

# 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 April 28th, all 10 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.

Graduate success: In its latest ranking of M.F.A. programs, *Poets & Writers* placed the University of Arkansas M.F.A. program 8<sup>th</sup> in the nation (out of ~150 programs) for job placement and 18<sup>th</sup> for post-graduate fellowships. Among the many accomplishments of our students and graduates this year:

## Student and Alumni Accomplishments

Rising fourth year translator Lizzie Fox was awarded a Centennial Grant by the Medieval Academy of America for her project, "The Plays of Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim: Bringing the Medieval to Arkansas (University of Arkansas // Two Headed Repertory).

In April 2025, Fox premiered two new plays by based on the work of Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, a Medieval playwright: "The Martyrdom" and "The Resurrection."

Recent grad Shalini Rana's poetry collection, *No One but the Sun*, was named a finalist for the 2024 Gaudy Boy Book Prize.

Fiction alum Steve Yate's latest novel, *The Lakes of Southern Hollow* was released by Mandeville Publishing.

Rising fourth-year poet Claire Scott's debut poetry collection, *Relentless August* was released by Bottlecap Press in Spring 2025.

*Resistir*, a selection of poems by Rocio Duran-Barba features translations by current MFA students Joaquín Gavilano, Colleen Noland, and Cal Paule. The work was published in collaboration with Latin American PEN Centers, *World Literature Today*, and *Latin American Literature Today*.

Poetry alum Brody Parrish Craig was named a recipient of the Arkansas Arts Council's 2024 Individual Artist Fellowships in the category of Community Engagement and Literary Arts. Craig's second collection of poetry, *The Patient Is an Unreliable Historian*, was released by Omnidawn in Fall 2024.

Chloe Honum's poem, "Alone With Mother," was featured in the *Best of Adroit* from the *Adroit Literary Journal*. Honum has been named a 2025-25 James Merrill House Fellow by The James Merrill House & Writer-in-Residence Program.

Alison Pelegrin, current Louisiana Poet Laureate, has been awarded a Poet Laureate Fellowship by the Academy of American Poets. The award will support Pelegrin's work with incarcerated writers.

Alum Patrick Font was named the winner of the Texas Institute of Letters' Kay Cattarulla Award for Best Short Story. "All B's and One C," originally published by *Iron Horse Literary Review*, who nominated Font for the award.

Corrie Williamson's new collection of poems, *Your Mother's Bear Gun*, was released by River River Books in January 2025.

Fourth-year translator Robin Bruce was selected as one of Fayetteville Public Library's 2025 Artists in Residence.

Fourth-year poets Sylvia Foster and Erin Pinkham and third-year poet Allison Flory presented original compositions set to music by the Symphony of Northwest Arkansas (SoNA) Singers at "SoNA Beyond: Transcending Words," a free concert celebrating sung and spoken poetry.

Matthew Goldberg's collection of fiction stories, *Night Watch*, published by Willow Springs Books, won the 2025 Spokane Prize for Short Fiction.

Alums Mayssa Hashaad, Elizabeth Muscari, and Hiba Tahir, are recipients of Mid-America Arts Alliance's 2024 Artists 360 Awards. Poetry graduate Elizabeth ('24) and translation graduate Mayssa ('24) were both awarded the Artists 360 Practicing Artist Grant; poetry graduate Hiba ('22) was awarded an Artists 360 Community Activator Grant.

CD Eskilson celebrated the release of their debut poetry collection *Scream / Queen*, published by Acre Books, in March 2025.

Translation alum and current U of A French instructor Ryan Chamberlain was awarded an Albertine Translation Fund Grant. Chamberlain received the award for his translation of the novel *The Lives and Deaths of Véronique Bangoura* by Guinean author Tierno Monénembo. The novel was published in March 2025 by Schaffner Press.

Poetry alum Jackie Chicalese's scholarly article, "Reinscribing History through Docupoetry: Don Mee Choi's DMZ Colony as Counterstory," was published in the journal *Writers: Craft & Context* V5.1.

