

# The English Broadside

English Department Newsletter

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## Telling It Straight: T. Geronimo Johnson

by Melissa Roberson

T. Geronimo Johnson visited KSU on April 24, 2014 to read and discuss his debut novel, *Hold It 'Til It Hurts*. Nominated as a finalist for the 2013 PEN/Faulker Award, *Hold It 'Til It Hurts* follows Afghanistan war vet Achilles as he sets out to find his missing brother and ends up caught in the aftermath of hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

A seasoned writer and professor, Johnson holds an MFA from the Writers' Workshop and has received numerous fellowships at ASU, Iowa, Berkeley, and Stanford. He is also the founding director of the U.C. Berkeley Summer Creative Writing Program.

Johnson stood before an eager audience like a seasoned professor, offering up readings from his text, but also making it clear that he wanted to hear from those attending, passionately answering any questions asked of him throughout the evening. He connected with those in front of him, creating a safe space for discussions on writing, race, politics, publishing, and much more. One student asked him how he is able to write through the difficult and raw subjects in his book like war and death. Johnson answered, "Just tell it straight." He then added that the horror of emotion or violence is much more effective without the melodrama. It is easier for readers to imagine when they don't have to sift through language first. When asked what it felt like to write about those same negative emotions and experiences, Johnson described the sensation of those moments where he began



to feel uncomfortable with his own text and knowing in those moments that he was on the right track. That squirming feeling inside him meant he was getting to exactly the heart of the situation, and he wanted his readers to feel the same visceral response.

With just a few moments of time to spare, Johnson also offered a preview of his next work. His second novel, *Welcome to Braggsville*, follows a group of California college students who decide to protest a Civil War reenactment in Georgia by staging a lynching. The book will be released in January of 2015 and is available for preorder at Amazon.com.



## Comics, Professional Writing, and Graduate Education

by Sergio C. Figueiredo

While designing last semester's MAPW Special Topics course on "Writing Graphic Novels," I began doing some historiographic research, planning to develop the syllabus as a chronological development of the form. In part, my aim was to think of graphic novels not as a medium, but as a method of writing and reasoning with image—the *logos* of image-reason.

In conducting this research, I can across Rudolphe Töpffer's 1845 treatment of *littérature en estampes* in his "Essai de Physiognomonie," often cited as the first theoretical treatment of an experimental (at the time) image-text form of writing designed for public audiences. Interestingly enough, what I discovered was that Töpffer wrote this essay while serving as the chair of the *Rhetorique et Belle Lettres* department at the Academy of Geneva, and that the essay explores the 'proper advantages' of writing with both image and text as a rhetorical practice designed to communicate professional knowledge to lay-audiences; even more interesting was his focus on *method*, and its interdisciplinary mix of applied, creative, literary, and rhetorical composition, at times reflecting and deviating from



Töpffer drawing

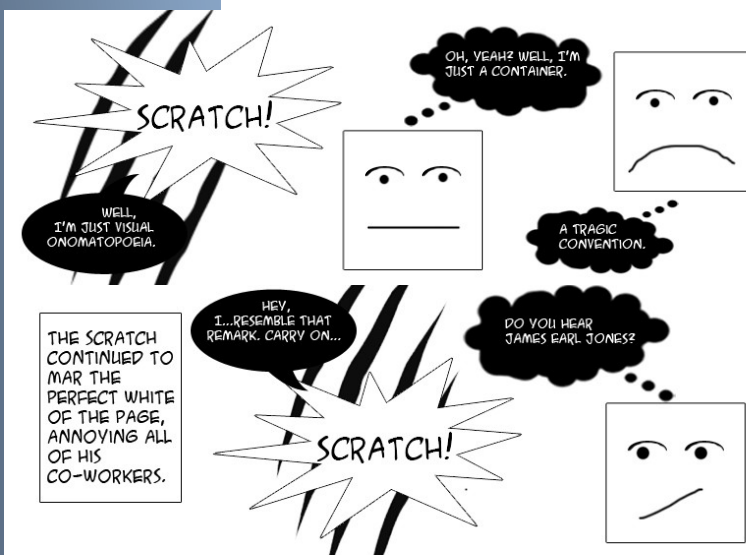
the traditional "Arts and Letters" structures of universities.

