

# THE WRITING LIFE



## The Power of Story: Changing the World One Book at a Time

By Jan McCutcheon

**I**NTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR AND AUTHOR CATHLEEN MILLER: “It was like handcuffing myself to the bumper of a fire-truck!” This was not the answer I expected when asking Cathleen Miller about her experience writing her most recent book, *Champion of Choice*, the biography of Dr. Nafis Sadik, former head of the United Nations Population Fund and current Special Advisor to the U.N. Secretary General and Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Asia.

So how did a woman who grew up in a cotton patch in Missouri end up writing about the former head of the U.N. Population Fund? “I had no idea what I was getting into! The United Nations calling me to say they need

my help? What’s next? Is someone going to ask me to be an astronaut?”

Miller’s name came to the attention of Dr. Sadik’s communications director. Dr. Sadik had spent 50 years traveling around the globe, pushing the envelope for women to get access to birth control, health care, education, economic opportunity, and to raise awareness on human-rights issues like the elimination of female genital mutilation. President Bush had just taken over the presidency and his first act in office was to cancel funding for the U.N. Population Fund. They were under siege and they needed public relations help to educate the people about Dr. Sadik and her important cause. Miller’s previous book told the story of Waris Dirie, an internationally renowned fashion model who had escaped an oppressive life in the African desert as a 13-year-old runaway who later became the U.N. Special Ambassador for the end of female genital mutilation. The book became an international best-seller and was made into a movie. Dr. Sadik was hoping Miller could do the same for their cause; they needed someone to tell their story in such a way that everyday people could relate.

Miller said, “One of my primary theories as a writer is my belief in the power of story. I decided that in between the chapters about Dr. Sadik’s life, I’d put mini-profiles, or vignettes, the story of women who personify these issues. And so it was kind of morbid. I would go into a country like Kenya and say, ‘I need to find a girl who has been circumcised’ and then interview her so I could tell her story.”

At 82, Dr. Sadik is still racing around the world. In writing the book, Miller had to do extensive research into the issues and took a trip around the world to interview colleagues, constituents, and the women Dr. Sadik has fought to help. “I decided that one of the problems with the

work that she’s doing is that it’s very abstract for most people in the developed world, especially in the U.S., because we don’t deal with issues like female genital mutilation. But these are issues Dr. Nafis Sadik deals with every day.”

The 700-page manuscript took ten years to complete and went to the publisher in September. “It has been a monumental experience in every single way. Good, bad, depressing, uplifting...” I asked Miller, “What happens next?” and she said simply, “I’ll get edits back from my editor, I’ll do revisions, and then they’ll publish it.”

Miller is a professor at San José State University, teaching creative writing and specializing in nonfiction. She is currently on sabbatical, returning in fall 2012. Her previous work includes a memoir, *The Birdhouse Chronicles*, and the international best seller *Desert Flower*, which has been published in 55 languages, with over 11 million copies in print. The feature film adapted from this work has been released in 27 countries; in the U.S., *Desert Flower* is distributed by *National Geographic*.

Ms. Miller is also one of the founders of the Wild Writing Women, a group of San Francisco travel writers and *bon vivants*.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

THE POWER OF STORY.....	1
NO GUTS, NO GLORY.....	2
BOOKWAVES ON COVER TO COVER.....	4
CRINKLY PAGES.....	5
BREAKING INTO COMICS.....	5
STEINBECK CENTER.....	7
WORKING WITH WORDS.....	8
ENGLISH DEGREE CAREERS.....	10
GOOGLE THIS. GOOGLE THAT.....	11
KICKSTARTER.....	12
BAR HEMINGWAY.....	14

# No Guts, No Glory: National Novel Writing Month

By Jonathan Hamilton

**A**LL HALLOWS EVE, 2011, AND I AM NOT TRICK OR TREATING OR WEARING A COSTUME. I have bigger fish to fry, such as eating dinner with several fellow writers in a Denny's. I clean my glasses to keep the yellow lamps from blinding me as I ask a neighbor, a white-haired man wearing a fashionable pirate outfit, for the time. He checks his laptop screen and holds up five fingers. A smile stretches across my face as I reach into my backpack and pull out my own computer in preparation for midnight. The turnout for the kick-off party is pretty good, with around twenty participants or so sitting at their tables with their preferred typing apparatus at the ready. After taking a bite of my dish of chicken strips, I wipe down my hands and ready my fingers to begin the typing. The thought of achieving the goal of writing fifty thousand words of fiction in thirty days excites me enough to make my hands quiver.

Someone calls out into the room, saying there is only one minute until midnight, and I open a blank word processor file in preparation. Then I plug in my headphones and open my music program to select some decent writing music. Thirty seconds. I let the song begin and save the file for later use as "NaNoWriMo 2011". Fifteen. People are beginning to count down. I join in around nine. Three, two, one, and several cheers ring out, which are soon drowned out by the sound of two dozen pairs of hands getting to work on their keyboards, mine included. I have only a general idea of what I want to write about, only two main characters in mind to introduce, and nary a clue where the story will end up going. Let's do this.

In 2007, my first year participating in National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo), I did a lot of research

about the challenge before November 1st. I discovered how it began in 1999 among only twenty people and expanded from there at neck-breaking speed. The goal of writing so much in one month greatly intimidated me back then. I often thought to myself, "How will I ever get another fifteen hundred words done by the end of the day?" Since then, such thoughts have transformed into "Oh, only another fifteen hundred words?"

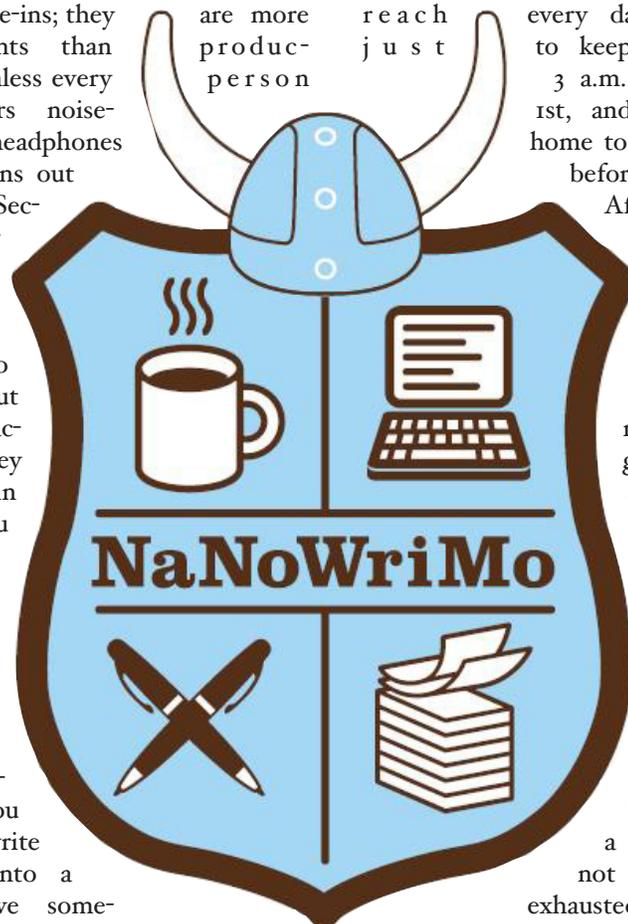
During my first year, I went to some write-ins, which are local writing-centric get-togethers of participants in cafes and book stores, and I learned more and more about how things generally worked for them during November. First of all, nothing ever gets done at write-ins; they are more social events than productive ones unless every one there wears noise-canceling headphones or never runs out of coffee. Second, never take your work too seriously. If you care too much about your characters, then they will begin to slow you down, taking valuable time out of your furious word count-increasing typing sessions. If you suddenly write the plot into a corner, have something explode or kill off a character and just run with it from there.

The purpose of NaNoWriMo is not quality, but quantity, simulating a brutal deadline that you must overcome. If you can write through a compelling narrative with coherency and dedica-

tion and finish fifty thousand words by November 30th, then by all means, go for it. But just remember that not everyone is Superman and therefore cannot catch up to your seemingly godlike imagination and vitality.

