

English Broadside

English Department Newsletter

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Professor Tony Grooms Researches American Vietnam War Resisters in Sweden for New Novel

by Melissa Roberson

“Kennesaw’s been very good to me,” Professor Tony Grooms mused at his English Hour presentation in October of 2014. With 20 years under his belt as a member of KSU faculty, Grooms presented the highlights of the research for his new novel, *Burn the House*.

His journey began when he visited an archive in Sweden to research American War Resisters (ARS), who found refuge in Sweden during Vietnam. Initially, he only found one private archive to visit; however, while he was pouring over the small collection of items in the library’s catalog, the librarian approached him about a new, uncatalogued collection that had just come in to their possession. Within this second box, Grooms came across a slip of paper with the words “Deserters are heroes” written on one side and “Deserters are slob” written on the other. This simple set of opposing declarations set Grooms on a fascinating road that culminated in his writing *Burn the House*.

Between 1967 and the last years of the Vietnam war, approximately 1000 young Americans from the ages of 18 and 30, found themselves taking refuge in Sweden. The Swedish Prime Minister at the time offered “an asylum of sorts,” according to Grooms, where the government allowed the deserters and resisters to stay in Sweden as long as they learned Swedish, got a job, and agreed not to do drugs. For

agreeing to these terms, they would receive \$20 a week, but were left on their own to find shelter as there was a substantial housing shortage in the country.



Terry Whitmore, circa 2004

One of the major members of the resistance group, and a significant inspiration in the direction of Grooms’ research, was Terry Whitmore. Whitmore wrote a memoir about his experience during the war and eventual asylum in Sweden. A chance meeting with a young man whose history teacher brought Whitmore’s autobiography back in to print in the late 1990s led to a friendship between Grooms and Whitmore that lasted until his death in 2007.

Whitmore joined the Marines in the 1960s and deployed to Vietnam shortly after. He obtained significant injuries trying to save a lieutenant in his platoon. He received a Purple Heart from President Johnson for his service during this fight. After convalescing in

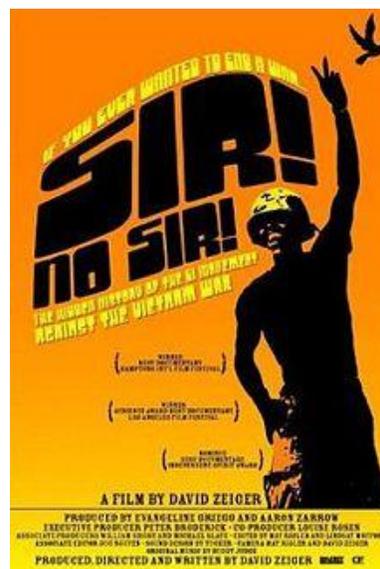
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Professor Tony Grooms (continued from page 1)

Japan, Whitmore thought he would be sent back to his home in Memphis; however, he received orders to again return to service in Vietnam. Whitmore refused to go back and arranged to desert the military through an anti-war group in Japan. They managed to arrange for him to go to Sweden by way of the Soviet Union.

Though Whitmore would claim to not be a political man, his desertion and life would become an important symbol for the resistance in Sweden. Though the resisters saw themselves as heroes, their society saw them as cowards and “slobs.” Yet, here was a man rewarded for his bravery in service to the military who committed the political act of desertion. This led Grooms to the research question his novel set about trying to answer: How does an African American from the Jim Crow South adapt to a predominantly white, socialist country?

Grooms ended the hour by reading a passage from the novel inspired by this question based on his extensive research on the subject. The excerpt describes the experience of his main character, an African American man from the deep south deserting his military post, in registering with the Swedish government when he arrived. When asked by the government repre-



Poster for documentary film *Sir! No, Sir!*, which includes interviews with Terry Whitmore

sentative why he came to Sweden as a deserter, the character turns this over in his mind, finally asserting to himself that “His country didn’t want him. The U. S. deserted me first.”

Though the novel, *Burn the House*, has not yet been scheduled for publication, Grooms is currently working with an editor for possible acquisition of the work to a publisher. For further information on Professor Tony Grooms and his previously published works, please visit www.anthonygrooms.com.

The KSU Writing Center Explores Revision in 140 Characters

by Milya Maxfield

In general, students are hesitant to revise. The mere suggestion of migrating paragraphs and ripping up pages can bring about howling and gnashing of teeth. But what if they heard the same advice from some of their favorite authors?