Fiction alum John Dufresne's latest novel, *My Darling Boy*, was recently reviewed by the *New York Times*. Dufresne is a professor of creative writing at Florida International University.

2015 alum and folksinger Willi Carlisle recently announced a new record, *Winged Victory*, will be released in June 2025.

### *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 core course. Assessment data consistently has revealed that our student instructors excel at teaching the course according to stated student learning outcomes and are therefore gaining valuable teaching experience for their professional resumes.

## **Faculty Accomplishments 2024-25**

### **Program Director, Professor Toni Jensen**

#### **Publications**

*The Masters Review Volume XII: With Stories Selected by Toni Jensen*

(April 2024)

I selected the winning ten stories and essays from a pool of fifty submissions for *The Masters Review, Volume XII*. I gave editorial suggestions on the ten chosen stories and wrote a two-page introductory essay to begin the collection. This series publishes the work of new writers and has been guest edited in past years by writers such as Roxane Gay, Peter Ho Davies and Kate Bernheimer. The anthology often helps launch the careers of notable new writers.

#### **Submitted to publisher**

*This American Grief*. Nonfiction book in progress, book proposal submitted to publisher.

*This American Grief* focuses on rural and small-city gentrification and the housing crisis in the middle of the country. It traces the origins of our contemporary moment back to policies enacted during the Reagan administration and includes personal narrative, alongside statistics, policy and history.

#### **Awards, Grants, and Fellowships**

2024, Porter Fund Literary Prize, Porter Fund, presented annually to one Arkansas writer who has accomplished a “substantial and impressive body of work that merits enhanced recognition,” \$5000, Fall 2024.

2024, James and Lois Welch Distinguished Visiting Native American Writer, \$50,000, University of Montana, Spring 2024.

#### **Presentations and Invited Talks**

Invited reading and craft talk, Clemson Literary Festival, April 2025.

Reading and discussion presenter, Sowell Collection Conference, Texas Tech University, April 2025.

Panel discussion, “Native American Authors Panel,” True Lit Festival, Fayetteville Public Library, AR, October 2024.

Panel discussion, “True Voices: The Power of Nonfiction,” Northwest Arkansas Book Festival, August 2024.

Invited readings and craft talks, Owens Community College Big Read events, one book/all campus reads program, Ohio community college system and high schools, April 2024.

Panel presentation, “‘Life of Labor’ in Letters: Working-Class Storytelling,” AWP Conference, February 2024.

Panel presentation, “Shaking Up the Memoir from Middle America,” AWP Conference, February 2024.

Invited reading and panel conversation, “The Future of Environmental Writing,” Shakespeare & Company Bookstore, Missoula, MT, February 2024.

Invited talk, Groton School, January 2024.

## **Professor Davis McCombs**

### ***Publications:***

“For Once, Then,” (haibun/essay) accepted by *White Wall Review*, Toronto Metropolitan University.

“A Winter Triptych” (haibun/essay) accepted by *FLARE: The Flagler Review*, Flagler College.

“The Shadow of the Dog” (haibun/essay) published in *American Poetry Review*.

“After Hours” (haibun/essay) published in *Sand Hills*, winner of their 2024 Prose Contest (\$500), Augusta University.

“Radical Heat” (haibun/essay) published in *The Georgia Review*. University of Georgia.

“In a Cleft of the Rock” (haibun/essay) published *North American Review*. Cedar Falls, Iowa: North American Review / University of Northern Iowa.

“Ora Et Labora” (haibun/essay) published in *Pensive*, Northeastern University.

“The Private Frog” (haibun/essay) published in *Blackbird*, Virginia Commonwealth University.  
<https://blackbird.vcu.edu/>.

### ***Reading:***

*Pensive* launch, Northeastern University, Jan. 15, 2025.

## **Professor Geoffrey Davis**

### **Book Publication**

*One Wild Word Away*. American Poets Continuum Series. BOA Editions, 2024.

### **Anthology and Collected Edition Publications**

Poem. *A Literary Field Guide to Northern Appalachia*. U of Georgia Press, 2024. Print.

