

# Guidelines and Policies

*Freelancer* is an annual publication of the Amarillo College English Department designed to showcase student, faculty, and staff writing of all kinds. Winning entries from the Amarillo College English Department Writer's Roundup contest are also included. A new issue is published each spring.

*Freelancer* invites submissions from AC students, faculty, and staff. You may send us original poetry, short stories, essays, reflections, etc. Submissions may be emailed to a staff member, given to a member of the English Department, or delivered to the English Writing Lab in Ordway 101. We would prefer to receive an electronic copy of each work, either saved on a disk or emailed as an attachment. Submissions must have a name and contact information on them. To be published in *Freelancer*, submissions must be accepted by staff majority vote.

Each submission becomes the property of *Freelancer* until after publication of the issue it appears in, when rights revert to the author. Submissions will not be returned unless accompanied by the author's request and a self-addressed stamped envelope. All submitted works must be original and unpublished.

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# Unspoken Truth

by Barbara Logan

*"The wicked shall be turned into hell"—Psalms 9:17*

Mourners pass to whisper their words of pity  
lingering like the aftertaste of vomit.

Standing by the freshly shoveled mound,  
white knuckles tattering the delicate ribbon  
knotted around the dead bouquet,

I glare at the unpolished slab of granite,  
pleased with its harsh grey coldness.  
Etched on the front only a name—  
for to say "loving father"  
would be to lie to the souls that lay at rest.

A smile taunts my lips, a laugh escapes my throat.  
I toss the crumpled flowers on the dirt.  
Yielding to the fury that smothered my youth.  
The beast frees its claws from my chest.

And now—

I am able to breathe.

## Trying to Write Paradise

by Travis Allen

The poet peeks outside  
Through a laughing window  
And sees himself  
Streaking the firmament  
As some unseemly Elijah

Except he,  
With secondhand chariot,  
Struggles  
In fledgling fashion,  
Embarrassed  
And sweating a bit

In grave concentration  
And with fearful intent  
His eyes are fixed,  
Bloodshot upon the heavens

# They're Altogether Ooky

by Trey Funderburg

Popular culture, specifically television, has been the root of many debates. Would you rather be stuck on a deserted island with sultry Ginger or girl-next-door Mary Ann? Was Casper once a “Friendly Little Boy”? Were the Clampetts really backwoods enough to believe that a baby elephant was a “long-nosed calf,” as Granny did in one classic episode? And, would you rather run, screaming in horror, from 0001 Cemetery Lane or 1313 Mockingbird Lane? Not familiar with that last one? These addresses refer to one of the greatest television smack-downs of all time. Simply stated, which is better: “The Addams Family” or “The Munsters”? The two classic television shows share many similarities. Both debuted in 1964 and ran for two seasons. Each depicts families of close-knit oddballs who believe the world outside is filled with strange and unattractive creatures. In their own weird way, both families promote strong family values and the concepts of acceptance and tolerance. Both the Addams clan and the Munster family are loving, supportive, and blind to their own eccentricities. Although these shows are similar, I believe the crown of superiority should go to the gloriously ghoulish Addamses for the show’s better developed characters, darker and more wicked wit, and timeless nature.

“The Addams Family” characters are simply more entertaining and fully developed. While the Munsters are more cartoonish and are obviously based on traditional monsters, the Addamses are harder to define. In my opinion, this shows more imaginative character development. Patriarchs Herman Munster and Gomez Addams could not be more different. Herman, played by the much loved Fred Gwynne, is a Frankenstein’s monster. His character comes across as a buffoonish, one-trick pony, as Herman throws tantrums, unintentionally scares people, and accidentally smashes something. Not surprisingly, he works for a funeral home. John Astin’s Gomez has more layers and little hidden corners. Fiercely loving and loyal, he is a bug-eyed lawyer who attaches himself with enthusiasm to a wide variety of projects and interests. In one episode, he may be fighting the local school system for teaching his children horrible stories of dragon-slaying. In another, Mr. Addams might take on city hall to prevent the draining of his beloved swamps. All the while, Mr. Addams is never without his cigars, which he produces seemingly from thin air, often already lit. Embracing Zen Yoga, he champions spending countless hours on his head. This is not only therapeutic, but saves on shoes. The wives, Lily Munster and Morticia Addams, share a dark vampiric look. Lily, an actual vampire, seems to be merely on the scene to become frustrated with her husband’s hijinks. Morticia, played by Amarillo’s own Carolyn Jones, is a wonderfully comedic character that doesn’t rely on her family for laughs. At times, interaction between Morticia and her African Strangler Vine provide genuine humor. That is just one woman, her plant, and a plate of meatballs. The Munsters inexplicably have a wolf boy for a child. Eddie may be chasing cars or howling at the moon, while the wonderfully amateur Addams children are lower key. Little Wednesday may be playing with her beheaded doll, Marie Antoinette, while pudgy Pugsley is hiding in his room, trying on a Boy Scout uniform that sends his family into despair.

Supporting characters include “The Munsters” Grandpa, who is Lily’s father, and actually Count Dracula, and Herman’s niece, Marilyn. Al Lewis plays Grandpa as a hammy sidekick to Herman’s schemes. Marilyn is a pretty, blonde teen whose normalcy worries the family. This gag, while inspired, tires over time. The Addamses’ extended family consists of the brilliantly funny Jackie Coogan as Uncle Fester, Blossom Rock as creepy Grandmama, and Ted Lewis as both the butler Lurch and disembodied hand Thing. These characters are all provided with detailed back stories and plot lines over the series’ run, giving each character a multi-dimensional life.

“The Addams Family” is a twisted show with more thoughtful and mature humor. “The Munsters,” aside from being monsters, could be any ‘60’s or ‘70’s sitcom. The storylines are centered on wacky schemes and misunderstandings. Grandpa and Herman often mess something up, scheme to fix it, and mess that up as well, while Lily rolls her eyes in frustration. The writing on “The Addams Family” is more sophisticated. Episodes often contain charming innuendo, playing on the passionate relationship of Gomez and Morticia. Many of the gags center around the adults in the family, even using the children to point out grown-ups’ foibles. The sly writing lifts this show out of the campiness of the subject matter and places it in a category all its own.

“The Addams Family” truly stands the test of time. The shows are based on cartoonist Charles Addams’ irreverent creations for The New Yorker. Like these cartoons, the series has a classy and timeless quality. Themes of romance and truly dark humor never go out of fashion. Even Lurch’s harpsichord music has a classical sensibility to it. More cultural satire than sitcom, the episodes show a group of outsiders’ view of politics, child-rearing, hypocrisy, and even bigotry. These shows stand up today with very little signs of age. With custom dragsters, ‘60’s pop music, and hippie counter-culture references, “The Munsters” does not fare as well.

And so, in the battle royale of TV monster-family comedies, the Addamses rise to the top. They exist in their own self-contained quirkiness, just like all truly realized families. Because of this, they can be transplanted in any time and still be equally enjoyed. Although a fine example of classic television, Herman and his gang never rise above their era or pigeon-hole writing. Besides, the Addamses once met Scooby-Doo, and that alone will always win points in my book.

## Origins

by Sally Evans

I come from desert shaman  
whose songs of lament  
lofted flat sanded mesas  
and river-worn mountains...

Whose moonlight dances  
beckoned ghosts of longing  
and the smoke of peace,  
settled deep in  
flickering firelight.

I come from stardust,  
moistened with the spit of God  
and sculpted sacred  
by the laughter of his breath.



# Leo Man, Scorpio Woman

by Rachel Waterhouse

Real jungle royalty makes him roam  
when thoughts so wild encage his will  
Claws dig no carnage under his crown  
Zoos of the Zodiac show his Zen  
Mainly, his mane makes locks of marriage  
hunting a heart to carry to hearth  
A beast feasting upon benevolence

Dame of the desert, born in defense  
pose within, poison without her peace  
straddling stinger, herself, she'll strike  
arachnid archives make her astral  
pinch as she preys upon her dark past  
creeping, she craves a mate to collect  
A chaotic, erotic cold creature

Aroused, they arise despite their anatomy  
Bonding, they both boil passion without boundaries  
Teeth, and with tail, they tend to target their tempers  
Verging, a vertebra stands them vertically  
Two bodies tattoo in astrological taboo  
Celestial cells of stars cannot encage our celibacy  
Anarchist animals, our appetite grows without approval

# His Great Delight

by Julie Grisham

I

His mouth widens with anticipation,  
as He tries to stifle a chuckle.  
Raising His hands with vigor  
the Great Composer unveils His masterpiece. **Da niente**

II

Clicking shoes fill the stage,  
putting the tenor on display.  
Heaven restrains its clamor **Lento**  
to witness the redemption of the common.