Our premise was simple: Contact some of our favorite authors on Twitter, ask them for advice about their writing process, and wait for their responses.

Writing assistant and MAPW student Alex Genetti sent out the following tweet

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The KSU Writing Center (continued from page 2)

on November 12, 2014 from the KSU Writing Center's Twitter handle (@ksuwc): "Our students do not see the value of revising, but they love your writing. Do you have any advice/tips we could relay? Thanks!"

Within moments, we had responses from several noteworthy authors.

Jodi Picoult, author of such bestselling novels as *My Sister's Keeper*, wrote, "I do about seven drafts before an editor even sees the novel. Revising is KEY!"

Wil Wheaton, who may be best known for his role on the television series *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, but who also authored a collection of memoirs and writes blogs, responded, "Rewriting (or revising) is the best part! It's easier, and more rewarding, to fix a page than it is to fill it."

Bill Prady, whose words have entertained millions from the mouths of the actors on the television show *The Big Bang Theory*, wrote, "Our scripts are revised and rewritten dozens of times. We even revise while we're filming. Writing is rewriting."

And finally, one of our very own heroes at The KSU Writing Center, Mignon Fogarty, better known as "Grammar Girl," replied, "Only that nobody's first draft is the best they can do. I know fiction writers who revise 15+ times. It's what serious writers do."

With such positive results and such gracious responses, we plan to expand our reach and ask more from our favorite personalities on Twitter to contribute their wisdom. We hope that students will listen to celebrated and successful writers, even when they are telling them that they may have to revise that draft...six more times.

Spotlight on Writing Studies and Professional Writing

by Laura McGrath

It's an exciting time for writing in the English department, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the university as a whole. Undergraduate writing courses are filled with students who recognize that writing proficiency is a necessary and marketable skill, who are eager to hone their craft, and who take pleasure in, as Truman Capote phrased it, "the inner music that words make." Professional writing courses offer students opportunities to study professional editing, workplace writing, digital rhetoric, argumentative writing, and careers in writing, as well as poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, environmental writing, playwriting, and writing for film and television. Our writing faculty—accomplished scholars and practitioners and active, published writers—are committed to preparing students



to be critical thinkers, careful researchers, and creative and capable writers who are able to respond effectively to contemporary writing tasks and opportunities.

The professional writing minor mirrors the concentrations available to students in the Master of Arts in Professional Writing (MAPW) program, housed in the English department—applied, composition

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and rhetoric, and creative writing—and some students who minor in professional writing as undergraduates go on to enroll in the MAPW program. For example, current MAPW students and teaching assistants Carolyn Buonomo and Elizabeth Visscher were Professional Writing minors as undergraduates.

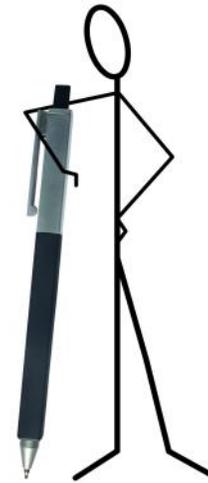
Carolyn explains the value of the minor: “The professional writing minor was very valuable because it allowed me to take classes that were representative of all that the field of Professional Writing encompasses. I was able to take both applied and creative courses, and these courses sparked my interest in studying Professional Writing more in-depth at the graduate level. I took a professional editing course that equipped me with skills that I’ve been able to use when editing my own work, and ever since taking the course I’ve been doing freelance editing, particularly for dissertation students.”

For Elizabeth, an artist, the minor complemented her degree and opened up new possibilities: “The professional writing minor at KSU allowed me to pair my BFA with my passion for writing, as well as introduced me to creative writing. Now, as a graduate student studying creative writing, I’m grateful for the foundation I received through the professional writing minor and happy that I am pursuing this field of study in my graduate studies.”

Coursework in professional writing prepares students to enter not only the MAPW program, but also a wide variety of graduate programs and careers.

The Writing Studies Committee and the Professional Writing Minor

Writing studies as a discipline investigates writing, “its production, its circulation, its uses, its role in the development of individuals and societies, and its learn-



ing by individuals, social collectives, and historical cultures” (Bazerman, “The Case for Writing Studies as a Major Discipline”). Such investigation regularly occurs in our classrooms and in the scholarship of English department faculty.