Poem. *Elementals: Water*, vol. 3. Humans and Nature Press, 2024. Print.

Two Essays. *The Next Draft: Inspiring Craft Talks from the Rainier Writing Workshop*. U of Michigan Press, 2024. Print.

Poem. *Pushcart Prize XLVIII: Best of the Small Presses*. Pushcart Press, 2024. Print.

### **Journal Publications**

Poem. *The Academy of American Poets*, Poem-A-Day Project (March 2024): Online.

Poem. *The Massachusetts Review* 65.1 (Spring 2024): Print.

Essay. *The Adroit Journal* (2024): Online.

Essay. *The Seventh Wave Magazine* (2024): Online.

### **Podcast Feature**

“The Drive to Connect.” *Poetry Centered* (2024): Online.

### **Honors**

Finalist for 2025 Cecil Hemley Memorial Award, *Poetry Society of America*

Nominated for 2025 Master Teaching Award, Fulbright College

Nominated for 2024 Master Teaching Award, Fulbright College

### **Presentations**

Craft Talk: “The Sky above the Roof: Community and Creativity in Carceral Environments,”  
AWP Conference (Los Angeles, WA), 2025

Visiting Writer, West Virginia University, Virtual, 2024

Workshop, Open Mouth Reading Series, Virtual, 2024

Workshop, Bee Balm, The Medium (Springdale, AR), 2024

Craft Talk: “The Fine Art of Craft Talking,” AWP Conference (Kansas City, MO), 2024

Craft Talk: “What Did I Know?” AWP Conference (Kansas City, MO), 2024

### **Editing and Jurying Activity**

Member, Peer Review Subcommittee, U of Arkansas Press (2025 – Present)

Member, Board of Advisors, Write Place (2023 – Present)

Member, Editorial Advisory Committee, U of Arkansas Press (2022 – Present)

Poetry Editor, *Iron Horse Literary Review*, Texas Tech U, (2018 – Present)

Member, Southern Prize for Literary Arts Jury Panel, South Arts (2025)

Judge, James Wright Prize, U of Minnesota/Academy of American Poets (2024)

### **Public Readings**

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center (San Francisco, CA), 2025

Lunch Poems Reading Series, University of California (Berkeley, CA), 2025

Marin Poetry Center, Mill Valley Public Library (Mill Valley, CA), 2025

The Academy (Berkeley, CA), 2025

Writing the Wild Reading and Q&A, Virtual, 2025

Friends of Hobbs Speaker Series (Hobbs State Park, AR), 2025

College of Central Florida (Ocala, FL), 2024

West Virginia University, Virtual, 2024

Writing the Wild Potluck Reading, Virtual, 2024

Open Mouth Reading Series, Virtual, 2024

Pushcart Prize Reading, The Writers Studio, Virtual, 2024

## **Professor Geoffrey Brock**

### **Publications:**

*After*, my book of poems published in 2024, was named to two year-end “best of” lists:

[“The Best Poetry Collections of 2024”](#) by *Electric Lit*: Dec. 3, 2024

[“10 Best Poetry Books of 2024”](#) by *Times Now*: Dec. 24, 2024

One new translated book published this academic year:

*The Rabbit Punch* (novel) by Marco Missiroli. London: Sceptre, Feb. 2025

3 new poems appearing in journals this academic year:

“Goodbye” in Academy of American Poets’ *Poem-A-Day* (330,000 email subscribers). NY: Aug. 2025

“The Old Mirage” in *Nimrod* (print). Tulsa OK: Summer 2025

“Song” in *The Common* (Monthly Online Poetry Feature). Amherst MA: June 2025

7 new translated poems appearing in journals this academic year:

“I Travel” by Sara de Ibáñez, in *Atlanta Review*. Atlanta: Summer 2025

“Untitled” by Paolo Febbraro, in *Threepenny Review*. Berkeley: Spring 2025

Five poems by Umberto Saba, in *Waxwing*. Montpelier VT: Dec. 2024

### **Professional Service:**

Jury Member, IIE Fulbright Scholar Program (Creative Writing): Fall 2024

### **Readings & Talks:**

Two Friends Books (Bentonville AR), poetry reading: Oct 9, 2024

“Who Do Anthologies Speak For?” (ALTA Conference, Milwaukee), panel talk: Oct. 27, 2024

