Putting the “International” in The International Women’s Writing Guild

The IWWG membership has always included women from nations other than the United States—in fact, our current membership includes women from Australia, Belize, Canada, Finland, France, India, Israel, Italy, Nigeria, Switzerland, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom. Historically, however, the majority of our international members have been women with the financial resources to attend our conferences. This is an issue we mean to take on in 2017, with the goal of expanding our online offerings, conducting outreach, promoting members, and developing a virtual community that doesn’t depend on face-to-face contact to provide support, encouragement, and a platform for women everywhere to claim and use their voices—something that seems more relevant now than ever before.

With this in mind, we are featuring the international work of four longtime IWWG members who are eager to see The Guild expand its outreach: Suzi Banks Baum (Armenia), Dorothy Randall Gray (China), Pamela Varkony (Afghanistan), and Cora Schwartz (Ukraine).

Have an international connection of your own as a writer? We’d love to hear more! Write us at iwwgquestions@gmail.com.

New Illuminations:
A Three-Week Residency with Women Artists of Armenia
by Suzi Banks Baum
www.suzibanksbaum.com

I repeat: I am an enemy of injustice and prejudice. Hence I look with anger at those chains with which the female sex is shackled, such that neither a woman’s words, nor her work, nor her movements are natural or true. How can truth ever live with a yoke around its neck?

~Srpuhi Dyussap, trans. Nairi Hakhverdi, Mayta (1883)

This past November, I spent three weeks as an artist-in-residence in Gyumri, Armenia. The second largest city in landlocked Armenia, Gyumri has worn several names, depending on which political power occupied its region—most recently, Alexandropol or Leninakan. With over 120,000 residents, about 3,000 people still live in domics, the metal shipping containers that the Soviets delivered after the 1988 earthquake. Poverty, a languishing reconstruction effort, and lack of opportunity make this historic city a difficult place to live. As the cultural hub of Armenia, Gyumri also has significant beauty to witness.

Suzi (right) with her translator and workshop coordinator, Annie Ginosyan
Photo credit: Raffi Barberian

-continued on page 12
Shining a Light for Women Writers:  
A Note from Our New Board Vice President

A writer is all I’ve ever wanted to be, ever since I was little. My journey to The Guild started with a wish: to have someone come into my life and show me how to build a writing life. That wish came true with my introduction to longtime member and former Board member Heather Cariou, who brought me into The Guild. I walked into The Guild about 15 years ago, lacking both the path to a writing life and the confidence; now, I’m taking a break from my consulting work to finish my first novel. I have The Guild to thank for shining a beckoning light for me all these years, and for instilling in me the belief that I have a contribution to make to the world of women’s writing. I am honored to have been invited into this circle of inspiring women who have bravely forged ahead to birth a new organization, one that serves the needs of women writers in the 21st century.

I recently accepted the Board’s nomination to be your Vice President because the experience I have had, of finding a place where I am exceptionally supported in my writing life, is what I want for other women. As we enter our 41st year as an organization, I want to make us sustainable, capable of serving women for another 40 years and more. I believe so deeply in the potential of The Guild, not only to convey the art and craft of writing, but to enrich and transform lives. We are unique in the strength of our trust and confidence in each other, and our ability to accept each other as both writer and woman. We are a sanctuary in a turbulent world. This holistic approach is what sets us apart.

I believe it’s not a coincidence that I have been selected as Vice President at this time. It is my time now to step up and give back, and to help lead us into a new era. I look forward to serving you in the months and years ahead, shining a light for you and other women writers around the world.

In the spirit of The Guild,
Laura L. Kieley

Don’t try to figure out what other people want to hear from you; figure out what you have to say. It’s the one and only thing you have to offer.
- Barbara Kingsolver

What Do You Do When You’re Not Writing with Us?

Brief narratives, such as the four you may have read in “Putting the ‘International’ in the International Women’s Writing Guild,” are one way we share who we are with each other. To continue offering these windows into what you do in your world outside The Guild, please complete your member profile at iwwg.org:

- After you log in, click on “View profile” in the upper right-hand corner.
- Scroll down to “My Profile” and click on “Edit profile” in the upper left-hand corner.
- Fill out the text boxes in your profile and click on “Save” in the lower left-hand corner.

Have an idea you’d like to pitch for an article in Network? Send a query letter to Marj Hahne at iwwgquestions@gmail.com. Articles should focus on some aspect of the writing experience and/or the writing life, and should not exceed 350 words.
2017 Spring and Summer Conferences Announced

Our list of regional conference locations is expanding! And attendees attest that the one-day and weekend-long conferences pack the same warm vibe and enrichment experienced at our week-long Summer Conference. We will be announcing workshops and opening registration in mid-January, so stay tuned. In the meantime, mark those calendars!

California Dreaming
March 25, 2017
Antioch University Los Angeles
Culver City, California

Florida Fling
March 25, 2017
Ponte Vedra, Florida
(St. Augustine area)

Spring Big Apple
April 8-9, 2017
New York, New York

“Writing from Your Life” Retreat
May 6, 2017
Medfield, Massachusetts
(Boston area)

40th Annual Summer Conference
July 7-14, 2017
Muhlenberg College
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Mark Your Calendars!

