

FALL 2015

# The English BROADSIDE

The English Department's Newsletter  
Kennesaw State University

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## Outside Myself

Jenny Sadre-Orafai

Poet Sadre-Orafai doesn't write what she knows; instead, she writes what she doesn't know—yet. She gets outside herself.

## Invent Your Future

Valerie Mathews

Creative student entrepreneurs make the most of whatever they have right now, no matter how little. They invent their futures.

## Coming to Class & Getting (an) AIDS (Project)

Rochelle Harris et. al

When students combine expected work with unexpected collaboration, what the students gain is what the community needs.

# PLUS

The KSU Writing Center Takes it's Mission to High Schools,  
What Else Can You Do with a BA in English?, and more....

**-Fall 2015-**

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*"It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see."*

—Henry David Thoreau

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## *From the Editor:*

"It's not what you look at that matters, it's what you see," wrote Henry David Thoreau. To be able to truly see, one has to get outside oneself, which is why the fall 2015 issue of *The English Broadside* kicks off with Professor Jenny Sadre-Orafai's article, "Outside Myself." The root of every article in this issue grew from a seed of *re-seeing*. Yet, each writer envisions the subject in a unique way.

Sadre-Orafai lets us into her world of imagery and poetry in "Outside Myself." She reveals how opening our eyes to what we *can't* see just may transform our writing.

In "Invent Your Future," I explore how English students can become creative student entrepreneurs. By telling my own story, I show what it might look like to invent your own future.

Dr. Rochelle Harris and her honor students provoke us in "Coming to Class and Getting (an) AIDS (Project): Tips on Writing

with Community Partners." Through re-seeing the images of the *Art AIDS America* exhibit, these students helped create programs that transformed the way all of us see our history—and our future.

In "KSU Writing Center Takes Its Mission to High Schools," Kelsey Medlin, a senior undergraduate and writing assistant in the KSU Writing Center, reveals the incredible partnerships happening between colleges and secondary schools. She shares the KSU Writing Center's mission to bridge the gap between high school and college writing, ushering in a new way for students of all ages to view writing and writers.

Graduate student, Megan Graham, helps us reflect on our roles not only as English majors or professional writers but also as concerned and involved community members. Graham shares her volunteer experience, offers tips, and inspires us to see how our writing skills can be used for local organizations in "What Else Can You Do with a B.A. in English?"

Wrapping up this issue, we share the accomplishments of our faculty and outstanding alumni.

The fall issue of *The English Broadside* hopes to inspire students and alumni to see the broad vistas that are open to them. Furthermore, this issue seeks to help Kennesaw State University's dedicated professors and administrators to mentor their students, opening their eyes to the many possibilities that surround all of us.

On a personal note, I want to send my appreciation to the contributing writers. Thank you. It has been a pleasure speaking and working with you.

I hope you enjoy reading the fall 2015 issue of *The English Broadside*. Have a safe and fun winter break. Happy Holidays!

*Valerie Mathews*

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**The English Broadside**  
is a publication of the KSU  
Department of English.

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# -Outside Myself- Outside Myself

*By Jenny Sadre-Orafai*

Writers are empathetic people. Mostly. This ability allows them different lenses for looking at the internal and external worlds and translating what is found there. However, the “Write what you know” advice still lingers. While this instruction

certainly is useful when writing non-fiction, it can lead to disaster when writing poetry. In fact, I ask my undergraduate poets to write what they *don’t* know—yet.

When I first meet most of them, they believed all poetry is personal and all poetry is pure emoting. To

combat this, I teach them that writing what one knows not only lends to writing that can be limiting but also robs the writer of producing organic work. It, of course, deprives the reader of the writer’s discovery of what he/she didn’t already know. I tell them, *try very hard to not come to*



...every image is candy.

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*the page with an agenda.* It goes against most of the writing they have done their whole lives. From essays to e-mails, there is an agenda; there is something that calls for that writing.

This is where I tell you that I wrote poetry for so long with an agenda. I already knew how I felt and what I wanted to say before I even wrote the first line. Then, I started replacing the emotion or the idea with an image. It was only then that my writing got better. It's a little terrifying to sit down and not know where you're going with your writing. But, it's also how we write what's true. It's how we come to realize how we feel.

Perhaps one of the more recent times this happened for me was when I caught a story on the news about a high school student who abandoned a piano on a sand bar in the middle of the ocean. That surreal image stuck with me for weeks. Finally, I sat down and tried to figure out why. Then, I wrote a poem. The poem ended up being about how, as I've gotten older, I've become less inhibited and how I would never be able to leave a piano in the middle of the ocean. For me, that poem is

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one of the truest things I've written. That piano was the seed.

In helping guide my students to begin with the image, I ask that they write an ekphrastic poem. This calls for them to choose a piece of visual art and use that image as a seed. I explain that their first instinct will be to describe the art. I urge them to push past the obvious, to come to realize why they were drawn to the image initially. One way of pushing past the obvious is to put themselves in the shoes of one of the subjects in the painting or photograph.

I suggest more provocative and visually arresting photographers as examples in class. I show them Diane Arbus' work. I also show them Francesca Woodman's photography. Lately, I've been directing them to Jon Rafman's project *9-Eyes* in which all of the images have been captured from Google Street View.

I ask students to imagine what's happening off the camera, off the canvas. Write about what you can't see in the photo or painting or sculpture. Of all the prompts, this one yields the most transformation in their writing.

## I've become a collector of images.

While ekphrastic poems work for most of my students and sometimes work for me, I've also relied on other ways to get outside myself. Perhaps what works best for me is to physically get outside myself. I travel. When I'm forced outside of what's familiar, every image is candy. Every image is foreign and requires investigating.

I have become a collector of imagery, especially when I'm away from home. I make sure to take a lot of pictures and jot-down those images I'm afraid of forgetting. I've even used overheard conversation on a plane for the title of a poem. It's automatic that we constantly assess how we feel about place and home when we travel. I've had students in past semesters that went on hiking trips and came back with images woven into poems. They've told me "now I get what you were saying."

Being a part of a literary journal in an editorial position has also been a catalyst for my creativity, helping me to get outside myself. Not only am I afforded illuminating and important conversations about what good

poetry is and does with co-founding editor at *Josephine Quarterly*, Komal Mathew, but also I have the opportunity to be in the midst of poetry right now. I get to read the most current poets and see the ways in which they interpret the genre. This tends to always spark something in me.

