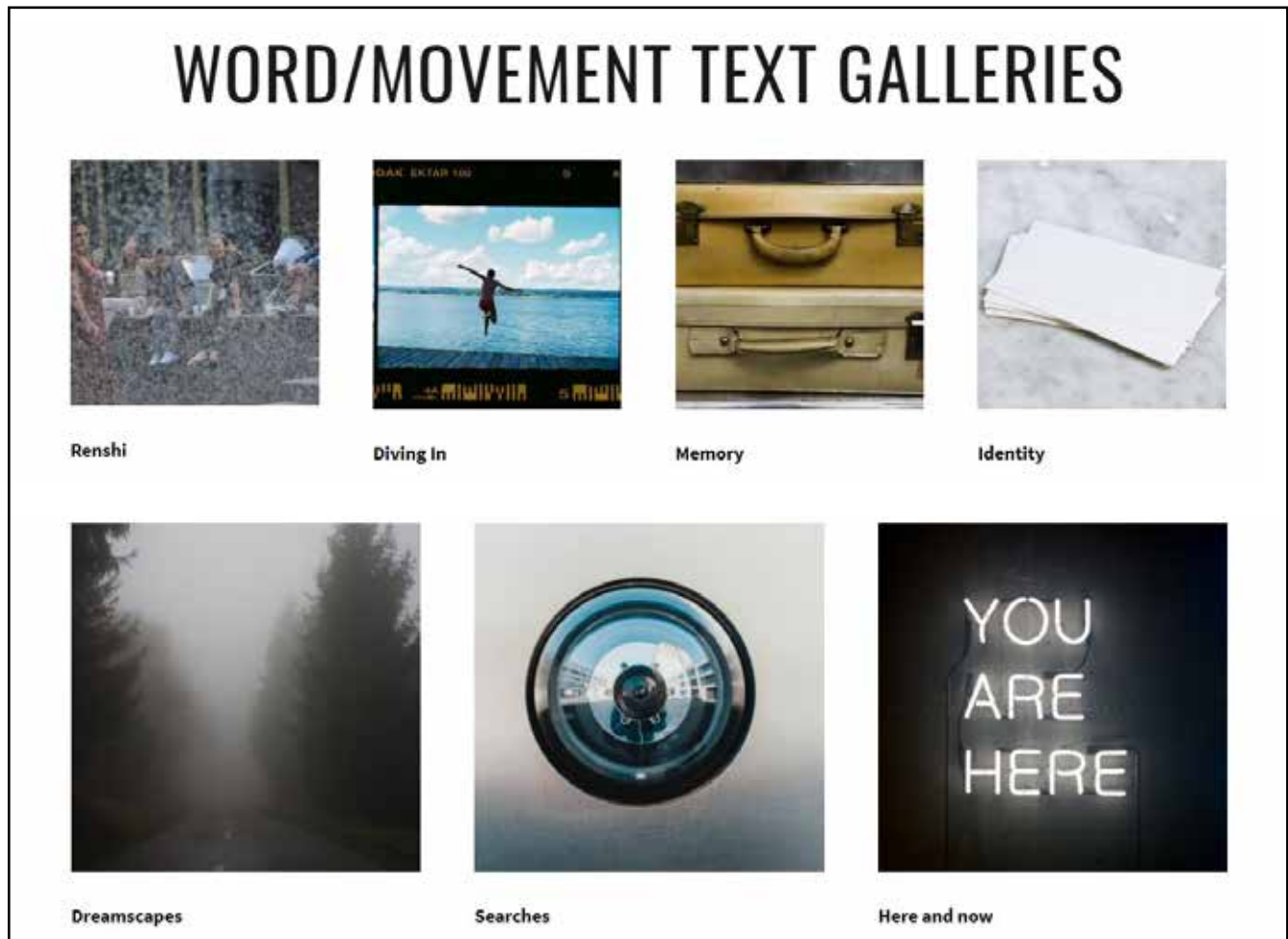
Ulane ZHUSSIP, Kazakhstan

Adan ZIA, Pakistan

Matthew Daiqing ZHANG, U.S.