As comics-methods and -practices evolved over the twentieth century, Töpffer's work has given way to projects like Will Eisner's *Comics and Sequential Art*, and Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*. In some ways similar to Töpffer's essay, these two works address conventions of writing comics as presented in popular publications; however, with the exception of McCloud's *Reinventing Comics*, contemporary research on comics has focused so much on conventions that experimental projects have been left out of the conversation. While we covered these conventions, practices, and methods throughout the course, the aim of the course was to introduce students to *ways of thinking comics*.

In the first half of the semester, we examined and applied creative composition practices to develop methodologies for writing comics; in the second half of the semester, we examined how these practices and methods are being re-thought as comics (and graphic novels) and adapt themselves to the *available means* offered by digital environments. One particular example that stands out is *nawlz*, an online graphic novel that incorporates both

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From *Power and the Page* by Melissa Roberson completed for "Writing Graphic Novels"



## Comics (continued from page 2)

movement and sound, and that challenges the long-held divisions between comics and cinema.

Throughout the course, students were encouraged to experiment with comics, composing 5 short projects and one larger project (of 20 pages, or an equivalent for an electronic form, echoing standard comic-book lengths). The projects submitted were fascinating, including approaches such as transmedia-adaptation

(of a local news story about a mugging), a dream-work narrative (of a writer grappling with writing a graphic novel for a public audience), and two narratives personifying punctuation marks as they reflect on their existential being. For Töpffer, this kind of playful-professional work he suggests is one of the primary advantages of multimodal narratives, including and beyond narrative reasoning with still-images.

## Sigma Tau Delta: Looking Toward the Future

by Vanna V. Cuthbertson

The English Honorary Society has made a few accomplishments this year. This past summer, Sigma Tau Delta collected over three hundred books; thanks to O'Neil Real Estate Agency, the Marietta community and Kennesaw State's English faculty. Due to the profits from the book sale, Sigma Tau Delta is able to host our annual events: induction ceremony, Shakespeare Day, English Hour, and recruitment month meet and greet.

This year, in order to recruit more members, we hosted our very first meet and greet. This event lasted about a month. Officers visited many sophomore and junior English classrooms. We would like to thank the English professors for being supportive of Sigma Tau Delta in this endeavor. On the final meet and greet day, we held a forum in which English members were encouraged to stop by, ask questions, and learn more about the society. We are proud to say that we recruited eight new members, in comparison to recruiting three new members last year.

We are very proud to announce that the English Honorary Society now has two advisors to help provide guidance and inspiration. Dr. Figueiredo, Dr. King, and officers banded together to re-invent

the way we host our annual English Hour. The English classroom has morphed into a paper and multimodal classroom. The outcome is that beginning next fall Sigma Tau Delta will now accept multimodal projects with written reflections in addition to written pieces.

You may find more information about Sigma Tau Delta's upcoming events on our bulletin board posted in the upstairs of the English building or visit our facebook page: [www.facebook.com/groups/ksusigmataudelta](http://www.facebook.com/groups/ksusigmataudelta).

Through all the ups, and downs, and governing changes, I would like to say thank you for the support, passion, and persistence that advisors, faculty, officers, and members bring to the literary table. A society is only as good as the members make it to be; but remember—it is not how good you are, but how good you want to be.





## Graduate Spotlight: Natalie Coley



Ugandan day celebrations at school. I am wearing a traditional Ugandan outfit called a Gomesi.



Baboon who stole my mango.

My time in Kampala, Uganda, has been priceless so far. With only two months left until the end of the school year and my first year as a teacher, things are already feeling bitter sweet. I work for a great school, with wonderful, welcoming co-workers and students who bring twenty different cultures into my classroom each week—talk about cultural diversity! They bring new languages, beliefs, food, and customs. One may think that teaching in a certain country only exposes you to that one culture, but in an International School you can expect to meet people of many different cultures. Additionally, during the breaks, I have had the opportunity to visit other places in and outside of Uganda, such as Kenya and some of the Ssesse Islands.