It should be no surprise then that attending readings is also generative. It's rare for me to attend a reading whether in Atlanta or at a conference without something being shaken loose inside, without the realization that I have something to say too. Readings are another way of, again, being close to poetry right now. This isn't poetry in a 2000-page anthology. Witnessing those conversations and readings are incredibly important to my work as a poet in general.

However, perhaps the first tool I really mastered in getting outside myself was research. In a desperate attempt to avoid writing about myself, I looked to what I teach my composition students—research. I thought I would try to come to the page without my emotions or bi-

ography dictating what I would say and where the poem would go. I set out to write a chapbook (roughly twenty-five to thirty pages of poetry) about superstitions from all over the world. While I was raised in a very superstitious family, I thought if I could tap into my fascination with these beliefs, I would be able to move away from myself.

I conducted research online and bought obscure books. And, then I sat down to write one poem about each of the most image-heavy beliefs I found. My research and writing led me to write my chapbook *Avoid Disaster*, published by Dancing Girl Press. It was the first time I learned that I could write poetry that still evolved emotionally even if the poem wasn't autobiographical and even if I didn't have emotion as the catalyst. I haven't looked back.

While writing without an emotional agenda or without what I know can be anxiety producing, I never know where I'm going when I look outside myself and just write. One of the best things about reading good poetry is that you never know where you'll end up.



Photo courtesy of the poet.

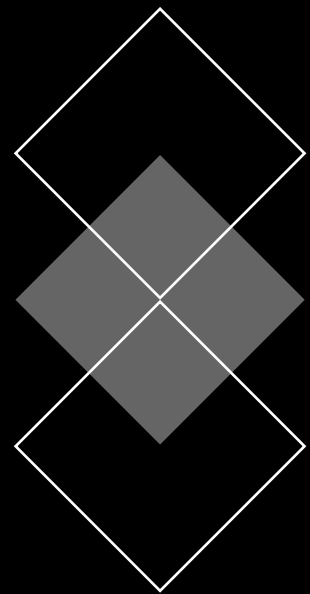
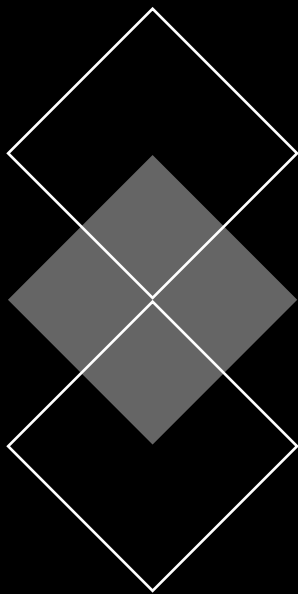
**Jenny Sadre-Orafai** is the author of *Paper*, *Cotton*, *Leather* and four chapbooks. Recent poetry has appeared in *Tammy*, *Linebreak*, *Redivider*, *Eleven Eleven*, *Thrush Poetry Journal*, *PANK*, and *Rhino*. Recent prose has appeared in *The Los Angeles Review*, *The Rumpus*, *The Toast*, and *South Loop Review*. She is co-founding editor of *Josephine Quarterly* and an Associate Professor of English at Kennesaw State University.



**-INVENT-**

# YOUR FUTURE

*by Valerie M. Mathews*



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*The best way to predict the future is to invent it.*

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Alan Kay, inventor

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Today's most creative people have at least one common characteristic with *student* entrepreneurs: they make the most of whatever they have right now—the skills, the knowledge, the talent—no matter how little. Instead of sitting around waiting for someone to give them a break, they drive their own stories forward. They are proactive—huge generators. They get out there and do. To make it in today's world after graduation, English majors may want to steal from their playbook. In other words, take their careers into their own hands. These student entrepreneurs understand that being a college student in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century means they can't trade their degree for a career. They have to create one. After all, like the famous inventor Alan Kay said, "The best way to predict the future is to invent it."

Let me tell you a story. It's hard to believe that the creative and famous actor Robert DeNiro was once a flop. He read for audition after au-

dition, like most beginning actors, but didn't get very far. After a while, he grew tired of waiting for someone to give him his big break, so he invented his own. Passionate about the novel *Raging Bull* written by Peter Savage and Joseph Carter, DeNiro decided it needed to be made into a film and *he* needed to play the lead role. He showed it to producer after producer; each turned him down. He was a nobody. Not deterred, he kept trying. His passion and persistence paid off. *Raging Bull* became one of the most critically acclaimed films ever, and best yet, it won DeNiro an Academy Award for Best Actor. Robert DeNiro invented his own future—in a way he was a student entrepreneur.

So how can English majors become creative student entrepreneurs? And what does inventing your own future even look like? Well, from experience I can say follow your passions, be persistent, cultivate naivety, take leaps (trust yourself to land on your two feet), stay outside your

comfort zone—and do do do.

When I was an undergraduate at the University of Georgia, I was passionate about art and wished Athens had an art walk like Atlanta's First Thursdays—but better. "We tried that before; it didn't work," said the government officials and art administrators. "Well," I said, "I guess I have to do it myself." So, I established The Athens Art Crawl Association and got busy. I admit to my naivety—I didn't know what I was getting myself into until I was too deep to turn back.

In the beginning, I didn't even know how to write a press release let alone produce all the types of writing needed to kick the event off. Managing 100 artists, 50 businesses, several sponsors, two bands, and one trapeze troupe became a crash course in student entrepreneurship. By our second year, over 500 people showed up for the event. After proving it can be done and done big, I handed the Athens Art Crawl over to the Athens Art Council. It's still

**N**aivety, that fabulous quality that keeps you from knowing just how unsuited you are for what you are about to do.

— Steve Martin, comedian

going today.

From my first experience as a student entrepreneur, I landed several freelance art curator positions. The writing materials I created went into my portfolio and helped me get into grad school for professional writing at Kennesaw State University. As in DeNiro's experience, passion and persistence paid off. I envisioned what didn't exist and leaped.

People will often say I'm fearless. Fearlessness does not make me leap, however, naivety does. "Despite a lack of natural ability," said comedian Steve Martin, "I did have the one element necessary to all early creativity: *naivety*, that fabulous quality that keeps you from knowing just how unsuited you are for what you are about to do." As students, we are tenderfoots. And that is our secret sauce. "If you don't know what you're doing," says Rod Judkins, author of *The Art of Creative Thinking*, "you don't know what you can't do" (130). So, just do. Learn up to a point, then jump right in. Don't over

learn in the beginning or you will never do anything. Cultivate naivety and get out there. Trust in the process; you will learn what you need to learn by doing it.