What wonderful writers and human beings these women are. I attended all the open-mic readings, which were very well run by the way, and as one woman after another got up to read—women of all shapes and sizes, ages and ethnicities, and all other categories we use to separate one from another—I was struck by the skill and sincerity of each, speaking her truth in her own voice—women I might otherwise pass in the street without ever suspecting the complicated, questioning, striving selves I was moving among.

-2016 Summer Conference participant
Giving Voice: Race Relations

Giving Voice—short memoir pieces on a specific topic—is a new feature of Network in 2016. Contributors are asked to write a piece of flash memoir or creative nonfiction on a topic that is published in advance. This month’s topic is Race Relations.

Still Here

A year ago, I was asked to participate in a 32-day online meditation, led by spiritual activist Eisha Mason, on the subject “Lifting Up Black Lives and Building the Beloved Community.” The need for this work intensifies as the number of Blacks killed by police in the United States escalates—over 200 so far this year, more than a third of whom were unarmed.

My meditation is for the Still Here. These murdered husbands and brothers and mothers and sons belonged to someone who is still here. Grandparents who thought they had seen the worst and it was over. College-bound teens now uncertain about their future. Young siblings who have missed some hugs, some help with homework, thrust into the adult world as the family deals with autopsies, police reports, conflicting testimonies, the aggressive press.

We can share tears, counsel on grief, make space for sorrow, but the Still Here are facing legal bills, police bureaucracy, the needs of their other children, attempts to discredit the value of the deceased and their own lives, and the demands from our community for them to show up at our rallies and marches and represent. It is to the Still Here that I direct my spiritual energy, a vision for sustenance both tangible and intangible.

The contemporary poet Ise Lyfe writes, “We are the space between God and the ancestors. Fill it up!”

And so we are. We are the space between these new ancestors and those they left behind. Let our meditations reach them, our visualizations protect them, our resources support them. Let our love surround the Still Here and fill them up.

Catharsis

My path through academia taught me many uncomfortable truths, the hardest being this: I am privileged because I am white. I used to think that color-blindness was the answer. It is not. Or that my ancestry of “Scots-Irish indentured servants dying in slave ships” makes me exempt. I am not. I was simply seeking a safe place to hide my own racism.

Because I can choose when it feels safe to walk with those who live this reality. I can choose when I am at risk. I can choose if I put my daughter at risk. Many friends of mine cannot make these choices. They can never wave off. My friends, their loves, their families, and their leaders could be going about their day, minding their own business, and be accused, harassed, assaulted, shot, tased, or killed. JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE BLACK.

I know what you’re thinking. Shhhhh, Zen. You can’t be racist. You are the most caring, tolerant, liberal person I know. YOU CAN’T BE RACIST. Because if YOU could be RACIST, I am...uncomfortable.

I totally get it. I was not racist, too, for the first forty-eight years of my life—until one day, I wasn’t. I cannot NOT be racist. I am a product of a society founded on Colonialism and built on Slavery.

I feel burdened by insight, but freed by this truth: I am privileged because I am white. I am trying to do something to change that. And I am no longer afraid to make you uncomfortable.

S. Pearl Sharp
Racially Proud and Diverse

Race is such a strange concept, because it includes not only the human one, but also the cultural one we’re all from. When I think about relations between these various groups, I can’t help appreciating the opportunities I’ve had to learn from the art, food, dance, and literature of Asians, Hispanics, Caucasians, etc. As an African-American female, I also enjoy sharing my heritage with others through self-expression, be it tap dancing, clothing, or writing. Whenever I learn about the pain endured, and the ecstasy celebrated, in books by Lisa See, Alice Walker, Isabel Allende, Gillian Flynn, and others, I know the races are more closely aligned than I’ve seen in the media.

The times when there are divisions—between African-Americans and Hispanics, or Caucasians and Muslims—can be painful, on both sides, because the cause might result in personal attacks that cause traumatic psychological consequences. Unfortunately, I’ve been the recipient of dysfunctional racial misunderstandings, more times than I care to count, and the texture of my hair, my snazzy wardrobe, and my familial background have been ridiculed and slammed, resulting in a loss of emotional ground between me and the attackers. At that point, I know racial relations have reached an impasse that needs to be overcome with increased diversity and education. My hope is that the healing will take place through an understanding that we’re all an integral part of this world and our similarities and differences can only make us stronger as a unit and a race.

Victoria Moore

A Note from the Executive Director

In response to the news of the police shootings in Baton Rouge and at the request of some conference participants, Connie Garcia-Barrio led an open discussion on race at the 2016 Summer Conference. While some participants were disappointed that the discussion was not more action-oriented, many felt it was an important first step that we, as women and writers, needed to take to move beyond our discomfort and our denial and into common ground. We hope that this will be the first of many discussions on topical issues that inform our writing and our hearts.