It is the end of the kick-off party at Denny's, and I forgot to pick up cash to help pay for the group check that we received. I tell this to the coordinator of the event, and he says to hit him up at a write-in later in the month with a twenty and we could call it even. The night ended around two in the morning with around 1,400 words written and exactly zero enemies made. A good start, though I was not able to break the 1,667 words I am supposed to reach just every day on average to keep on schedule. 3 a.m. on November 1st, and I finally get home to grab a cat nap before my 8:30 class.

After finishing my assignments earlier than expected, I rush to the student union and pop open my laptop to begin the writing anew. In total, I reach 2,500 by the time my noon class rolls around. After my classes finish around 4:30, I catch the early bus home and take a nap. One cannot write with an exhausted mind, after all. I sleep through my alarm, however, and end up dozing until 9 p.m. I have a test the next day. I can't very well choose between the two very important acts of writing something at breakneck speed and sitting with a textbook for hours on end. I end up study-



ing. I am ahead on word count anyway.

November 2nd, I take the test in my 9 a.m. class. Satisfied with my work, I turn it in and rush back to the bus stop. However, because of my late night studying, I take yet another nap until 2 in the afternoon. After a shower I realize I have two more papers to finish and some other homework, all due tomorrow. The accursed fact that I have a life strikes again. An arduous evening later, I finally get the chance to write some more. Since it is the second day, I need roughly 3,333 words to stay on track. Sadly, it is already after midnight and the NaNoWriMo website never forgets. My recorded word count for the day stays at an embarrassing 2,500. By 1:30 in the morning, however, I manage to grind out another thousand.

I am not alone in this endeavor, however, even outside of write-ins. Far from it. If Wikipedia is to be believed, the challenge managed to rope in more than two hundred thousand participants last year, myself included. With everything accounted for, participants wrote a collective 2,872,682,109 words of sci-fi, fantasy, romance, mystery, adventure, erotic fiction, horror, historical fiction, and more. I failed to reach fifty thousand in 2010 with a little soft sci-fi piece, but that's just me. That massive word count came from regions all around the U.S. and the rest of the world. The website even ranks the regions with the highest word count. San José's South Bay region is usually locked in deadly word combat with one region or another if one pays attention to the listings.

Aside from the forums and your own profile on the NaNoWriMo website, the front page features videos, tools, pep talks from various authors, and notable forum posts. One such section is known as the "Procrastination Station," which brings especially time-wasting forum threads to the attention of anyone willing to look. It updates constantly, but I have managed to post about what my novel would look like in the form of a movie trailer. Inevitably, posting in one thread leads to posting in another. Then

another. And then there is an interesting article someone links me to regarding quality versus quantity. And then there is video of a guy singing a NaNoWriMo-themed version of "A Modern Major General." Oh, he does other music, too! I should browse his YouTube channel! Before I know it, an hour and a

**If there is a writer's equivalent to a runner's high, then I achieved it. Four straight hours of nothing but writing, and I managed to churn out more than 6,000 words.**

half has passed me by in a blink without a single word written in my novel.

November 3rd, 9:30 A.M.. I sleep in after a power outage knocks out my alarm clock. My plans to write for a couple hours before getting to my noon class are dashed prematurely, leaving me scrambling to get to the bus a mere thirty minutes before class starts. Luckily, we are given half an hour of work time in class, so I help myself to some writing on my laptop. Sadly, I only manage to squeeze in another hundred words or so before the rest of the class begins. In my 1:30 class, I pull out my laptop and pretend to take notes. If I'm lucky, writing in class might net me one of the many NaNoWriMo merit badges, such as "Secret Noveling."

Several other little knick-knacks are awarded by hosts at write-ins, including "Plot Ninjas," stickers, and t-shirts. For many participants, however, the finished manuscript of their novel is the true reward for participating. It alone is proof of their hard work, perseverance, and imagination. NaNoWriMo is meant to force writers to tear down the walls of the status quo and think outside the box, letting the ideas rush forth by the nature of their whims. Without a soul-crushing deadline like NaNoWriMo's, participants may not have ever finished their novels, leaving them on the wayside for who-knows how long? I can proudly say that out of the past four years of participating, I have managed to reach the fabled fifty thousand

word milestone once. Sitting in the Student Union on the November 30th, 2009, more than 5,000 words behind, I parked myself in a chair, plugged in my computer, and started typing. If there is a writer's equivalent to a runner's high, then I achieved it. Four straight hours of nothing but writing, and I managed to churn out more than 6,000 words.

The feeling was altogether exhilarating, exhausting, and liberating.

This year, I am doing quite well. By the time the third day is over, I manage to finish the 5,000 word mark. Looking over my piece, a swelling of pride rises within my chest. In only three days, I have written the equivalent of a nine-page, single-spaced essay in twelve-point font. Looking over the California South Bay forum, I discover several write-ins I can participate in and plan accordingly. After all, there are only four weeks left to write the remaining 45,000 words.

*Jonathan Hamilton is a Bay Area native who grew up in Morgan Hill. Studying English with an emphasis on Career Writing, he is a Renaissance Man of nerd culture and plans on working as an editor for a video game publisher after he graduates in 2012.*

### **Camp NaNoWriMo**

A pair of thirty-day challenges similar to the one in November, except it takes place during July and August.

### **Script Frenzy**

A challenge to write 100 pages of original scripted material in the 30 days of April.

### **Young Writer's Program**

A writing challenge for the younger age groups; educators can integrate this program into their normal schedule, allowing students to set realistic word-count goals for their novels in the month of November, while learning about characterization, plot elements, and the structure of novels.

[www.nanowrimo.org](http://www.nanowrimo.org)



Salman Rushdie and Richard Wolinsky 2005

## *Bookwaves on Cover to Cover with Richard Wolinsky*

*By Jill Stahl*

**H**AVE YOU EVER WANTED TO SIT DOWN AND CHAT WITH YOUR FAVORITE AUTHOR? Do you want to ask Gore Vidal what the Kennedy brothers were really like with each other at home? At the speed of low frequency light waves, every Thursday afternoon at 3 p.m. at local, listener-sponsored KPFA 94.1 you can listen to authors discuss their work, the process of writing, how they learned to write, and inside stories about the publication business.

Richard Wolinsky is the well-informed host of *Bookwaves on Cover to Cover* who interviews high-profile and well-received authors about their latest work, making it accessible and interesting for wide audiences. The result is a surprisingly entertaining and educational half-hour. Wolinsky's uncanny memory and ability to recall the fine details of the book eases the author into revealing intimate facts about the material and their lives.

*Bookwaves* started back in 1977 on KPFA radio as a program about science fiction called Probabilities Un-

limited. By the early 1990s, its format expanded and is now heard across the nation. Wolinsky's Thursday show's primary range "is fiction, literary and otherwise, and narrative non-fiction, with forays into politics and punditry."

In a half-hour, face-to-face interview, Wolinsky talks with the author about voice, point of view, plot arc, character choices, and the broader issues surrounding the difference between literary fiction and pop fiction. A genial host with a sonorous baritone, he approaches the authors' work with deep interest. In turn, his inquisitiveness is appreciated by the authors who eagerly disclose their writing processes, character creations and inspiration. You listen as Nora Ephron confides to Wolinsky that she learned how to be a better playwright by typing scripts over and over. You reflect on Andre Dubus III's (*Townie, The House of Fog and Mirrors*) emotions as he tells Richard of his regrets for past violent rages, an energy he now channels into writing essays. You are surprised that Margaret Atwood's grim but darkly entertaining dystopia visions in her sci-

ence fiction novels are only set twenty years into the future. Wolinsky says he likes the personal, face-to-face format, so he can gage their reactions to his questions and find what the authors want to talk about most. Under Wolinsky's direction, the authors love to talk!

The archived interviews with older authors are particularly interesting. We hear the late Susan Sontag in a voice thickened by smoke, talking about the origins of celebrity culture, "though I don't know how much of a culture it is," and lamenting about how we Americans are "promoting personality and eccentricity" to the detriment of nurturing artistic abilities. Kurt Vonnegut's interview went just like his books: irreverent, funny, engaging. We listen as Gore Vidal wryly comments, "we have a new wrinkle in the readers of America. Nobody wants to read a book about something they don't know about. Now, if you only want to read about what you already know — you're already 'round the bend."