At the end of my first year in graduate school, I took another leap as a student entrepreneur. My goal: gain digital expertise and write articles. Other than blogging, I had no idea how to do it. Well, luckily I fell in love with surfing.

After watching dozens of instructional videos on the Surf Coaches YouTube channel—"How to Pop Up," "How to Turtle Roll"—I came across their video requesting help in return for a *trade*. I sent them an email volunteering to trade my services for surfing lessons. They replied, asking me to send a proposal. Having never written a proposal, I panicked for an afternoon and then got busy.

I submitted my vision for a magazine-style website dedicated to giving new surfers a motivational kick: *Surf Coaches MAG*. Did I know

how to create a website? No. Did I know how to write articles for the web? No. Did I know how to run an editorial team? No. I was a good writer and editor, however, and I knew how to get things done. The Surf Coaches response? "You have full creative license to do whatever you want." Again, panic! This *carte blanche* license fell far outside my comfort zone. Yet, being uncomfortable drove me to achieve what I would have never done if I hadn't jumped—sink or surf.

After a year of writing, editing, and surfing with the *Surf Coaches MAG*, I developed the beginning of a strong portfolio—a platform—to start a freelance writing and editing career. As a student entrepreneur, I built websites, wrote articles for online sites, and created business cards and promotional materials for artists. From my past experience, I knew that when I stepped outside my comfort zone, the path I invented would lead to more paths. And, good news, it did.



Photo licensed from Fresh Idea.

Now, as a freelance editor, I get paid to read and edit novels. Furthermore, I work as editor-in-chief of *Exit 271: Your Georgia Writers Resource*, the new digital magazine for The Georgia Writers Association. And, I'm in my final year as a graduate student.

Real learning takes place outside the comfort zone, not in it. Not knowing can be the driving force to learn, improve, and get creative. "Whatever I know how to do, I've already done," the famous sculptor Eduardo Chillida said. "Therefore, I must always do what I do *not* know how to do." Roberto Cavalli, the successful fashion designer, said, "Sometimes incompetence is useful. It helps you keep an open mind." So, where am I now? Keeping an open mind no doubt. By following my passions, envisioning my own path, and living outside my comfort zone, I predict my own future, inventing it as I go.

"We don't learn to walk by reading a book on how to walk," says Judkins. "We learn by walking, falling over, getting up and trying again. There is no right way of doing anything. So you must find your way... try to work out for yourself how to do things" (80). If you want to be a playwright, then write a play. Cast

your fellow students. Put the play on—even if it's in your own backyard. Does it matter if it flops? No. As Steve Jobs used to say, "Just ship it." Get it out there. Learn by doing. If you want to be a fiction writer, then create an online magazine. Hire volunteer student editors. Put out a call for short fiction. Publishing is easy in our digital world. Learn as you go—invent your future.

Today's student entrepreneurs can be called "make your own shelf" thinkers. They don't look at the world as a bookstore divided into neat categories into which they must fit their stories. They make their own shelves. They generate their own experiences to gain the skills and know-how that their future employers want to see on a resume. English majors who become student entrepreneurs not only build their own creative platforms but also develop soft skills that employers want, such as creative problem solving and accountability for their own actions.

Professors can help create these opportunities for students—mentoring them and providing the space for them to invent their own careers. In the process, perhaps some students will build their own creative organizations and companies, becoming lifetime student entrepreneurs.

**Valerie Mathews** works as a freelance writer, editor, and artist in Athens, Georgia. She is the editor-in-chief of *Exit 271: Your Georgia Writers Resource* sponsored by The Georgia Writers Association. Her writing has appeared in *Ginger Hill Literary Magazine*, *The Story*, *Surf Coaches MAG*, and others. She is a graduate student in Kennesaw State University's Master of Arts in Professional Writing program and a graduate assistant for the English Department.  
<https://twitter.com/ValMathews8>

*Real learning takes place*

OUTSIDE YOUR  
COMFORT  
ZONE

**COMING TO CLASS**

**& GETTING (AN) AIDS**

**(PROJECT)**

# Tips on Writing with Community Partners

by Rochelle Harris and students:  
Kami Greene, Jeremiah Murrell,  
Kirthi Rao, and Elizabeth Raps



“**E**kphrasis Inquiries,” taught in Spring 2015 by Dr. Rochelle Harris, combined the expected work of English 1102—reading, writing, and research—with the unexpected collaboration between the students and the Zuckerman Museum of Art (ZMA) on the forthcoming exhibit *Art AIDS America (AAA)*. The partnership compelled us to connect with startling images and histories even as we discovered that our experiences in English classes had prepared us to grapple with the texts and ideas in this project. And, we liked this work, we realized. As members of the class, we’d like to share our thoughts on the experience and our tips for finding and working with community partners.

**A COLLISION OF THE VISUAL**

*and the verbal*

## TIP 1

### **Rochelle says, “Ask them.”**

**A**s I am committed to partnerships between community organizations and students, I emailed the ZMA Education Director, Katy Malone, to ask if our local museum had a project to which my Honors class might contribute. She and Curator Teresa

Reeves invited my students to develop materials for visitors, from middle school through college, on an AIDS-themed exhibit of activist art. Surprised and intrigued, I realized my challenge: Could I balance the needs of the community partner and the learning objectives of 1102? Could I ask them to work with art in a writing class? Barbara Pollack’s “Document, Protest, Memorial: AIDS in the Art World,” one of the articles I assigned the class to read, describes this art era as “annihilating

a community and activating one of the most highly effective artist-driven political movements of the 20th century.” The *AAA* exhibit tackles “the deep and unforgettable presence of HIV in American art” by exploring “the whole spectrum of artistic responses to AIDS, from the politically outspoken to the quietly mournful” (“Exhibitions”). The project afforded a striking opportunity both to meet a community need and to stretch our own understandings of writing and interpretation.

## TIP 2

### **Jeremiah says, “Talk to the people at the community site.”**

**M**y initial thoughts on the project with the ZMA’s *AAA* exhibit were characterized by reservations and general skepticism of how the work produced would be valued and used, if at all, by the museum. My reservations were alleviated when Katy and Teresa came to inform the class of their vision for the exhibit and explained what they wanted us to help them achieve. They challenged us to address controversial content in a manner that could be presented to a variety of demographics without censoring or diluting the subject material. The idea of conveying a strong portrayal of the culture surrounding AIDS and HIV without tailoring the message to just one appropriate audience was definitely a strong selling point for me.

Their words not only provided direction to our project but also attributed a certain degree of credibility and purpose to the work itself. They gave us a clearer view of the finish line and a more complete conception of how our work would play into the museum’s exhibit.

