SAIF Final Report for Kara Candito (2013-2014)

**Topic:** *The Alien Spouse: A Collection of Poems*

**Abstract**

I applied for and received funding to complete the research, writing, and submission processes for my third collection of poetry, *The Alien Spouse*. Inspired by my own marriage to a Mexican national and our subsequent navigation of the United States immigration system, these poems explore very literal intersections between the political and the personal by treating immigration as a process of spatial and linguistic translation. “The Alien Spouse’s Application,” a series of erasures of U.S. marriage-based immigration petition forms I-130, I-485 and G-325A, exposes the anxiety and xenophobia inherent in legal discourse about otherness, borders and national identity. This series enters into dialogue with the more elliptical narrative-driven “I/(intimate) you” poems, such as “By the Numbers” and “Gardening.” Through this poetic dialogue, my project disrupts the depersonalized, official discourse about immigration by inflecting it with an urgent, often polyvocal intimacy. Poems in *The Alien Spouse* expand upon the themes of my first two collections of poetry, *Taste of Cherry* and *Spectator*, by exploring the power dynamics between male and female, domestic and foreign, and personal and political through a new lens.

**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 2013-2014 SAIF Grant were very successful. In September of 2013, I completed a draft of the manuscript and proceeded to submit the manuscript to approximately fifteen national poetry manuscript contests. The collection was named as a finalist for Noemi Press’ Open Book competition. I also have multiple interviews based on this collection and my second book, *Spectator* (University of Utah Press, 2014, Winner of the Agha Shahid Ali Poetry Prize), forthcoming in 32 Poems, Poemoftheweek.org, The Conversant,
Memorious, and Bookslut. Based on my third collection’s employment of heteroglossia, I have also been invited to publish a critical essay and translation of Argentine poet Ana Maria Shua’s Casa de geishas for Tavern Books’ Honest Pint series.

The creative work I completed with the support of a 2014-2013 SAIF Grant has garnered the attention of the national creative writing community. In June of 2014, I was awarded a fully funded artist residency to The Vermont Studio Center. Also in June, one of my poems, first published in jubilat, was awarded the prestigious Pushcart Prize. Additionally, I have been invited to serve as the featured reader for the following 2014 national and regional literary events and readings series:

- Thursday, April 10th at 8 pm, Beyond Baroque Literary Arts Center, with Sarah Vap and Sarah Maclay (681 Venice Blvd., Venice, CA 90291)
- Saturday, April 12th at 2 pm, LA Times Festival of Books, Poetry Stage (University of Southern California, University Park Campus, Los Angeles, CA 90089)
- Monday, May 19th at 7 pm, The Bubbler, with Chloé Krug Benjamin (Madison Public Library Central Branch, 201 W Mifflin St, Madison, WI 53703)
- Thursday, June 19th, Beaverdale Books, with Kyle McCord (2629 Beaver Ave #1, Des Moines, IA 50310)
- Friday, September 5th at 7 pm, Monsters of Poetry, with Holly Amos, Mark J. Brewin Jr. and Jeffery Allen (401 E Washington Street, Madison, WI 53703)
- Friday, November 7th at 6 pm, the Big Mess Reading Series, with Sean Bishop (Annabell’s Bar & Lounge, 782 West Market Street, Akron, OH)
- Saturday, November 8th, the Dollhouse Reading Series, with Sean Bishop (Chicago, IL)
- Monday, November 10th at 7:30 pm, Observable Readings, with Bridget Lowe (Llywelyn’s Pub, 4747 McPherson Avenue, St. Louis, MO)
- Tuesday, December 2nd at 7 pm, Wit Rabbit Reads, with Sean Bishop (2401 N Western Avenue, Chicago IL USA 60647)
In August of 2014, I was invited to serve as the judge for the 2015 Wisconsin Academy’s *Wisconsin People & Ideas* Poetry Contest. As part of this role, I will receive an honorarium and present the winner at the 2015 Wisconsin Book Festival.

Finally, several of the poems I wrote with the support of a 2013-2014 SAIF Grant have been published or are forthcoming in the following literary journals:

- “Initiation #5: Lorca,” *Verse Daily*
- “Monologue during a Blackout,” *Verse Daily*
- “Ars Amatoria: So You Want to Marry a Foreign National,” *Drunken Boat*
- “Ars Poetica #40: The Worst Case Scenario Version,” “Dear Forgiveness,” and “Holding Pattern, Lifted,” *Waxwing*
- Yo, la peor del mundo, *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*

**Benefits to the University**

On September 10, 2014, I will share the results of my 2013-2014 SAIF Grant by delivering a reading and Q&A with Dubuque-based poet Lauren K Alleyne as part of the Humanities Department Visiting Writers Reading Series. The poems in *The Alien Spouse* compliment UW-Platteville’s commitment to diversity and multiculturalism in the classroom and on campus. As a project, the collection probes the ethics of the United States’ immigration system and the psychology of immigration and otherness. 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, my recent Pushcart Prize and the 2014 publication of my prize-winning second manuscript will bring recognition to UW-Platteville’s Humanities Department.