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NEWS

Ouachita faculty member Mark McGraw publishes book translation

By McKenzie Cranford

April 14, 2015

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Ouachita Baptist University professor Dr. Mark McGraw's English translation of Joseph Avski's book *A un paso de Juárez* (One Step from Juarez) has been published by Mouthfeel Press in El Paso, Texas.

McGraw, assistant professor of Spanish, has published two books with Avski since the two met in graduate school at Texas A&M University. The book is available for purchase [online](#) or can be checked out from Ouachita's Riley-Hickingbotham Library.

"Dr. McGraw's significant professional contribution highlights the strength of our Spanish program at Ouachita," noted Dr. Jeff Root, dean of OBU's School of Humanities. "Spanish is a growth area for us, and it's because of both the strong academic standing of our faculty members and their expertise in the classroom."

"It's a thrill and a dream come true to see your name on a book," McGraw said. "My mom taught me to value reading and books and to think about all the author went through to produce a book. So even to translate this and it not be my original work, I do still take ownership of projects like this."

A un paso de Juárez tells Avski's personal journey of immigrating to the United States from Colombia. Avski earned a master's degree in physics before moving to Texas to pursue a Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing.

"What is interesting about this story is that it's not your typical immigrant narrative," McGraw said. "I felt honored to be able to give him a voice for an audience who needs to hear his story. There are a lot of misconceptions about what the immigrant experience is like here, so to put a human face on the experience of an immigrant, a guy with a lot to offer the United States and students, was a real privilege."

Speaking about the process of translation, McGraw added, "Avski writes the book very conversationally, so I wanted to make the translation the same way so that you see his intelligence, his sense of humor, his humanity and his view of the United States."

"Having Mark in the department is fantastic," said Dr. Doug Sonheim, chair of OBU's Department Language and Literature. "He has scholarship in translation, and he is skillful in working as a short story writer and a poet in English as well as in Spanish. We hope that he'll be teaching our creative writing courses in the future."

McGraw joined the Ouachita faculty in 2013. He earned his Ph.D. in Hispanic studies as well as bachelor's and master's degrees from Texas A&M University and also earned a master's degree from Webster University. He served 20 years in the U.S. Marine Corps where he learned Spanish and worked in 35 different countries.

For more information, contact Dr. Mark McGraw at mcgrawm@obu.edu or (870) 245-5551.

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