Knowing that institutions and organizations in my own community were excited to partner with me and my writing to deliver stark, new points of view on our society is comforting to me, both as a writer and a student. We need writing in different mediums. The combination of young, strong-willed writers and eager community partners resulted in a fusion of new ideas and perspectives, which all of us should push to develop in the future.

## TIP 3

Kirthi says,

**“Write what they need;  
write what you know.”**

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When I received the assignment to create a program for the ZMA's AAA exhibit, I had one immediate concern. What could I possibly write that would keep a group of rambunctious high school students interested in serious and monumental pieces of our history and culture? First, my partner and I considered our main audience. We knew immediately we'd have to tone down the historical and medical jargon to more colloquial language. Second, the format of the program had to be engaging. What could be more engaging than a game?

So, we modeled our program on the popular role-playing game, *Dungeons & Dragons*, in which play-

ers create and navigate a story, encountering obstacles and embarking on quests. Third, the program had to be organized into themes. We chose five pieces to serve as distinct “themes” and created individual storylines from each of those. Finally, we pulled everything together into a single booklet.

This project allowed me to use the writing skills I'd developed in all my previous English courses. Writing the program material in essay format was impractical. We had to write so that teachers or museum directors could use them in multiple ways and settings. I learned that my skills are not limited to academics but are open to any project I encounter.

## TIP 4

**Rochelle says, “Find a foundation idea. Do some research. Read examples.”**

A poet friend introduced me to *ekphrasis*, the idea that became the foundation of the class, several years ago. *Ut pictura poesis*, Horace called it in 15 B.C., “as is painting, so is poetry” (Cheeke

21). Ekphrasis now encompasses “elements of interpretation, meditation, interrogation, comparison, criticism, and praise as well as the more traditional description and narrative” (Kaplan) in such genres as art criticism, movie reviews, personal essays, and academic texts. Ekphrastic writing lives in that space between what is seen and what is said—a collision of the visual and the verbal.

Our class began by studying Mark Doty’s *The Art of Description* as a theory of this rhetorical approach. We read numerous essayists writing about art in *Drawing Us In*, and we

wrote our own pieces in the forms of blogs, journals, and essays. Each week we discussed an image from the exhibit, brainstorming discussion questions for Jenny Holzer’s imprinted condoms or rhetorically analyzing Ann Meredith’s black-and-white photography. By midterm, we were writing program materials, drawing on models I pulled from the Getty Museum, the Holland Museum, and Gettysburg National Park. By the end of the class, the four groups drafted, revised, and finished over eighty pages of program material.

### **“Kith and Kin: Getting Personal with AIDS.”**

This 30-minute museum tour for senior citizens focuses on visual literacy techniques, considers the themes of epidemics and family, and uses specially selected music for each art piece to inspire conversation about the art.

### **“Visual Literacy and Culture: A Traveling Trunk.”**

This traveling trunk program focuses on four images in the exhibit, with accompanying activities, for seventh graders. These activities teach visual literacy skills and help students understand the culture surrounding the AIDS epidemic.

### **“Exploring Art, AIDS, America: An Activity Guide for Late High Schoolers.”**

This role-playing activity, inspired both by *Dungeons & Dragons* and a Plato-esque symposia, asks students to assume the identity of a person involved in AIDS activism in the 1980s; then, students experience and discuss different scenarios based on art pieces in the exhibit.

### **“No Turning Back: Aids is Irreversible.”**

This 45-minute museum tour for freshmen and sophomores in college focuses on such themes as the vulnerabilities and stigmas associated with an HIV/AIDS diagnosis as well as the historical context of the 80s. Tour guides wear costumes, and AIDS awareness is emphasized.

## TIP 5

**Kami says, “Write like you mean it.**

**Find a way to mean it. Connect.”**

I really enjoyed working with the ZMA on the *Art AIDS America* exhibit. It was interesting and challenging to write about art with such a difficult context and deep, personal meaning. The weight of *AAA* came down on us more than the other images that we wrote about on our blogs because the art and issue are still so relevant. In fact, in Robert Sherer’s *Hookups*, the locust images painted with HIV-positive and HIV-negative blood can be very disturbing. It’s easy to write about something nice that has a gentle significance. Looking at this art, though, and seeing blood as the material to create a grotesque masterpiece, posed a

challenge.

Having to study the images’ details, draw out a meaning, then shorten it to just a few sentences for the reader was amazing—one of the most challenging projects I’ve ever done. While drafting my group’s tour script, I had a difficult time finding any information about Deborah Kass’s *Still Here*. However, I did find her email on her personal blog, so I sent her a message. I didn’t expect a response, but she wrote the next day with all the information I needed. We even had a short conversation about her piece. Without the museum’s collaboration, I never would have had these experiences.

## TIP 6

**Elizabeth says, “Know your audience and know yourself.”**

I was enthusiastic to partner with the Zuckerman Museum of Art. It makes sense to me that written word and visual art have the potential not merely to coexist but also to bring out the best in each other. Good writing can do more than convey thoughts and messages between persons and groups; it can profoundly and emotionally impact its audience. However, I also

understood why it was necessary to develop age-specific programs: many of the images were both incredibly powerful and incredibly difficult, like Ann Meredith’s *AIDS—Judgment Has Come* photograph with its 1989 billboard designed to condemn GLBTQ viewers.

It took me until we were almost done with the project to realize why my composition and writing class

had been given the opportunity to assist with interpreting such art and conveying the themes of the exhibit. Accompanying art with thought-provoking writing was not just a way to help diverse individuals understand work they might not usually approach; it was also a way to urge those individuals to gain knowledge they may not otherwise have thought pertained to them.

## WE SAY,

### "Give connecting with the community a try"

**R**ochelle says, "Call up your local historic sites and museums. Just in this area, we have New Echota, Etowah, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center, The Southern Railroad Museum, The Human and Civil Rights Center, the Atlanta History Center, the Marietta History Museum, the High Museum, and the Booth Museum. Look for the Education Director, a public relations person, or, if it's a smaller site, go straight to the supervisor or director."

**Dr. Rochelle Harris's** work appears in *Pedagogy*, *The Writing Instructor*, *sympleke*, *Writing on the Edge*, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, and *Fourth Genre*, among others. She has taught writing and literature at Kennesaw State University for six years. Her co-authors—Jeremiah, Kami, Elizabeth, and Kirthi—are students in the KSU Honors Program and were members of her Spring 2015 honors writing course.