In a recent correspondence, Wolinsky—commenting on the current trends for writers—voices strong concerns the e-book raises regarding censorship: technology can make censorship easier because it "can be orchestrated with a single button from a single place" he notes. "The main trend in publishing...seems to be the attempt to find 'tentpole' authors, promote the hell out of their first novels, and then screw up their careers if those books don't sell. In the old days, publishers nurtured younger writers. These days that doesn't happen. Writers are pushed before they're really ready. It's a terrible system forged by corporate management of an artistic environment."

*Bookwaves on Cover to Cover* is the antidote to our collective lack of curiosity about "what we don't know about." It is produced locally in Berkeley; podcasts of most of the archived shows available online [bookwaves.homestead.com](http://bookwaves.homestead.com).

---

*Jill Stahl is a senior in English Literature and an East Bay native. During the cold winter months while living in New York City, she began to read some great writers such as Steinbeck, Austen, Eliot, Tolstoy, James, and Dickens, and decided she should someday finish her degree.*

**B**OOKS, ONCE THE FOUNDATION OF EDUCATED SOCIETY, ARE BECOMING LESS AND LESS POPULAR WHEN WEIGHED AGAINST THEIR PAPERLESS COUNTERPARTS. In a world of Nooks, Kindles, and iPads, the question arises: what will happen to books? The history of printed forms oftentimes has shown the new form of authorship completely replacing the old. Where is our culture going as far as books go? The best way to find out is to look at where we have been.

David L. Gants, professor of English history at Florida State University, shows the path of written word best (*Book History Timeline*). The timeline for books begins in Egypt—around 2400 B.C.—with the earliest surviving papyrus scrolls. The next major step was the founding of the first library, the Ancient Library of Alexandria—most noted as the first culturally expansive collection. After this advancement, fibrous paper was developed in China using vegetable fibers. Soon, papermaking spread to other parts of the world, and in the first century A.D., the format of books went from a scroll to codex form—meaning they were bound.

Circa 1041 A.D. movable type was invented by Pi Shêng, of China. Slowly throughout history, movable type was adjusted and perfected, and in 1456 Gutenberg printed the Bible. By the 1500s printing was established in more than 250 European cities. The year 1621 marks the first

## Crinkly Pages

By Becky Bambach

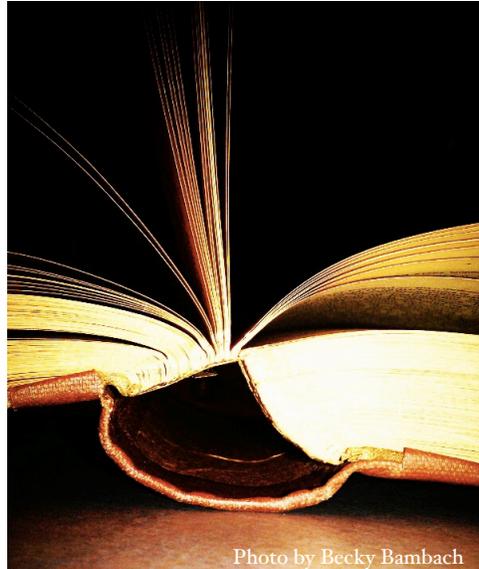


Photo by Becky Bambach

English newspaper, *The Corante*, followed by a daily newspaper, the *Daily Courant*—which survived for 30 years. Soon after the English, came American success with *The Boston Newsletter*.

The late 1700s marked the invention of the first paper-making machine by Louis-Nicolas Robert. More and more libraries were springing up around the world, and in 1800 the Library of Congress was founded. Soon after, William Austen Burt produced the first typewriter. Many new and more effi-

cient presses were being perfected during this time and the daguerreotype's invention added the possibility of photographs alongside written words. The first successful electric typewriter was marketed by IBM but was quickly replaced with the steady rise in computer technology starting during WWII. The invention of a photocopier by Xerox in the 1950s was quickly followed by the laser printer, also invented by IBM.

In 2004, Google announced "Google Print," where the company took on the task of making an online library—giving the general public access to books through the internet. Many colleges have made a Nook, Kindle, or iPad a necessity to the learning experience. Will "e-books" replace paper books entirely the way scrolls were replaced by bound books? Or handwriting was replaced by a press? Or typewriters were replaced by computers? If this pattern holds true, then yes. Advancements are often made and easier ways of doing things are typically what people favor. Will books completely die out, though? No. Paper books will become a novelty. There will always be people who can't get enough of turning the crinkly pages of a delicious book.

*Becky Bambach is an English student at San José State University. Being a Fall 2011 transfer student, Becky is enjoying the new lifestyle that college life has to offer. She looks forward to her wedding with fiancé, Braxton Ingrahm, which they are planning for the summer after graduation.*

## Breaking Into Comics: The English Major Way

By Orion Petittlerc

these stores promote: the mainstream, the pulps, and the "immature." Is that not just funny, how easily people can dismiss comics in all their forms to the dregs of pop culture, as if they are merely adventure stories? In fact, it is usually educators, scholars, and parents who perpetuate the most vitriolic rebuttals against the medium, claiming effects ranging from desensitization to violence in youth, to adopting lax reading habits. The number-one most harmful opinion to devoted and prospective readers and to the individuals who live to make the magic is a simple one passed down generation to generation regarding every new literary form and genre: IT IS TRASH. English majors and courses, however, can improve the general consensus.

It was not long ago when the comic book medium never crossed the average person's mind as a (continued on page 6)

legitimate literary art form. Only a few years back, teachers scoffed at the idea of introducing comics into Maryland's elementary classes, but the movement was a success in 2008 and two hundred third-grade classes were approved to incorporate the literary art form. At SJSU, graphic novels are starting to find their way into English classrooms. This is the second semester in a row in which I had a class with one in the reading list: *The Complete Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi this year for ENGL 117 (Film, Lit, Culture) with Kate Evans, *V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore and David Lloyd for ENGL 100W with Paul Douglass, and Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman: Endless Nights* for ENGL 56B (English Lit from 1800) with Katherine Harris last semester. (Quite literally my playground and heaven!) The trend of comics being introduced into academia gains steam, and now postgraduate English majors can enroll in the University of Florida's Comics Studies program, including MA and PhD concentrations. And frankly, it is no big surprise because English departments, over any other related area, are spearheading the academic study of comics.

The comic book medium has captured the fancy of so many, and a large portion of credit is due to Hollywood for churning out many great comic-based films—both the flux of superhero flicks and non-superhero films including *Art School Confidential*, *Road to Perdition*, and *A History of Violence*, to name a few. Once upon a time in San Diego (1970), a small comic book convention was born; it sold out for the first time in 2008, and now attendees must stand in city-block-long lines to preorder next year's tickets to Comic-Con the moment the four-day event begins. Media

and pop culture are not the only contributing factors to the medium's allure, though; comics represent something much larger for the literary society, especially the graphic novel. The graphic novels—longer formats of comic books that usually contain larger issues of society, morality, and so forth—are the stepping-stones that bridge the gap between traditional text novels and digital media. Traditional literature is a threatened medium with too much potential to be lost in obsolescence; instead, with the graphic novel format, text novels can combine their strengths and messages with art—a medium with even larger potential of conveying meaning—to create works that both entertain and teach. Electronic media has many benefits for evolving readers, and graphic novels help ease the shock in transitioning between the pure-text and digital media.

Unquestionably, we are changing as a people.

The digital age has made bounds in innovation, and each new generation's ideas are evolving in its wake. Historians and scholars can profess: society, arts, and literature all progress

on a relatively parallel path. It should then be no surprise we are at a point in time when literature is transforming once again. How many adults—how many *children*—admit they like reading anymore or even read for pleasure? It is true, even I find text-novels cumbersome to withstand sometimes. The younger generations have developed such advanced multi-tasking skills (as some of my older professors and colleagues have termed it, “your A.D.D.”), we literally become bogged down by the overwhelming blocks of text. (Heck, if I had the time and resources, I would have made this article a comic book!)