Dixie L. King

Submission Guidelines

Please keep the length to 250 words or less, and proofread your work carefully. Send, as an email attachment in Word, to iwwgmembernews@gmail.com, with “Giving Voice” as the Subject line. Failing to follow these instructions will result in our not considering your work this time around. Please indicate if you wish us to publish your piece anonymously.

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<td>Out of the Silence</td>
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<td>A Funny Thing Happened</td>
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<td>Road Trip</td>
<td>May 15</td>
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The only way to leave the circle, to stop dancing with the jailer, is to find a way to preserve one’s individuality, that unique quality which evades description but differentiates one human being from the other.

- Azar Nafisi

Summer Conference participants gather for an informal discussion on race—and how we, as writers,
Writing Circle Announcements and Requests

Once called the “IWWG Kitchen Table,” a “writing circle” describes a local gathering of women writers who meet on a weekly, biweekly, or monthly basis to share their work in a mutually supportive environment. The IWWG promotes local writing circles by publishing information submitted to us, as well as requests by members looking to either join an existing group or form a new group.

Note: If you wish to find or launch a writing circle, send your request, in the below format, to iwwgmembernews@gmail.com, or browse previous issues of Network for a listing in your area: https://iwwg.wildapricot.org/Network-Newsletter. If you are currently a member of a writing circle and you are open to new members, let us know and we’ll include your announcement.

Current Writing Circles

Columbus, Ohio
January 7, February 4, March 4: 10 am–12:30 pm
Karl Road Branch Library, 5590 Karl Rd.

Free and open to all. We offer writers a supportive environment for writing, reading, and gentle critiquing. Each participant may share her writing. Bring 4–5 copies of the work you’d like to have critiqued.

Jeanne Marlowe
jamarlowe@juno.com; (614) 476-8802

Slingerlands, NY
Our Kitchen Table meets the second Wednesday of the month, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Contact me for information on location. This group is limited to IWWG members. We have an OPEN meeting (Women Who Write) on fourth Wednesdays. We follow the IWWG experience regarding support and critiques. Bring a piece you’re working on to read. All interaction is supportive and encouraging.

Carol Bluestein
carol@carolbluestein.com

Seeking a Writing Circle

River Ridge, Louisiana
I would like to start a writers’ group in my area (New Orleans, Metairie, Kenner, etc.) for writers and budding writers of all genres. I write fiction primarily, and also poetry.

Kekelwa Nyaywa
keinyawa@gmail.com

Editor’s note: Kekelwa published this request in the last issue of Network, but we inadvertently misspelled her email address. This is the correct address!

Madison, New Jersey
I am ready to get my work out, so am looking for a writing group to support one another.

Janet StraightArrow
jstraightarrow@aol.com

-continued
Member News and Correspondence

Note: We’d love to hear about all your writerly news—readings and recognitions—and any feedback for us. We’ll no longer be gathering your news from the “IWWG Members’ Room” Facebook page, so please email it to iwwgmembernews@gmail.com, as well as post it to our private-group Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/groups/IWWGmembers/
(You need a personal Facebook page to join any Facebook groups.)

Chicken Soup and Mother’s Milk
My piece “An Owl in Winter” was published in Chicken Soup for the Soul: Angels and Miracles, which was released on November 1, 2016. It was one of 101 stories selected from over 5000 submissions. My piece “Anything Could Happen” was published in The Mother’s Milk Books Writing Prize Anthology 2016. Mother’s Milk Books is a small publisher based in Nottingham, England.

Deborah L. Staunton

Poem-Happy
So glad to have some publication news: “Neighbor,” in Rabbit Ears: TV Poems (NYQ Books); “Unfound Love Note,” in The Doll Collection (Terrapin Books); “Purple Rain,” in Delirious: A Poetic Tribute to Prince (NightBallet Press); “Ne – Neon 10,” in the “Doobie or Not Doobie?” issue of The Poeming Pigeon; “Center, Fleeing,” in the “Poems About Music” issue of The Poeming Pigeon; and “Valentine,” in the Syracuse Cultural Workers 2017 datebook.

Marj Hahne

Multi-Arts in Columbus, Ohio
4th Saturdays (January 28, February 26): A Time to Honor Our Individual Journeys, 12:00–1:30 pm
JungHaus, 59 W. Third Avenue; free for members of IWWG, the Interfaith Association of Central Ohio (www.iaco.org), the Jung Association of Central Ohio (www.jungcentralohio.org).
Share 3–5 minutes of your photography, art, music, dance, dreams, or writing, or simply enjoy what emerges from informal multimedia group process when we express what matters to us, enriching understanding of our diverse and common humanity.

I think it’s a question which particularly arises over women writers: whether it’s better to have a happy life or a good supply of tragic plots.
- Wendy Cope

Jeanne Marlowe
jamarlowe@juno.com
(614) 476-8802
HOT OFF THE PRESSES!

Arlene I. Shapiro

Bess: A Novel

Set in England from 1588–1639, Bess follows the life of a precocious child who, as an adult, becomes a published dramatist, poet, wife, and mother of nine. She shocks family and friends when she makes a controversial life-changing decision and ultimately defends a woman’s right to challenge authority for reasonable causes.