The tenor deeply fills his abdomen; **Affettuoso cresc.**  
at last the perusal of the perfect notes met.  
The weight of his longing is spilled,  
revealing his vulnerability. **Cresc.**

His beckoning plea  
provokes a secret place in her soul.  
Her emotions ascend the scale; **Stretto**  
her presence the response.

Distracted his voice thins. **Diminuendo**  
Gazing at the treasure of his affections,  
overcome by the whiteness of her beauty,  
his strength is awakened.

He sings once more. **Dolce affettuoso**  
The intensity of his vibrato  
is joined with his thudding pulse. **Stringendo**  
His strength unfolds her loveliness.

As the medley of two hearts intertwine  
Heaven breaks its silence, **Stretto**  
accompanying the holy union  
with wings in motion sparking angelic chords. **Giocosso marcato**

III

The Great Composer breathes; **Vivace in rilievo**  
a symphony of delight is born.  
Foreshadowing what is to come, **Ritenuto**  
He thunders a sigh of approval.

Harmonies in the morning **Rall.**  
And melodies at night.  
O, hear the sacred song; **Morendo adagio**  
cultivated only by time. **Al niente**

# The Café

by Kelly Laxson

Stepping out on the back porch, Selma lights a cigarette and looks into the alley. The chain link fence irritates her. The thought that anyone could peer at them, at her, whenever they wanted to was unnerving. Looking over at the dumpsters, she groans seeing the flies circling overhead. She has repeatedly asked the busboys to bag up the table scraps before tossing them out. Night after night, they tossed the leftovers into the bins, food splattering over the edge and crusted on the lids.

Every morning, the smell reminds her of what the special had been the day before. Monday night had been the fish, Thursdays, turkey and dressing. Saturday mornings, she knew the customer count was down when Mr. Ruis' blue heeler clawed at the dumpsters to get to her spoiled sirloins. She is going to have to switch to meatloaf again. The regulars will complain, but she has no choice. They will spend a couple of weeks eating at the Chinese buffet to make their point, but they will be back. They always come back. Let them go, she thought. She doesn't swoon over the guests anymore. As long as the food comes out hot, and the waitresses don't get stiffed, she stands behind the counter silently, waiting for the clock to wind down to midnight.

The sharp grinding of gears distracts her, and she sees the towel guy pull in the back drive. She takes one last drag of her cigarette and flicks it into the scrap bin. He is late again, but Selma decides not say anything. He looks tired and she can't deal with his excuses today. He hands her the clipboard and she glances down. The order is short again and she looks at him with a sigh. He stiffens, waiting for her protest, but she just signs and hands the invoice back to him wordlessly. Relieved, he is quick to unload and is gone before she realizes.

Lighting another cigarette, she takes a slow draw and closes her eyes and hears Ramon yelling for her to call the bakery again. Freddy keeps sending them blackberry pie when he knows damn well we asked for blueberry. It is not our problem that the customers don't like blackberries. She opens her eyes and smiles thinly over his head. She'll take care of it, she says. He waits expectantly and she waves him off, putting out her cigarette and stepping back inside. She heads into her office and closes the door.

Ramon watches her through the glass, and she fingers the phone list carefully. He turns back to set up the dessert case, and she sits back in the chair and rubs her forehead. An ache is building behind her eyes. She reaches over and turns off the lamp and waits for the pain to ease up. She breathes in and smells the bleach Loretta uses to clean the floors. It is strong but does not disguise the smell of the rotting onions in the walk-in.

She clears her throat and coughs deeply, reaching for the water glass on her desk. It has dust on the rim, but she reaches for it anyway. Her throat is dry and scratchy, and she claws at her neck for relief. Reaching for the waste bin, she hovers over the edge, coughing and retching, but nothing happens. She slides the bin back to

the floor and lays her head down on her desk. She is so tired. She will just rest her eyes, just for a moment. She breathes in and out. In and out. She rubs her forehead and waits.

Outside her door, a loud crash wakes Selma up, and she sees the new girl picking up broken plates from the kitchen floor. Ramon shakes his head, annoyed, and looks towards her office, but she looks down quickly, pretending to sort the morning tickets. She doesn't bother to read them anymore. They are the same every morning. Lulu with her toasted English muffin and grapefruit, Frank and Bobby and their biscuits and gravy. The tow truck guy always asks for coffee and an extra glass of water while he scans the morning paper. The cafe is still with its designated corners occupied with those who have no time to talk and nowhere to go.

In the early years, there were no empty tables until after the lunch rush. The farmers gathered for their morning coffee while their wives gossiped in the corner booths. Tired mothers dragged their toddlers in for noisy lunches with other tired mothers. In the afternoons, boys from the high school pretended to study while flirting with the cheerleaders in the booth behind them. The door was always opening and closing.

*Ping, ping, ping, ping.*

Selma missed the Christmas shoppers most of all. Families would rush in the door with their bright faces and foggy breath, asking for hot chocolate in their sing-song voices. She used to tell the waitresses to add extra marshmallows for the kids as a surprise. They always noticed. Every time, they noticed. Parents would beam at Selma, mouthing *thank you* over their heads. She would stand at the counter and cross her arms, happily watching over her flock, careful to catch empty coffee cups or someone reaching for the check. Nothing went unnoticed. No one left alone. She made sure of it.

Selma opens her eyes and sees Ramon watching her again. She stands up and steps outside her office, passing his demanding gaze and heads to the dining room. Looking over the counter, she sees Lucinda checking condiments on the tables although it is not necessary. They are rarely empty anymore. Selma decides to send the new girl home for the day. She has a new baby at home, and there is no reason to stay on. Selma can work lunch with Lucinda, and Ramon can handle the kitchen alone. She grabs a rag from the bleach bin to wipe down the counter.

The door opens and closes.

*Ping, ping.*

Selma looks over her shoulder. An older woman shuffles in and sits in the front booth, her back to the counter. Selma sees Lucinda make a move towards the booth, and she shakes her head. "I'll get her," she says. Grabbing a pad from the register, she walks over to the booth and realizes the woman looks familiar.

She looks up as Selma approaches and smiles sweetly. "Could I just have some coffee, please?" she asks. "And some wheat toast, if you have it?"

"Sure thing, ma'am. Want your coffee black?" She looks the woman in the eye, waiting for recognition to kick in but nothing happens.

"That'd be fine." The woman looks out the window at the cars passing and begins to unbutton her coat.

"Right back with that." Selma turns on her heel and walks away. She watches the coffee brew and tries to remember.

She must have been a customer at some point. Rarely venturing around town except to drop off her weekly deposit at the bank or to pick up her prescriptions at the pharmacy, Selma is a creature of habit. She tries to imagine the faces of the bank tellers or the woman who rings her up at the drugstore.

It's possible she saw the woman at the department store last month, but it is doubtful. Selma had only stepped inside for a moment. Running errands on her lunch break, she stood in the lobby and immediately noticed the polished housewives looking bored as they browsed the racks of new dresses. Selma had glanced down at her waitress' uniform with the coffee stains and yellowed apron and immediately felt out of place. She backed right out the door she entered and headed back to the cafe.

Careful to grab a clean spoon and a saucer, Selma grabs the coffee pot and heads back to the front booth.

"Here you go, ma'am. Just made a fresh pot." She turns to go but the woman stops her. "Aren't you May's girl?"

Selma is still stumped but tries to bluff her way out. "Yes, ma'am, that's right. I thought that was you. How've you been?"

The woman laughed, exclaiming "I can't believe you remember me after all these years! Such a memory you have. You were just a kid when I saw you last!" She reaches out to touch Selma's arm and her hand is warm and soft. She smiles so sweetly that Selma can't bear to lead her on.

"To be honest, ma'am, you look awful familiar, but I can't seem to place where I have seen you before."

"Aw, honey, I can't blame you," the woman exclaimed with a quick laugh. "It has been close to forty years since we last saw one another."

The gentle cadence of the woman's voice calmed Selma. Eyes twinkling, the woman continued, "You were around nine or ten years old or so at the time. I'd be surprised if you remembered me at all." She smiled widely and said, "I used to work at the library over on King Street. You used to come in every Friday and visit with me when your momma was gettin' her hair done at Cecilia's place."

Selma abruptly remembered. "That's it!" she said. "I used to stand at the desk and bother you with questions the whole time. I don't know how you put up with me!"

