

# Freelancer

Spring 2012

9th Edition



A Publication of  
the Amarillo College  
English Department



Amarillo College



# 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 **must** receive an electronic copy of each work, either saved on a form of electronic media or emailed as an attachment. Submissions **must** have a name and contact information (student ID number, mailing address, and phone number) 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 All submitted works must be original and unpublished.

For more information about the *Freelancer*, please contact Margie Waguespack at mcwaguespack@actx.edu or by calling (806) 371-5185.

## **Freelancer Staff Members (2011-12):**

Dr. Dan Ferguson, Chair of English Department (dwferguson@actx.edu)

Margie Waguespack, Professor of English (mcwaguespack@actx.edu)

Dr. Mike Bellah, Professor of English (mdbellah@actx.edu)

Matthew Goodman, Instructor of English (mjgoodman@actx.edu)

Luci Creery, Instructor of English (luci.creery@actx.edu)

Dr. Bill Netherton, Professor of English (wdnetherton@actx.edu)

Frank Sobey, Assistant Professor of English (fesobey@actx.edu)

Cover design by Jena McFall and Angie Siens Peoples

Quotation by Edward Bulwer-Lytton, English novelist (1803-73)

© 2012 by the Amarillo College English Department

**English Department Website:** <http://www.actx.edu/english>

# Table of Contents

<b>My Prayer Bones</b> ; Joseph Holmes, staff.....	4
<b>Self Portrait</b> ; Karen Finado, student.....	5
<b>State Street Diner</b> ; Lance Garza, student .....	6
<b>Iris</b> ; Lew Wetzel, student.....	10
<b>El Porvenir</b> ; Andrew Hawkins, student.....	11
<b>The Collector</b> ; Jake Goodnight, student.....	13
<b>Hands</b> ; Lauren Speelman, student.....	14
<b>Turning the Page</b> ; Frank Sobey, faculty .....	15
<b>The Water Promise</b> ; Haider Salih, student.....	16
<b>Waiting for Tom</b> ; Brent Hix, student.....	17
<b>Yard Sale</b> ; Audrey Wick, faculty .....	18
<b>Captain Chaos</b> ; Ruth Lumpkin, student .....	19
<b>Saint Runaway</b> ; Raene Mathes, student.....	20
<b>Ecclesiastes</b> ; Miranda Parman, student.....	21
<b>Collage Dream</b> ; Lauren Speelman, student.....	22
<b>Cathedral</b> ; Joseph Holmes, staff .....	23
<b>The Beautiful Desert</b> ; Katie Rose Stoeppler, student.....	24
<b>A Song of Ascents</b> ; Frank Sobey, faculty.....	25
<b>Self Portrait</b> ; Rusty Marnell, student .....	26
<b>Revolution in <i>Breathless</i></b> ; Jon Alexander, student.....	27
<b>Staring</b> ; Penny Frazier, student.....	29

<b>The Struggle of Re-Assimilation: A Character Analysis of Harold Krebs;</b> Skylar Brannon, student.....	30
<b>PTSD is Not Just a Problem for Veterans,</b> Kai Vrede, student.....	32
<b>The Winds of War;</b> Sean Callahan, student.....	35
<b>The Religion of I;</b> J. Eric Dennis, student.....	36
<b>The Sacramental Veil;</b> Ashley Abbot, student .....	39
<b>Eternal Dusk;</b> J. Eric Dennis, student.....	42
<b>Writers' Roundup Information</b> .....	43
<b>Open to Interpretation, Grand Prize Winner;</b> Danielle Luce, student .....	44
<b>Collide, 1<sup>st</sup> place Sophomore Level;</b> Katharine Freedman, student.....	45
<b>Smiling Away the Pain, 1<sup>st</sup> Place Freshman Level;</b> Mariela Mundo, student .....	49
<b>When You are Blessed, 1<sup>st</sup> Place Developmental Level;</b> Phyllis Bates, student.....	50
<b>Common Reader Information</b> .....	51
<b>Daddy, Come Home, 1<sup>st</sup> Place Common Reader Competition;</b> Danni Kiker-Pruett, student .....	52
<b>The Flame and the Flower, 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Common Reader Competition;</b> Kyla Matthews, student .....	54
<b>STAY CALM, 3<sup>rd</sup> Place Common Reader Competition;</b> Grace Calvert, student .....	55

## **My Prayer Bones**

**By Joseph Holmes**

I needed a sign, which meant  
I needed the sky to open, for clouds  
To gather and bloom and part  
In radiance. I needed to see the Messiah  
With pale platinum hair and cream skin  
And fierce, incendiary, forgiving eyes.  
I wanted to see his flock of blond angels  
Floating in cloaks of cotton gauze.  
I wanted the vignette, the prayer card,  
The Renaissance ceiling. But

Nothing happened: The sky cannot open  
Any more than it already has. What can I  
Believe? I still want to believe.  
So I dried my tears and looked around:

A nebula of dark birds dipped and swarmed  
And chirped their ancient navigations  
In melodic racket.—The trees leaned in,  
Then out, entranced with the variable wind.  
The grass—the fixed undulation of prairie grass,  
Still green—The benign sky, the opening sky—

I breathe so easily here. —Everything is in prayer.  
If you read this, you must know  
Your eyes will die one day, like your heart:  
Let them go. Let your joys flail up.  
Let them flail in the skin of your ecclesia  
Sung so sweetly into the ears of the world.