I have also had the pleasure of experiencing the Ugandan wedding ceremonies where family and friends come together to contribute money, and I have gone to funerals held in the front yard of family members' homes. The safaris have been my favorite experience. Nothing compares to seeing an elephant in its natural habitat or a lion lying tired after its meal. I've seen monkeys, have had my mangoes stolen by a baboon, and rowed down a river with fear that my boat may hit a hippopotamus and capsize.

Teaching internationally brings a world of experience I would not have had otherwise. My eyes have been opened, and it only makes me curious about what experiences there are to be had in other countries.



My students and me after coming in 2<sup>nd</sup> at the World Scholars Cup competition. We are heading to Singapore in June for the 2<sup>nd</sup> round.

## Graduate Spotlight: Kallianne Neumann

Previous MAT English Education graduate (2009), Kallianne Neumann, recently accepted admission to the University of Georgia's Ph.D. in Learning, Design, and Technology program. After graduating from KSU, Neumann moved to Portland, Oregon, to pursue a career in teaching. She has taught high school and middle school English, social studies, and technology in the Portland Metro Area. Neumann also put her experience as a Division I soccer player from the University of South Carolina to use by coaching several high school soccer teams. Additionally, she designed and developed an app sold on iTunes. The app, Diabetic Dosage: an insulin calculator, was inspired by her brother, who has Type I Diabetes.

Neumann has had the privilege of teaching middle school students one-to-one with Macbook Air laptops the last few years. She has incorporated a vast amount of technology that has allowed students to naturally inquire and build critical thinking skills through sharing new information in the form of graphic novels, blogs, VoiceThreads, Google Docs, and more. Because of her interests in the integration of technology within the K-12 realm, Neumann decided to look at doctoral programs that value the same interests. The University of Georgia quickly became a top choice because of its location, rank among other programs, and esteemed faculty members. She plans to focus her doctoral research around the integration of technology in secondary English/Language Arts classrooms.

## Graduate Spotlight: Courtney Cook

After graduating from Kennesaw State in 2007, I spent two years teaching English and Journalism at a local high school in Dunwoody, Georgia, where I focused on the teaching of human rights literature. I first encountered conversations on human rights in a Civil Rights Movement course at KSU. This course opened my eyes to a number of historical injustices that I was quite ignorant of and, in retrospect, it (in conjunction with English and education courses I was privileged enough to take at KSU) set my trajectory for the next few years. In 2009, I attended Boston University on a full academic scholarship for a Masters in African American Studies, and in the years that have followed I've been teaching in Wellesley, Massachusetts.

This past summer, I presented "Teaching the Tolerant: Breaking through boundaries of 'knowing better' to teach anti-racism and historical injustice" at the Free Minds, Free People conference in Chicago. This continued interest is evidence that those questions I began developing in that classroom at KSU have evolved and deepened over time and, ultimately, serve as the driving force behind my pursuit of doctoral work. In the fall, I'll enter a Cultural Studies in Education Ph. D. program at University of Texas, Austin, to continue exploring the ways in which historical injustices shape education in this country and beyond. It's hard to say where I'll end up, but I'm certain that I wouldn't have made it this far if it weren't for relationships I developed with inspiring and supportive professors at KSU. While I count these accomplishments as my own, I am incredibly grateful to that community, specifically Dr. Darren Crovitz, for the unending patience and support that I've received.

## The Writing Game: A Q&A with Javy Gwaltney, MAPW Grad Student of the Year

by Julia Reidy

Javy Gwaltney, this year's Kennesaw State Master of Arts in Professional Writing graduate student of the year, has several writing and publishing concerns on his mind. A third-year teaching assistant in the MAPW program, Gwaltney splits his time among his many interests, including video game journalism, fiction writing, and teaching. Gwaltney also served as editor-in-chief of the *Red Clay Review* 2012-13, and as fiction editor of *This-A Literary Magazine* from 2010-12. His work as an editor has extended to the gaming community as well.