CreateSpace, July 2016


www.arleneishapiro.com

Carren Strock

Grandpa and Me in the Park in the City

Grandpa and Me and the Park in the City celebrates the child/grandfather bond and the rewards that effort and persistence bring. It celebrates diversity, and lends itself to inter-generational, ethnic, and urban study theme units for elementary schools. Effective rhyming and eye-catching colors make this a good choice for a read-aloud.

Gray Rabbit Publications, October 2016

http://fantasticbooks.biz/fantasticbooks/grayrabbit/1515400506.html

www.carrenstrock.com

Cindi Michael

The Sportscaster’s Daughter: A Memoir

Despite being disowned by her father—sportscaster George Michael, the man who is said to have inspired ESPN’s SportsCenter—Cindi Michael manages financially and heals emotionally, finding confidence from within. Candid, moving, and ultimately hopeful, The Sportscaster’s Daughter is a family story of forgiveness, faith, and strength.

She Writes Press, 2016


www.cindimichael.com

The biographies of the great men see their excesses as signs of their greatness. But Jean Rhys, in her biography, is read as borderline; Anais Nin is borderline; Djuna is borderline; etc. etc. Borderline personality disorder being an overwhelmingly gendered diagnosis. I write in Heroines: “The charges of borderline personality disorder are the same charges against girls writing literature, I realize—too emotional, too impulsive, no boundaries.”

- Kate Zambreno
Jessica Tyner Mehta

ORYGUN: Poems

ORYGUN takes you home, marrying confessional poetry while tapping deep into the reader’s cravings for a full literary experience. This collection of narrative poems touches on how the landscapes that helped raise us also shape us, the intricacies of love with ourselves and others, and shared human struggles of hope and desire, as we teeter on ever-changing, emotional edges.

Tayen Lane Smooth Stones Press, 2016
www.tayenlane.com/orygun
www.amazon.com/ORYGUN-Poems-Jessica-Tyner/dp/1944505636
www.jessicatynermehta.com

Jey Tehya

The Wrong Kind of Indian

The Wrong Kind of Indian is a memoir-style story of what it means to claim your identity after a dysfunctional childhood steeped in sexuality that emerges too early, parents whose actions hovered between neglect and abuse, the cycle of abuse escalating into homelessness as a teen, and the flailing that occurs when you don’t feel like you belong, anywhere.

www.wymacpublishing.com/0.2010/the_wrong_kind_of_indian.html
www.amazon.com/Wrong-Kind-Indian-Jey-Tehya/dp/1942545479
www.jessicatynermehta.com

Jill Rath

The Promises of God

In The Promises of God, His word comes alive through visual enhancement. Magnificent and inspiring photographs add dimension for meditation. In a world of turmoil, change, grief, anxiety, and unpredictability, it is only God’s eternal and everlasting promises that can provide encouragement and tranquility of soul. His word never changes, and His promises never fail. Knowing one’s destiny in life begins with understanding all that God has promised for us in Christ.

www.amazon.com/Promises-God-Jill-Rath/dp/1681974894

Maybe just as many women writers as male writers could be billed as the next great American writer by their publisher. Maybe book criticism sections could review an equal amount of female and male writers. Maybe Oprah could start putting some books by women authors in her book club, since most of her audience is women.

- Jami Attenberg

-continued on page 10
HOT OFF THE PRESSES! (continued)

Kristin Rath

Meant for More: Create Your Dream Life, Plan Your Path, and Start Living It Now

A guide to the answers you seek about your life path, purpose, and passions. You’ll gain an intimate understanding of your core needs for a fulfilled life and a detailed action plan from which to work. The path to your Dream Life isn’t far into the future. It’s right in front of you, waiting for discovery. Each day can be full of joy, purpose, and meaning. This book will show you how.

Amazon Digital Services, November 2016
www.amazon.com/gp/product/B01MSTHQY7
www.kristinrath.com

Linda L. Chase

The Fugitive’s Sister

2016 Nominee for the Georgia Author of the Year Award (GAYA), in Memoir

The author’s sister, Becky, was convicted by a jury of multiple white-collar crimes, looking at a sentence of up to 75 years in prison. Prior to sentencing, Becky was allowed to get on a plane from Ohio to Arizona, unaccompanied by any law-enforcement personnel whatsoever. She escaped, disappeared, and became one of America’s Most Wanted fugitives. Then, she contacted the author for help!

W & B Publishers, October 2015
www.amazon.com/Fugitives-Sister-Linda-L-Case/dp/1942981368
http://thefugitivessister.com
http://fantasticbooks.biz/fantasticbooks/grayrabbit/1515400506.html

Lynn Hess

Well of Range

The bones of an African-American teenager are found in an abandoned well in Mobile, Alabama, by a rookie cop, Carly Redmund, who won’t give up until all the cold-case questions are answered. What Carly doesn’t know is that a white supremacist group is involved, as well as the mayoral candidate who is the brother of her training officer.