**K**irthi says, "Shakespeare's Tavern or local school productions are great ideas." "Think music," says Elizabeth, "like local bands that need people to write reviews." "Try the Chattahoochee Nature Center, the Tellus Museum, the Atlanta Botanical Gardens, or Fernbank," says Kami. "Local corporations and businesses may be interested," Jeremiah says, "like Habitat for Humanity, the Atlanta Dream Center, and other non-profits."



**C**ommunity partners are out there, ready and willing to collaborate. What we can gain—new knowledge, new ideas, new connections, new experiences—they can offer. What we already know—reading, writing, interpreting, research—is what they need.



Photo courtesy of the artist.

**Sweet Williams**, 2013. (HIV- and HIV+ blood on paper, 24 × 18 inches framed)  
by Robert Sherer <http://www.robertsherer.com/>

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# KSU WRITING CENTER

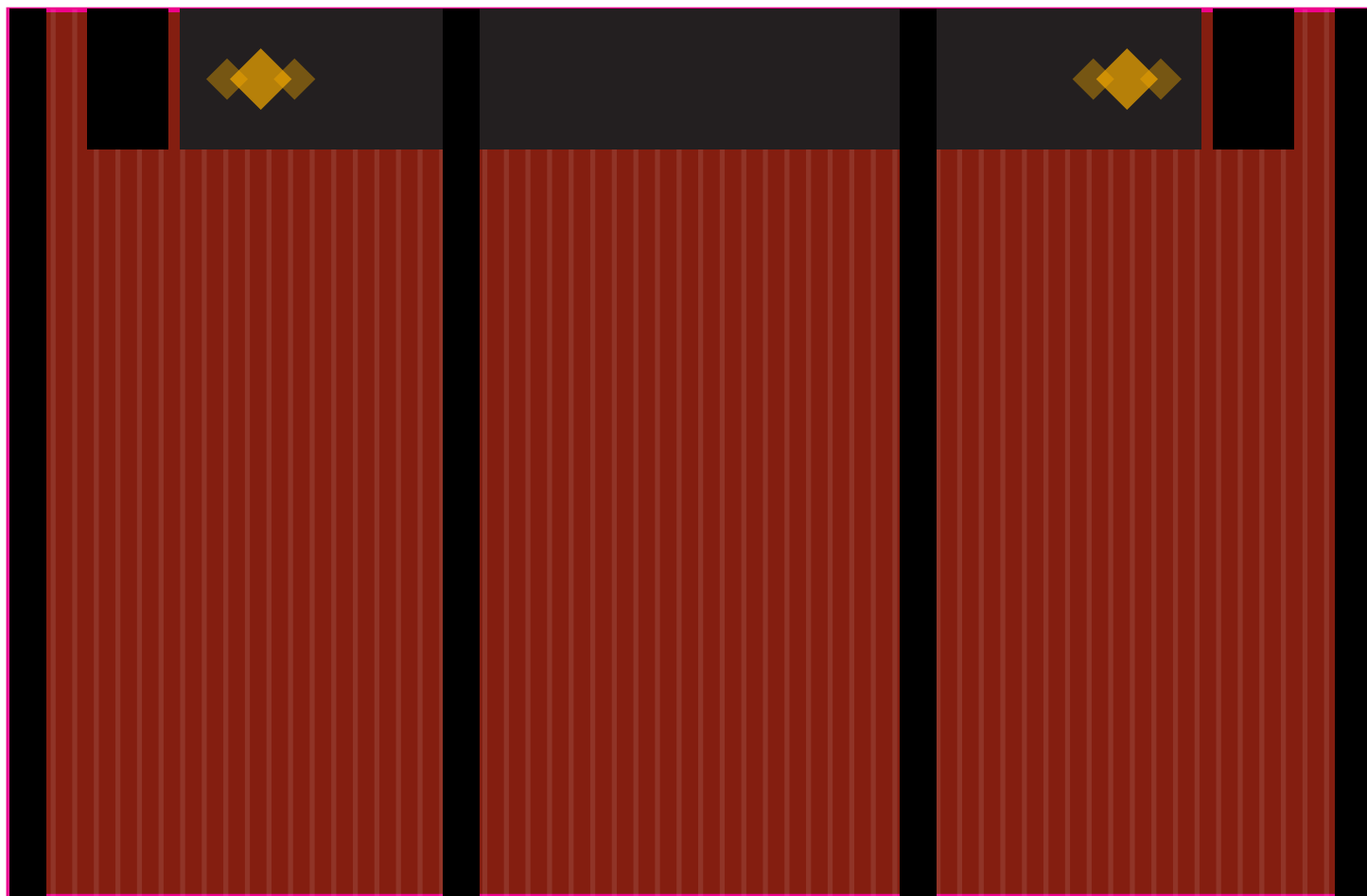
## Takes its Mission to High Schools

*by Kelsey Medlin*

Writing centers are not just for colleges anymore. In the past twenty years, interest in the role of writing centers in secondary education has grown. With that in mind, the Kennesaw State University Writing Center has made supporting high

school writing centers part of its community engagement work. The KSU Writing Center has worked with two different high schools this year (one in Cherokee County and one in Fulton County) to help them establish student-staffed writing centers. In fact, one of the high

school teachers starting the Etowah High School's Writing Across the Curriculum Center in Cherokee County is a graduate of our department (English Ed) and one of the KSU's Writing Center's former tutors. Thus, the KSU Writing Center has inspired its alumni and current



# The KSU Writing Center seeks to bridge the gap between high school and college writing.

writing assistants to bridge the gap between college and high school writing in order to foster growth and change the way students of all ages view their craft.

The KSU Writing Center was busier than usual on September 10, 2015, when it hosted four teachers and thirty-five high school students from Riverwood International Charter School in Fulton County. The students arrived eager to observe and work with members of the KSU Writing Center staff in preparation for the opening of Riverwood's own peer-to-peer writing center.

Riverwood teacher Christy Toledano first contacted KSU Writing Center coordinator Milya Maxfield last January to discuss her dream of establishing a student-led writing center at the Fulton County public high school. After securing approval for a fall 2015 launch of the Raider Writing Center, Toledano and Dr. Mary Lou Odom, director of the KSU Writing Center, planned the September visit. The KSU Writing Center staff collaborated to organize a full day of training for the high school students, who rotated through a variety of activities including observing instructional

sessions, talking to veteran KSU writing assistants, playing games to brush up on comma usage, and participating in role-playing exercises that modeled writing center sessions.