# DIGITAL LEARNING



Explore these text galleries submitted by the Russian-speaking and Latvian-speaking participants in our Word/Movement course: [distancelearningiwp.org/wordmovementtextgalleries](https://distancelearningiwp.org/wordmovementtextgalleries)

Digital Learning (DL) handles the IWP's virtual outreach, so the COVID-19 pandemic actually did not impact the basic structure of our planned 2020 DL programming. However, we were gratified to hear that these programs strongly affected participants and instructors alike at deeply personal levels, across nations—perhaps even more so than in normal times because virtual connections were and are lifelines during this particularly challenging time.

Early on in the pandemic, DL made two conscious decisions to accommodate the situation's unique struggles: first, to be extremely flexible with schedules and content, and second—and most importantly—to be compassionate, and to make space for the impacts of COVID-19 through the creative expression of the realities being experienced by each participant and each instructor.

The following DL projects all ended up containing components to help cope with loss and uncertainty. And each of the projects held components of hope as well: that sharing stories, while not a solution, is a way forward. — IWP Digital Learning Coordinator  
Pamela Marston

## Virtual Outreach Course: Word/Movement

*Kazakhstan, Latvia, Russia* (30 participants & 3 instructors / June 15-August 1, 2020)

DL planned this Outreach course well before the pandemic hit, but its emphasis on virtual collaboration between different art forms intersected with many projects across the U.S. during the period of lockdowns due to COVID-19.

The 'Movement' sessions of this course offered dance sequences created by established choreographers, accompanied by a recorded video conversation with the sequence's choreographer speaking about inspiration, structure, experimentation, and text/movement interactions and overlaps. These became the starting point of each 'Word' session, offered in a creative writing workshop format. Participants spoke about and experimented with form and with language, working responses, insights, and reactions from the 'Movement' sessions into their creative writing.

Typically, course assignments would not be made publicly available, but these participants wanted to make their work accessible to the public. Explore these text galleries, sharing a few of the course projects submitted by the Russian-speaking and Latvian-speaking participants: [distancelearningiwp.org/wordmovementtextgalleries](https://distancelearningiwp.org/wordmovementtextgalleries)

## Virtual, On-Demand Course Series: Creative Writing, Disabilities Awareness, and Inclusion

*Created for Near East and Northern African regions, though free and accessible on YouTube to anyone, anywhere, anytime* (Sessions posted weekly November 5-December 22, 2020)

Access the course playlist at: [bit.ly/DAwritingcourse](https://bit.ly/DAwritingcourse)

This short course series is captioned/subtitled in Arabic and in English, and each short course session is taught by a different disabilities writer/activist. These six one-hour courses were released weekly, and each contains a 30-minute lecture and two 15-minute assignment sections.

Instructors for this short course series:

Elsa Sjunneson: a Hugo, Aurora, and British Fantasy Awards-winning editor, author, and disability scholar

Melody Moezzi: an Iranian-American Muslim author, attorney, activist, and visiting associate professor of creative writing at the University of North Carolina Wilmington

Ron Marz: an established DC and Marvel comic book writer, also known for the Silver Scorpion, a Syrian-American teenage superhero who uses a wheelchair

Dilman Dila: an IWP alum (Fall Resident '17) and Ugandan writer, filmmaker, all around storyteller, and author of a critically acclaimed collection of short stories, *A Killing in the Sun*

Hanaa Alghamdi: an IWP alum (Fall Resident '09), Saudi Arabian writer, and retired physician whose recent creative non-fiction focuses on her son, who has Asperger's

Sheila Black: an American poet and writer, and currently director of development at the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP), the main professional organization for creative writing programs

Access  
the course  
playlist here!  
[bit.ly/DAwritingcourse](https://bit.ly/DAwritingcourse)

## Digital Collages



Ivania Cox—(playwriting, fiction; Argentina) is an actor whose writing



Priya Hein—(fiction, nonfiction, poetry; Mauritius) is the author of



Firdous Hendricks—(fiction; South Africa) is an artist, writer,



Mandisa Mabuthoe—(poetry, fiction, drama; Botswana) is a narrative



Ghada Martinez—(fiction; Mexico) is a short story writer who studied



Sarah Ochiwada—(fiction; Kenya) is the first African woman to hold an



Yijhan Renteria—(fiction, poetry; Colombia) has had stories and



Jimena Repetto—(fiction, poetry, drama; Argentina) has published



Paula Silva—(fiction; Colombia) graduated cum laude from the



Mmakgosi Tau—(poetry, screenwriting; Botswana) is



Haddiyyah Tegally—(fiction; Mauritius) is the author of several



Lupita Vega—(fiction, essay; México) studied Creative Writing and

Participants in the Virtual Women's Creative Mentorship Professionalization Project created digital "collages" to describe their work over these six months amongst the COVID-19 pandemic: [distancelearningiwp.org/digitalcollageswmp2020](https://distancelearningiwp.org/digitalcollageswmp2020)