Oak Tree Press, August 2016
www.lynnhesse.wordpress.com

Male critics and men in the publishing industry want from their women writers what they want from their wives. I’m interested in presenting characters that are more challenging, threatening, complicated and unpredictable.

- Janet Fitch

-continued
Marilyn June Janson

The Super Cool Kids Story Collection
Ages 5–8

When Cindy Matthews goes away to overnight summer camp, she finds the courage to be herself. Tommy Jenkins is afraid to visit his grandparents in Florida; instead of flying, his best friend, Marissa Walsh, finds a cool way to get him there. Carla Camel Cane is bringing a present to her grandmother; when her best friend, Clyde Camel Clark, wants the present for himself, Carla risks losing a BFF.

Amazon Digital Services, August 2016
Kindle version: www.amazon.com/Super-Cool-Kids-Story-Collection-ebook/dp/B01KPN2JKA
www.janwrite.com

MaryAnn Myers

Tetch

What do three empaths, a coven of women, a birthing, a foaling, ceremony, and healing ritual have in common with a missing Thoroughbred? The answer is Tetch. But why won’t Tetch defend herself? Why would she rather go to jail than tell the truth? And ultimately, where is Quantro?

Sunrise Horse Farm, November 2016
www.amazon.com/Tetch-Women-Only-MaryAnn-Myers/dp/1539983846
www.sunrisehorsefarm.com

Robin Russell Gaiser

Musical Morphine: Transforming Pain One Note at a Time

This stirring memoir chronicles twelve years of Robin’s work as a Certified Music Practitioner, bringing live acoustic instrumental and vocal music to the bedsides of the critically and chronically ill, elderly, and dying in hospitals, Hospice, rehabs, nursing homes, and private homes. Witness the miracles and magic as she takes you into the lives of patients, staff, families, and caregivers, often during their most vulnerable moments.

Pisgah Press, June 2016
www.amazon.com/Musical-Morphine-Transforming-Pain-Note/dp/1942016174
www.robingaiser.com
Putting the “International” in the IWWG—continued from page 1

New Illuminations has three components: interviews of women artists, an art and writing workshop, and a collaborative exhibit curated by HAYP Pop-Up Gallery of Yerevan.

Why Armenia? Why Gyumri?

I am an enemy of injustice and prejudice. I am a writer and book artist devoted to raising women’s voices. Armenia intrigued me with possibility: its culture treasures illuminated manuscripts, yet has not produced a single female book artist within its borders; and its women live on a pittance of freedom in its densely patriarchal society. If Armenian women are silent, who tells their stories? Is the truth of their daily lives, as artists, expressed?

Srpuhi Dyussap’s quote is still pertinent today. One of the artists I interviewed spoke about her life being a series of slightly bigger and bigger cages, always pinioned by societal and familiar expectations. This sentiment was common among the twenty-five women with whom I worked.

New Illuminations is a cultural exchange that weaves fibers that make sisterhood, seed community, and fuel women with courage, color, technique, and the pleasure of being heard. Our exhibit was a success, bringing contemporary manuscripts to an audience new to the book arts and springing up a community conversation about art and stories, and who is telling them.

For more about this project:


NPR Interview with Alison Dunne of 51%:  http://wamc.org/post/1425-empowering-women-artists-armenia-seeing-mary-and-her-monster

-continued
I am in China, in love, and in a small rural town of Xin Zheng, Henan Province, birthplace of philosopher Lao Tze. I’m blessed to be one of ten artists chosen by the World Academy for the Future of Women for their amazing leadership program, Give Voice to Women Through the Arts. Each day, I teach at the magnificent sprawling campus of Sias University, a city unto itself in this place where foreigners are a rare commodity. Years ago, a young recent arrival from China stared at me and asked, “Miss Randall, why you so black? The sun?”

I remember Robert Heinlein’s 1961 sci-fi novel, *Stranger in a Strange Land*. Here, I am more than strange; I am exotic. An African-American blonde with dreadlocks, hair and skin unlike any they’ve witnessed. In China, it is not considered impolite for people to stare at you. And they do. They point, gather around, and talk loudly about me. Old women come up from behind to touch my hair to see if it is a wig. I smile through it all, wave, and say, “Nee ha,” and they smile back. Everywhere I go, people insist on taking selfies with me.

In Xin Zheng’s town square, an elderly man hands me a persimmon. Men invite me and my friend Ceceilia, a Navajo fellow artist, to sit and sing with them. A chess-like game is played with black stones, and people gather to hear a former Beijing opera star. Each musician accompanies her on a jinghu, a two-string fiddle whose bow evokes sound like a woman’s voice. I don’t understand the words, but I feel the sorrow of entire families who sacrificed their lives for a beloved general killed in battle.

I take my life in my hands as I leave the chockablock stores and cross streets with a cacophony of scooters, three-wheeled concoctions, taxis, jitneys, pushcarts, and city busses with rearview mirrors like a praying mantis. Just forty minutes away is the tiny village of Zhugedah, where miles of yellow corn dry in the sun on one lane of the road. I stay there overnight at the home of my students, whose family is honored to have a teacher visit them. Next morning, I visit their orchard and eat red grapes warmed by the sun.