She reached up and toyed with a piece of hair. Shifting her weight on her other foot, Selma thought of all the afternoons she had spent crouched in aisles of that library, pulling one book out after the next, enthralled with the words she read, too young to understand their meaning.

*Feckless, temerity, sanguine, esoteric.*

She had been so desperate to know more, to be part of a special club where words came easily and she was always self-assured. She wanted to stand at parties with a martini in one hand and exclaim, "Why, yes, I was just perusing that novel the other night! I found it to be quite obtuse and stuporous myself." Everyone would look at her fondly and nod in agreement at her wit and insight.

Looking down at the woman in the booth, Selma remembered the young librarian who had laughed with glee when she walked through the door. Standing behind the book desk, her bouncy black hair and red lipstick reminded her of an actress she had seen in a movie matinee. Selma had been ungainly and nervous as a child. Her momma always said Selma had the only knees in the county that were meant to be black and blue. Going into the library on hot summer days, Selma would step up to the checkout desk and there was Miss Enger, always fresh and smelling of lavender. She would lean over the desk and, in a conspiratorial whisper, ask Selma, "What sort of trouble shall we get into today?"

Still holding the coffee pot, Selma looked down at the old woman sitting in the booth and laughed. "You must have been so glad to see my mother walk back in the door", she said. Miss Enger laughed and waved off the comment. "Hardly," she said. "If it weren't for you, I would have been looking up casserole recipes for the Ladies Auxiliary. Your questions were nothing compared with those sorts of silly things." She picked up the extra coffee cup and pointed at the empty seat across from her. "Care to return the favor and indulge an old lady with some conversation? And maybe some coffee?" Her eyes were hopeful and her hand was shaking as she pointed at the coffee pot in Selma's hand.

Selma laughed as she realized how long she had been standing there. "Oh, I am so sorry! She poured Miss Enger's coffee and settled in across from her. The old woman smiled slyly and asked Selma, "What sorts of interesting books are you reading nowadays?" Selma giggled and Miss Enger seemed pleased at her reaction. Selma remembered everything now. She used to spend hours combing through the card catalog and looking for books with interesting titles. Only the most exotic or shocking titles interested her.

Once, she had proudly walked up to the book desk and handed Miss Enger a card for a book she had trouble locating. She still remembered the title, 101 Ways to Die a Most Miserable Death. Miss Enger had not appeared to be shocked in the slightest. Without hesitation, she walked around the counter and led Selma to the crime section. After looking a moment, she handed Selma the book and simply said, "Just remember to leave it on the table when you are done, dear." She walked back to her desk and resumed reading the morning newspaper as though she always found gruesome books on death for ten year-old girls.

Selma looked across the table at her old friend and said, "I can't believe I could forget you at all. You were so nice to me back then. I was so curious about everything and everyone. I thought you knew the answer to everything! It was really hard to stump you."

Miss Enger laughed gleefully. "It did not stop you from trying, though, did it? You used to walk up to the counter with such a defiant face, so sure of yourself! You used to ask about the most obscure things and *insist* that your teacher had demanded you write a report about them. You practically dared me to claim ignorance of such things!" Reaching out to pat Selma's hand across the table, she sighed happily. "I looked forward every week to seeing what you would come up with."

Selma thought of those days and smiled. She remembered asking her geography teacher after school one day to tell her the name of a lost tribe in the rain forest so she could ask Miss Enger about it. He seemed annoyed with her questions and began putting his coat on. Walking out the classroom door, he said distractedly, "Well, if they are lost, then I can't tell you their name, can I?" He walked down the hall without looking back.

On Friday, when she asked Miss Enger if she knew of any books about the rain forest, she had smiled and squeezed her shoulder before saying, "I know just where to look!"

Taking Selma's hand and leading her to the adult reference section, Miss Enger had pulled a heavy book down from the top shelf and opened it flat on the table in front of her. She flipped through several chapters before finding a section labeled *Life in the Amazon*. The pages were a brilliant mix of blues and reds and greens. It was an actual map of a rain forest, and its sections were labeled with the names of tribes believed to reside there. Selma mouthed the names as she pointed.

*The Pirahã, the Xucuru, the Karaja.*

Selma blinked hard and sipped her coffee, feeling her throat catch. She tried not to let the tears well up in her eyes. Too late, she brushed a finger under her right eye and reached for a napkin. Looking across the table at the older woman, she tried to laugh it off saying, "I can't believe myself. It is stupid to feel so nostalgic about a bunch of old books."

She wiped her nose and peered at Mrs. Enger over her cup. The woman looked Selma in the eye and laughed. "Nonsense!" she said. Reaching over, she picked up Selma's left hand and squeezed it tightly "There was *never* anyone like you before or since, my dear." She smiled at Selma and let go.

Miss Enger picked up her cup and drank the last sip of her coffee. "Time to go, I'm afraid. My grandson's birthday is today, and I am going to see him. I don't want him to wait long." She reached down to get her wallet, and Selma waved her off.

"Don't worry about it. The coffee is on the house," she said.

Mrs. Enger beamed at her and replied, "Wonderful! This is your cafe? I imagine you get all kinds of characters in here!" She winked mischievously at Selma and went to stand up.

Selma scrambled to her feet and reached out a hand to help her. Stepping behind her, she helped the older woman with her coat and walked her to the door. Looking outside, Selma saw the only car in the lot and noticed the out of state plates.

Thinking of her little grandson, she asked Mrs. Enger, "Do you know the way?"

Mrs. Enger smiled and reached into her purse and pulled out a folded map. She replied, "I know just where to look!" She walked out to her car, settled in, and turned on the ignition. Waving at Selma, she backed out of the lot and headed down McClaren Avenue.

Selma watched her car drive away until she couldn't see it anymore. Walking back inside, she brushed the hair away from her eyes and smiled to herself. Ramon stepped out from the kitchen and asked her if she would rather he called the bakery himself. She shook her head.

"I'll do it right now," she said.



## To What End a Dream

by Frank Sobey

In my dream, you

gathered words

I had skipped  
across the dark.

You said some were smooth

like my best poems

but others flat with too much belief.

Disheartened  
at never writing again

I woke to take a swim.

But seeing you

this morning

looking out over

the rim

of your cup

to watch me dry  
in the sun

I knew I could write

again—

and would write again—

and write what

no one but you  
would ever believe.

## Tooth for Tooth

by Travis Allison

“ . . . Go unto the altar, and offer  
thy sin offering, and thy  
burnt offering, and make an  
atonement for thyself. . . ”  
—Leviticus 9:7

The chair is silent  
until someone  
flips the switch

Then it hums  
a steady rhythm

coming alive  
as one expires

and making man  
incandescent  
in his transgressions

# Good Deeds for Everyone to See

by Kristina Peterson

Chrystal and I were both females trying to make our way in a harsh reality. She was thrown out of her adoptive parents' house at age thirteen. The only way she could survive was to find a boyfriend. Unbeknownst to us, the boyfriend was HIV positive. When she found out she was pregnant, she was given a routine AIDS test. It came back positive.

Then, life turned around for both of us. I married her brother Daymon, and she met a man who loved her enough to marry her. Sometimes out of the worst pain come the fondest memories and the best lessons.

Daymon and I had been together about five years, and Chrystal gave birth to a healthy baby girl. As she declined in health, I thought about a lasting memory for a Christmas present to her family. What could be better than a family photo? We planned to have one taken at Bryan Allen Studio.

On the day when it was scheduled, I stopped by her house to see if she needed anything. She was frantic. She had lost too much weight, and none of her clothes looked good on her. We went shopping and got her a dress, but forgot the slip.

By this time in our lives, I had been an office manager and was wearing professional clothing. That day, I had on a short, fluttering see-through skirt paired with a solid jacket that went down just past my hips. I figured I was on my way home, and if I gave her my slip, nobody would know the difference. It was a good choice for a good friend, allowing her to once again feel beautiful, confident, and womanly.

In Florida, storms can come up in a second. On my way home, a gully-washer let loose. My daughter and I were in my huge truck, with 44-inch tires, sitting at the bottom of a tall bridge. It didn't stop. It hit us at about 45 miles per hour, sending my truck into the cow pasture next to the road, where it stuck in the mud. My daughter and I were not hurt. Getting out of the truck, I quickly realized the problem. Winds were gusting at about twenty-five miles per hour, it was pouring rain, and I had no slip on under my skirt to hide my business. The others present were polite enough not to comment, although nobody offered me anything to cover up with. It wasn't until the fire trucks showed up about fifteen minutes later that I got a blanket.