### **Virtual Women's Creative Mentorship Professionalization Project**

*Argentina, Botswana, Colombia, Kenya, Mauritius, Mexico, Somalia, and South Africa*  
(14 mentees & 5 writer/publisher experts / April 15-October 15, 2020)

This project built on the already-established connections in IWP's 2019 [Women's Creative Mentorship \(WCM\) Project](#), which engaged female IWP Fall Residency alumni as mentors for emerging female writers from their home countries. This program extension introduced participants to prominent writers and creative text publishing experts through a series of professional practice seminars, one topic expert per month. Participants continued their mentorships, and were invited to create digital "collages" (short videos, images, text, and their personal 'writing resource lists') to describe their work over these six months and—given the COVID-19 pandemic—their work beyond it, including the balancing/un-balancing of life, COVID-19, writing, and global and local concerns: [distancelearningiwp.org/digitalcollageswmp2020](https://distancelearningiwp.org/digitalcollageswmp2020)



# SUMMER INSTITUTE



The 2020-21 Summer Institute cohort takes a group selfie on Zoom.

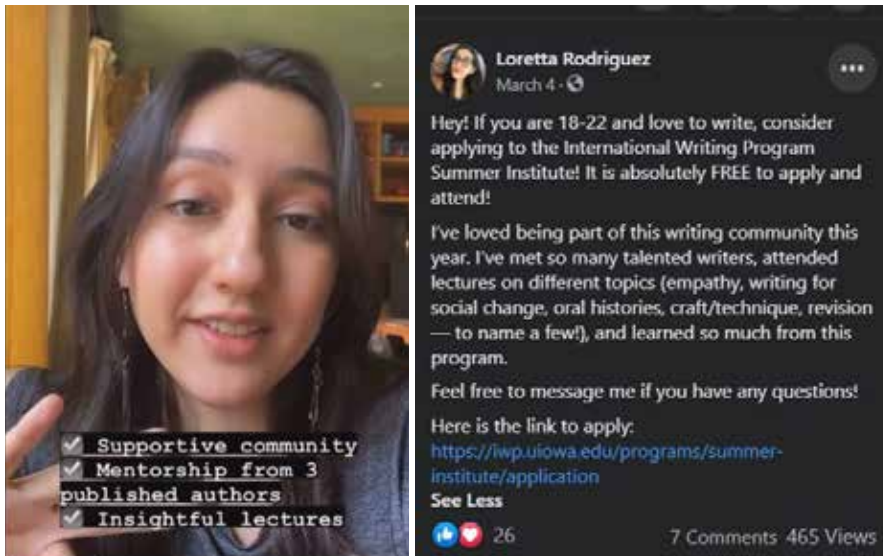
In 2020, the new cohort of students from Pakistan, India, and the U.S. came together for the second installment—but an entirely new iteration—of the Summer Institute (SI), IWP’s cultural exchange and creative writing program for college-age individuals (18-22 years old). Made possible by funding from the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan, SI 2020 was a fully virtual experience stretching from June 2020–March 2021. Redesigned to meet the challenges of the global pandemic, what would have been a two-week in-person experience became a 10-month program, offered in a largely asynchronous ‘menu’ format, in which participants chose how they engaged.

Each month, participants received a new ‘menu’ of six curricular elements: pre-recorded lectures discussing the month’s

theme and learning goals; selected readings; writing prompts to practice writing skills and new literary forms; one-on-one connections with mentors to discuss craft and gain insights from accomplished authors; small writing groups to learn from and write with SI peers; and engagement through SI social media groups to build community with each other, 2019 SI alums, and the SI team. Writing mentors included Anam Zakaria (Pakistan), Dini Parayitam (U.S.), and Chandrabhas Choudhury (India, IWP Fall Resident ’10). Special guest speakers included Fatima Salman (U.S.), Kamal Siddiqi (Pakistan), Shilpa Raj (India), Ather Zia (U.S./India), Sabyn Javeri Jellani (Pakistan), and Pranav Prakash (U.S./India).