Friends of Palestine (fundraiser), Mt Sequoyah Center (Fayetteville), poetry reading: Nov 17, 2024

A Satellite of Love Bookstore (San Luis Obispo CA), poetry reading: Feb. 25, 2025

Cal Poly University (San Luis Obispo CA), poetry reading & class visit: Feb 26, 2025

“20 Years of Reimagining Place: An *Ecotone* Reading” (AWP, Los Angeles), poetry reading: Mar 27, 2025

Drew University (Madison NJ), poetry reading: Mar 6, 2025

Us & Them (reading series), Molasses Books (Brooklyn), poetry reading: Mar 7, 2025

Northeastern State University (Tahlequah OK), poetry reading & class visit: Apr 30, 2025

Phoenix Poetry (reading series), Shades of Green Pub (Manhattan), poetry reading: June 23, 2025

“Purgatory Happens on the Earth,” Dallas Institute of Humanities & Culture (Dallas), lecture: July 14, 2025

### **Professor Padma Viswanathan**

#### **Publications:**

*Like Every Form of Love: A Memoir of Friendship and True Crime*. (American edition of book published in Canada in 2023) Los Angeles: 7.13 Books, July 2024

*The Charterhouse of Padma*, novel. Boston: Godine Books, Oct. 2024

*Where We Stand*, book-length essay by Djamilia Ribeiro (translated from Portuguese). New Haven: Yale University Press, Margellos World Republic of Letters imprint, Sept. 2024 (one of LitHub’s “Most Anticipated Books of 2024”)

“Double, Double: On the Unsettling Power of Doppelganger Stories,” personal essay, LitHub, Nov. 2024

**Readings and Talks:**

Bhisé Festival of the Arts, Keynote and reading, Adelphi University, Garden City, NY 2025  
Us & Them, Molasses Books, Brooklyn, NY, Reading, 2025  
Drew University, Madison, NJ, Reading and Q & A, 2025  
Boswell's Books, Milwaukee, Reading and conversation, 2024  
American Literary Translators Association, Panel (organizer/moderator/presenter), 2024  
Pearl's Books, Fayetteville, AR, Reading and Q & A, 2024  
Two Friends Books, Bentonville, AR, Reading and conversation, 2024  
Concordia University, Reading and Q & A, 2024  
Toronto International Festival of Authors, Toronto ON, Reading and conversation, 2024

**Jury/Service (outside of the university)**

Porter Prize, Little Rock, AR, Board of Directors, 2023-present  
Armory Prize for South Asian Literature, Jury Member, 2025

**Professor Rebecca Gayle Howell*****Publications & Performances:*****Book**

*Erase Genesis* accepted for publication by Project Poëtica / Bridwell Press. Scheduled for release in November 2025.

**Journals & Magazines:**

- "Chapter 1 [In the beginning divide]", "Chapter 1 [In the beginning call]", and an essay excerpt - accepted by *The Sewanee Review*. Summer 2025. 133. 3.
- "Chapter 3 [Now the fields said unto the trees]", "Chapter 3 [Now the Lord woman said]", "Chapter 3 [Now the Lord woman in the midst]", "Chapter 3 [the fruit of the fruit]" - published by *Strange Hymnal*. Spring 2025. Volume 1, Issue 1.
- "1908 | regreso," and "1908 | return." Poem by Claudia Prado, Translation by Howell. Selected for republication in *Poetry Daily*. September 01, 2024.
- "A Decade of New Southern Poetics: Notes on the *Oxford American* Poetry Archive: 2014 - 2024." Essay published by *Oxford American* Online, August 16, 2024.