Three weeks later, at the annual family gift exchange, Chrystal and her husband, Wayne, presented Daymon and me with a faux oil painting of their family portrait. On the back, she had taped a bag containing a pair of bloomers with an overabundance of girly ruffles on the legs. She added a Christmas letter from Santa, telling me undergarments are precious and discouraging me from giving them away any more. They were being replaced by something nobody sane would wear.

Daymon and I have since divorced, he has remarried, and Chrystal has died. But twelve years later, my daughter wears those bloomers, and every time she puts them on is a fond memory, a huge chuckle, and a lesson on love and friendship. My daughter, over the last three years, has begun a new tradition in our family. She wears them on AIDS Awareness Day. This year, she went to school with green and black stockings, black bloomers, a green shirt, and a gigantic red ribbon. She also wears them to all the family dinners at Christmastime. It is a fitting memory of her Aunt Chrystal and a good lesson for her in the dangers of AIDS.

## **Smokey Row**

by Karon Hamby

Down in the great state of Tennessee back in 1862,  
Union soldiers in Nashville with nothing better to do.

Needing to fulfill their desires, to Cumberland River they go;  
lady mockingbirds earn a buck for love, money, or a beau.

Front, Market, College, Cherry. The streets where soiled doves stay,  
maybe money or something else. Who's to say?

Soldiers of the North down on Smokey Row,  
catching more than the women, don't you know.

Perhaps it's justice to spread disease around  
to kill a Yankee soldier for invading their town.

# The Hunt

by Majaunta Fruscella

I searched long for  
what great men write,  
the elusive prize.

The list I followed  
*"directions,"* they said.  
*"everything I needed"*  
was useless.

Only when I threw  
it out, reckless,  
did I find the first clue:

In haste, I followed  
that child of the sun,  
defiant and exceptional.

# **All the World's a Stage; Except This Actually Is a Stage**

by Paul Mahaffey

The theater is my lifeblood. To a student of theatrical arts, the building houses the climax of all the passion and labor put into a production. The Amarillo College Experimental Theatre has become my second home. At different periods of my time at AC, this theatre has consumed me with dread and grief, embraced me with the warmth and comfort of friendship, and now fills me with excitement and anticipation of the possibilities of creating theatre.

When as a college freshman I wandered into the Experimental Theatre, it frightened me. The Experimental Theatre is what is referred to as a black box, because it is just that, a large square room painted completely black. The black box almost feels like a jail cell; besides uncomfortable stadium seating, the theatre's only other feature is assorted electric boxes on the walls and a covered heating grating along two opposite walls. Straight above, a tension wire grid beneath air condition ducts imposes the feeling of a seedy warehouse rather than a housing for art. The entire building is like a minimalist, steampunk nightmare.

The black box didn't stay empty for long, though, because soon it was filled with eager theatre majors ready to pour their hearts out on the stage. People assemble around the room, laughing, joking, reveling in their quirks and idiosyncrasies. There's the pretty girl who always smiles and is almost too eager to be a best friend talking to the portly fellow ranting with language far too colorful to be appropriate in this part of the Bible Belt. Mumbling to himself, the burly, camo-clad tough guy, a good ten years older than any others, diligently studies his lines. Walking in late, as usual, is the pretentious, self-proclaimed outcast with his ironic garb and mean sarcastic streak chatting up the fashion-savvy Latina valley girl into a cackle. The theatre is thick with that air of a co-dependent, sitcomy, delightfully dysfunctional group dynamic.

These days, the black box just brims with fiery potential in my eyes. Afternoons, the brisk scent of saws ripping through wood fills the shop, sawdust hangs in the air and collects around eyelids, the jingle of screws and shrieks of drills fire off from all sides, the yell from above foretells ten minute spans of darkness, and maybe a rogue gunshot will blare from the smoking barrel of a mismanaged volume knob. The dark walls turn in the backdrop of a quickly forming set as the wooden skeleton of an intricate support system of braces, platforms, and flats rises from the construction. At night, the actors take center stage cloaked in costumes, concocting contrived characterizations, creating comparisons of compassion with cruelty. Beams of light fly to the scenery, taking form like a discotheque with a raging case of Saturday night fever, with a soundtrack to match. The construction, rehearsal, and performance breathe life into the black box, creating a sort of ephemeral creature with a will and strength of its own.

The progress of my education is manifest in how I see the Experimental Theatre, which at first was looming and fearful, then grew to be the source of my friends, and now is my canvas as a designer. The true beauty of the space is its freedom and flexibility, which can be overwhelming at times. Truly talented actors and designers can transform a simple black box into a life-changing event, making testament to the truth and power that is inherent in live performance.

# Day of the Turtle

by Sarah Parijs

There was a turtle,  
youth eroded by a constant surge of days, Ancient and cracked.  
The turtle beheld the world in its end. . .

Fractures slivered across  
an edgeless orange atmosphere.  
The fissure ruptured,  
allowing the sky to  
slip through jagged fingers.  
Moving in the sky,  
the orange swirled  
within dark hands.  
It pushed out a man  
to fall from the sky,  
foggy, fiery tufts of air  
twinned to him;  
sparks winking iridescently,  
becoming flaky glass scraping.  
Burning, afire, raw  
he descended.  
The orange sky shredding above,  
he fell towards evolving green,  
to dissolve into silence.

There was a turtle,  
eyes heavy and puffed from watching,  
New and clean.  
The turtle beheld the world at its beginning. . .



# Drug Dealer

by James Baker

drug dealer  
lace your cigarettes with my self-esteem  
and hold me  
hold me like a fermata holds a conductor-less symphony.  
infinitely.  
kiss me with high school lips.  
remind me of the way it used to be before the sounds of bones breaking.

drug dealer  
lace your cigarettes with my self-esteem.  
blow me  
hard  
like sucker punch wind  
take away the child I could see in you  
like you did when you said  
"i'm pissing plus signs again"  
multiplication  
then  
addition  
then  
subtraction  
i hate math now  
especially with you in the equation  
division  
the scales were never quite even  
but i tried to calibrate  
because i loved you anyways.  
you gave me my fix  
the way you rifled through  
the secrets in my heart like  
you were trying to empty the chambers

gunpoint made you crazy  
you got off on the idea  
of it getting off in you  
round after round  
until you smoked  
from the entry point  
i was a straight shooter  
one wound  
no exit either

you took the pain like  
new orleans took the rain  
only you opened up  
before the storm  
dropped your flood gates  
and said "wash me clean,  
i dream of getting filthy again"

drug dealer  
lace your cigarettes with my jellyfish spine  
blow me  
hard  
to the heart  
like a needle to the vein  
and i will quiver for you  
with weak knees  
a rush to the head  
and claim  
that being close to you makes  
the hurt seem so far away  
until the crash comes  
and i feel the withdrawals

incendiary memories of  
sailboats crumpled in a sea of wallpaper  
empty picture frames  
books of names  
and the possibilities of becoming something more than just a user

drug dealer,  
he would have called me father.

# Sentenced

by Barbara Logan

Now I am a voice on the phone,

a signature on a letter,

a picture on a mantle.

I cling to the hours between dusk and dawn.  
The Darkness does not judge me for what I have become.  
Its Sandman befriends me with dreams of who I once was.

Confined, arrested—  
I will serve this sentence and keep the secret  
of this embarrassment that guards the cold steel door.

What if I escape

to step outside and let the wind graze my cheek?

Fear will not let me fly.

# Redemption: The Theology of Flannery O'Connor

by Roman Leal

In her short story "A Good Man is Hard To Find," Flannery O'Connor shows that salvation can come for anyone. O'Connor begins with the grandma, a character that is devoid of grace, and she ends by saving her from her own conceit and egotism. Buried in the pretenses of apathy, conceit, and tragedy, Flannery O'Connor presents an eye-opening story of redemption.

The grandmother is a character who has no redeeming qualities. She places herself on the same level as the children, scheming for what she wants at the expense of the rest of her family. Her arrogance is unbearable when she shouts, "oh, look at that cute little pickaninny!" (355) as they pass a black boy on a porch. Through her selfishness, she ultimately leads the entire family to their doom. She tells the children of a secret panel in the plantation that Bailey refuses to let her visit, "not telling the truth but wishing that she were" (358) to secure a trip to it. She accrues even more responsibility for the untimely deaths of her kindred when her smuggled cat, Pity Sing, springs from its hiding place causing the wreck. Acting out of pride, she shouts, "You're the Misfit!" (360), and dooms the fate of her family. While her family members are picked off one by one, she only tries to save herself. She begs for her life, imploring him while still retaining her vanity, "you wouldn't shoot a lady" (364).