**Self Portrait**

**By Karen Finado**



## State Street Diner

By Lance Garza

Katherine stepped with heavy foot  
Through the threshold  
Of the State Street Diner  
And the hostess  
Kindly greeted her  
“Back again,  
I think your booth is open!”  
Katherine stretched  
Her chubby, jolly cheeks  
Into a smile & simply nodded  
Thelonious Monk hammered  
Away to “Straight, No Chaser”  
In her headphones  
And Katherine shifted her weight  
With each step  
As she arched the corner  
And patiently followed the hostess  
To her usual booth  
By an open window  
Where she could peer out  
& observe the birds in a splendid fury  
Around the faucet across the street  
Set to a constant, leaky drip  
As she neared her familiar sanctuary  
A group of college kids  
In malicious ignorance  
Across the diner  
Gawked at the 6’2  
412 lb. beast  
& among themselves  
In deviant, quieted laughter  
Started mimicking the noises of pigs  
Under hushed breath  
Each “oink” floated about  
But landed nowhere near  
Katherine’s languid atmosphere  
Katherine plopped her immense, beautiful body  
On her usual edge of the tight booth  
And as Monk was reaching his climax  
The hostess chirped,  
“Daisy will be right with you!”  
And she made her way

To the back of the diner  
And to Daisy she declared,  
"Your heifer's back..."  
To which Daisy replied,  
"That fat bitch,  
This is a restaurant  
Not a hog trough."  
But Daisy sweetly  
Made her way to  
Katherine's booth  
And as Thelonious was reaching  
His final crescendo  
Katherine pulled her headphones  
Around the rolls  
Of her abnormally large neck  
And promptly, happily ordered  
A stack of four pancakes  
Three eggs, over-easy  
Bacon  
Sausage  
Ham  
Hashbrowns w/ cheese  
Buttered toast  
Two servings of ice cream  
Strawberries on the side  
& a tall glass of milk  
Daisy amiably nodded  
And chimed,  
"I'll have that right out!"  
And in a deep, hearty voice  
From the lungs embedded  
In her immense chest  
Kathy replied,  
"Thank you!"  
With a smile  
Daisy daintily maneuvered  
The tables of the diner  
And pinned the hefty order  
Above the cooks' station  
And muttered under her breath,  
"It's feeding time."  
Katherine with her great fingers  
Thumbed the pages  
Yellow from sweaty palms  
Of a pleasantly abused copy  
Of Jane Austen's

*Pride and Prejudice*

Where she read  
The highlighted verse,  
“*Pride relates more  
to our opinion of ourselves,  
vanity to what  
we would have others think of us.*”

Time passed  
And Kathy stared up  
Over Austen’s masterpiece  
At an elderly couple  
Halfway across the diner  
She invested in the daily crossword  
& He reading the headlines  
He looked up from his paper  
Glanced at the college youth  
Then at Katherine  
& spitefully avowed,  
“Kids these days...  
Obnoxious  
And repulsive!  
I hope I die  
Before I see the day...”

Meanwhile,  
Daisy once again  
Delicately maneuvered  
The obstacle course of the diner  
With oversized platter in hand  
Back to Kathy  
And she anxiously, wondrously gazed  
As Daisy neatly placed  
The feast  
In front of her studious face  
And she honestly, forgetfully  
Without a *thank you*  
Dived into her meal  
Halfway through her buffet  
Katherine gazed out the window  
At the birds in momentary flight  
As a group of locals passed by  
And she was greeted  
With a slight shock  
As Daisy prettily  
Refreshed the tall, perspiring  
Glass of milk  
Katherine in all her enormous innocence

Admired the new ring  
    On Daisy's dainty left hand  
She sweetly commented,  
    With her hearty voice,  
        "You're getting married?  
        It's a wonder it hasn't  
Happened sooner.  
    A beautiful creature like yourself."  
    To which Daisy glitteringly replied  
        With a nod & a smile,  
"He proposed last night."  
        And Kathy with deep admiration  
    As Miles Davis & Cannonball Adderley  
        Dully, calmly began to blow  
    From her perched headphones  
        The beginning notes  
    Of "Autumn Leaves"  
Gazed at the elder couple  
    Across the way  
    And solemnly pondered the day  
        She would find such a lasting love  
    And she stared out the window  
At the college kids gathered  
    Lively laughing  
        Smoking cigarettes  
        Around the birds' vacant puddle  
        And with wild awe  
        She revered their blissful ignorance  
Of their surroundings  
    And wondered when  
        She could live as such