*Writing is a kind of revenge against circumstance too: bad luck, loss, pain. If you make something out of it, then you’ve no longer been bested by these events.*

- Louise Glück
Food is ever present and plentiful: homemade noodles, baozi (buns), congee (rice porridge), lemongrass greens, onion and egg pancakes, and hot-pot meals with bowls of twenty different ingredients to cook in steaming oil at the center of the table.

Every day, I fall in love with my Sias students, the most loving and considerate young women I have ever met. They insist on carrying my bags, holding my elbow when I walk up the stairs, and walking arm-in-arm as they escort me to the faculty residence. One night, I was exhausted from preparing PowerPoints for the class, doing interviews, and missing dinner. As I talked with the class about making time for things that are important, a sudden wave of sadness came over me. I thought about my older sister, Ruthie, and wished I had taken more time to be with her before she died. A tear rolled down my cheek. One by one, the students left their seats and surrounded me with hugs. One handed me a snack, and another said, “We’ll be your family, teacher.” They all smiled and now call themselves Dorothy’s Big Family.

The Stories of Afghanistan

by Pamela Varkony
www.pamelavarkony.com

Afghanistan is a writer’s paradise: Everyone you meet has a story. For the Afghans, those same stories represent a living hell—none more so than the women who, through forty years of war and civil unrest, found themselves threatened by a foreign enemy, then subjugated by their own religious and political leaders.

For women living in the cities, conditions have improved, but, by any western standard, there are few options and fewer opportunities. Even finding basic healthcare is a challenge, a condition I witnessed firsthand.

I was an embedded journalist with a military medical team tasked with assessing Afghanistan’s available medical services for women and children. It was an experience that stays with me to this day and a turning point in my commitment to aid Afghan women.

I will always remember my first visit to Rabia Balki Hospital—the only hospital in Afghanistan devoted to the treatment of women at that time. From across the country, women came there seeking care—at least those who could obtain permission from their husband and survive the trip. Complicated pregnancies, rape victims, critical malnutrition—every imaginable woe that can befall a woman in such a paternalistic society was within those walls.

Outside the walls surrounding the dilapidated building, hundreds of people wait for admittance or news of loved ones. As our vehicle, containing a team of U.S. doctors, approaches, the gate swings

Poems come out of wonder, not out of knowing.
- Lucille Clifton

Pam (second from left) was an embedded journalist with a military medical team in Afghanistan.

Pam with medical staff at Rabia Balki Hospital
open; with batons, the guards repel those who try to rush through. “My daughter, my daughter,” one woman cries.

Rabia Balki’s director, Dr. Najia Tareq, is waiting for us. She is young and pretty, much like the portrait that hangs above the landing. It is a painting of Rabia Balki, a member of the tenth-century Persian court and one of Afghanistan’s most famous female poets. The beauty of her prose could not save her from her fate. She was murdered by her own brother for having an inappropriate relationship. How fitting that this place of last resort was named for her.

Dr. Tareq asks me if I am familiar with Rabia Balki’s poetry. I am not, but offer that I know there is a centuries-long history of beautiful Persian/Afghan poetry, literature, and music written by women. That history has been interrupted, she says, as she begins our tour.

Walking through the hospital’s corridors, the smell of disinfectant mingles with the sound of soft moans. Tucked in the corner is a large, yellow, metal trunk with “Abandoned Baby Supplies” crudely painted on it. Afghanistan’s maternal mortality rate is one of the highest in the world; every thirty minutes, a woman dies from a pregnancy-related cause. Families unable to cope with the loss, or with one more mouth to feed, simply disappear.

Dr. Tareq kisses me three times—right check, left cheek, right cheek—the traditional Afghan farewell of a friend. Driving through Kabul’s unpaved streets, past patrols of heavily armed soldiers, I see the faces of the women of Rabia Balki. And I will see them long after I return to the United States. It’s not the suffering that will stay with me; it’s the courage and perseverance.

* * *

The women of Afghanistan deserve to have their stories heard, and who better to help make that happen than their IWWG sisters. As Dr. Tareq said, the history of Afghan women writers has been interrupted. Perhaps we, as an organization of women writers, can re-weave those ancient threads through outreach to Afghan institutions of higher learning and recognized NGOs with whom we have relationships.

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Mentoring Ukrainian Women Writers

by Cora Schwartz

www.coraschwartz.com

I appreciate this opportunity to tell my writing sisters about my experiences working with women writers in Ukraine. I do want to note that I did not, and do not, receive payment for the mentoring I have offered to these brave souls. As I do not speak Ukrainian, all work is submitted to me in English. I have had the privilege of being privy to work that is emotional, authentic, sincere, and fresh!

I got involved in mentoring Ukrainian writers as a result of researching Olga Kobylanska, a Ukrainian writer, nationalist, and feminist-before-her-time. Olga was born in 1863 and, during her lifetime, became well known in Eastern Europe. One of her greatest wishes—which was not successfully or fully realized during her lifetime—was to introduce Ukrainian writers to the world. As my fascination with Olga’s life grew, I felt I was destined to fulfill her wish.