We are very much a visual society on the fast-track for instant gratification, and comics offer exactly what we desire with the potential of translating the complexities and issues in text-novels.

I have a vision that one day comics in all their forms will be taught side-by-side with text books in every classroom. English departments will be the first to usher in this new era, and I hope to at least make a dent in the opinions of those who oppose it at the university. Much of this disapproval against comics stems from fear and misunderstanding, and most educators condemn graphic novels because of the notion that *all* graphic novels revolve around the supernatural and display misogynistic fantasies. The format of comics are another major reason for adult opposition because they have difficulty with panel sequencing, which can often times become complex, especially in Japanese *manga*. This issue can easily be remedied with an investment in Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics* (which can be used as a guide for students as well) or any other “how to” books for reading comics.

As for how to incorporate comics into the curriculum, I highly recommend visiting McCloud's website ([scottmccloud.com](http://scottmccloud.com)), which offers valuable resources for teaching comic book theory, as well as reading “Graphic Novels in the Secondary Classroom and School Libraries” by Paula E. Griffith (*Journal of Adult & Adolescent Literacy* 54, no. 3 [Nov 2010]) which provides useful evaluation criteria for selecting graphic novels for the classroom, and a table of graphic novels and possible lesson plans they can offer. Some graphic novels are adaptations of famous literary works (often termed “Classics,” and include some Shakespeare), and these can be taught alongside their source material and used for analysis about adaptation. For more excellent teaching suggestions, consult “Transforming English with Graphic Novels: Moving toward Our ‘Optimus Prime’” by James Bucky Carter (*The English Journal* 97, no. 2 [Nov 2007]).

The teaching opportunities are endless, and are not only geared toward



Photo by Orion Pettilerc

grade school; graphic novels especially offer diverse, complex, and interesting topics for discourse in the college classroom and beyond! Attend major (and maybe even minor) comic book conventions such as San Diego Comic-Con or San Francisco WonderCon (which will be held in Anaheim in 2012 due to renovations at the Moscone Center), and you are bound to find one, if not several, panels packed with hundreds of attendees for academic workshops. There is so much to gain from comics for all ages.

Interdepartmental collaboration is another possibility for expanding students' education. English and social studies can address titles like *V for Vendetta* for political statements and national or international issues. At SJSU, the English and Animation/Illustration departments hold the greatest potential for collaboration, where they can address the important relationship between text and art in storytelling and teach McCloud's "Big Triangle Theory" on art and meaning. I propose collaborative courses be created not only to teach about comics, but also to create comics. English majors can provide rich stories for the artists to illustrate.

I am not only addressing general English majors here: I am talking to all the other English concentration majors, including career writing, education, library studies, and creative writing. Creative writers—be you declared, professional, or hobbyist—consider comics another medium and genre. Join the ranks of greats like Art Spiegelman (*Maus*), Alan Moore (*V for Vendetta*, *Watchmen*), Frank Miller (*300*, *Sin City*), Craig Thompson (*Blankets*), Grant Morrison (*All-Star Superman*), and even Neil Gaiman (*The Sandman*, author of *American Gods*, *Anansi Boys*, *Coraline*, and *Stardust*.) The comic book industry could use more talented, young writers to create new, innovative stories and usher in the era of comics in academia. Write for comics, and I will see you there myself in a few years!

Every new medium suffers growing pains. Rock and Roll, Impressionistic Art, even the ancestor to the modern novel were criticized and scorned by the older

generation, but look at them now: they are all official, legitimate, recognized, and even taken for granted. Comics join the ranks of the new, the young, the hip, and the misunderstood, and every day gain ground in the fight for legitimacy. Limiting ourselves and students to the strict constraints of "legitimate texts" will prove detrimental to lifelong education and limit the scope of interest.

To all who made it this far in reading my article, I thank you, and implore you: if you have not yet explored the vast world that I lay before you, please use the resources I have provided to become familiar with a new, *legitimate* literary art form; and if you are already familiar with the medium, please advocate. Take your favorite comic, manga, or graphic novel to your professors and explain to them how it has enriched your learning experience. Show SJSU that we in the English department support comic book education!

*Orion Petitclerc is both a genre writer and character design artist. He is currently attending San José State University, studying English with a Creative Writing minor. He plans to publish his comic book series The Mad Mummy with Image Comics in the near future.*

## The National Steinbeck Center: Insights on a Writer and His Work

By Daniel Acuff

THE BEAUTIFUL SALINAS VALLEY, AN HOUR'S DRIVE FROM SAN JOSE, IS HOME TO THE NATIONAL STEINBECK CENTER, a celebration of the life and work of John Steinbeck. Blending history with literary appreciation, the National Steinbeck Center displays themed exhibits of nearly all of Steinbeck's novels. These exhibits showcase the dedication of a great writer to his work and the continuous improvement of his writing. The



walls are filled with many of Steinbeck's most poignant quotes from interviews during his life and from his novels, *East of Eden* in particular: "If a story is not about the hearer he will not listen. And here I make a rule—a great and interesting story is about everyone or it will not last."

The entrance sets the theme of what is showcased in the Center with this quote from Steinbeck: "I think I would like to write the story of this whole valley, of all the little towns and all the farms and the ranches in the wilder hills. I can see how I would like to do it so that it would be the valley of the world." Walking through the Steinbeck Center, visitors can see how he accomplished this during his life. Steinbeck's novels tell the story of real people in California: the poor and downtrodden workers searching for jobs and shelter, the exploited migrants looking for the American Dream, the union organizers fighting for basic human rights, and anyone struggling to feed themselves and their families.

Steinbeck's family history and childhood (growing up in a house a few blocks from the Center) are chronicled through pictures and snippets of writing. Interviews from childhood classmates and friends play in the background for visitors to hear. His college days at Stanford, where he studied English and left before receiving a degree, are portrayed in pictures and through written testimonials. A

Ford Model T from the early twentieth century sits inside the Steinbeck Center along with a quote from *East of Eden* describing the difficult process of starting it. A scene of James Dean playing Cal in the film version of *East of Eden* plays on a projector in the background.

The *Grapes of Wrath* exhibit features magazine articles from the 1930s showing pictures of devastated Oklahoma migrant workers living in camps in California. Newspaper articles blasting Steinbeck's book as propaganda and calling for it to be burned are also displayed. The *Of Mice and Men* exhibit includes a projector playing memorable scenes from both film adaptations of the book. One of the highlights of the Steinbeck Center is seeing the actual camper that Steinbeck drove across the country with his dog Charley, written about in his novel *Travels with Charley*.

The tour of the Steinbeck Center ends with a quote from Steinbeck written on the wall above the exit: "I nearly always write—just as I nearly always breathe." His life is an inspiration for anyone who follows their passions and for those who have the need to write just as they have the need to breathe.

*Daniel Acuff is an English major at San José State University. He enjoys playing guitar, riding his motorcycle, and eating pizza. He plans on getting an MFA in creative writing and working as a travel writer and/or musician. He is preparing himself for a life of poverty as he follows these "career" paths.*

## Working with Words

By Shannon Daly

**P**OLISHING, SHAPING, AND REVISING THE WORDS ON A PAGE ARE ALL IN A DAY'S WORK FOR A WRITER'S RIGHT-HAND MAN: THE EDITOR. Though some writers may not want to believe it, even the best writers need good editors. After all, editors bring indispensable abilities to the world of writing. A comma here, a misspelled word there—it all makes a difference, and the presence of a grammatical error can easily undermine any writer's work.

The duties of an editor, though, reach far beyond mere commas and misspellings.

Editorial positions are wildly appealing, especially for those who spend nearly every day of

their lives studying words on a page: English majors. The word "editor" is an umbrella term of sorts and encompasses vast responsibilities and possibilities. So what exactly does a job in editing entail?

An editor helps to shape a text before it is published. The editor's job is to make sure the text can be easily understood and used by the reader. "You need to become the reader's advocate," asserts Lois Johnson Rew in her invaluable book, *Editing for Writers*. As an editor, you have to keep in mind that it is *all* about the reader

and crafting the most readable text.