This extended program also included multiple Zoom ‘Open Mic’ events for students to read their original work, and facilitated





SI participant Loretta Rodriguez encourages her Facebook friends to apply to the Summer Institute: "It's basically been the highlight of my whole year." Watch her one minute video here: [bit.ly/3zShiFo](https://bit.ly/3zShiFo)

### **2020-21 Summer Institute Open Mic event:**

[bit.ly/IWPSummerInstituteOpenMic](https://bit.ly/IWPSummerInstituteOpenMic)

### **FOLLOW THE IWP SUMMER INSTITUTE ON INSTAGRAM @SI\_UIWP**

group conversations. We learned about the lived experiences of those in Kashmir; about the realities of being a feminist author writing about wearing—and not wearing—a hijab in Pakistan; about the daily struggles of the social underclass in rural India, and how writing breaks caste and social barriers. And an informational session on U.S. MFA programs, led by SI mentor and Iowa Writers' Workshop graduate Dini Parayitam, even inspired a half dozen SI students to apply for MFA and graduate programs!  
— IWP Summer Institute Coordinator Peter Gerlach

### **2020-2021 Summer Institute Participants:**

Minahil ABIDEEN, Pakistan  
Qazi Akash AHMAD, Pakistan  
Muhammad Zain Ahmad BILAL, Pakistan  
Syedah Irram ANDRABI, India  
Ellora BULTEMA, U.S.  
Kritika DIXIT, India  
Ifrah FAHIM, Pakistan  
Maya GOEL, India  
Diya ISHA, India  
Osahon IZE-IYAMU, U.S.  
Moachiba JAMIR, India  
Talha KHALID, Pakistan  
Hunaina KHAN, Pakistan  
Sophie KIM, U.S.  
Nidhi KRISHNA, India  
Yamini KRISHNAN, India  
Abhiram KUCHIBHOTLA, India

***"I'll miss the writing and the lectures, but most of all I will miss the unconditional love and support I received from my IWP family. I will miss how much light this program has spread despite the impenetrable darkness of a hard year."***

**— 2020-21 Summer Institute participant**

Junaid MANZOOR, India  
Lindsay MORGAN, U.S.  
Chirodip NAHA, Bangladesh  
Eiman NASIR, Pakistan  
Ali RAZA, Pakistan  
Luke REYNOLDS, U.S.  
Loretta RODRIGUEZ, U.S.  
Jeiliany RODRIGUEZ PIZARRO, U.S.  
Ayesha SADIQA, Pakistan  
Fatima SAJJAD, Pakistan  
Shanza SARFARAZ, Pakistan  
Himangi SHEKHAWAT, India  
Tanya SINGH, India  
Megan STEBLAY, U.S.  
Shehzor SYED, India  
Tiana WILDER, U.S.  
Sidney WOLLMUTH, U.S.  
Shigraf ZAHBI, U.S.  
Anita ZEHRRA, Pakistan  
Mahnoor ZUBAIR, Pakistan

# FALL RESIDENCY



IWP's annual collaboration with the UI Dance Dept. continued in spite of the pandemic. Fall Residents and alumni worked virtually with UI graduate student choreographers and videographers to create dances inspired by and incorporating the Residents' writing for a series of performances under the title "Eyes Closed Eyes Open." Watch this incredible production and hear about the collaboration experience at [bit.ly/3jqTWB7](https://bit.ly/3jqTWB7)

Our Fall Residency, a "United Nation of Writers," continues to be a one-of-a-kind forum, nearing its fifty-fifth year of bringing literary artists from around the world together for a residential experience of writing and cultural exchange at the University of Iowa (UI). Unfortunately, due to the global pandemic in 2020, the IWP had to postpone bringing participants to campus until 2021.

For the 2021 Fall Residency, the IWP has already invited three dozen emerging and established writers from around the world, including the first writers in ten years to be joining us from France, Poland, and Colombia. Many of the writers have already been involved with UI activities, thanks to a series of IWP virtual programs conducted during the 2020-21 academic year.