While hosting high school students for a day was a new experience for the faculty and staff of the KSU Writing Center, supporting the development of writing centers at the secondary level was not. Odom and Rachel Greil, the Center's assistant director, have long encouraged the development of high school writing centers and have led professional development workshops for Cobb County educators on how to establish and maintain a successful writing center. Weeks before the Riverwood visit, Greil and Odom were guests at Cherokee County's Etowah High School to share advice and answer questions at the first staff meeting of the school's brand new Writing Across the Curriculum Center. At the invitation of current Etowah English teacher Shaina Anderson, a KSU English Education alumna and former KSU Writing Center writing assistant, Odom and Greil discussed how student tutors can talk about writing in ways that fos-

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ter an environment of trust with students who may experience writing anxiety or difficulty.

After their visit to KSU, Riverwood student reflected on their experience in handmade “thank you” cards to the KSU Writing Center faculty and staff. Tutor Madison McConell wrote, “It was clear that [the KSU Writing Center staff] care so much about the students who come in and want them to succeed.” Senior Kenyatta Robinson admitted, “I was very afraid of having people rely on me, making me feel as if I had to know everything about writing. Because of everyone [at the KSU Writing Center] sharing their tips, personal experiences, and advice, it restored faith in myself.”

Ultimately, that’s what a writing center is all about: building confidence in writers. While writing centers certainly work to improve students’ writing abilities, they also “play a role in helping the entire university or school community understand that effective writing is both essential and *possible* for everyone,” according to

Dr. Odom. She notes that the most important advice the KSU Writing Center staff members felt they imparted to Riverwood’s student tutors was the necessity of “making often nervous student writers feel comfortable so that meaningful conversations about writing can begin.”

Riverwood is definitely succeeding in making their writing center a safe zone for writers. In the three weeks following their opening on September 18th, the Riverwood Writing Center tutored 256 students, and “we are seeing an increase in student visits to our center each week,” said Toledano. Like the KSU Writing Center, Riverwood employs writing-friendly activities and events to engage their students in more than just tutoring sessions. This Halloween they adapted the KSU Writing Center’s “Writing Isn’t Scary” event into their own “Writing Isn’t Spooky” and called for students to participate in haiku and costume contests.

The influence the KSU Writing Center has on high schools in the community continues to grow. If

you are interested in getting involved in high school writing centers, the KSU Writing Center suggests thinking about what you believe makes a writing center a writing center and how you want to get involved. If you wish to start your own writing center, get in contact with a local high school principal, then begin making connections and asking questions. Express your interest in helping and inspiring writers to grow in the writing process. Another helpful resource is the *Bedford Guide for Writing Tutors* where you can discover effective techniques and tools for tutoring. Finally, feel free to contact [writingcenter@kennesaw.edu](mailto:writingcenter@kennesaw.edu) and visit the KSU Writing Center’s website (<http://writingcenter.kennesaw.edu>) for resources and any questions you may have on developing secondary writing centers.

Together we can bridge the gap between college and high school writing, ushering in a new way students of all ages view writing and writers.



Owl illustrated by Jonathan Maxfield.

**Kelsey Medlin** is an Undergraduate senior in English. She started working at the KSU Writing Center in February of 2014. She also works for Peachtree Publishers in Atlanta as their publicity and editorial intern. With a passion in theatre, she is currently developing her second play, *A Little Game of War*, for the KSU Theatre Department's 10-Minute Play Festival in 2016. She is the founder of the writing and editing blog, *Edit Me Perfect*, where she encourages writers of all kinds to craft their passion into the perfect career through discipline and technique.





# -What Else Can You Do With A- B.A. in English?

*by Megan Graham*

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*S*o what are you going to do with a degree in English? Teach? If I had a dollar for each time I heard that question, I would be a rich woman. People assume the only two career paths that exist for us English folk are teaching and professional poverty—unless you're J.K. Rowling.

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With our mastery of analysis and critique, we become pros at inventing quick and sassy retorts to this question, my favorite being “Yell Shakespeare at strangers on the sidewalk.” However, it does become a question that requires serious reflection. In order to find gainful

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employment after graduation, our answer needs to be well articulated.

In undergrad, I thankfully had professors and mentors who emphasized the value of transferring the skills I acquired in courses to work outside of academia. Through these experiences, I was able to intern

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# *To be or not to be? That is the question—*

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with a local non-profit and put those skills to good use. During my internship, I learned that a non-profit must tell a story to convince community members to support it.

Telling an organization's story is putting basic rhetoric to work: combine ethos, pathos, and logos into a format that appeals to the organization's donor base. Isn't that what we do each time we sit down to write an essay or a discussion post? At the root of these assignments is the skill of communicating effectively to make an argument. What's the message a non-profit group needs to communicate? It must show that its cause is the most worthy of the person's valuable time, talent, and treasures.

Although the writing I created was largely small pieces, such as press releases and brochures, it got me to conceive of how I could articulate the value of my English degree. I knew that I wanted to work with a non-profit organization post-graduation. However, I also knew that it is incredibly difficult to find a job in the field. So, I worked in various

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administrative jobs that paid the bills and gave me valuable skills—project management, database management, and basic knowledge of Excel (trust me, you need to know Excel). These skills I can use in any job.

Fast forward a few years, and I find myself in an entry-level job at a local non-profit to support me through graduate school. Initially, I just wanted a desk job, a pay-the-bills-kind of job. However, while working for this non-profit's fundraising department, I learned quickly that I could volunteer my skills to help out some of my coworkers and do work that I enjoyed, like revising appeal letters or crafting social media posts. It was a welcome reprieve from the academic, theoretical work I was completing in my courses, and it was refreshing to write for a new audience outside of my professors.

It's no surprise that most non-profits need help to maintain their quality of services. Whether it's environmental advocacy, a homeless shelter, or an organization that helps human trafficking victims, most non-profits use volunteers in some



capacity. In my experience, people who work in this field are incredibly committed and work tirelessly for their cause, which leads them to take on more projects without an increase in pay.

You see, a non-profit has to be mindful of allocating money for salaries, so it usually can't afford to have a full-time communications person to write the stories that garner support. This is where ambitious English majors can help. If students can be consistent volunteers who support an organization through writing, then they'll be using their skills to not only serve a cause but also gain practical experience. It never hurts to have more work experience related to writing.

It may not seem like it, but even a small organization desperately needs writers. Usually a non-profit creates brochures in-house that explain its services and mission. These communications are likely in need of an update. If writers have more time to devote, they can volunteer to create a quarterly newsletter for the organization to send out to its constituents, highlighting its amazing work. Creating newsletters, as well as writing event programs, web content, or press releases for anything from new funding to upcoming events, are fantastic writing samples for our portfolios.