Javy Gwaltney

I sat down with Gwaltney to discuss the freelance writing world, what makes teaching writing important, and how video games fit into our current ideas of cultural criticism.

**You graduate from the program this May. What are your aspirations after this?**

I'd like to have education-related job, so whether or not that's teaching or a writing center coordinator job, I'll be freelancing on the side.

**How come both and not just one or the other?**

I like teaching, and I don't honestly think you can make enough [just freelance writing] in the current climate with digital writing coming into its own. Journalism, and what have you, are still figuring out a way to pay writers decently. I know a lot of people do it, but I just don't think I can do it. I just like teaching, too.

**Why?**

I think its about helping students find their way, not necessarily just teaching them the proper rules of grammar, but also how to conduct yourself in college, how to become part of intellectual conversations that will get you noticed, how to contribute in a meaningful way. I just want to help them find their voice.

**I know you do a fair bit of writing outside of Kennesaw; tell me about that.**

Most of the time I'll write games criticism or personal pieces about games. I've been an editor for a small indie site or two. For example, I have dysgraphia, which is a writing disability, and I wrote a piece about how a game that has deliberately difficult controls reminded me of that. I've written guest lectures about games and education, why we should talk about the rhetoric of games in the classroom, why games are important because a lot of people consider them silly things. Often they *are* silly things and they're problematic things, but right now they make more money than the film industry. They're the new film industry, and if we say that films matter because they have an effect on our culture, then we have to say that games matter because they do the same thing.

**You're writing a novel for your capstone. What other types of projects are you involved in?**

There's a program called Twine that lets you make your own choose-your-own-adventure game; it's free software. I spent seven months making one inspired by *Alien* that's 90,000 words. It's got two female protagonists that you can play as and 10 endings. Right now I'm also working on another one, a much smaller one, and I'm

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## The Writing Game (continued from page 6)

hoping to get some of my other game community writers into it. It's a Twine project called "You Were Made for Loneliness" and it's kind of like a short story collection with a sci-fi setting.

### Do you consider writing for gaming to be any different from writing for more "reputable publications"?

Yes, but only because it's in its infancy. We're still trying to figure out how we talk about games. Whereas basically the great game writing is happening right now, no

one knows how to pay writers. The great writers, they're going to realize, "OK, I'm not getting paid for this. It's not worth the effort to spend anywhere from 10-20 hours on it before an editor gets their hands on it." We're talking about the kind of writing that would be an essay in the *New York Times* or *Rolling Stone*, the kinds of essays made with blood and sweat and ink. We're not going to have those for a while, at least until game writers can be paid decently.

## The English Department mourns the loss of three of its own:

- Ms. Ellen Taber, Senior Lecturer, taught at Kennesaw State from 2001 until her retirement in 2013. She died suddenly on April 27<sup>th</sup> while visiting her grandchildren in Seattle, Washington.
- Dr. Kellen Williams, Associate Professor of English, taught at Kennesaw State from 1996 until 2013. She died on May 13<sup>th</sup> after a long and courageous struggle with brain cancer.
- Mr. Jeremy Sparks, MAPW graduate from 2004, died suddenly at the young age of 33 from complications associated with diabetes.

**All three left us much too soon. They will be missed.**

## Faculty Accolades and Accomplishments

### Keith Botelho

Dr. Botelho's article "Credibility and Truth in Oroonoko" was published as part of a collection entitled *MLA Approaches to Teaching Behn's Oroonoko*, edited by Cynthia Richards and Mary Ann O'Donnell, for the MLA Press in New York City. Additionally, his article "'Manured by the People': Winstanley and Revolutionary Soil" will be a part of the essay collection *Soil in Early Modern Literature*, edited by Hillary Eklund, which is now under review with the University of Minnesota Press.

### Jen Dail

Dr. Dail has been awarded a \$56,000 teacher quality grant through the Kennesaw Mountain Writing Project in order to facilitate

a professional development program for several schools in Jekyll Island during the summer of 2014. She also won a National Writing Project grant in the amount of \$20,000 for this same program.