## **INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE TODAY (UNIVERSITY OF IOWA COURSE IWP:191:001), 2020 EDITION**

Traditionally, the IWP's International Literature Today (ILT) course is centered on the presence, presentations, and writing samples of the current cohort of IWP writers-in-residence, in conversation with a class of mainly undergraduate UI English majors focused on creative writing. The course's fall 2020 iteration, with no writers yet in residence, converted to an online course, and called for a different approach. Literary as well as scholarly readings were added to support four thematic blocks: "World Literature(s)," "Literature as Cultural Diplomacy," "The Work of Translation," and "Prizes, Publishing, and Canon-building." Guest presenters—largely distinguished IWP alumni, plus a few newcomers from the upcoming group of writers-in-residence—were Zoomed in to comment on their own work, and to answer questions by UI students as well their virtual residency peers.

### **ILT '20 Guest Presenters:**

Tariro NDORO (Zimbabwe, incoming resident 2021)

Yvonne Adhiambo OWUOR (Kenya, Fall Resident '05 & '17)

Shehan KARUNATILAKA (Sri Lanka, incoming resident 2021)

KIM Won-Chung (South Korea, Fall Resident '03)

Alisa GANIEVA (Russia, Fall Resident '12 & '18)

### **U.S.-based scholars:**

Prof. Jonathan STALLING (University of Oklahoma)

Prof. Jan STEYN (UI)



**Enjoy this 3 minute video about the Global Poetry Consortium's Global Poetry Festival, featuring almost exclusively IWP alumni:**

[bit.ly/GPFestRecap](https://bit.ly/GPFestRecap)

Of course, the IWP has continued to work and plan with the upcoming residents, in spite of their postponed arrival. We created a new online 'Resource Hub' to help familiarize the group with Iowa City, the UI, and the IWP in advance of their arrival; we're highlighting each writer on IWP's social media channels (@UIIWP on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Twitter](#)); and with our ever-growing international social media community, we're sharing more news than ever before about the publications, awards, and readings of IWP writers both past and future. Moreover, to stay connected to alumni and to create a bridge to the fall of 2021, the IWP conducted two virtual events in spring 2021: our annual writer-choreographer-dancer collaborations with the UI Department of Dance, and a new IWP partnership with the Global Poetry Consortium Festival.

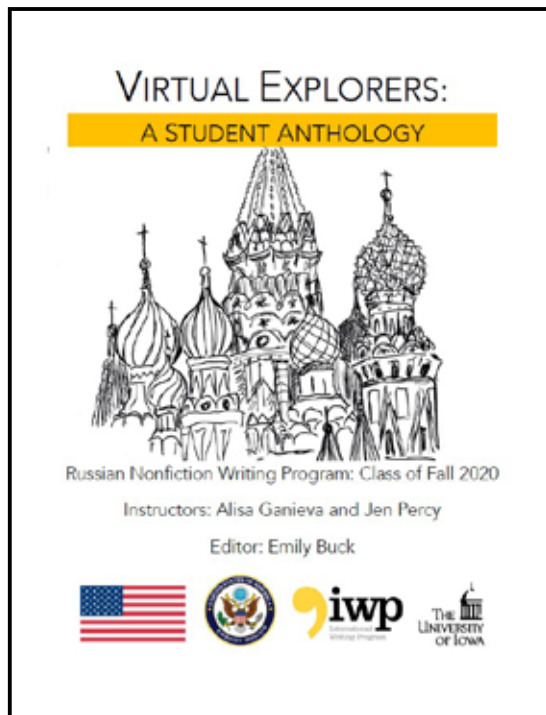
Through flexibility, creativity, and innovation—some of the many necessary qualities to weather a global pandemic—the IWP was able to make and expand our worldwide connections during these unprecedented circumstances. We very much look forward to receiving the next round of IWP residents in Iowa City in 2021.



# 2020 PROJECTS

## RUSSIAN NONFICTION WRITING COURSE

In a world where a seemingly infinite amount of information is at our fingertips, how do we distinguish what is real, and what is trustworthy from that which is merely arresting? How do we approach the challenges of research, bias, and, for that matter, the fallibility of memory? And what about biographies and history books and propaganda? What counts as nonfiction, and what rules does one follow writing it? Twenty-three enthusiastic Russian college students grappled with these questions during this class, IWP's first virtual Russian Nonfiction Writing Course.



This course, supported by the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, was designed to increase the students' familiarity and facility with nonfiction in a time when journalism and other forms of nonfiction are in danger of being either misused, falsified, or censored. Undaunted by the global pandemic, these bright, young writers made time in their regular school semester to take part in six workshops over Zoom from October to December 2020 to learn about nonfiction writing from two superb practitioners—Alisa Ganieva (IWP Between the Lines Instructor, Fall Resident '12 & '18) from Moscow and esteemed journalist Jen Percy from New York City, who holds MFA degrees from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and the University of Iowa's Nonfiction Writing Program, and teaches in the MFA Creative Writing Program at Columbia University.