Although the editing process is complex and varies from job to job, an editor typically performs at least two main levels of editing: substantive editing and copy editing. Substantive editing deals with the overall structure of the text and focuses on such things as organization, coherency, and logical development of the content. Once the substantive edits are completed, it is time for the copy editing to commence. Copy editing is done at the sentence level and looks at grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation, formatting, and much more—a keen eye and a patient mind are must-haves.

As I mentioned earlier, an editor is in charge of a text—but what kinds of texts do editors often find themselves editing? The most obvious text an editor could work with is a book, but

the possibilities don't end there. Newspapers, magazines, and journals are publications that always need editors. What about screenplays, or technical manuals? Not to mention the massive television industry that consistently requires editors for scripted television programs. Even the scripts for news broadcasts must be edited—albeit in an arguably much faster time frame than any other editing job.

The point is, whenever ink is put to paper, you can find an editor lurking closely by. With endless texts floating around just itching to be edited,

there are innumerable editorial positions ready to be snatched up. Still unsure about where your editorial interests lie? Let's look at a few types of editing positions a bit more closely.

Book editing is a demanding job with many responsibilities—but the rewards more than make up for the rigors of the trade. Book editors are typically employed by a publishing house. They review manuscripts and choose which ones will be bought and published. Then, they work with the author from the manuscript stage all the way to its publication. During that process, a book editor may also perform duties such as negotiating contracts and working with an artist to determine the cover art. As a book editor, the relationship you build with the authors is the most important aspect of the job; there is nothing more satisfying than guiding them through the process and finally seeing their books come to life.

Technical editing is a more specialized profession, perfect for those with a passion for science or technology. A technical editor works with technical documents or manuals such as product user guides, appliance repair manuals, and software installation guides, to name a few. Basically, a technical editor can work with just about anything that requires instructions. Technical editing is all about understanding the purpose of the document and how to make it as accessible as possible to the reader. It isn't always required for an editor in this line of work to have full knowledge of the subject they're editing, though it can be helpful in ensuring that the document is user-friendly.

With endless texts floating around just itching to be edited, there are innumerable editorial positions ready to be snatched up.

A job in business editing offers virtually endless possibilities since business documents are constantly being produced and are always in need of an editor's keen eye. Documents such as grants, brochures, sales contracts, and business proposals are some of the most common texts a business editor can work with. A business editor should be prepared to edit a wide range of texts, as well as be comfortable in a corporate environment.

Newspaper editors work with journalists in a fast-paced setting with unforgiving deadlines. Working for a newspaper can be chaotic: the news is forever changing, so you have to be able to think on your feet and make quick, effective editing decisions. News publications hire many kinds of editors, such as assignment editors, managing editors, and the editor-in-chief, so it's just a matter of finding what type of role you want to play in the dynamic process.

As for script editing, the editor and writer have a strong relationship as they work to produce scripts for television programs, such as dramas or comedies. The editor even helps to create storylines while constantly giving feedback to the writer. A script editor has certain responsibilities that are unique due to the nature of the job. For instance, a script editor must keep the running time of the program in mind, as well as be extremely familiar with the show in order to ensure continuity from episode to episode and even season to season.

These are just a few of the avenues available to editors, but there are countless others. Nearly half of salaried editors work in publishing and half of those were employed by newspapers, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Also keeping editors busy are educational institutions, information services, and social and professional organizations; they all hire editors to work on their publications, either print or online. Now more than ever, it is important to note that texts are making dramatic shifts from print to the online

environment; therefore, more editors will be needed to handle digital content.

Regardless of which type of editing you undertake, certain skills are necessary to produce a good editor. At its most basic level, "Editing requires careful reading, good judgment, and a sense of the English language," asserts Rew.

Being organized and able to meet deadlines is the most important aspect of becoming a successful editor. Publication schedules are solid—especially for newspaper and magazine publications—and editing a document requires an ample amount of time, even for experienced editors. Therefore, it is important for beginning editors to get a sense of how long they will spend on any one document so they can manage their time efficiently.

A creative mind is an invaluable tool in the writing world and will help you solve editorial problems in unique and meaningful ways. Editing is all about crafting the most readable document—a task not easily undertaken when considering the importance of the tiniest details. Therefore, thinking creatively can help an editor manage those details to produce an effective and enjoyable document.

Good communication skills are an essential part of the job and perhaps the most imperative. As Rew notes, "Editors must be language experts, not only knowing what to do, but also knowing how to explain each decision." For example, when you make any kind of change to a text, whether it is diction, grammar, or syntax, you have to be able to communicate the reason for those changes to the author. This can be a sensitive situation as most authors become very attached to their work; therefore, being able to justify your decisions and communicate them effectively is vital.

Have I scared you yet? Well, I certainly hope not. If you *are* considering a job in the bustling editorial world, getting a Bachelor's Degree in English is a great place to start. However, there are other majors that are just as ap-

propriate for an editing career such as journalism, creative writing, linguistics, or communications. Courses in grammar, publishing, and editing will give you the confidence to compete against other qualified candidates. Whatever your area of study, a love for language will get you far in the editing world.

At the end of the day, the editor's job is to make the words on the page come to life in the best way possible—and it's not as easy as it sounds. The English language is complex and constantly changing. Just like anything else, becoming a good editor takes time and practice. You will always be learning new things and refining your skills with each new text. Just remember: you have to love what you do, and if words are what you love, a career in editing could be for you.

*Shannon Daly is studying English with a concentration in Career Writing at San José State University. When she's not reading, writing, or fighting crime, Shannon enjoys the simple pleasures of biking, fishing, and scrapbooking.*

## K N O W O R D

[www.knoword.org](http://www.knoword.org)

Knoword is a fast-paced word game that challenges your vocabulary. With 60 seconds on the clock, Knoword gives you the first letter and a definition. Every correct answer awards you points and a time extension, and getting enough answers in a row rewards you with additional points as you build a word streak! Go head-to-head with a vast online community of players on Knoword's competitive ranking.

(Note: Knoword is not advisable for players with friends possessing the ability to tease, ridicule, taunt, or bedevil.)

## What to be...

By Alexander O'Connor

**I**F YOU ARE LIKE MOST ENGLISH MAJORS, YOU ARE PROBABLY TRYING TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO AFTER GRADUATION. Do you really want to continue your education with a credential or MFA program? If yes, then by all means do so; if no, welcome to the club. An English major can use the skills they have learned in many careers that do not involve a classroom. These careers can be highly rewarding and stimulating, not to mention financially stable.

Have you ever wondered how some schools and non-profits are able to afford new equipment, while others still use the equipment from the last century? That new equipment is probably the result of a well-written grant and behind it, is a grant writer. If you love writing based on predetermined requirements—i.e. minimum and maximum pages and audience and purpose—then grant writing may be the right career. You will be given specific requirements for your grant, and you will be required to write a proposal specific to those requirements. Because part of a well-written grant is the business model, or budget, you will need to know at least some accounting. This career is rewarding, both monetarily and emotionally, because you can help institutions better themselves and, in turn, better the lives of those they serve.

If, however, you would rather focus your writing in a more creative direction, you should look into ghost writing. What is ghost writing? Writing somebody else's book, article, story, report, or any other type of document for them for a fee, which can be small or large depending on the piece and your experience. With ghost writing, you will most likely be writing anonymously and a large amount of information in a short amount of time. One of the advantages to ghost writing is that once you finish writing, you are done, as in—no book tours; no dealing with publishers; and no waiting to get paid until the book sells a specific number of copies. How-

ever, if you are the kind of person who likes to take credit for your work, you probably won't enjoy a career in ghost writing. You may, however, learn to enjoy the paycheck and time off more than your name on the cover of a book.

If you find yourself saying, "I want to write and make money, but I don't want to deal with publishers and book tours," maybe a career in screenwriting is right for you. Every movie has a script—even the bad ones—and every one of those is written by a screenwriter. As a screenwriter, you will be responsible for telling the story in a way that inspires the director to make it, the actors to want to be in it, and, most importantly, the producers to give you money. Screenwriting is highly competitive and you must be able to pitch your story in as little time as possible. You will spend most of your time either rewriting your own work or someone else's work; and, if the studio decides to go with a different writer, you must be willing to have your work rewritten by someone else.