This academic year, a Writing Studies committee formed in order to address, in a more coordinated way, matters of importance to faculty who teach undergraduate professional writing courses in the English department. As chair of this committee, I’m grateful for the opportunity to work with my colleagues to enhance and grow professional writing offerings. So far, we’ve written a new description of the minor and are moving forward with an online professional writing minor option that will be attractive to a variety of students, including those enrolled in the university’s online degree programs.

Writing Initiatives and Resources

Writing studies faculty support writing within the department, college, and university in a number of ways. For example, within the department, writing studies faculty bring guest speakers to campus and participate in knowledge sharing opportunities like the First-year Composition Program’s professional development workshops, introduced by director Dr. Beth Daniell, and the department’s “Tech Tips and Bits” workshop series, estab-

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lished by Dr. Letizia Guglielmo. Writing studies faculty have collaborated with others in the department to establish a culture of support for digital writing and innovative pedagogical uses of technology. In partnership with the KSU Writing Center, Dr. Sergio Figuerdo is preparing a proposal for a digital writing and research lab that will provide students and faculty with exciting new opportunities. Writing studies faculty have also contributed ideas and resources to, and led workshops for, faculty involved in the Writing-Intensive English initiative, a program being piloted to improve the writing skills of English majors.

Beyond the department, Dr. Beth Daniell and Dr. Mary Lou Odom's Writing Across the Curriculum program helps faculty from across the college integrate writing into their teaching in ways that support student learning. The KSU Writing Center that Dr. Odom directs supports undergraduate and graduate student writers from across the university as well as faculty, staff, and alumni.

Taken together, these initiatives and resources indicate a thriving culture of writing as well as recognition of the importance of writing within and beyond the academy.

MAPW Graduates and Faculty Represent KSU at 2014 Georgia Author of the Year Awards

by Melissa Roberson



Celebrating fifty years of Georgia literary history, the Georgia Author of the Year Award Ceremony for 2014 brought together the best writers from around the state on June 7, 2014. Held in the ballroom of the KSU Center, guests packed in to enjoy a smart, well-paced, and entertaining showcase of the great writing talent in Georgia.

MAPW graduate Chris Ward emceed the festivities, even pausing to take a selfie with the audience. Dr. Jim Elledge, director of the MAPW program at KSU, won the GAYA for biography for his book, *Henry Darger, Throw-Away Boy: The Tragic Life of an Outsider Artist*. This award joins the many accolades for *Darger* Dr. Elledge has received this year, including winning the KSU Foundation Prize for Publication of Creative Activity. Also taking home a GAYA in the novel category was MAPW graduate Ray Atkins for his novel *Camp Redemption*.

First held in 1964 by the Dixie Council of Authors and Journalists, the awards recognize both commercially and independently published authors from across the state of Georgia. The Georgia Writers Association, founded in 1994, took over coordinating the event that same year. As of the 2014 Awards, an impressive 108 Georgia authors were nominated across 11 categories. Past winners of note include President Jimmy Carter, Representative John Lewis, poet Turner Cassity, and Georgia Writers Hall of Fame member Judith Ortiz Cofer.

The English Department would like to express its appreciation and gratitude for Dr. Walters and Katie Marvel for their hard work in maintaining the relationship between the department and the Georgia Writers Association. Thanks also belong to Dean Robin Dorff for continuing to support funding for this relationship.

From Page to Stage: A Q & A with Dr. Aaron Levy

by Kristi Martin

In the fall of 2014, English Department professor, Dr. Aaron Levy, won a contest to have a play he authored produced in New York City. Thespian Production included Levy's *Bolt Cutter Man*, a ten-minute play, as part of their 2014 "Pumpkins, Poison, and Plays...Oh My!" event. The event ran October 16-18 at the Joria Mainstage Theater. Recently I had the opportunity to discuss *Bolt Cutter Man* with Dr. Levy.

Kristi Martin (KM): Please tell us a little bit about your play, Bolt Cutter Man.

Aaron Levy (AL): It's a 10 minute play that I submitted to a play contest that had a Halloween type of theme, and it was one of the plays chosen.

KM: How did you get the inspiration to write this play?

