

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

CONTINUING EDUCATION AND SPECIAL PROGRAMS

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY SUMMER PROGRAM FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WRITING DIVISION

Student: Noora Mashruwala
Instructor: Jamie Pearlberg
Course: Advanced Creative Writing
Date: August 2001

Noora Mashruwala successfully completed a rigorous advanced creative writing program during July 2001 as a member of Columbia University's Summer Program for High School Students Writing Division. This program is modeled after the Structure and Style workshop taken by Columbia undergraduates.


Noora attended a 45-minute morning seminar with Kelly Zavotka, a 90-minute morning workshop with me, and a 90-minute afternoon workshop with Noemi Cress. In addition, she had individual conferences with members of the faculty.

The Advanced Creative Writing Workshop is an intensive program during which students develop original works of poetry, short prose, drama, and fiction. They then receive feedback on this work from their peers and faculty members. Emphasis is placed on the ability to give as well as receive constructive and insightful criticism, and on in-depth discussions of the writing process. At the completion of the program each student submits a portfolio of revised pieces for approval by their instructors.

Noora is a talented writer with a refreshing eagerness to learn. The work she did this summer was exciting in many ways, not least of which was her willingness to experiment with new forms and take risks on the page. Her poetry was especially impressive. In "California Summer," Noora writes beautifully of the subtle powers which that time of year has on the soul: "Summer likes to whisper hidden longing in my ear / She likes to dance around reason / Isolated in the unsullied sheets of childhood / Summer beckons and always wins." One of Noora's many strengths as a writer is her ability to evoke place, be it an Indian coconut stand, a street in Havana, or a neighborhood in the suburbs. In her play, "Fireflies," she writes of a man haunted by the memory of his daughter. Staying clear of the trap of melodrama, Noora is able to portray through strong development of her character and expert choice of detail how deeply the father is still pained many years after his daughter's tragic death. Underlying Noora's work is the feeling that she cares deeply about her characters and their stories.

Though somewhat quiet in class, Noora participated in discussions with well placed comments about her peers' work or the subject at hand. She had smart things to say and did not shy from standing behind them. Noora was also very receptive to the feedback and ideas she received both in class and in conference. I give her my wholehearted recommendation to any undergraduate institution.

Sincerely,



Jamie Pearlberg
for the faculty