I have heard from many students

that they would love to be able to volunteer or intern with an organization, but their schedule with classes, working, and other commitments prohibit them from going into an office during standard business hours. Guess what? We can write from anywhere!

I had an intern who helped me put together our monthly newsletter over the summer. Because she was so passionate and dedicated to the organization, she continued to work with me after she went back to school and couldn't come into the office. Truth be told, I got some of my best written work done during the snow storms this past January because I was at home, focused on writing without my office phone ringing and all the other office distractions.

In my work with volunteers, I have found that many are passionate about an organization's mission, but they don't know how to channel that passion. Unfortunately, most non-profit organizations lack the resources to have a staff person solely devoted to managing and cultivating a volunteer's skillset. However, here are some tips to cultivate our volunteer skills and get a foot in the door at an organization.

### **Be transparent and honest about availability.**

It is a wonderful thought that instead of watching Netflix, we could devote our free time to a worthy cause. It's a great intention but really not practical for most students. Those in non-profits understand that students are juggling a lot of commitments so they do try to accommodate volunteers where they can. But if we can use our time wisely, make it valuable, then the organization will be more than happy with the resulting product.

### **Be understanding and follow-up if necessary.**

I have never known a non-profit where staff did not juggle many responsibilities and have emergencies arise. When grant reports are due or an event is that weekend, potential volunteers may not get the quickest response. Yes, I know that it makes no sense; after all, we'll write for free. Shouldn't that make their jobs easier? Well, yes and no. Training a volunteer to know the organization and its basic programs and functions takes time.

Keep in mind that non-profits are used to having inquiries from volunteers who never follow through. This is why articulating our availability and skills to an organization is so important; it shows that we have taken the time to think about our volunteer position as a real commit-



ment and not just a way to pat ourselves on our backs. I typically give a week for a gentle follow-up. I send an e-mail acknowledging that they are busy but that I am still interested in helping.

### **Examine what is already in place, and don't reinvent the wheel.**

This is a hard one for me. As with most English majors, a terrible brochure hurts my soul. I know that it is well within my skill-set to create a far more compelling brochure that does not remind people of Windows 98. However, if we are asked to re-

do something that is already existing and the organization does not seem receptive to a complete overhaul, we shouldn't push it too hard.

At the same time, looking through these materials will give us a better idea of what messages the organization wants to communicate to its constituents. Recurring themes or phrases can easily be integrated into any project that we create to help keep the the organization's brand cohesive. Showing this kind of initiative proves to the organization that we took the time to examine the current situation and demonstrate how it can be communicated in a new way.

### **Don't take feedback too personally.**

Taking things personally is something I have seen many writing students struggle with and not just in a non-profit environment. If we want a career in writing, we have to learn that some people just will not like our style. I have seen many writers become too precious and territorial over their writing, but people don't want to work with someone who is going to argue about every single suggested edit. If we learn how to accept feedback gracefully, then we will be far ahead of our peers.

Whether it's environmental advocacy or a homeless shelter, most non-profits use volunteers— and most need good writers.

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**Remember to keep copies of projects. If it's something shareable, then share it!**

Volunteers can be an organization's greatest resource when it comes to getting the word out. On social media, we can share an invitation to an event we created or share a newsletter highlighting the organization's successes. It will help get the word out to new people. We can take advantage of our friends' lists, even if they include acquaintances we haven't seen in years.

We should clear with the organi-

zation first before using anything we creat for a portfolio. Some organizations may not allow volunteer writers to post it directly online but password protect the information instead. This should not be a huge issue, but it is something to keep in mind.



As students, it may be difficult for us to imagine what kind of work we can do with a degree in English. At times, it's too overwhelming to even enjoy what we're studying when

we're faced with discouraging people who say we will never be able to get a "real job." Learning how to articulate our worth and transferrable skills is a valuable asset that will serve us well after leaving Kennesaw State University. Our degree can take us in a wide variety of directions, but we have to be willing to put in the work. Volunteering is a wonderful way to not only fine tune the skills we learned as an English major but also discover new career avenues we didn't know existed.

So, what will you say the next time someone asks, *What are you going to do with a B.A. in English?*

**Meg Graham** is a graduate student in the Master of Arts in Professional Writing program, focusing on Applied Writing. She earned her bachelors degree in English and Women's Studies, with a certificate in Interdisciplinary Writing, at the University of Georgia. In addition to her graduate studies, she spends her time as non-profit Jane-of-all-trades, excelling at communications, fundraising, and volunteer coordination. She works as a graduate assistant at the Women's Resource and Interpersonal Violence Prevention Center.



Photo courtesy of the writer.

*Are you inspired to help out your local organizations? Listed below are a few organizations that would love to have good writers on board.*



info@choicesforkids.org  
[www.choicesforkids.org](http://www.choicesforkids.org)

C.H.O.I.C.E.S.



The mission of C.H.O.I.C.E.S. is to provide a parent and child resource center for the clinically diagnosed and at-risk children of obesity. The Center promotes weight management and lifestyle changes through nutrition education, peer socialization, physical activity, and community involvement.

ENDURING  
HEARTS



Enduring Hearts funds important and innovative research to increase the longevity of organ transplants, and improve the quality of life for transplant recipients. Enduring Hearts has a strong preference towards research that benefits pediatric heart transplant recipients.

info@enduringhearts.org  
[www.enduringhearts.org](http://www.enduringhearts.org)

Good Mews offers an alternative to traditional animal shelters in the Metro-Atlanta area by providing a no-kill, cage-free haven for homeless, abused, or abandoned cats until placing them in permanent, loving homes. Good Mews promotes public awareness regarding the value of pets, animal welfare, pet overpopulation, and quality human-animal companionship through education and outreach programs.



goodmewsvolunteer@gmail.com  
[goodmews.org](http://goodmews.org)

GOOD MEWS



# Accomplishments & Accolades

## **Dr. Keith Botelho**

Dr. Keith Botelho's article "The Beasts of Belmont and Venice" appears in the book *Ecological Approaches to Early Modern English Texts: A Field Guide to Reading and Teaching* (Ashgate, 2015). This article is a portion of the first chapter of his book-in-progress, *Little Beasts: Cultures of the Hive in Renaissance England*.

Dr. Botelho has also accepted a position on the Editorial Board of *The Shakespeare Newsletter*, founded in 1951, a bi-annual publication that reaches more than 1,000 subscribers in 37 countries.