These are only three of the many lucrative careers that can be pursued with an English degree. If you still have no idea what type of career to pursue with your degree, talk to an advisor, spend a couple hours on Google, or if all else fails go to the closest Starbucks and ask for an application—they are always hiring humanities majors.

*Alexander O'Connor is an English major at San José State University. Born and raised in Hollister, California, Alexander is a regretful graduate of San Benito High. His goal is to eventually make a living off of writing whatever people will pay him to write.*

## ...with an English degree

By Jonathan Barreto

**I**T'S THE AGE-OLD QUESTION THAT ALL ENGLISH MAJORS GET FROM THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY—"Oh, you're an English major, so you want to be a teacher?" While some are gladly striding down the path to help educate the younger generation, many

just don't have that passion. So what is there left to do—writing iambic pentameter or crafting award-winning novels for a living is not always an option. What good is an English degree if all you can do is read and write? Well, an English degree is more than reading and writing skills, much more...and it can lead to a ton of job opportunities.

If you like technology, gadgets, and so on, technical writing combines both writing and technology in seamless ways. But how do you know if a career in technical writing is suitable for you? Does your blood boil when you can't figure out a problem? Or do you patiently work your way toward a solution? If you're a problem solver, a career in technical writing might be for you. As a technical writer, testing and solving technical problems, layout issues, and technology functions are a part of your daily process, in addition to writing and editing. Technical writers gather information about specific subject matter through interviews of production and engineering staff, review of trade journals, and trial and error sessions to create instruction manuals, design marketing documents, transcribe highly technical jargon into layman's terms, write how-to guides, or document any other useful information about products we use. These documents must be clear, detailed, cohesive, and include all the necessary components to ensure that customers understand the product.

Granted, technical writing is not the most creatively fulfilling career; however, with a passion for technology and a knack for structure and detail, you can enjoy a career in technical writing—and a hefty paycheck.

For those who see technical writing as a little monotonous, you might be interested in the exciting and fast-paced world of broadcast writing, especially if you are naturally curious and enjoy researching and writing short, concise, conversational, and engaging sentences. As a broadcast writer, you will be responsible for reporting news and current affairs in a balanced, accurate, and entertaining way. Broadcast writers, for

the most part, gather information from newspapers and the Associated Press, and then repackage them into active, lively, and compelling 30- to 40-second snippets that are read by the news anchors. Since our culture has moved from 10 channels to over 500, broadcast writing must grab your attention and use language that is simple, unlike newspaper writing, in order to be more compelling. Be prepared to start out with an erratic schedule, working the graveyard shift; however, once you have some experience under your belt, broadcast writing can be a rewarding career for those who enjoy the competitive and active environment of a news studio.

Not everyone is cut out for the vigorous environment of the newsroom, yet some may still want to utilize their more creative side. “Think Different,”

“Just Do It,” and “Obey Your Thirst”—copywriters created all these slogans. If you are a good communicator who can use words to create vivid images and express the benefits of a product, businesses are looking for writers just like you. As a copywriter, you have the opportunity to create slogans, brochures, promotional copy, ad campaigns, and more with the focus and intent to sell a product or service. For the most part, the primary goal of a copywriter is to capture the attention of potential customers and persuade them to purchase the product or service you’re writing for. This involves not only a fair amount of research and brainstorming but also the unique ability to create catchy and memorable words and phrases that appeal to the customer. However, writing copy is not for the faint of heart as it

is extremely competitive: if a sale is not made or if a potential customer is not persuaded, then your job has not been done. But for those who can step up to the challenge, the earning possibilities are endless, with annual salaries that have the potential to reach six-figures.

So next time you’re asked if you want to be a teacher, know that it’s not your only option. Technical, broadcast, and copy writing are three careers in a market of endless possibilities. Every major company needs someone who can write well...and that person can be you.

*Jonathan Barreto is a graduating senior at San José State University and a collaborator to the SJSU Incubator classroom Wiki page. He has interned as a blog writer with Envision Marketing and as a technical writer with eMeter Corporation. He hopes to extend these skills into a career as a technical writer.*



## Google this. Google that.

By Hsin-Che “Josh” Lee

you can edit your documents with other users, and all changes appear in real-time. You also don’t have to worry about having different versions of your documents since everything syncs to your Google Docs account. The app also lets you download documents from your Google Docs account so that you can work on your files offline. Google also includes optical character recognition (OCR) technology in the mobile app, which users often overlook: This feature lets you take photos of hard-copy documents and convert the image into a Google Doc file. OCR can save valuable time that you can put toward editing.

The app is far from perfect, however. The mobile app does not provide any editing features, so you will have to type an entire essay without any proper formatting until you have access to the web version. The mobile app can only view PowerPoints as well, so do not expect to create a presentation on the go. In addition, all versions of Google Docs tend to have issues with importing PowerPoint files, which may alter the formatting and omit graphics. The chat feature is missing too, likely because of the lack of screen real estate, and that is definitely a letdown for the collaborative aspect of Google Docs.

Yet despite these faults, “Google Docs for Android” is still a great introduction into mobile office suites. The app may lack features, but the basic functions should satisfy the needs of most users. There are full-featured apps, like “Documents to Go,” that cost no more than \$15. However, it is hard to ignore free software, and the app does not take up much space on your phone. Google will continue to update the app with more features and bug fixes, so it is definitely an app worth downloading, even if you only use it once. You never know when you will forget that term paper!

**B**Y NOW, WE SHOULD ALL KNOW HOW UBIQUITOUS GOOGLE HAS BECOME. Three years have passed and Google’s Android operating system is currently being activated on more than 500,000 devices per day worldwide and holds the majority of the mobile market (just shy of 50%)! With the emerging tablet market, certain apps have become near necessities to our mobile devices. Let’s be realistic: We will all cross paths with office suites, whether we like it or not. But fear not, Android users, “Google Docs for Android” is here to save you!

The main appeal of Google Docs is its price—free! Following that, Google Docs is known for its collaborative and sharing features, and Google has not forgotten about that for their mobile app. Like the web version,

*Hsin-Che “Josh” Lee is an English major at San José State University. Originally from Taiwan, Joshua immigrated to the United States in 1997. Aside from the alphabet and the vocabulary of a three-year-old toddler, Joshua entered the third grade with almost no understanding of English. A decade later, he ironically ended up an English major.*

# Kickstarter

By Manni Valencia

I'M ON MY SIXTH CUP OF SULAWESI WITH ROOM AND I'M PRETTY SURE THAT I'VE BEEN TAPPING MY FOOT AT A RATE OF 88 MPH. I remember ordering a blueberry coffee cake, but that was at least three cups of Indonesian-black-gold ago. My hands are shaking and I have no idea how my story about a young man in Milwaukee—who discovers his homosexuality during sex with his first girlfriend *dun dun dun!*—ties in with the inequality of money distribution in modern America. The baristas are going through a second shift change, which is my cue that I've been playing coffee-shop-novelist a little too long now. I pack up my MacBook, manage a head nod to the other 17 novelists in the place and take off.

Writing is the easy part of being a novelist—it can be done on a laptop at a coffee shop, a desktop computer at your local library, or 140 characters at a time on your phone. Getting published is the big feat every writer faces. Now, though, we are in a time where being published can mean anything from print in Reader's Digest to your personal blog hosted on Wordpress.com. But for those of us who prefer a more traditional route of getting our books on a shelf somewhere, self-publication is gaining a strong foothold. While offering numerous creative freedoms, self-publication requires a substantial amount of overhead. Enter Kickstarter!

Kickstarter is a website dedicated to providing funding for independent projects through a social community. Its focus is on creative projects in varying areas, such as books, applications, dance projects, and independent films, to name a few, submitted daily to the site.

When first visiting the site, you'll notice that numerous prominent media outlets, like *Wired* and *The New York Times*, have featured Kickstarter.



The main page opens up to a host of projects, including a "Project of the Day," which are active works currently gaining momentum. Featured projects show a picture along with their creator, location, blurb, percent funded, amount pledged, and days left of a project.

