

## **Academic Program Assessment Report**

### **M.F.A. Program in Creative Writing & Translation**

#### *Assessment Tools*

As outlined in our Academic Program Assessment Plan, the Program in Creative Writing and Translation uses the following assessment tools for student learning outcomes:

- A combined thesis defense and oral examination.
- A yearly review of each student's academic progress toward the M.F.A. degree.
- An indirect review of our graduates' professional success via published works, national program rankings, and anecdotal evidence.

#### *Assessment Results*

Thesis defense/oral exams: As of May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 8 M.F.A. students eligible to graduate this spring had successfully written and defended a thesis manuscript that was deemed publishable by their thesis committees. Through oral examination, the committees were satisfied that graduating candidates were leaving the program with a broad knowledge of literature and technique. One additional student will graduate in Fall 2023, having met the same evaluative criteria successfully.

#### **Student and Alumni Accomplishments**

Rising third-year translator Joaquin Gavilano was awarded the PEN/Heim Translation Fund Grant by PEN America for his translation from the Spanish of *THE HOSTAGE* by Gabriel Mamani Magne.

Brody Parrish Craig (poetry) and Sabine Schmidt (literary translation), and recent fiction grad Lily Buday were awarded 2022 Artists 360 grants from Mid-America Arts Alliance and the Walton Family Foundation.

Ryan Chamberlain is at work on a translation of "Saharienne *Indigo* (original); *The Lives and Deaths of Véronique Bangoura* (translation)" by Tierno Monénembo to be published by Schaffner Press in Summer 2024.

Recent graduate Anna Vilner's translation of "The Preparatory School," a short story by Hebe Uhart, was published in August 2023 in *The New Yorker*.

Recent graduate Lily Buday and alum Joy Clark were awarded Individual Fellowship Awards for their work by the Arkansas Arts Council.

2023 MFA grad Vasantha Sambamurthi has been awarded the 2022 C.D. Wright/Academy of American Poets Prize for "Believe Me."

Rising fourth-year poet CD Eskilson was recently nominated for Best New Poets by Beloit Poetry Journal. The journal nominated Eskilson's poem, "'On Hold, I Think About the Shape of Words'" for the Pushcart Prize in 2022.

Rising fourth-year poet Jami Padgett's "Polaroids" was featured on Poetry Daily in March.

Rising second year translator Lizzie Fox received the Bridge Fellowship from the Gender Studies Department, to support her research as she translates Hrotsvitha (c. 935-1002 CE), a Saxon nun and the first-known female playwright in the Western tradition.

Rising fourth year poet Elizabeth Muscari published her poem "Bodies, Revised" in the spring 2023 issue of *The Nashville Review*.

Rising third year translator Cal Paule secured their first book contract. Paule will publish their translation of Diana Garza Isla's *Caja negra que se llame como a mí* with Ugly Duckling Press in Spring 2024.

LSU Press has published an English-language version of poetry alum David Brunson's anthology of poetry by Chilean writers, "Una cicatriz donde se escriben despedidas. Antología de poesía venezolana en Chile."

Collin Callahan's collection of poetry, "Thunderbird Inn" was awarded the Silver medal for Poetry in the 2022 Florida Book Awards.

Poets Tobias Wray and J. Bailey Hutchinson were each awarded \$25,000 Creative Writing Fellowships by the National Endowment for the Arts in Fall 2022.

Wray, an assistant professor of Poetry at the University of Central Oklahoma won the College of Liberal Arts award for Outstanding Scholarly and Creative Activity, and Hutchinson, who is an editor at Milkweed Books, will serve as a guest editor for Antioch University's MFA program this Summer.

Peter Mason was named as a finalist for the 2022 Ruth Lilly and Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Fellowships. Two poems by Mason appeared in the December issue of *Poetry Magazine*.

Pamela Carmell's "The Dead," her translation of Nancy Morejón's "Los Muertos," was published in the *New Yorker Magazine*.

Angie Macri was the May 2023 SLANT Feature Poet at the University of Central Arkansas.

Adam Clay organized and hosted TYPO FEST this Spring to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Typo Magazine, which was founded by Clay and the late Matthew Henriksen, with two days of panels and readings on Mt. Sequoyah. Clay's fifth collection of poetry *Circle Back* is forthcoming from Milkweed Books in 2024.

United States Poet Laureate Ada Limon featured "Afterlife with a Gentle Afterward," a poem by Henriksen on her poetry podcast "The Slowdown."

Jen Jabailly Blackburn's poem "Girl in a Bear Suit" was chosen by Christopher Citro as the winner of the 2023 Elixir Press 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Poetry Award.

Jack Bedell's collection of poetry "Against the Woods' Dark Trunks" was published Mercer University Press. Bedell is the former Poet Laureate of Louisiana.