Each week focused on a new subgenre: biographies, autobiographies, and memoirs; experimental forms of nonfiction; travelogues and immersion journalism; examples of dissent in a range of forms, from humor and satire, to essays; and Gonzo journalism. Students debated the different uses and impacts of each subgenre and completed weekly writing assignments designed to push their writing boundaries and explore the new modes of recounting.

Students selected their strongest pieces for a digital anthology, a body of work that demonstrates the diversity of writing gathered under the label of "nonfiction." You can enjoy their work at [bit.ly/3qJRQxS](https://bit.ly/3qJRQxS) — Project Coordinator Emily Buck



# CRAFTING THE FUTURE



A final video showcase features self-recordings of participants performing their new work in English and Spanish, with introductions from our faculty at [bit.ly/CFShowcase](https://bit.ly/CFShowcase)

*“It makes me feel that the writing is not just a hobby, it can change your life and [others’] lives.” – 2020 Crafting the Future participant*

In *Crafting the Future: Writing and Workshopping in Speculative Forms*, a new six-week IWP course made possible by the Arts Envoy Program of the U.S. Department of State, 70 writers in 8 countries worked to creatively imagine some of the futures that might emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants ages 18-35 from Argentina, Bolivia, Ghana, Guatemala, Iraq, Mexico, Poland, and Russia met online in small sections taught in English, Spanish, or bilingual English/Spanish. The all-U.S.

teaching faculty included award-winning writers José Olivarez, Joyelle McSweeney, Sabrina Orah Mark, Juan Vitulli, Maria Melendez Kelson, Nisi Shawl, and Terese Svoboda. Prairie Lights Bookstore in Iowa City hosted an online reading with the seven-member faculty for the public, which can be enjoyed here: [fb.watch/5TxyMhFBa4](https://fb.watch/5TxyMhFBa4)

Throughout the course, participants shared aspects of their cultures, past and present, while bringing inventive characters, situations, technologies, and cosmologies into

being. As one participant summed it up: “I know better how to construct my literary worlds. It’s clearer to me how I can build tension in small forms, how much craftsmanship there is in writing itself.”

The course enhanced everyone’s writing practice and increased the participants’ appreciation and understanding of the speculative genre: “Puedo escribir con más facilidad mejoré mucho en el orden de mis ideas al momento de escribir mi cuento. Comprendí que la ficción especulativa puede ser un género muy interesante y con mucho misterio.” [I can write more easily, I really improved the organization of my story writing. I realized that speculative fiction can be a very interesting genre with a lot of mystique.] — *2020 Crafting the Future participant*

Most importantly, participants also imagined new ways to use their writing: “Honestamente, el curso me ha dado mayor seguridad para escribir lo que

deseo expresar, creo que además, me ha proporcionado una luz verde para usar la escritura y los distintos géneros narrativos para militar por la justicia social.” [Honestly, the course has given me more confidence to write what I want to express. I think that it has also given me a green light to marshal writing and the different narrative genres for social justice.] — *2020 Crafting the Future participant*

“I learned to write, write, and write. Before this workshop I was afraid to write, and even more to let someone read what I wrote, but now everything has changed.” — *2020 Crafting the Future participant*

A *Crafting the Future* final video showcase features self-recordings of participants performing their new work in English and Spanish, with introductions from our faculty, available for your viewing at [bit.ly/CFShowcase](https://bit.ly/CFShowcase). — *Crafting the Future Coordinator Alisa Weinstein*

# Program Support

The IWP can only continue its activities thanks to the ongoing support of the University of Iowa, as well as federal, state, community, and individual funding sources. We would like to acknowledge our profound debt to the individuals, entities, and institutions listed below.

We would like to single out for special thanks both Dean of the Graduate College John Keller and Executive Director of Operations Donna Welter, who have been tireless in their support of the International Writing Program.



2020-21 Summer Institute participants express their appreciation at the program's conclusion.

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Division of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures: DEO Jill Beckman; Division Administrator Rebecca Tritten; MFA Program in Literary Translation: Director Aron Aji, Professor Jan Steyn and production teams

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Kanchna Ramchandran

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