

Nomination for Joan Hambidge to the College of Fellows, University of Cape Town

To Whom It May Concern:

It is a special pleasure to present Prof. Joan Hambidge for Election to the College of Fellows of the University of Cape Town. Since joining UCT as Senior Lecturer in 1992, Prof. Hambidge has become one of South Africa's most celebrated contemporary poets, and one of the few who is also a household name among Anglophone connoisseurs of poetry in this country.

Joan Hambidge is professor in the School of Languages and holds the Hofmeyr chair in Afrikaans and Creative Writing. She has from the beginning been part of the world-famous Centre for Creative Writing working with UCT scholars and authors such as Nobel laureate J M Coetzee, Andre Brink, Peter Horn and Stephen Watson and more recently supervising both English and Afrikaans novelists and poets with current director Imraan Coovadia. Her area of research and publication is in Afrikaans poetry and prose, but she is also a theorist and public intellectual, and she has published key works on gender and postcolonialism in both English and Afrikaans journals. She has completed two PhDs, her first at Rhodes University and her second at UCT.

Afrikaans publication has, perhaps, limited points of access for non-Afrikaans speakers, but Professor Hambidge has been a bold advocate for the value of Afrikaans creative work in both the academic and the public realm. At UCT as an historically English-medium institution, the teaching and creation of literature in Afrikaans has always been subject to much scrutiny and public interest, and Prof. Hambidge has more than anyone else in recent years, the public face of this celebrated intellectual endeavour. Apart from her own publications in poetry and other creative writing journals, she has been spoken in multiple radio interviews, at book conventions and literary festivals and written for the Afrikaans press. She is, arguably, the most notable and most powerful voice in Afrikaans poetry in the country, in addition to being a celebrated Afrikaans public intellectual who regularly reviews poetry published in English, German and French in publications like *Die Burger*. On a personal note, I was fortunate to attend her session at the 2019 McGregor Poetry Festival and was proud – though not surprised – to see how many guests were attending the event solely in order to see my friend and colleague read from her then recent volume of poetry in translation, *The Coroner's Wife and Other Poems*. In this way, Joan Hambidge's

oeuvre lives in the great tradition of Afrikaans literature at UCT by opening up great writing in her language to speakers of English around the world.

Professor Hambidge's poetry and creative work has been extensively reviewed. Henning Snyman commented on her publication *Meditasies* saying that she is 'a connoisseur on the ars poetica' (self-reflexive poem or poem on the art of writing poetry) and that her poetry 'strives towards pure poetry', and Bernard Odendaal indicates that there are few poets as compelling. 'The eulogy, ekphrastic poem and travel and love poems with the ars poeticas should be seen as matrix for new variations and improvisations', writes Thys Human on her publication *Matriks*.

Joan Hambidge's extraordinary contribution to Afrikaans poetry and literature has been recognised in the top awards given to poets in South Africa. In 1987 she won the Eugene Marais prize, a South African literary prize awarded by the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns for a first or early publication in Afrikaans. Previous award winners have included André Brink, Shiela Cussons, Antjie Krog and Ettiene van Heerden. In 1999 she won the Litera Prize 1999 (for poetry) and the Poetry Institute of Africa-prize for poetry. More recently in 2018 she was awarded the ATKV Prize, the premier award for prose written in Afrikaans.

Joan Hambidge is not just an author of outstanding poetry and prose but furthermore an inspiration to many creative writers who have gone through her school of Creative Writing of which the School of Languages and Literatures is rightly proud. It is Joan's unique gift – and a sign of her boundless intellectual generosity – to be able to share her creative talent with others many of whom will have first come across and been inspired by her writing in their study of literature at university. To many, the writing of literature at UCT is embodied by Joan's poetry, and she has empowered young writers, such as Loftus Marais and Fourie Botha, to write what she calls 'out of the closet' poetry.

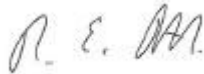
Joan Hambidge is also a trusted colleague and source of sage advice as one of my predecessors in the Directorship of SLL. Little did I know that I would once be able to count myself as her friend – let alone be called 'boss' by her! – when I was first interviewed for a position at UCT by her. While Joan's commitment to her students is legend is exemplary, she is also a staunch champion of academic freedom and the values of the academy at UCT and beyond. On the Council of Stellenbosch University (her Alma Mater) Joan helped steer the ship through the troubled waters of the protest years, and as one of the longest-standing members of the Humanities *ad-hominem*

committee she has followed, mentored and promoted many colleagues through their careers.

It is a fitting honour that in celebration of Professor Hambidge's retirement at the end of this year, a Festschrift is being prepared in her honour with contributions from Johann de Lange, our dean, Sonja Loots, Marius Crous, Burgert Senekal, Catherine du Toit, amongst others, and published by Stilet – the journal for Afrikaans literature.

To conclude, I wish to reiterate that Prof. Hambidge's contribution to the University of Cape Town's standing as a national centre of Afrikaans Creative Writing, her role as a South African public intellectual and, last but not least, the legacy which she has created through her supervision of young writers' poetry and prose make her most worthy of being elected to UCT's College of Fellows.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'R. E. Roth', is centered below the text 'Yours faithfully,'.

A/Prof. Roman Roth, Director, School of Languages and Literatures, University of Cape Town.