Iris  
By Lew Wetzel



## El Porvenir

By Andrew Hawkins

Six hours in a bumpy car traveling through golden plains and lusciously green mountains. When I finally arrive, I step out of my car, and I hear the birds chirping. I can smell the pine trees in the wind. I step forward and can hear the crunch of leaves, rocks, and dirt under my feet. I look and see all of the cabins and places I can stay. I would rather be in El Porvenir than any other place.

From Amarillo I have to drive six hours to a place right outside of Las Vegas, New Mexico. Once through Las Vegas there are mountains covered in mile after mile of pine trees. There is only a single one-lane path to get to where I am going. Driving up the narrow road I am always scared that I am going to drive off of the unguarded side of the street. I turn off the AC in my car and roll down the window. All I smell is nature surrounding me. I can't help but pull over and take in the sight and the smell of the trees, the dirt, and the clean crisp air.

I arrive and unload my little white GMC pickup truck covered in dirt and dust from the trip. There are many cabins scattered across the hillside, but only one will be used this week. I walk down the rocky hill toward the old and decrepit chow hall. I still remember my middle school days with a group of kids trying to make a shape out of their bodies to decide who got breakfast first. Now, I look and the roof has caved in, the wooden supports are rotting, and the chains that once held up the porch swings have long since rusted.

I walk past the barren rec field and remember playing soccer, kickball, and Ultimate Frisbee with my friends, and getting dark green grass stains on our pants that would get us in trouble when we got home. Today the grass is yellow and dead from the cold weather, and the sand in the volleyball pit is hard and dry. The chains on the basketball hoops are rattling in the wind and are shining in the sun. I can distantly hear the small roar of the waterfall from the pond. As I keep walking, I look right and see the fire pit where I spent many nights with my church singing and listening to people preach by the fire light. The sparks floating up into the night sky would distract me from the message.

As I keep walking, I see Hermits Peak in the distance. Hermits Peak is the highest area of the camp. It takes all day to hike there, and it is the hardest hike. It is full of switchbacks and steep hills, but once you are at the peak, you can see for miles and miles. It is the most beautiful sight I have ever seen. The hike is hard and grueling, but it is worth the time and effort. I look back down and I am at the pond. Stairs lead up and over a small stream and to the pond itself.

The pond is lined by moss and cattails. I look over and see the huge rock that is next to the pond. I close my eyes, and when I open them, I am on the top of the rock listening to my friends yell from below, "Jump! Jump! Jump!" I close my eyes as I step to the edge and feel a twist in my stomach as I jump. Time slows down, and I feel the wind blowing by me. I look up and see the water getting closer and closer. I open my eyes, and I am back on the shore.

I head back up the hill, my feet crunching leaves and kicking up puffs of dirt. I enter the cabin, and I see the bunk beds that are usually full of children laughing and getting ready for bed with the leaders trying to get them to settle down and go to sleep. I spread

my sheets on the bed and change into my sweats and t-shirt that I sleep in. I walk into the bathroom and see the stalls and the three showers that helped to get twelve kids ready in the morning. I brush my teeth as I start to get drowsy. I spit out the white toothpaste, go back to my bed, and snuggle down into my sheets and comforter. As I am drifting off to sleep, I can't help but think, "I love this place, and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

## The Collector

By Jake Goodnight

An odd collection I have gathered  
None is perfect but all the same,  
Each one carried, like mother with child,  
that shard of light. That whisper of hope.

The ones I first came upon are, by far, the wildest.  
Like some elusive stag always just out of sight.  
They are no more or less precious to me  
Than the others I have since collected.

At first, each one I found held such promise.  
So much so, that after neatly tucking them  
safely away with the others,  
I would immediately begin my search for the next.

It's not like that now.

Always in that dusty chest they lay.  
I'm not exactly sure, when it happened.  
But it seems as if, though I no longer seek them,  
One by one they continue to turn up.  
At times they almost take me by surprise.  
Sneaking in to hide with the rest as I sleep  
in my chair with the T.V. on,  
or while I'm down having my coffee  
with the other soul weary collectors.  
My prey, it would seem, has turned to chase after me.

Oh what I could have done with them all  
They should have afforded me all of my dreams.  
No. I called my complacency contentment.  
And my birthdays will be buried with me.