Yet, standing on the precipice of death, the grandmother is irrevocably redeemed. At first, her pleas are weak, as she is still only focused on saving her own skin. She tries to reason with the Misfit, telling him that he can be a good man if he will only try. She appeals to him through faith, asking, "don't you ever pray?" (362). Yet, suddenly, when she realizes that the Misfit is one of her "children" (364), her head clears, and she tries to reconcile with him. O'Connor finally begins to paint the grandmother in a positive light. For the first time, she begins to value something other than her own self-preservation. The touch she bestows on his shoulder seals her fate. Her state of redemption is solidified for eternity as the Misfit pulls the trigger and makes her a martyr.

Flannery O'Connor's view of the grandmother is clear when she speaks through the Misfit: "She would have been a good woman if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life" (365). In her story, O'Connor shows that redemption is sometimes deadly, but always aided. The Misfit, though a hardened, heartless, cynical sinner, ultimately rescues the grandmother from a life of narcissism. Without this intervention, the Grandmother would have remained quite comfortable in her original state. In the face of death, even a character as despicable as the grandmother can be saved. As O'Connor notes, "The trees were full of silver-white sunlight and the meanest of them sparkled" (355).

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## **Abandoned**

by Judy Salazar

He lay naked on the cold stone bench.  
Limp skin hung from his body,  
As a draped blanket, falling  
Across peaks of sharp bones.  
He sang a quiet song to expel dark thoughts  
Of a marvelous life squandered.  
Afraid to sleep,  
Unable to fight,  
He sailed on the raft  
Through the window to the light, and  
Wrapped in the balm of imagination,  
Slipped safely to his lair.

## **The Gentle Breeze**

by Douglas Meggers

The gentle breeze  
The soft mist  
Brown leaves fall to the ground  
Blue bonnets in the field  
The cold words across the top  
The harsh dates on the bottom  
The warm tears  
Only three days  
The ground still bold  
The simple fear of mortality

## **Bow'd Heads and Veil'd Blushes: The Dualism of Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market"**

by Travis Allison

England, under the reign of Queen Victoria, is known to have been a place of breadth and cultural expansion. Due to the vast Evangelical movement of this period, high moral values and prudery became the standards of society. This was marked by the increase of churchgoing, altruism, and stricter canons of decorum, dress, and speech. However, these ideals and morals were conflicted by the obvious sexual appetite of the Victorians. It was in this period that prostitution gained immense popularity among the members of English society, and, with this, diseases (particularly sexually transmitted) thrived among all the social classes. This is but one disheveled truth that lies beneath the shiny exterior of the Victorian Age. Brown University's George P. Landow refers to it as "an age of paradox" (Landow). A reflection of this dualism can be found in one of Britain's most influential Victorian poets, Christina Rossetti, who was not only a key force in this movement, but host to an *internal* paradox of spiritual devotion and carnal longing. Certain aspects of the author reveal how religion dictated many of her actions and led to an inner tension that shines through in many of her works. The poem "Goblin Market" by Rossetti contains a dichotomy of thought that gives insight into the author's struggle with sexual repression, due to her stern religious beliefs.

The psychological phenomenon of repression is a defense mechanism of the mind that occurs when one "hides" aspects of his or her personality that, due to a variety of reasons, is too strenuous to accept. These desires, feelings, etc. are pushed out of the forefront of the mind (or the conscious mind), but they cannot just be "deleted." They are merely shoved into the subconscious where they, as Lyman Baker of Kansas State University suggests, ". . . have taken up a kind of 'underground existence,' where they continue to be at work, sponsoring fantasies that the person can indulge only in disguised form—i.e., in some fashion in which they won't be recognized, by the person whose fantasies they are, as expressions of the wishes or fears they deny are theirs" (Baker). The disguise in which Rossetti's subconscious appetites and feelings are cloaked is, of course, her poetry. Repression is brought about because of outside influences. Commonly, demands of society, family values, etc. are what cause individuals to deem these aspects of themselves as "unacceptable." In Rossetti's case, a combination of social, family-rooted, and personal religious standards appear to create that tension within her. She is known to have inherited her mother's religious ideals in opposition to her father's artistry; ultimately, this is the foundation of the tension that brings about her marvelously repressed poems. She was often ill as an adolescent, a time when young people begin to create their own ideals from what they have been taught and exposed to. H.B. de Groot maintains that "Her illnesses at this time were probably psychosomatic, and one of her doctors is reported to have diagnosed them as 'a kind of religious mania'" (de Groot). Several times throughout her life, she denied her suitors marriage because of various religious conflicts even though friends and family knew her to be very fond of some of them. Though this is not uncommon for devout believers, it is merely one aspect of Rossetti that shows how



much religion influenced the course of her life. It seems that the issue of “sex” is one of the main problems she struggled with. Certain works by Rossetti seem to contain hints of fixation on the carnality of sexual acts, and even in the sanctity of marriage they remain “unclean” to her. Theo Dombrowski concludes, “it is as if Christina Rossetti is searching restlessly, half guiltily, for some kind, any kind, of unity. She considers a meeting of ghosts, as if, removed from the flesh, she and her lover can at last meet, their union sanctified” (Dombrowski). Rossetti’s dealings with repression seem rooted in her childhood and blossom with greater intensity throughout her adulthood.

In spite of Rossetti’s religious temperament, she held close affiliations with the founders and members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. This group of painters and poets objected to the “mechanical” approach to art that they believed to be marked by the works of Raphael, hence “Pre-Raphaelite.” Dante and William Rossetti were co-founders of the second phase of this group and brothers to Christina. An article from Victorianweb.org states, “Since her own era, Christina Rossetti’s devout Christianity has often been seen as a characteristic that divides her from the other, avowedly non-Christian, members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle” (Harrison). Her relationship with this avant-garde group of people surely fueled the repressed side of Rossetti’s personality and intensified the struggle within her. Dante is known to have had a great influence on Christina’s poetry. She would often confide in him for editing and publishing advice, and it is said that Dante suggested the title “Goblin Market.” This is of course Rossetti’s most famous work and a genuine example of the disguise in which the repressed material within her is very much alive and at work behind the bounds of consciousness.

In “Goblin Market,” Lizzie and Laura appear to be the literary manifestations of the conflicting parts of Rossetti’s personality. In the beginning of the poem, the succulent descriptions of the goblins’ fruit suggest a theme of temptation and desire that is present throughout most of the text. Fruit, of course, is the sexual reproductive organ of plants in which the seed is contained. A “seed,” of course, is what the Bible uses to refer to a man’s semen. Also, the “forbidden fruit” in the Garden of Eden was that of the knowledge of good and evil; Adam and Eve are ashamed, forever changed, and lose their innocence after partaking of it. After Laura has had her encounter with the goblins, the poem exclaims, “Her tree of life droop’d from the root” (260). This is similar to the consequences of one losing her virginity, because not only can that be associated with shame and change, but in Victorian society, once a woman lost her “purity,” it was nearly impossible to be considered “fit for marriage.” This is later elaborated on when Jeanie, a girl they knew to have given in to the goblins, is referred to as “... Jeanie in her grave, / Who should have been a bride; / But who for joys brides hope to have, / Fell sick and died” (312-315).

We are shown, at the beginning, how the two young women initially react to the goblins’ cries: “Laura bow’d her head to hear, / Lizzie veil’d her blushes” (34-35). Laura, curious and willing, listened intently to their summons while Lizzie was embarrassed and tried to ignore them. Laura stays behind to fraternize with the goblins when Lizzie heads back home. When she announces that she has no money, the goblins show Laura what it is that they truly desire: “Buy from us with a golden curl” (125). This symbolizes giving up of the flesh or virginity, and her “golden” lock represents that purity. “She clipp’d a precious golden lock, / She dropp’d a tear more rare than pearl,” (126-127). This is a possible symbol of the pains that a woman endures when she

forfeits her chastity, not only the physical pain that accompanies it, but spiritual and emotional as well. The way in which Rossetti describes the initial act brings to light the strong desire that has possessed Laura. Not only did she partake of the fruit, but “Fruits which that unknown orchard bore; / She sucked until her lips were sore” (35-36). She sucked with such ferocity that it hurt her lips, almost as if it were an uncontrollable impulse. This shows the great amount of desire that smolders within Laura. While the “Lizzie” within Rossetti can subdue the temptation in her own mind, her “sister” side becomes very much alive for readers in this poem.