Down the page, Kickstarter also has a section for "Curated Pages," which are sections dedicated to a few choice organizations that create and foster numerous projects on the Kickstarter site. At the bottom of the Kickstarter homepage, you'll find a section that lets you sign up for Kickstarter's weekly newsletter, if you want to stay on top of new and exciting projects. You'll also find some buttons dedicated for subscription to Kickstarter's Twitter feed and blog.

Back at the top of the page you'll find Kickstarter's most important tab: "Discover Great Projects," which takes you to all the projects hosted on Kickstarter and is divided into different sections according to their purpose. Just like the homepage, "Discover" is arranged in a similar array but with sections like: New & Noteworthy, Popular This Week, and Recently Successful.

Along the right-hand side, there are some interesting, new options to delve further into the vast pool of creative enterprises. Under "Featured," there are projects that are Recommended, Popular, Recently Launched, Ending Soon, Small Projects, Most Funded, and

another link to the Curated Pages. Then you come to the categories of Kickstarter, with some interesting choices like Food or Comics, along with the more traditional, such as Film & Video or Writing & Publishing. Interestingly enough there's also a section dedicated to finding projects by the city they're featured in, so if you're determined to keeping Portland weird, then do so by donating heavily to Dill Pickle Club's Know Your City, an application detailing the strange and exciting history of Portland, Oregon.

With little browsing, it's quite easy to find one or two projects that will catch your fancy, and hopefully your checkbook (or debit card because who carries a checkbook anymore?). Now for those of us not quite as altruistic as the others, there's plenty of reason to fund a project on Kickstarter.

Kickstarter is unique in its approach to curate investors by offering "rewards" through donation. Basically, every project on Kickstarter has differing tiers of rewards to the amount of money pledged. The reward system for every project is completely up to the project creator, but, once again, the Kickstarter team emphasizes creativity over all else. A band may offer up a copy of the album they're trying to finance as the base donation, and the top tier donation might invite investors to a special show. There are even some projects rewarding top investors to be featured in the works, such as becom-

ing a character in a comic book or story. There's also an option to not receive a reward should you just want the hipster cred of supporting such indie projects! As a word of caution to potential investors, once a project becomes successful in attaining the goal amount, imparting the rewards is entirely up to the discretion of the project's creators. Kickstarter

does not take any part in enforcing the rewarding of investors. This shouldn't deter any would be investors since Kickstarter is a tight-knit community and a negative reputation for a project leader can prevent any future investors.

I say "money pledged" because the amount you submit isn't paid into the creator's account until a project has become successful in accruing the planned amount. This means that during the period that a project is active you can decide to change or withdraw your pledge, and if a project can't generate enough funds then no money is charged to any investors. For those who are wary about online shopping and checkout, fear not: Kickstarter uses Amazon checkout to process the financial end of pledging.

So with all that in mind, why not browse around Kickstarter? You may be surprised as to what you find being hosted, such as the web series *Chad Vader, Day Shift Manager*.

Now that you know all about becoming a Kickstarter investor, let's take a look at creating a project. First, how do you decide if your project belongs on the Kickstarter site?

Kickstarter adheres to strict guidelines concerning projects and reserves the right to pull any off the site if they do not follow their criteria. Submissions cannot be used for charity, awareness funds, or non-profit organizations, as there are numerous grants and scholar-

ships available already. This is repeatedly found throughout the company's legal documentation. Also of note, Kickstarter does not consider "fund my life" a worthy project, so don't sign up thinking you can get people to donate money to help you with rent or that vacation

to Amsterdam you've been wanting. Kickstarter is not intended for the

Writing is the easy part of being a novelist—it can be done on a laptop at a coffee shop, a desktop computer at your local library, or 140 characters at a time on your phone. Getting published is the big feat every writer faces.

initial stages of any project. Submissions should be down to production or pre-production stages or in the late developmental stages. This level of development will also help generate more investors, as a finished product needing funding to shift into production is more appealing.

Once you decide that your project would benefit from a Kickstarter page, you'll need to start defining your expectations. All projects on Kickstarter have a finite time span, between 1 and 60 days, and funding goal, which is completely up to you, the creator. As the project lead, you'll need to create a summary of your project along with pictures of the product, service, or team. Kickstarter also recommends creating a video, and stands behind the idea by dedicating an entire section of its guidelines to video inclusion.

Every project requires having different tiers of rewards for potential investors, and this is where the fun and creative part comes into play! The more creative your rewards system, the more alluring it will be for investors.

Reward fulfillment is an integral part of your project. Should you become successful in reaching your goal amount, you'll be expected to handle rewarding those investors. Kickstarter doesn't take part in the reward commitment or enforcement, but remember that should you falter in this duty, your reputation (and conscience!) is at stake.

Blogging is also a heavily relied

upon aspect of hosting a project on Kickstarter. Every project is provided a section to blog, and it's recommended to keep one regularly to show your commitment to your investors and that a forward motion is in fact happening on your end. A comments section also provides a back and forth in the community, with speedy replies generally preferred.

Keep in mind that just because your project is on Kickstarter doesn't mean it's going to be magically funded. This is a community and you'll need to promote your project; try not to be seedy by dropping your project link onto other, more popular, projects' comments section. Kickstarter operates on an all-or-nothing agenda, so even if you miss your goal by \$1, your project will be deemed unsuccessful and investors won't be charged. But don't despair as you can always re-enter your project back into Kickstarter.

For more information concerning starting a project or project guidelines, check out the Kickstarter School ([www.kickstarter.com/help/school](http://www.kickstarter.com/help/school)).

*Left-handed, near-sighted, and single-dimpled, Manni Valencia challenges himself time and again "to do weirder." Graduating from San José State University in the fall of 2011, Manni hopes to use the skills refined at SJSU to push the written word further than is accepted.*

K E R N T Y P E

type.method.ac

Do you wax on about helvetica and have ironic facial hair? Then KERNTYPE might be for you! Apply your understanding of typography by adjusting the space between letters, known as kerning, and then scoff with your friends about how cool kerning used to be.

## Bar Hemingway: Paris, 2011

By Lauren McDermott

AS I SAT ON A BARSTOOL IN ONE OF THE MOST EXPENSIVE PIECES OF REAL ESTATE ON THE PLANET, I contemplated the portrait of the man on the wall in front of me: Ernest Hemingway. Renowned author, notorious for his drinking and marrying habits, Hemingway embodied both the ideals of the “Roaring Twenties” and the struggles of a “Lost Generation.”

In a place where the bartenders are as well-versed in Hemingway’s history as their own country’s, I began to wonder about the influence of Paris on American literature. I recall reading somewhere that some of the highest-esteemed novelists and artists flocked to Paris from all over the world in the years following the First World War. Inspired by the city’s vibrancy and beauty, these artists sought to create meaning and find purpose in an atmosphere that not only accepted their art, but encouraged it.

My friend remarked this afternoon, as we were walking along *La Seine*, how beautiful Paris was in the fall.

She gestured toward the firecracker trees and meticulously designed buildings, attempting to describe what makes Paris—Paris. An element unique to the city, she decided, is its tone. I admire this explanation. Paris possesses a personality, but one that is a contradiction of sorts: it is

charming but overwhelming, serene but restless. Paris has evolved into a city where art, fashion, and business exist in relatively equal amounts of importance.

However, in Bar Hemingway, very little of this matters. The questions asked by a disillusioned generation are the same ones circulating in contemporary society today. Paris in the 1920s and 1930s defines American literature in a way that no other city outside of the United States can.

In fact, Gertrude Stein once said, “America is my country and Paris is my hometown.” For novelist Hemingway, as well as a great number of other expatriate writers and artists, this was absolutely true.

Lured by favorable exchange rates, free-flowing alcohol, and a blossoming art scene, a great number of American writers moved to Paris in the ‘20s and ‘30s. However, Carlos Baker, Hemingway’s first biographer, argues that the author moved to Paris because it was where “the most interesting people in the world

lived.” This was certainly true, as artists such as Pablo Picasso, James Joyce, and F. Scott Fitzgerald all sought inspiration—

and discovered it—while living in Paris.

