SAIF Final Report for Kara Candito (2012-2013)

Topic: Spectator: A Collection of Poems

Abstract

I applied for and received funding to complete the research, writing, and submission processes for my second collection of poetry, Spectator. The poems in Spectator engage the lyric-narrative form and the post-confessional poetic tradition to explore my experiences growing up in a bicultural household in which both parents were first-generation Americans. The collection includes dramatic monologues based on the interviews I conducted with my grandparents about their experiences immigrating to the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. The lyric-narrative poems in the collection employ polyvocality (of language and voice) to explore my own experiences of hybridity and marginality through the lens of childhood. The final poems in Spectator address my adult negotiation of the United States immigration system as a result of my recent marriage to a Mexican citizen. This project works within the recent trend of the poetics of identity while also challenging the boundaries between poetry and memoir.

Budget

I requested and received $4000 for salary. This allowed me to work full time on my creative work over the summer and to cover the costs of manuscript submission and postage fees.

Results

The results of my 2012-2013 SAIF Grant were very successful. In September of 2012, I completed work on Spectator and proceeded to submit the manuscript to approximately
twenty national poetry manuscript contests. Between November of 2012 and June of 2013, *Spectator* was named as a finalist or semifinalist for the following contests:

- **Finalist, 2013 Brittingham Pollack Poetry Prizes (University of Wisconsin Press)**
- **Semifinalist, 2013 Philip Levine Poetry Prize (Anhinga Press)**
- **Semifinalist, 2014 Miller Williams Poetry Prize (University of Arkansas Press)**
- **Finalist, 2013 Crab Orchard Series in Poetry Open Competition (Southern Illinois University Press)**
- **Finalist, 2013 May Swenson Poetry Award (Utah State University Press)**
- **Finalist, 2013 Dorset Prize (Tupelo Press)**

In July of 2013, judge Connie Voisine selected *Spectator* as the winner of the 2013 Agha Shahid Ali Poetry Prize. My second collection will be published by the University of Utah Press in the Spring of 2014. In addition to publication, I will receive a $1,000 cash prize and a reading in the University of Utah's Guest Writers Series, with travel and accommodations funded by The University of Utah Department of English.

The creative work I completed with the support of a 2012-2013 SAIF Grant has garnered the attention of the national creative writing community. In April of 2013, poet Shara McCallum chose a selection of poems from *Spectator* for the 2012 Lorine Niedecker Poetry Prize from the Council for Wisconsin Writers. In June of 2013, I attended the prestigious MacDowell Colony as a poetry fellow. In mid-August of 2013, I will attend the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts as a poetry fellow.
Additionally, in the spring and summer of 2013, I served as a featured reader for the following national and regional literary events and readings series:

- Kraken Reading Series; Denton, Texas (January 26, 2013)
- The Bridge Poetry Series: 1934, A New Deal for Artists; The Chazen Museum of Art; Madison, WI (March 21, 2013)
- WILD AMERICA: Poetry & Visual Art; Common Wealth Gallery; Madison, WI (March 29, 2013)
- Lightning Strikes Twice Poetry Reading Series; Hawthorne Public Library; Madison, WI (April 27, 2013)
- Middle Coast Poets Reading Series; Milwaukee, WI (July 29, 2013)

Finally, several of the poems I revised with the support of a 2012-2013 SAIF Grant have been published or are forthcoming in the following literary journals:

- “The Alien Spouse’s Application” & “V’s Dream on the Plane Between Chicago & Mexico City,” Indiana Review (forthcoming Fall 2013)
- “Human Resources” & “Road Trip,” Forklift, Ohio (forthcoming Fall 2013)
- “There Are Lots of Guns Here” & “Camino Real,” Memorious (Winter 2013)

Benefits to the University

In May of 2013, I shared the results of my 2012-2013 SAIF Grant at the Undergraduate Research and Creative Endeavors Symposium via the “Poetry of Otherness,” a reading and Q&A about publishing creative work. The poems in Spectator compliment UW-Platteville’s commitment to diversity and multiculturalism in the classroom and on campus. As a project, it initiates a dialogue about culture, race, and “difference” as dynamic, constantly shifting
categories, rather than fixed attributes that are often assigned static positive (white, American) and negative (non-white, “foreign”) labels. As literature, poetry enables identification and imagination with other perspectives and groups with which students might have little experience. Imaginative rather than instructive, poetry traverses the boundaries of racial and cultural identity. Since I began my professorship at UW-Platteville in the fall of 2010, the readings, conferences and panels I have participated in, along with the poems and reviews I’ve published in literary journal publications, have contributed to UW-Platteville’s reputation as a regional center for the arts. Additionally, the forthcoming publication and prize-winning status of my second manuscript will bring recognition to UW-Platteville’s Humanities Department.