AL: When we had our first kid (he's 13 now!), you get hyper aware of all the things you have to do just to keep this little person alive on a daily basis. When you're new parents, you don't really know anything about anything, no matter how much you read. Parenting, in some sense, is a "learn on the job" kind of job. The little dude didn't sleep for the first 10 months of his life, and I swear, he caught every cold he could catch—at least once a month. So as we were learning all of these things about "routines" and other ways to protect the boy from germs, I think, like lots of first time parents, we became a little insane with all of it. So I created a situation where these new parents had their kid on strict routines for everything, and had arranged their lives so they'd never have to take him out of the house, like, ever. But then when Halloween rolls around, they decide to shut out the lights and put a bolt lock on their front gate so no one will come to trick or treat. That is until a teen dressed up like Bolt Cutter Man, does what he's designed to do—cut through bolts—and pays the anxious couple and their baby a Halloween visit!



Dr. Aaron Levy

KM: Your play was recently chosen to be produced in New York. Please tell us about the production process. How involved were you as the playwright?

AL: In this case I had nothing to do with the production. The play was chosen as one of six plays, I think, for an evening production run. It was directed by someone I didn't know or even talk to. In fact, I haven't found out how well it did or didn't do yet. There was talk of some parts of the plays being videotaped at least, but I haven't been contacted yet. Soon I'll chase some feedback.

KM: What was your favorite part of this process?

AL: I wrote a draft of this several years ago and then revisited it a little bit ago after having our 3rd kid and I was more of a veteran parent, you know? So I had a lot of fun revising the play—being a wiser parent and a more experienced writer. And while I love and would have loved working with actors and directors on this production, it wasn't part of the experience this time around. But I do love working on new

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scripts with cast and crew—they always make it better than I ever could on my own.

KM: What does your writing process look like?

AL: It's never the same I don't think. It's typically a combination of writing a lot of character-driven scenes that don't necessarily feed into a particular plot in hopes of figuring out a particular plot that is both interesting and character-driven ultimately. So there's a lot of writing and fumbling that happens, a lot of walking around trying to figure out puzzles of story, before I lock in by putting a box around the story.

I've found a new way to revise that's really been helpful... using *Plot Whisperer Martha Alderson's PlotWriMo: Revise Your Novel in a Month with Literary Agent Jill Corcoran*. It's helped me look at my...novel and figure out its crucial plot components, chart the scenes, and make sure the plot components come at the right spot in the manuscript. It's a great way for more creative and/or scattered type thinkers (like me, sadly) to hone in and organize the story, no matter the genre.

KM: What other projects do you have in the works?

AL: Well, I've been trying my hand at YA novels of late. I have one, *Waisted*, that is currently being shopped to major houses by a NYC agent. The market is tough, but she's slowly working through a pretty extensive submission list and still very optimistic about its chances for publication.

Meanwhile, I'm finishing a revision for an upper Middle Grade novel (8th grade protagonist), and hope to submit it within the next month or two. And, for the first time, I'm trying NaNoWriMo in hopes of getting at least 50,000 words out towards a first draft of a new YA novel called *Gimp*. Plus, I have worked on shorter stuff—flash fiction type pieces. I really enjoy writing those because the scope isn't as big, the mountain not as high. Plus they are fun to read when I read out [loud].

Dr. Levy can often be found at Johnny McCracken's Pub in Marietta on the first Tuesday of the month for open mic night. Come listen to him read some of his work out loud, or take his playwriting course to work with him directly.

Important Dates and Upcoming Events

- ◆ **University System of Georgia Teaching and Learning Conference:** Conference to be held April 7-8, 2015 at the UGA Hotel and Conference Center in Athens: <http://www.usg.edu/facultyresources/conference>.
- ◆ **Atlanta Writers Conference:** Conference to be held May 8-9, 2015 at the Westin Atlanta Airport Hotel: <http://atlantawritersconference.com>.
- ◆ **PlayPen Open Mic:** Every first Tuesday of the month at Johnnie MacCracken's in Marietta. Free open forum to read any type of writing to an interested crowd of listeners. Find future dates and events at: <https://www.facebook.com/playpenlive>.

Faculty Accolades and Accomplishments

Laura Davis

Laura Davis won the 2013-14 Outstanding Contribution Award in Gender and Work Life Issues. This is one of just seven Presidential Diversity Awards given for 2013-14.

Larrie Dudenhoeffer

Larrie Dudenhoeffer's *Embodiment and Horror in Cinema* has been published by Palgrave.

Allison Davis

Allison Davis contributed the essay, "Constructing the Arbor: Absence, Place, and Memory as Poetic Strategies in the Poetry of Jeff Daniel Marion," to *On the Banks of the Holston: Jeff Daniel Marion, East Tennessee Poet* published by the University of Tennessee Press.