## **Dr. Martha Bowden**

Bucknell University Press will publish Dr. Martha Bowden's new book, *Descendants of Waverly: Romancing History in Contemporary Historical Fiction*. Dr. Bowden worked on this book with help from a CETL Faculty Renewal Grant. This is her third book.

## **Ms. Anne Corbitt**

Ms. Anne Corbitt's novel, *The Rules Of Lying*, has won the Nilsen Literary Prize for a First Novel. It will be published by Southeast Missouri State University in the fall of 2016.

## **Dr. Allison Davis**

Dr. Allison Davis is the new assistant director of composition. She will work with Dr. Letizia Guglielmo, who will assume the duties of interim director of composition in July.

## **Dr. Michelle Devereaux**

Dr. Michelle Devereaux is the English Department's nominee for the BOR Award for Distinguished Work in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

## **Dr. Dr. Cherif Diop**

Dr. Cberif Diop and Dr. Dominica Dipio co-authored and published "Art's Subtle Liberating Ways: Violence Trauma and Agency in Fanta Regina Nacro's *The Night Of Truth* (2004)." The article appears in the *Journal of African Cinemas*.

## **Sergio Figueiredo**

Parlor Press will publish Dr. Sergio Figueiredo's French-to-English translation of Rudolphe Töpffer's essays on the rhetorical invention of graphic novels. The book will also contain an article-length introduction in which Dr. Figueiredo will argue that Töpffer's graphic novels are one part of his wider media theory. The book will be part of Parlor Press's series *Prospects in Visual Rhetoric*.

## **Mr. Kyle Jones**

Kyle Jones, a 2007 graduate of the English Department's English Education program, is a 2015 Clendenin Scholar. This top KSU honor comes with \$20,000/yr. plus a full tuition waiver for up to three years in the Ed. D program. His profile is at the link below:

<https://web.kennesaw.edu/clendenin/2015-clendenin-scholars#kj>

Mr. Jones was also honored this year as the 2014-15 outstanding graduate student in Secondary English Education in the Education Specialist degree program. He lists English Education professors Dr. Jennifer Dail and Dr. Ryan Rish as major influences in his graduate success.

## **Dr. David King**

Dr. David King's film, *Uncommon Grace: The Life of Flannery O'Connor*, will soon be released on DVD and to other media outlets. This is a film that Dr. King has been working on for two years. It is the only full-length documentary ever made on O'Connor. Furthermore, it will feature access to information never seen before. Dr. King is interviewed in the film as well as O'Connor biographers William Sessions and Brad Gooch. Dr. King will screen the film at an upcoming English Hour.

## **Dr. Kendall Klym**

Dr. Kendall Klym published and/or received recognition for a number of short stories:

- "Pavlova" was published in Hunger Mountain.
- "A Professional Male Ballet Dancer in Twelve Steps" won first place in the short story category of the Ad Astra Arts Festival.
- "The Belly Dance" was a finalist in the 2015 International Reynolds Price Short Fiction Contest.
- "Tinker Bell Laundry Detergent" was one of the top five finalists in the Ghost Story Supernatural Fiction Award.
- "The Dance Quiz" was a finalist in the 2015 Unclassifiabes Contest.

## **Dr. Iraj Omidvar**

Voice of America Persia (VOAP) interviewed Dr. Iraj Omidvar for an hour on October 12th. Nobel Prize Laureate Shirin Ebadi, a well-known Iranian lawyer and women's and human rights activist, was also a part of the interview as was an Iranian journalist and activist living in exile in Europe. The topic under discussion was the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to the Tunisians who participated in the recent revolution. Dr. Omidvar and Dr. Anne Richards, his partner, served as Fulbright lecturers in Tunisia in 2008. Also, under the auspices of PBS Frontline, Dr. Omidvar has published an extended series of comparisons between the Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the recent Tunisian Revolution.

## **Dr. Andy Plattner**

*Offerings from a Rust Belt Jockey*, Andy Plattner's recently published novel, has been awarded the Dr. Tony Ryan Book Award. For more on the award, go to the following website:

<http://www.bloodhorse.com/horse-racing/articles/91298/plattner-wins-dr-tony-ryan-book-award>

## **Dr. Tammy Powell**

Dr. Tammy Powell has co-authored “Increasing Student Engagement and Assessing the Value of an Online Collaboration Tool: The Case of VoiceThread,” an article that appears in the current edition of the *Journal Of Interactive Technology And Pedagogy*. To read the article, follow this link:

<http://jitp.commons.gc.cuny.edu/increasing-student-engagement-and-assessing-the-value-of-an-online-collaboration-tool-the-case-of-voicethread/>

## **Dr. Bill Rice**

Dr. Bill Rice received a Georgia Author of the Year Award in the short story category for his 2014 book, *The Lost Woods: Stories*. An excerpt from the book was published in the November/December 2015 issue of the *South Carolina Wildlife Magazine*.

## **Dr. Anne Richards and Dr. Iraj Omidvar**

Praeger invited Dr. Anne Richards and Dr. Iraj Omidvar to propose a book on the topic of transnational Muslim immigration. After providing a successful proposal, the two signed a contract with Praeger for a book tentatively entitled *Muslim Immigration in America and Europe*.

## **Ms. Melanie Sumner**

Random House published Melanie Sumner’s novel, *How To Write A Novel*. For a review of the novel, click on the following link:

<http://www.perimeternorthlifestyle.com/2015/07/28/kennesaw-state-teacher-pens-metafiction-masterpiece/>

## **Dr. Griselda Thomas**

Dr. Griselda Thomas will become Coordinator for AADS in July. She will continue to teach classes for us as her schedule allows. Congratulations to Griselda on this important accomplishment!!

## **Ms. Alyssa Varhol**

Alyssa Varhol, a recent graduate of the English Department, has just been awarded a Fulbright fellowship to study in England.

With the support of the Fulbright Partnership Award, Ms. Varhol will be studying for a M.Sc. in Psychological Research Methods at the University of Sheffield from September 2015-September 2016. During her Fulbright year, Alyssa will synthesize topics from her KSU undergraduate degrees in Psychology and English by completing a research dissertation (thesis) on children’s pragmatic language development under the supervision of Dr. Danielle Matthews.

## **Ms. Yvonne Wichman**

After being nominated for outstanding alumni by the English Department, Ms. Yvonne Wichman was selected as a 2015 CHSS Distinguished Alumni. She was also one of three nominees from the College for the university-level award.

The English Broadside is a publication  
of the KSU Department of English.

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