**Libretti:**

- "The Unexpected Early Hour [Lauds - Raag Ahir Bhairav]" - from *A Winter Breviary* (Oxford University Press, 2023) - has been translated into German and scheduled for publication with Oxford University Press. Libretto by Howell, Composition by Reena Esmail.
- "The Unexpected Early Hour [Lauds - Raag Ahir Bhairav]" - from *A Winter Breviary* (Oxford University Press, 2023) - performed as the title performance for the New York City Master Chorale's winter concert.
- *A Winter Breviary* (Oxford University Press, 2023) performed by Kathmandu Chorale (Nepal), Musica Intima (CA), Young New Yorker's Choir (US), Orpheus Choir of Toronto (CA), CANTARE Houston (US), The Sixteen (England), and others. Recorded by the Los Angeles Master Chorale (US).



**Interviews:**

- *Hablemos, Escritoras* (Podcast). 2025.
- *Writing Lessons with Silas House* (Podcast and Radio; NPR). 2025.
- Special Collections Library, Baylor University. Waco, TX. 2024.

**Award:**

Foreword Reviews Indies Gold for Anthology of the Year. 2024. *What Things Cost: An Anthology for the People* (University Press of Kentucky, 2023), co-edited with Ashley M. Jones, Emily Jalloul, Associate Editor.

**Readings and talks given:**

- The University of the South. Sewanee School of Letters. Reading with Jamie Quatro. June 11, 2025.
- the University of Kentucky. The Lexington Gathering. March 15, 2025.
- Word Up Community Bookshop in New York, New York. Reading with Claudia Prado. February 02, 2025.

**Textbook adoptions:**

- Indiana University: *Render / An Apocalypse* (Cleveland State University Press, 2013).
- Texas Tech University: *El interior de la ballena / The belly of the whale* (Texas Tech University Press, 2024).

**National service:**

- Jurist. Poetry Fellowship Award for 2025-2026. Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown.
- Jurist. Poetry Grant Award for 2025. The Barbara Deming Memorial Fund for Women.

**Professor Bryan Hurt****Books**

*The Magic Hole: A Novel*, on submission, 2025.

**Grants & Fellowships**

2024	I-Corps SITE Program, National Science Foundation
2024	Individual Artist Fellowship, Arkansas Arts Council

**Jane VB Larson, TAP, Program Associate Director****Publications**

May 2025 – “Tracy Anderson Arms” (short fiction) – Fruit Journal.

October 2024 - “Some other things I did to make you sleep with me,” (poem) – Chapplebook Roan, community chapbook published by Bee Balm Arkansas.

August 2024 - “Quelders” (collage) – Bible Belt Queers Zine #3: Community.

### **Conference Participation**

Panelist - “The Sky above the Roof: Community and Creativity in Carceral Environments,” AWP Conference (Los Angeles, CA), March 2025.

Presenter - Craft talk and workshop titled, “Queerness and the Spirit: Writing Memoir” at the inaugural Punch Bucket Literary Festival, Asheville, North Carolina, September 2024.

Panelist - “Author’s Journey: Growing Arkansas’ Literary Future” NWA BookFest, Fayetteville, AR, August 2024.

### **Teaching/Community Engagement**

Facilitator – Craft class and writing workshop titled, “From Dread to Elation: Writing Close Calls,” NWACC Spring Festival, Bentonville, AR, March 2025.

Instructor - Writing Fiction: Innovative Forms at Mt. Sequoyah Center, Fayetteville, AR, February 2025.

Facilitator - Revision Night, a free monthly community revision workshop, presented in collaboration with Beebalm Arkansas, August 2024-April 2025.

Instructor - Memoir Writing craft class and writing workshop in collaboration with Beebalm Arkansas, November 2024

Facilitator - Carroll & Madison County zine making workshops (two sessions). In collaboration with the Carroll & Madison Library System, with funding from the Radical Librarianship Institute, October 2024.

### **Awards**

“Eleven, Twelve, Thirteen Years Old” (creative nonfiction) - nominated for the Pushcart Prize by Cherry Tree Literary Magazine.

Nominated for the Fulbright Outstanding Advisor Award, 2025.