### Michelle Devereaux

Dr. Devereaux has been awarded a Summer Research Grant by the KSU College of Humanities and Social Sciences for 2014.

### Cherif Diop

Dr. Diop's article "Beyond Point Zero: Reclaiming Agency in Nawal Al Sadwi's Woman at Point Zero" has been selected to appear in an upcoming issue of *Safara: Revue Internationale de Langues et Cultures*.

## Faculty Accolades and Accomplishments

### Jim Elledge

Dr. Elledge's most recent books, *Who's Yer Daddy? Gay Writers Celebrate Their Mentors and Forerunners*, which he co-edited with David Groff for the University of Wisconsin Press, and *Henry Darger, Throwaway Boy: The Tragic Life of an Outsider Artist*, published by Overlook Press, have been chosen as finalists for the Lambda Literary Awards. *Darger* has also been nominated for a Georgia Author of the Year Award and the Randy Shilts Award for Gay Nonfiction. He also won the KSU Foundation Award for Distinguished Publication for *Darger*.

### Tony Grooms

Professor Grooms was awarded a Global Enhancement Award in order to support the travel he will need to do as he works on his current project, *Burn the House: A Novel of Black American Exile in Sweden*. He also won a Summer Research Grant from the KSU College of Humanities and Social Sciences in 2014 for work on this same project.

### Letizia Guglielmo

Dr. Guglielmo won the College of Humanities and Social Sciences award for Distinguished Scholarship and Creative Activity for her book *MTV and Teen Pregnancy*.

### David Johnson

Dr. Johnson was chosen as the KSU College of Humanities and Social Sciences Nominee for the 2014 KSU Foundation Distinguished Professor Award.

### David King

Dr. King and Christopher Martin's co-authored book of poetry, *Marcescence: Poems from Gahneesah*, was accepted for publication by Finishing Line Press.

### Kendall Klym

Professor Klym's story "The Continental" appears in *Best Stories from the Saturday Evening Post Great American Fiction Contest 2014*. You may read an excerpt and purchase the collection through Amazon.com. His story "The Dancing Bee" has also been chosen as a finalist in the Lamar York Fiction Contest sponsored by *The Chattahoochee Review*.

### Laura McGrath

Dr. McGrath was one of two faculty members chosen to represent the KSU College of Humanities on the Faculty Senate Comprehensive Distance Education Task Force.

### Bill Rice

Dr. Rice celebrated the publication of his short story collection, *The Lost Woods*, by the University of South Carolina Press. *Publishers Weekly* called it a "satisfying debut collection of 15 short stories, thematically bound by the sport of game hunting [that] features well-written, smartly paced, entertaining yarns."

### Anne Richards and Iraj Omidvar

Dr. Richards and Dr. Omidvar published their two volume work, *Muslims and American Popular Culture*, with Praeger. They have been working on the project since 2009.

### Jenny Sadre-Orafai

Professor Sadre-Orafai's first full-length book of poetry, *Paper, Cotton, Leather*, will be published by Press 53 in the fall of 2014. She has also accepted a residency at the Hambridge Center for Creative Arts and Sciences, being one of just 41 selected from the 261 applicants.

### Linda Stewart

Linda Stewart was awarded an FY 2015 Incentive Funding Award for Scholarship and Creative Activity for her work on the Reforming Arts Project. This project is directly tied to KSU's Engagement Initiative. Also, her article "A Catalyst for Change: Staging Dramatics for Preservice English Teachers through Improv, Role-play, and Collaborative Reflection" was accepted for publication in the January 2015 issue of *English Education*.

### Melanie Sumner

Professor Sumner's new book, *How to Write a Novel*, was sold to Vintage/Random House for publication in 2016.

### Ralph Wilson

Dr. Wilson's poems "Hambre" and "Elegy for My Right Eye" have been accepted by *Atlanta Review* for publication in the spring 2014 issue. Also, his poem "Knives" will be published in the winter 2014 issue of *North American Review*, while another poem, "Around Midnight," will appear in the winter 2014 issue of the prestigious journal, *Antioch Review*. His poem "Loons" was also recently accepted for publication in the *Tampa Review*.