"Devonport" by Chloe Honum was featured as a Poem A Day selection from The Academy of American Poets in January 2023.

Our faculty-founded, MFA student-run literary magazine, *The Arkansas International* continues to thrive; Issues 13 and 14 of the magazine were released in Fall and Spring, respectively. The staff has worked tirelessly this year in support of the magazine, travelling to the Brooklyn Book Fair and the Association of Writer and Writing Programs conference to share their work. The team cohosted a reading at AWP with the *Massachusetts Review*, featuring noted authors Sarah Viren, Randall Mann, Kemi Alabi, and Diannely Antigua.

They also hosted celebrated author K Ming Chan in the Fall. Chang served as the 2022 Walton Distinguished Reader. Chang visited Fayetteville and gave a free public reading of her work presented in conjunction with the Fayetteville Public Library's TrueLit Festival.

Earlier this year, *The Arkansas International* was shortlisted for the 2023 CLMP Firecracker Award for General Excellence.

This Spring, we welcomed Nigerian novelist Uchenna Awoke to Fayetteville as the inaugural author in the Writer at Risk Residency program, spearheaded by Professor Padma Viswanathan. More information about Uchenna and the program can be found here:  
<https://www.arkint.org/writer-at-risk-program>

## **Faculty Accomplishments**

*What Things Cost: An Anthology for the People*, the first major anthology of poetry and prose focused on labor and economic inequity published in a century, and co-edited by Poetry and Literary Translation Professor Rebecca Gayle Howell was released in Spring 2024 by The University Press of Kentucky. Poetry Professor Geffrey Davis's work is featured.

Professor Geoffrey Davis's new collection of poetry is forthcoming in 2024 by BOA Editions.

Work by Professor Davis and Fiction Professor Bryan Hurt is featured "Mid/South," an anthology of regional writing published by Belle Point Press in Fall 2024.

Professors Padma Viswanathan and Geoffrey Brock will serve on the faculty of the Bread Loaf Translator's Conference this Summer.

Fiction Professor Toni Jensen will serve on the faculty of Antioch University's Summer MFA session this year.

Professor Jensen served on the faculty at the Cherry Tree Writers Festival Faculty this summer.

Professor Jensen presented at the BYU English Reading Winter Series.

Professor Jensen served as the Mankato State University's Eddice B. Barber Writer in Residence.

Professor Jensen presented at the GetLit Festival in Spokane, Washington.

Professor Davis presented at the 2022 Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival.

Professor Davis is featured in *The Seagull Book of Poems*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition and in *River Poems*, an anthology that explores the power and beauty of rivers published by Everyman's Library.

Professor Davis has been awarded a Pushcart Prize.

*Like Every Form of Love: A Memoir of Friendship and True Crime*, by Professor Padma Viswanathan is forthcoming in August 2023 from Random House Canada.

*Where We Stand: Speech, Place, Justice*, by Djamila Ribeiro (translated by Padma Viswanathan from the Portuguese) is forthcoming 2024 from Margellos World Republic of Letters, Yale University Press.

Throughout the fall and spring semesters, we hosted three remarkable guests through the Walton Visiting Writers series: translator Ellen Doré Watson, acclaimed poet Jane Hirshfield, and novelist René Steinke, who conferenced with students, delivered talks on the craft of writing, and gave free public readings of their work. It was so gratifying to know that the students were able to work with these writers, considered among the best in their fields, and to have an opportunity to invite the larger community to experience their work firsthand at the readings.

Issues 6& 7 of *The Diamond Line* Literary magazine, which features the fiction, poetry, and visual art of undergraduates at the U of A were released in the Fall and Spring semesters, respectively. Led by Assistant Director Jane V. Blunski, the magazine is the product of a section of ENGL 3903, Literary Magazine Publishing. A link to the magazine's website is here: <https://thediamondline.uark.edu> and digital copies of all three issues are

here: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/diamondlitolitmag/>.

Belle Point Press released Prose Series #3, micro chapbook of fiction and creative nonfiction in Fall 2022.

Blunski's novella, "Mon Dieu, Love" was chosen by Renee Gladman as the winner of the 2022 Clay Reynolds Novella Prize, and published by Texas Review Press in April, 2023.

### *Use of Results*

Almost without exception, students in the M.F.A. program graduate within four years. These students produce publishable manuscripts, and many go on to prestigious post-graduate fellowships and residencies, as well as careers in teaching and writing.

In 2017, the Program in Creative Writing and Translation began teaching ENGL 2023, Creative Writing I, as a university core course. Assessment data has consistently revealed that our student instructors are satisfactorily teaching the course according to stated student learning outcomes and are therefore gaining valuable teaching experience for their professional resumes. Please do let me know if a more detailed report on this data is preferred; I am happy to send that along.