The way she describes it as “that unknown orchard” gives great validity to the notion that the “orchard” is that of a man, as it would very well be unknown to a woman of chastity. Once she has “eaten of the fruit,” she is no longer the same Laura. She loses her will to work and becomes grey and sickly. At the beginning, Lizzie warns her sister about the goblins in saying “Who knows upon what soil they fed” (44). This brings to mind the danger of disease that Rossetti was surely aware of; she was known to have worked in the rehabilitation of prostitutes during her adult years and was most likely exposed to the results of gruesome sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea and syphilis. She, later in the poem, refers to the women in the poem who succumbed to temptation as “canker’d,” and one of the primary symptoms of syphilis is a cankerous sore at its entry point on the body.

Lizzie maintains her strength throughout the entire poem, not only in staying chaste and resisting temptation, but ultimately saving her sister from certain death. She is Christ-like in a sense because of her strength and self sacrifice. She goes to the goblins to try and buy fruit for her sister and risks her own well being. Much like Jesus was mocked, ridiculed, beaten, and humiliated; so is Lizzie. When she explains to the goblins that she does not wish to stay, their violent reaction is expressed in detail:

They trod and hustled her,  
Elbow’d and jostled her,  
Claw’d with their nails,  
Barking, mewling, hissing, mocking...  
Held her hands and squeez’d their fruits  
Against her mouth to make her eat. (399-402, 406-407)

Rossetti describes her in the midst of this madness as “white and golden”(408), “like a royal virgin town” (418), and “beleaguer’d by a fleet/ Mad to tug her standard down”(420-421). This shows how she endured the “crucifixion” with great composure despite its humiliating and torturous nature. This gesture is ultimately the salvation of her sister. For when she returns with this pulp and nectar smeared all over her, Laura partakes of it and is saved. This is similar to the Lord’s Supper in the sense of the “flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood” aspect. Lizzie proclaims to Laura, “Eat me, drink me, love me/ Laura make much of me/ For your sake I have braved the glen” (470-472). Lizzie is an obvious projection of those standards and values that were surely present in Rossetti’s conscious personality, while Laura seems to be the repressed sexual appetite that can only come about by way of masquerade.

The social canons of Victorian England and the repressed society that they ultimately spawned is better understood when their effects on a single individual are

analyzed. Within Rossetti (like society) standards of religion, decorum, etc. led to natural impulses being censored and labeled as “unacceptable.” When true and undeniable aspects of the self (or society) are deemed wrong, the common result is repression. From her upbringing, religion and the arts were two competing forces in Rossetti’s world. Her work is evidence of that struggle, but in spite of her seemingly repressed nature, she produced many inspiring works. She blended the two components into a form that possessed what critics refer to as the “aesthetic mysticism” of Pre-Raphaelitism while maintaining her Christian values. Christina Rossetti was not only a talented English poet, but a microcosm of the repressed nature of the times.

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# **The Aristos and The French Lieutenant's Woman: Philosophy in Fiction**

by Marissa Parker

Cleverly and ingeniously, John Fowles uses the characters and plot of his novel, The French Lieutenant's Woman, to clearly establish his existential principles and beliefs expressed in his philosophic argument, The Aristos.

Fowles states that his main goal in The Aristos, as well as the main goal of existentialism, "is to preserve the freedom of the individual against all those pressures-to-conform" (The Aristos, 7). In The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles takes a number of opportunities to defend his stance against these "pressures to conform." Sarah Woodruff, the embodiment of true existentialism in the novel, is shunned and ostracized by the rest of the Victorian society because of her alleged fling with a French lieutenant. Rather than tell the truth about her still intact virginity, Sarah accepts her rejection, telling Charles Smithson, the protagonist of the novel, that she is "married" to her "shame" (142). Sarah's bond to her shame is the equivalent of her freedom. In the third ending of the novel (the first, imaginative; the second, Victorian; and the final, existential), Charles asks Sarah to marry him, but she refuses, not wishing to be bound by the shackles of holy matrimony. The sole purpose in Sarah Woodruff's refusal to tell the truth about her past and her refusal to marry Charles is to protect her own personal freedom and rebel against the "pressures to conform" to the image of the typical Victorian "woman."

The freedom that an individual enjoys is also paralleled by inescapable consequences. The Aristos states, "All our pleasures are dependent on hazard. Even though I arrange for a pleasure and look forward to it my eventual enjoyment of it is still a matter of hazzard" (18). Charles finally commits the ultimate mistake and sleeps with Sarah, and it changes his life forever. After Charles speaks with Dr. Grogan about his actions, Grogan tells him: ". . . the elect, whatever the particular grounds they advance for their cause, have introduced a finer and fairer morality into this dark world. . . If you become a better and a more generous human being, you may be forgiven. But if you become more selfish. . . you are doubly damned" (397-98). Dr. Grogan speaks to Charles in absolutes. There are still the penalties for his actions and total freedom must be tempered by responsibility. Charles' one moment of pleasure does not exceed the just rewards for it. He breaks off his contracted engagement to his ever-so-Victorian fiancée, Ernestina, is forced to sign a statement of guilt, is no longer granted the status of a gentleman, and cannot marry, lest his name be dragged through the mud.

As an authentic existentialist, one must take on the responsibility that accompanies it: "But wealth and rich men surrounded by poverty and poor men are guilty. . . [i]t does not necessarily require any of the nobler human qualities to make money" (The Aristos, 125). Sam Farrow, Charles' manservant, would be a prime example of this person who takes on the responsibility of his freedom, yet does not possess "any of the nobler human qualities to make money." Sam, fed up with Charles'

bashing of his dreams of haberdashery, decides to blackmail Charles so that he will finally be able to venture off on his own. Charles, being well off financially, is perfectly capable of giving Sam the money needed to start his business, but he doesn't, becoming one of the "guilty" rich men Fowles condemns. Sam's blackmail in response to Charles' refusal becomes the key to Sam's success. Sam ends up getting hired by Ernestina's Aunt Tranter, weds her servant Mary, and begins a successful career in the haberdashery field, earning significant pay raises in a short amount of time. Sam makes a substantial amount of money, but his tactics in doing so would be considered by most to exhibit anything but "nobler human qualities." Later, Sam feels guilty about his actions and informs Charles of the vanished Sarah's whereabouts, but Fowles gives his readers no indication of Sam suffering any setbacks on his success as a result of his actions. Sam sees his opportunity and takes it, making a better life for himself and Mary and, in the process, becoming existential himself.

The Aristos states that "the smooth interaction" between men and women "is one of the chief signs of social health. In spite of now general political emancipation of women, considerable sickness; and most of this sickness arises from the selfish tyranny of the male" (125). To truly live, there must be equality among the genders. Sarah Woodruff is described as having "a faint touch of a boy caught stealing apples. . ." and strong features that ". . . gave her a faintly tomboyish air on occasion" (118-19). These slightly masculine features befit Sarah, for she is the pillar of freedom in the story, quite the opposite of Charles' fiancée, Ernestina Freeman, who is a symbol of the chains of duty, described as having a "small chinned, oval, delicate as a violet"(25) face.

The principles of the sciences and established thought are seen by Fowles as the opponents of existential thought and living. They keep man confined within the space of rules and boundaries: "what good science tries to eliminate, good art seeks to provoke—mystery, which is lethal to the one, and vital to the other" (The Aristos, 152). After sleeping with Sarah, Charles goes to a church and says to himself: "Each day, Charles, each hour, it has to be taken again. Each minute the nail waits to be hammered in. You know your choice. You stay in prison, what your time calls duty, honor, self-respect, and you are comfortably safe. Or you are free and crucified" (362).

Inside, Charles sees that he is trapped, and he knows that following the rules of established thought places him in society's good graces, but in breaking free, he has condemned himself to a life of public judgment. At the novel's ending readers are left with Sarah under employment as a model for the artist Daniel Rosetti. For John Fowles, art represents the freedom of thought, and it is at the end of this novel, as an artist's model, Sarah Woodruff is the most existential she will ever become within the confines of Fowles' novel. She exercises her free will and a desire to fulfill her own passions.