Because I have friends in Ukraine (my late husband, Rudy, was born in Chernivtsi, where Olga lived and died), I am able to travel there freely, and I have met various literary people. I was there at the beginning of the Maidan uprising, when I quickly realized that a lot of the people, especially
“International” in the IWWG—continued

students, speak English. I helped some journalists refine their articles, but I was not helpful when it came to political issues. I did make it known, however, that I would read women writers’ fictional work and give honest feedback.

My ongoing dream is to publicize these writers to American readers. Most Americans know that “things are bad” in Ukraine. What you wouldn’t know is that one woman writer I worked with saved for three months to pay an American reviewer $75 to read and comment on her short story. An English teacher I know, who writes fantastic stories, earns the equivalent of $150 a month.

Not surprisingly, then, the prospects for these women to attend The Guild’s conferences are dim, but you cannot imagine the boost they would get from being a member of the IWWG community. To be able to peruse our Facebook page and correspond with us would provide huge, much-needed inspiration.

“Is my story any good?” is the request I typically get from these Ukrainian writers. “Should I give up on my writing or keep going?” Unbelievable as it might sound, I have yet to read a story that I didn’t find exciting and fresh. Yes, sometimes the second paragraph needs to be the first; and, yes, the sometimes choppy flow is what you would expect from someone whose first language is not English. But all of this is easily fixable. The stories these women write are awe-inspiring.

My other dream for now is to offer reduced or sliding-scale rates to women who simply want access to our IWWG community. It would expand our international outreach at a minimal cost to us. I also wish to form a mentorship program incorporating writing sisters who are willingly to read short works and offer general, gentle comments. We could manage the submissions by establishing a maximum word- or page-count and limiting genre to fiction. This would be enough to keep these women inspired. Ultimately, with the help of other IWWG members, I aim to develop a website or online magazine that features Ukrainian women writers and their work.

Interested in continuing the dialogue? Join us in a forum on international outreach at the 40th Annual Summer Conference, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Pennsylvania, July 7-14, 2017. For those who can’t make it in person, we’ll be opening an online discussion after the Summer Conference. We look forward to hearing your thoughts!

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Revision is not going back and fussing around, but going forward into the highly complex and satisfying process of creation.

- May Sarton

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A story is not like a road to follow... it’s more like a house. You go inside and stay there for a while, wandering back and forth and settling where you like and discovering how the room and corridors related to each other, how the world outside is altered by being viewed from these windows. And you, the visitor, the reader, are altered as well by being in this enclosed space, whether it is ample and easy or full of crooked turns, or sparsely or opulently furnished. You can go back again and again, and the house, the story, always contains more than you saw the last time. It also has a sturdy sense of itself of being built out of its own necessity, not just to shelter or beguile you.

- Alice Munro
Submitting Your Work

IWWG Members’ Room:  www.facebook.com/groups/IWWGmembers
Join our private-group Facebook page, where members sometimes post calls for submissions. You need to have a personal Facebook page to join a Facebook group.

NewPages:  www.newpages.com
Search engine for current calls for submissions, Guide to Literary Magazines, magazine and book reviews, writing contests, and writing programs.
Subscribe to weekly e-newsletter:  http://npofficespace.com/newpages-newsletter

FundsforWriters:  http://fundsforwriters.com
Resources, grants, contests, and freelance markets.
Subscribe to free weekly e-newsletter:  http://fundsforwriters.com/newsletters

Trish Hopkinson:  https://trishhopkinson.com/category/call-for-submissions
To receive up-to-date calls for submissions, join her “Calls for Submissions” group Facebook page:  www.facebook.com/groups/35517751475

Submittable:  www.submittable.com
Subscribe to free “Submishmash” e-newsletter for calls for submissions for writers and artists.
To receive up-to-date calls for submissions, “Like” the Facebook page:  www.facebook.com/submishmash

Erika Dreifus:  www.erikadreifus.com
Resources, “Practicing Writing” blog, plus subscribe to her free “The Practicing Writer” monthly e-newsletter, which includes writing contests and calls for submissions.
“Like” her author Facebook page to receive her weekly “Monday Markets and Jobs for Writers” posts:  www.facebook.com/erikadreifusauthor

Cathy’s Comps and Calls:  http://compsandcalls.com
Competitions and calls for submissions, many with deadlines falling within the current month.
Subscribe to free monthly e-newsletter:  http://compsandcalls.com/wp/subscribe-to-comps-and-calls

Poets & Writers:  www.pw.org
Search engines for literary magazines and agents, articles, grants & awards, small/independent presses, conferences & residencies, and writing exercises in poetry, fiction, and nonfiction (can also receive these by subscribing to their free “The Time Is Now” weekly e-newsletter).

Places for Writers:  www.placesforwriters.com
International calls for submission, contests, and Canadian journals & publishers.

Winning Writers:  https://winningwriters.com
Resources, plus subscribe to free e-newsletter for free literary contests and access to database.