Hemingway, the author, provides one of the most interesting examples of the era. Hemingway moved to France with his first wife Hadley in 1921. At the time, Hemingway was an unknown, aspiring journalist struggling to make ends

meet as a foreign correspondent for the *Toronto Star*. While in Paris Hemingway associated with other American writers such as Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, and Francis Scott Fitzgerald. In fact, it was in a small café close to his home on the rue Notre-Dame des Champs, titled La Closerie des Lilas, that Hemingway spent much of his time writing.

In the same café, newfound friend Fitzgerald first handed him a copy of

Paris possesses a personality, but one that is a contradiction of sorts: it is charming but overwhelming, serene but restless.

*The Great Gatsby*. Although Fitzgerald began writing the novel at his

home on Long Island around 1922, he finished it when he and his wife Zelda moved to the French Riviera in 1923. Published in the spring of 1925, *The Great Gatsby*—now regarded as one the great American novels—was not nearly as successful as Fitzgerald’s previous novels, *This Side of Paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned*. It is difficult to believe that such an important novel in modern English classrooms could ever be thought of as inconsequential; at the time of Fitzgerald’s death, though, this was exactly the case.

Hemingway praised Fitzgerald’s accomplishment and, perhaps inspired by these events, began spending a great deal of time in La Closerie des Lilas writing his debut novel *The Sun Also Rises*. The novel, about a group of American and British expatriates living in Paris, was written in just six weeks. Hemingway drew on events from his own life, focusing on the time he spent in Spain attending bullfights and the Pamplona festival. Fitzgerald is credited with having introduced Hemingway to Maxwell Perkins, who was both a friend and editor to the two writers. Perkins, while never having lived in Paris himself, is one of the most well-known literary editors ever, having edited many novels from artists who defined the “Lost Generation.” Therefore, as the bartender is now informing me, the partnerships forged during Hemingway’s time in Paris were essen-



www.delish.com

## Visit Bar Hemingway

Bar Hemingway is located within the Ritz Paris. Its décor is immaculate, dressed floor-to-ceiling in traditional Hemingway fashion. In fact, the carpets, panels, upholstery, and a good deal of its alcohol are from Paris in the 1920s and 1930s—or refashioned to appear so. Head bartender Colin Field can serve anything from the Hemingway House cocktail, called “Serendipity,” to one of the best Dry Martinis in the world (served at  $-18.3^{\circ}\text{C}$  in a glass of the same temperature, of course).

At Bar Hemingway, surrounded by photos of the man himself, guests can spend the 30 euros on a traditional cocktail, buy a bottle of Cristal for 650 euros, have a glass of their finest Armagnac reserve for 1250 euros, or simply chat up the person serving you for interesting tidbits about the bar’s namesake.

One can choose what type of salt they’d like on the rim of their margarita glass—as well as the country it comes from—making it no surprise that the bar and its head bartender were elected “Best in the World” by *Forbes* magazine in 2001. In a bar as uniquely doused in history and as decadent as the hotel that houses it, guests will be anything but disappointed in stopping by for a drink.



Photo by Lauren McDermott

tial to his later success as a novelist.

As Gertrude Stein once remarked to Hemingway about the work of his contemporaries, they were all a “lost generation” struggling to find meaning in a world that had lost purpose and reason. As most critics mark the beginning of the Modernist and Post-Modernist Movements as occurring after major World Wars, it is important to understand the circumstances in which these artists were creating their work. Authors like Hemingway, for example, published novels in the wake of both WWI and WWII.

The traditional literary form was challenged during these times, and Hemingway pushed the rhetorical limits by writing about the real and unflattering aspects of everyday life. In *The Sun Also Rises*, Hemingway writes about the casualties of war in terms of psychology and sexuality. Although there are other, more common themes to the work (like jealousy and monetary troubles), Jake’s impotence is the underlying but dominant feature. His impotence is a consequence of war, as he was irrevocably injured while fighting. Hemingway, through his protagonist, examines how war damages not only

the body, but the mind and the heart. The novel’s closing line perhaps best sums up the disillusioned attitudes of the generation: “Yes[...]. Isn’t it pretty to think so?” Akin to this closing is the ending of Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.”

Both Fitzgerald and Hemingway wrote of pains they suffered from themselves: the predominance of soul-searching through the vices of alcohol and unrequited love in their novels are evidence of this. Both writers are fixated with the illusion and the necessity of wealth, mostly because they understood what it was like to live in near poverty. However, where Fitzgerald chose to focus on the fickleness of romantic relationships in *The Great Gatsby* (due in large part to his dysfunctional marriage to Zelda Sayre), Hemingway chose to focus on their pointlessness in *The Sun Also Rises*. An element of yearning exists in these two texts that is utterly representative of their generation. It is “pretty” to think of what life could have been for Jake (and Hemingway) had there been no war, just as it is important to “beat on” through uncharted waters because it is all Nick (and Fitzgerald) know how to do. How-

ever, when asked about the characters in his novel, Hemingway replied: “they may have been battered but not lost.” Hemingway may have well been speaking of himself and his contemporaries.

My drink is almost gone, and I can’t help but wonder if the cloudiness threatening to permeate my thoughts is similar to what Hemingway attempted to seek himself every night. I contemplated the ways through which my expectations of Paris had changed over the last week. Being in Paris in November felt like a joy ride. I had left work and school behind, albeit briefly, and as this should have tainted my trip with stress or guilt, I felt somewhat vindicated by the whole thing. In my mind, I was bound by a desire to simply be in the city that inspired so many fascinating literary figures. I wanted to walk along the Left Bank in Ezra Pound’s footsteps, to write in cafés as Ernest Hemingway had, to read both of their works in a salon

as Gertrude Stein must have done.

However, as wondrously appealing as Paris is to a twenty-three year old college student, the city’s art and literary history are quite beyond my comprehension. It may be possible to appreciate it, but understanding it is nearly impossible. Here, where I am sitting in the Ritz Paris, is where Hemingway “liberated” the joint by ordering martinis all around during the Liberation in 1944. My knowledgeable source at Bar Hemingway also informs me that here Hemingway discovered a trunk full of notes that he wrote during his first years in Paris. These notes paved the way for a collection of memoirs titled *A Moveable Feast*, published posthumously. The memoirs examine the relationships of people Hemingway knew in the ‘20s and ‘30s, as well as the stimulating setting Paris had provided for him. Paris, perhaps because of the Lost Generation, became a symbol of sorts: a center for artistic expres-

sion and growth. It has remained one.

As I stood to gather my coat, I glanced once more at the photo on the wall. To live through what Hemingway had lived through and to express it the way he had are two things I, again, can appreciate but never understand. I left the bar, tipping though I shouldn’t—for both the memorable drink and the history lesson—and silently saluted a man and the city that inspired him.

---

*Paris correspondent **Lauren McDermott** is currently studying English at SJSU. Like many in the major, she enjoys both reading and writing in her free time, and already has many “projects” underway. After graduation, if none of her efforts in dabbling pay off, she hopes to find work as a technical writer or editor.*

---



---

*Cover article by **Jan McCutcheon**. Jan distinguished herself in high school as a world-class truant. To compensate for previous lack of academic interest, she spent more time in community college than most students have been alive. Now at SJSU she hopes to earn a BA in English before she is eligible for Social Security.*

---

## PRODUCTION STAFF

### Acquisitions Editors

Alex O’Connor

Chris Suard

### Copy Editors

Daniel Acuff

Orion Petitclerc

Manni Valencia

### Layout and Design

Shannon Daly

Joseph Gavidia

Jan McCutcheon

### Proofreaders

Tram Huynh

Austin McKenzie

### Distribution

Taylor Dere

### Faculty Advisor

Kelly A. Harrison

## English Department YouTube Channel

### Professor Sneak Peek

If you’ve ever wondered about who your professors are before taking their courses, now you have a chance to check them out! See videos of your professors explain the courses you’ve chosen for next semester and get prepared for what your textbooks, workload, and coursework entails.

[www.youtube.com/user/SJSUEnglishDept](http://www.youtube.com/user/SJSUEnglishDept)

## Please Visit *The Writing Life* Wiki

View course descriptions, links to professor videos, author bios, and the PDF version of this newsletter, as well as the English Department Newsletter:

[sjsuengl129.pbworks.com](http://sjsuengl129.pbworks.com)