According to The Aristos, "Adulthood is not an age but a state of knowledge of self" (165). An existentialist evolves. In the third and final ending of the novel, Charles leaves Sarah without taking the chance to hear the justification of her actions. The reader is left with a new Charles; a metamorphosed man: one that ". . . at last [has] found an atom of faith himself, a true uniqueness, on which to build. . ." (467). Readers are left to decide for themselves what ending to leave with Charles and in doing so either do, or do not, give him the opportunity to grow as an existentialist. Charles is

now free to explore a deeper “knowledge of self,” one that can only be discovered through his “God”—his fling with Sarah and its results. Sarah’s role as a symbol for “cruel but necessary freedom” (287) resulted in Charles’ eventual liberation from the chains of Victorian Duty. Without her, Charles would still be living the fossilized life of a typical Victorian rather than one in which he can fulfill his own desires. Though disguised as a Victorian love triangle, Fowles weaves The Aristos in and out of The French Lieutenant’s Woman, making a clever argument for his support and belief in the principles and relevance of existentialism. Each significant event, along with each major character, serve to convey Fowles’ personal beliefs to the reader: Ernestina Freeman, the epitome of Victorian life and representative of the bonds of duty, Charles Smithson, the everyman of the story, torn between Victorian duty and existential mystery, and Sarah Woodruff; the woman who, in a sense, willingly bears a scarlet letter of ignominy on her chest; all of these characters are ingenious tools of Fowles’ literary intellect that work to bring life to The Aristos.

## Works Cited

Fowles, John. The Aristos: A Self-Portrait and Ideas. Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1964.

Fowles, John. The French Lieutenant's Woman. New York: Little Brown and Company, 1964.



# ***Spring 2009 Writers' Roundup Winners***

Each year the Amarillo College English Department holds a Writers' Roundup contest to encourage beginning as well as advanced writers to demonstrate their creative flair. Students are given a prompt and have two hours in which to write. The type of writing is up to the student.

For more information on how to enter this friendly competition, please call (806) 371-5170 or email Angie Kleffman, English Department Administrative Assistant II, at [amkleffman@actx.edu](mailto:amkleffman@actx.edu).

## **The Pelix Entanglement**

### **Grand Prize Winner**

by John "Trey" Funderburg

As I walked into the "Binky Burgers" that chilled March morning, I surveyed my crew at their morning prep duties. For Mikey, my ever reliable and eager counter-boy, that constituted lining trays and filling condiment bins. For Buck, it meant harassing one of the free-coffee-refill seniors that frequent our establishment. T. James Buckleberry, or "Buck," took serious issue with the elderly patrons who bought the senior coffee, thirty-five cents, now and always, then took up booth space all day without ordering anything else. For Buck, our cook, paying thirty-five cents rent and camping out all day, drinking pots of coffee, was a personal attack on his culinary skills.

"How's about a FLIPPIN' PIECE OF PIE!?" he shouted in the codger's general direction, as Mikey refilled the cup on the counter. The customer, unfazed by this attack, returned to his seat, looking somewhat satisfied with Buck's irritation.

"Take 'er easy, Buck. That's no way to gain repeat business," I said as I rounded the corner.

"Oh, he'll be back," Buck snarled. "They all come back every day, since the 'Blue Hair' shut down. They got nowhere else to loiter." The Bluebird Cafeteria next door had closed recently due to the economic crunch. Often I wondered what the impact of a bottomless senior cup of Joe might be to a business, but that wasn't my problem. Corporate laid out the law, and I just assistant managed my way to the middle.

"Hey, chief," Mikey said, amiably, "there's a potential client in your office. It's a skirt."

Buck rolled his eyes. "Sheesh, it's just Eloise, ya drama queen." He picked up the edge of his already filthy apron and blew his nose into it. "You dorks are killing me with the gumshoe garbage." Buck's sense of humor did not mesh with Mikey and me. He believed himself to be infinitely funny, but really appreciated "Kick Me" signs, whoopee cushions, or just the gentle humor of a man falling down a flight of stairs into an open sewer.

I grabbed my own bottomless cup of coffee and headed through the kitchen into the back. An assistant manager for "Binky Burgers" did not exactly pull in the hard cash, so sometimes I would do a little private investigating on the side. As the great creator of PI's, Mickey Spillane, once wrote, "Inspiration is an empty bank account." Though my cases ran mostly in the mundane category, Mikey and I liked to contribute to the illusion that I was a tough-as-nails, hard drinkin', and hard livin' private eye in the Spillane tradition.

My office was more of a broom closet with a retired booth in it that also doubled as our break room. As I entered, I kept the movie in my head playing, imagining the

long-legged, platinum beauty, crying her eyes out, and looking for a hero. What intruded on my imagination was Eloise. In her late sixties, Eloise was a little, leathery woman in a jogging suit with a voice like a throaty buzz saw. She was the apartment manager for “The Open Arms” apartments behind our building. Her son, living the life in Florida with his family, owned the apartments, but Eloise kept them profitable. Before he moved away, I knew her boy and believed him to be a complete tool. I always suspected he had named the complex after the eighties song by Journey or REO Speedwagon or whoever. Eloise was happy with her job and the absence of her family from her everyday life.

“Morning, love,” she rasped. “Here are the specifics. Pelix Lister, apartment 3A. Two months behind and I can’t catch him coming or going. Little dweeby fellow. Shouldn’t be a problem if you can catch him.” Nine times out of ten, Eloise just needed someone to check a background on a potential tenant or serve an eviction notice on one who’d overstayed his welcome. Apparently, Pelix was one of the latter.

I said my goodbyes to Eloise and my crew and made my way across the vacant lot between our businesses. I was wondering what kind of name Pelix was, as I reached the door to 3A. The shades were drawn and the apartment seemed empty, so I made a cursory pounding on the door. I didn’t expect a response and didn’t get one, so I made a note of the door’s location and returned to work.

The lunch rush was beginning, so I made a quick run to my office. The monitor to the drive-thru camera showed a man in a mini-van, shouting his order in that irritating way some people have.

“Yeah, we hear you, jerk...,” I mumbled as I adjusted the camera to point at old door number 3A across the way. Proud of my ingenuity, I returned to the front to bail out Mikey and Buck.

Three days later, I was watching the hours of tape in fast-forward in my office, when I noticed a pattern. Though nobody went in or came out of 3A, both nights at six o’ clock, food was delivered from a chicken joint across the street. In both instances, the door quickly opened and the food was pulled inside. I looked at the clock on the wall and realized it was almost six now. I hollered to my night shift that I would be right back as I hit the front door.

It didn’t take much to get Joey, the chicken shack delivery guy, to let me take the order across to “The Open Arms.” He was a burnout and took the opportunity to catch a smoke break in his car. The order had been called in and paid for by credit card over the phone. Joey said it had been that way for about two weeks now.

I knocked on the door and waited. A small voice told me to set the food down and leave, so I pretended to do just that. I crouched out of sight and heard a series of locks clicking. As the door edged open, I caught it low with my shoulder and pushed it open. Surprised, the little man who must be Pelix stumbled back and fought to regain his footing.

I straightened up and squinted into the dim apartment. I hardly registered the

movement behind me as I said, “Pelix Lister, you need to conta—.” Stars burst in the darkness as the vase connected with my skull and all reality swam away.

“So, what happened then, boss?” Mikey asked two weeks later. We were standing at the counter on a Wednesday morning watching the ongoing battle between Buck and the elderly coffee patrol.

“Well, Mikey, my boy . . . After I woke up, there was the leggy blonde you and I always suspect will walk in the door. However, she had already found her hero and his name was Pelix Lister.” Eloise was there, too, and that’s when things began to clear up.

The story, as told by Pelix, was he had been an accountant for a very powerful and corrupt man, Walter Kipping, for fifteen years. Eventually, he had fallen in love with the man’s daughter, the aforementioned leggy blonde, Gwen. Wishing to be rescued from her father’s legacy of crime, she had aided Pelix in contacting authorities, testifying, and ensuring Mr. Kipping would spend a very long time in prison.

Their love affair kept secret, Pelix, whose real name was not Pelix, was entered into the Witness Relocation Program. For months, he kept a low profile, but two months previously, had broken the rules and contacted Gwen. She had disappeared from her life and joined him at “The Open Arms” two weeks before. Scared of her father’s long reaching power, they had hidden, not sure what to do. That’s when I showed up, and Miss Gwen had busted a very cheap vase over my melon.

“So, what now, cap’n?” Mikey asked. He was really digging the story.

“Mikey, they were missing one thing that could’ve assured a new start. Friends. Their love kept them hidden from the world, but at some point, you have to start trusting again.” I rubbed the sore spot on the back of my head. “It’s how any of us will ever make it in this world.” I could practically hear Buck roll his eyes.