Writing Career:  http://writingcareer.com
Listings of calls for submission (magazines & anthologies) in poetry, nonfiction, and fiction (including speculative, sci-fi, and fantasy).

Freelance Writing Jobs:
http://online-writing-jobs.com
Freelance writing jobs, plus subscribe to Brian Scott’s free weekday job-alerts e-newsletter.

www.freelancewriting.com
Freelance writing jobs, writing contests, articles, and free e-books on writing and freelancing.
Thanks to the organizational efforts of Guild member Marisa Moks-Unger, recently named Poet Laureate of Erie County, Pennsylvania, The Guild offered a one-day Flagship City Regional Creative Writing and Poetry Conference on Saturday, November 5, at the Erie Art Museum. The event featured two workshops, a poetry workshop presented by Myra Shapiro (far left) and a Hybrid Lit workshop presented by Marj Hahne (left).

What participants had to say about the most important thing they learned:

♦️ I learned that prose and poetry can take on many different forms, and the forms of these different ways of creative writing can showcase different emotions, thoughts, and feelings.

♦️ Writing doesn’t have to be orderly nor one form. I like the idea of hybrid—I’ve never heard of this before. Hybrid allows a way to express life and thoughts that just flow and don’t fit neatly in boxes that sit on a shelf.

♦️ I loved being introduced to all of the different hybrid forms and reading examples of them. They feel both accessible and expansive in terms of creative possibilities.

♦️ The beauty of precision of language and how structure can enhance, inform, inspire, delight, etc.

♦️ I was amazed at how much I learned about myself and poetry in one hour. I laughed, cried...

♦️ When you think of an idea or if something strikes you, you have to trust yourself and write down anything/everything you’re thinking. You can always go back and revise later, but in the moment, go with your gut.

♦️ Have fun with words; don’t overthink the process.

♦️ It was phenomenal. I learned a lot and was very inspired. I came home with a lot of seeds that, by tomorrow, will be some real stuff.

♦️ I want to share one of the most amazing things this fine poet and teacher, Myra Shapiro, said at her workshop. Anyone who knows me well will know why this is so incredibly special. "When you are writing, you are by yourself. But you are never, ever alone." Sometimes something just cracks open around the crust of your heart, and that opening lets in some sort of light that, that what? Does it close a wound? No not really…. It illuminates it, and makes it shine....
The IWWG Member Advantage

Women have returned to Guild events for 40 years, with a joyful camaraderie that has built a sisterhood unlike any other. You are welcome, no matter your level of experience. Here you can learn the craft of writing and be supported in special ways as you learn. You will have the freedom to express your own writing dreams in an atmosphere of acceptance. The energy created here is contagious. Your own voice will gain the power to join the chorus. **Women get brave here.** The isolation felt when writing alone will vanish as you find the sisters who have been missing in your life. **With women who share your passion, you can create lifelong bonds of friendship, all across the world.** Not yet a member?

*What are the perks of membership?*

**Many! And the list is growing:**

- Advance notice of and discounts on all our events and conferences
- Public listings of your published books and author website/blog on our website
- Promotion of your publications and news in our quarterly member newsletter, *Network*, and in our monthly open newsletter, *Your Latest Page*
- Access to our members-only Facebook page
- Links to upcoming contests and submission opportunities
- Support for the development of local writing groups
- Member forum

*Coming in 2017! Member-only access to:*

- Online courses and events
- Direct contact with published member authors
- Online member directory
- Special offers from other organizations and companies

**Annual membership (USD) $55.00**

($90 for Canada and Mexico / $105 for Europe)

Go to [www.iwwg.org](http://www.iwwg.org) to become a member or to find out more!

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*Network* is a quarterly, members-only publication of The International Women’s Writing Guild. Members receive *Network* electronically and can opt to have a hard copy mailed, as well.

Correspondence, notification of publications, and submissions to *Giving Voice* should be sent to iwwgmembernews@gmail.com.

Questions about membership or conference registration can be addressed to Marj Hahne, Creative Director, at iwwgquestions@gmail.com. Other questions may be addressed to Dixie King, Executive Director, at dking@tlcprofessionals.com.
The writer at any stage, the woman at any age...

We are an evolving global community of women who seek personal and professional growth through the written word. We enrich the lives of women by empowering them to tell their stories and giving them ways to experience writing as craft, regardless of genre. We recognize the need for storytelling and invite our members into a world where their words and their stories matter. To learn more about us, visit our website at www.iwwg.org.

SAVE THE DATE!

The 40th Annual Summer Conference will be held at
Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA, July 7-14, 2017

About the Summer Conference...

I was astonished by the creativity and courage of women from all walks of life, who came together to create but especially to support and encourage others regardless of their progress in the lifelong journey of writing. As always, I loved the classes and critique sessions. The open readings are always a highlight. As a writer who spends too much time alone, to be among the community of writers once a year and to be recognized as such is truly a miracle! Also learned a lot about the publishing journey from fellow participants.

-2016 Summer Conference participant