Michelle Devereaux

Michelle Devereaux's *Teaching About Dialect Variations and Language in Secondary English Classrooms: Power, Prestige, and Prejudice* has been published by Routledge.

Jim Elledge

Jim Elledge won the Georgia Author of the Year Award for biography for his book, *Henry Darger, Throw-Away Boy: The Tragic Life of an Outsider Artist*. He also won the KSU Foundation Prize for Publication of Creative Activity for this book. His new book of poems, *Tapping My Arm for a Vein*, will be published by Lethe Press.

Sergio Figueiredo

Sergio Figueiredo has been named a Fellow with the Global Art and Ideas Nexus. He received this award for his Virtual Education Project, linked [here](#).

Katarina Gephardt

Katarina Gephardt's book, *The Idea of Europe in British Travel Narratives, 1789-1914*, has been published by Ashgate Press.

Letizia Guglielmo

Dr. Guglielmo and co-author Lynée Lewis Gaillet published *Scholarly Publication in a Changing Academic Landscape: Models for Success* with Palgrave Macmillan.

David King

David King was awarded the Catholic Press Association's Best Regular Column on the Arts and Culture for his *Georgia Bulletin* Column. This is the 3rd year in a row he has been awarded this prize. He also recently had two poems published in *Flycatcher*.

Kendall Klym

Kendall Klym's story "Pavlova" was recently published in *Hunger Mountain*. His story, "A Professional Male Ballet Dancer in Twelve Steps," also won first place in the short story category of the Astra Arts Festival. His story, "Marva and Misha," won honorable mention in the 2015 Saturday Evening Post Great American Fiction Contest.

Aaron Levy

Aaron Levy's "Bolt Cutter Man" was produced and performed by Thespian Production Inc. as part of its "Pumpkins, Poison, and Plays...Oh, My!" Halloween play festival in New York City.

Chris Palmer

Chris Palmer has published three articles: "Measuring productivity diachronically: nominal suffixes in English letters, 1400–1600" in the journal *English Language and Linguistics* at Cambridge University Press; "Historical sociolinguistic approaches to derivational morphology: A study of speaker gender and nominal suffixes in Early Modern English" in the journal *Token: A Journal of English Linguistics* at Jan Kochanowski University Press; and "The phrasal verb in American English: Using corpora to track down historical trends in particle distribution, register variation, and noun collocations" with co-author David West Brown in the collection *Studies in the History of the English Language VI: Evidence and Method in Histories of English*.

Andrew Plattner

Andrew Plattner's novel, *Offerings of a Rust Belt Jockey*, has been published by Dzanc Books.

Ryan Rish

Dr. Rish's essay, "Puzzle Solving and Modding: Two Metaphors for Examining the Politics of Close Reading," was published in *Reader: Essays in Reader-Oriented Theory, Criticism, and Pedagogy*. He also had his essay, "Students' Transmedia Storytelling: Building Fantasy Storyworlds in Video Game Design," published in *Bridging Literacies with Videogames*. In addition to these publications, Dr. Rish was also the guest speaker at the Literacy Research Association's Research-to-Practice show on the topic of "Young Adults and their Writing Practices."

Jenny Sadre-Orafai

Jenny Sadre-Orafai's poem, "Ksraj," was nominated by *Thrust Poetry Journal* for a Pushcart Prize.

Ana Sahasrabudhe

Ana Sahasrabudhe won the KSU Foundation Staff Member of the Year award for her work as the business manager of the CHSS.

Beth Savoy

Beth Savoy's review of *Circulating Communities: The Tactics and Strategies of Community Publishing*, edited by Paula Mathieu, Steve Parks, and Tiffany Rousculp, will appear in next month's *Community Literacy Journal*.

Jeffrey Stepakoff

Jeffrey Stepakoff was a finalist for the KSU Foundation Award for Distinguished Scholarship and Creative Activity for his novel, *The Melody of Secrets*. He will be working in Hollywood in the spring as Co-Executive Producer for "Chasing Life" on ABC Family.

Linda Stewart

Linda Stewart has been selected a CETL Fellow for Learning-Centered Teaching.

Melanie Sumner

Professor Sumner and her agent sold the foreign rights to her new book, *How to Write a Novel*, to publish in 2016, to Germany, Italy, and Israel. She also had her story, "The Monster," selected for an anthology of the first 30 years of *Boulevard*.

Katie Walkiewicz

Katie Walkiewicz was selected for this year's Manuscript Completion Program.