Eloise and I had worked out the details, and Pelix was currently catching up on his rent. Gwen, who would soon have her own new identity, was working with the FBI to help crumble her father’s nefarious empire. Pelix and Gwen would soon start a new life together safely.

“All right, one question,” Buck interjected. “What kind of a goofy name is Pelix?”

“Isn’t it obvious?” a voice from the drive-thru answered. “It’s like Felix. With a P!” My new drive-thru guy, Pelix Lister, stepped out, grinning as if it all made perfect sense.

Buck walked up to him and told him his shirt was on fire, then yelled, “Now, it’s out!” as he pulled Pelix’s tucked-in shirttail out of his pants. It was one of his favorite gags. He brayed his horse-like laughter, and Pelix chuckled along with him.

My team is complete, I thought.

# The Anchor

## 1<sup>st</sup> Place Sophomore Level

by Kelly Laxson

"I am invisible, understand, because people refuse to see me." -Ralph Ellison

*Five, four, three, \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_*

The red light flares up and the camera demands her attention. She pushes her shoulders back and smiles brightly. Peering seductively into the lens, she reads aloud about traffic accidents and public meetings at the local library. She is careful and speaks slowly, clearly. Selling every word, she punctuates each syllable as though she were reporting on Chinese espionage or the G8 conference.

*I-95 is CLEAR throughout the mid-atLANTic today.(PAUSE) Watch for conSTRUCTION throughout the BELTway and as ALLways,(PAUSE) keep an EYE out for DEEEE-tours.*

The pageantry used to thrill her. She always knew the words were useless. The important thing was to convince the audience that she knew something they didn't. They must listen to her every word to be let in on the Secret. Her hair, her eyes, even her tan were all designed to project confidence, authority, sexual mystique. They must come to the point where they rely on her, need her, want her. She choreographs her words to woo them.

WONdering how TOUGH ecoNOMic times have affECted OUR area? (PAUSE)  
Let's take a look at ONE business owner's uNIQue spin on BAILout. (WINK)

Footage of a farmer using a pitchfork to toss hay into the back of a truck fills her monitor, and she relaxes her face. She blinks hard, sweeping a finger softly under her eye to brush away any broken lashes. Twenty seconds and she wills charisma to take over for her. Something shifts in front of her, and she realizes Andy is standing in her eye line again. He sees her notice, and he scribbles something on his clipboard, peering at her, daring her to say something, anything. She looks back at the prompter and continues.

*LOcal mIDDLE school students got a taste of GOVernment Life today as they TRAVelled to our NATION's CAPital as pARt of their "Learning LIFE" program.*

As the pre-recorded footage began to play, she stared at her monitor and sighed bitterly. A young girl was being interviewed about meeting Senator \_\_\_\_\_ on Capital Hill. Gushing about him, she giggled and reached up to twirl a strand of hair in her fingers. *He was sooo cool. He told us about, like, how everything works, and that I should do my best in school so I could work there someday. I totally want to be a senator now.*

The reporter on the screen is signing off, and the anchor feels her stomach twisting and churning. The Senator was selling words, selling a dream. He knew what knobs to turn and when. She had introduced herself to him at a charity ball once, and he had dazzled her right upstairs into a janitor's closet. After they were finished, he had buttoned his pants and said it was nice to meet her. *Goodnight, Sharon.*

Her name is not Sharon.

Her ears are burning with the silence, and she realizes what she hears is dead air. Andy is frantically waving at her from behind camera two and she recovers.

*The chILDren ARE our FUTure, AREn't they?(PAUSE) Great story.*

Her jaw is beginning to ache from her forced smile, and she feels nauseated. Reaching under the desk, she rubs her stomach discreetly and goes to commercial. Andy rushes the desk and tells her to get it together. She asks for water but there is no time. They are back in thirty. The girl dabs her forehead with a towel. Andy backs up quickly and counts down.

*Five, four, three, \_\_\_\_\_. \_\_\_\_\_*

She smiles again but can't feel it in her eyes anymore. Trying to disguise her disgust, she rallies but the words are all wrong.

*We now GO to sports, where Tony HAS some scores to SAY, to give TO us. How ABOUT those Lady Tigers, Tony?*

Tony looks at her quizzically and picks up her slack. *More than scores, we've got the action, folks! Let's get to it!*

The red light on camera one lights up and she feels relief. Tony is going on and on about playoff potential and head coach change ups. She looks up, and Andy rolls his eyes at her.

*What the hell is wrong with you?*

She tries to smile at him and shrugs her shoulders. Her stomach rumbles again. Too nervous to eat breakfast anymore, she settles for a cup of coffee with half a Splenda on the drive in. She came in with a bagel in her hand once, and Andy told her that too much salt makes her face puffy.

Tony is wrapping up and eyeing her to see if he should stall. She barely shakes her head, and he turns it back to her. She stares at the prompter once more.

*AFTER THE BREAK, WE WILL TAKE A LOOK AT THE WEATHER WITH SAM 'THE STORM CHASING' MAN. BACK IN A MOMENT!*

The red light goes off, and she is still smiling hard. The crew stares at her and she feels her face become wet. Reaching up, she realizes she is crying and frantically tries to wave the girl over.

No one moves.

She looks at them looking at her, and her stomach burns and her mascara is running into her eyes, and she tries to stand. Her steel toes betray her, and she grips the desk. Andy is walking towards her, and he touches her hand. She flinches. He whispers to her but his words are cold.

*Let's take a walk. Come on, get up. You can do it. We've got eighteen seconds. Tony can wrap up for you. Get the F\*\*\* up!*

Her knuckles are white, and she is trying to breathe. Andy stares at her, and reaches to pry her fingers from the desk. She shoves him away, and the red light goes on. Andy panics and grabs her arm. Her stomach fails her. He sees the vomit on his sweater and looks at her with disgust and fury. He clenches his teeth and grabs her shoulders.

*GET.*

*UP.*

*NOW!*

She looks back to camera two, puts her shoulders back, and smiles.

"Let them see me," she says. "Let them see."

# **This is Me, Hear Me Roar**

## **1<sup>st</sup> Place Freshman Level**

by Mysti Truitt

There were many years of which I felt invisible to society. I was the quiet kid in the corner. I never had a specific group of friends that I fit into. My head was always in the books. I wanted to be successful in life. I was the type of person that could hold a conversation with just about anyone, but my voice was never really heard. I have finally found my voice.

As a child, my life was never easy. I was molested when I was four years old, and it seems like it was just yesterday that it happened. My mother kicked me out of the house at the age of ten, right after finding out my best friend had passed away due to a careless driver. This irrational decision affected me deeply. I went to live with my dad, but by that time, the damage was already done. I started making bad choices, hanging with the wrong crowd. I went from a straight A student to getting kicked out of school my junior year. At that time, my life started moving into a downward spiral. I got to a point that I just didn't care anymore. I gave in to peer pressure and started trying out all kinds of drugs. When I became of age to live on my own, I started moving from town to town, trying to find happiness. Happiness never came. At one point, I just accepted the fact that my education had come to a standstill. I always knew I was a strong individual, but I thought that because of the bad decisions I made in the past, I had no future. At the age of twenty, I ended up getting married and having a baby. Then, a year later my spouse and I fought for custody of his kids and won. So, here I was, raising three girls, and still, my life felt incomplete.

It has always been a dream of mine to attend college. As the years passed, though, my fears of failure kept me tied down. One day, I woke up and thought to myself, "There's got to be more to life than this." I was right. That day I enrolled in college. That is the best decision I have ever made. I always had a need of helping people in the pit of my stomach, but I didn't know what to do with that feeling. Now, I realize this is my passion, and goal in life. I have a voice, but it has been masked until now. If I could reach just one person, and help them through their difficult times, I would feel more at ease with my soul. I have been through too much in life to sit back and watch someone else's life fall apart. My dream is to become a counselor. I will not rest until this dream is reality.

I know that everything happens for a reason. Instead of letting your past hold you down, use it as fuel to get what you want in life. I do not regret anything in my past because it taught me a very valuable lesson. I share my story with anyone who has an open ear, because you never know who it could help. Do not hide your voice, or be ashamed of the mistakes you have made. If there is something in life you want to achieve, don't let anyone hold you back. In the end, it will all work out. I am at the peak of my life. I finally have a voice, and it will be heard all across the nation one day. Please, don't feel sympathetic towards me; I am strong. I have learned my lessons life has thrown at me. Nothing will come in the way of my dreams anymore, because I finally found my voice. Take a moment, and find your voice too.