# Hands

By Lauren Speelman



## Turning the Page

By Frank Sobey

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*  
Psalm 22

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside quiet waters...*  
Psalm 23

I never before imagined You  
as one for laughing.  
But yesterday, caught between  
Psalm 22 and 23, on either side  
of the pendulum page,  
I had to slap my knee too,  
for the distance from one psalm

to the other is not as some supposed  
it was, an exodus of faith  
whirling aimlessly in the silence  
of the desert between poles  
of grief and joy,  
with only an occasional mute bush  
to punctuate Your terrible absence.

All this time, Lord, and truly  
the pastures are greener on the other side?  
But that is the punch line,  
not Your final truth:  
One psalm is nailed through flesh and bone and wood,  
the other through eternity,  
and between them—Your embrace.

## **The Water Promise**

**By Haider Salih**

My father is the hardest working and most determined man I have ever known because he set goals and took chances to start his own business to fulfill a promise he made to his mother. My father did not start life with a silver spoon in his mouth. He came from a very poor family who heard about good things in life like fancy clothes, but never wore them, saw cold running, clean water, but never drank it, smelled aromatic food, but never tasted it. What my father was born with was suffering, pain, hard work, faith, hope, imagination and determination.

In 1937 my father was born in one of the poorest neighborhoods in the suburbs of Baghdad, Iraq. He was born and raised in a house built from clay, which was lucky compared to other people's houses, which were made of things like tin cans. One day, at about eight years old, when my father started working, he was standing outside his house. He watched his mother, sweat dripping off her face, from the hot desert sun, as she finished her second four mile trip to the river that day, with another five gallons of water on top of her head. As he helped prepare a fire to boil the water for drinking, he made a promise to his mother---to one day buy her a house with a water faucet so she would never have to go through that again.

Harvesting crops at a farm near his neighborhood, he started his first job. When he was about eleven, slavery ended in Iraq which opened new opportunities for work and business; though my father continued to work in low class jobs because he was too poor and too young to do anything else. He pulled wagons of oil, and he also repaired bricks, selling them on the side of the road to start saving some money. With this money he bought a dress suit and a cheap camera with which he started taking photographs, mainly of rich families in private clubs. This started his deep love for photography.

In his early twenties, my father took out a loan from his rich friend to start his own business. He traveled to Germany with the help of his best friend, whom he had once helped before by sending him off to college. He purchased the first color photography lab to bring back to Iraq. His business grew, and became so successful that even the president of Iraq came to him to have pictures taken in color. He paid back the loan from his friend and purchased the entire building where his studio and lab were located. He worked hard and saved and purchased farms, shopping centers and a five-star hotel in Morocco. He also bought a big, beautiful sixteen-bedroom, eight-bathroom, ten-car garage home. It had a one-half acre lush, green, flowering, beautiful garden with running water for his mother and his entire family.

From 1980 until about 1991, Iraq went through economic recession, wars, and government corruption. Most of the riches and my father's business were lost during this time. What was not lost was the family home and all the memories, pride, and love that it contains. Though this house could one day too be lost, I will never lose the lessons that my father taught me. No matter where you come from or how your life starts, hard work, dedication, and determination can make all of your dreams come true. No matter how rich or poor, your family's love will always make you strong.

# Waiting for Tom

By Brent Hix



## Yard Sale

By Audrey Wick

He had already taken off from work to be home. The four kids were at Her mother's for the morning. He had just finished a cardboard sign to put by the mailbox; she sat in her lawn chair with a cigar box counting change.

Two card tables and several old blankets had been spread beneath the post oaks in the front lawn. An artificial Christmas tree, children's worn tennis shoes, a chipped set of wedding china, water-stained curtains, torn jeans now too small for Him—all in quiet presentation.

The customers came not as early as expected but arrived past 8:00. The first was a young mother, no older than twenty, with her son in a sling about her breast. She browsed silently.

The next, two middle-aged women, said they were looking for antiques. He tried to interest them in the china, but they said they didn't care for the color sage.

They came that morning in sporadic procession through the meager arrangements. Sometimes they would turn an item around a time or two in their hands, but always replace it before a kind "Thank you" concluded their perusal.

After rummaging past the shoebox full of pens and the milk crate full of books, shortly before ten, an elderly gentleman gave Her a smile and walked back to his truck. On his way, he paused a moment to admire a cluster of prickly pears, most now bright with their inaugural yellow blooms of spring. Walking back up to Her, he warily asked, "Those cactus for sale?" pointing past Her to the corner of the house.

"Sure," He said, cutting in. "How much you give me for one?"

He then began grubbing with His hoe, placing them each by each into plastic grocery sacks. The gentleman left with four, all flowering.

Other customers, too, admired the succulents. He even interested a few in barrel cacti He uprooted from behind his backyard shed.

At noon, the Christmas tree still stood, the tennis shoes remained. All of their belongings lingered under the now white-hot sun, a bit disarrayed but still as they were--all except for the prickly pears that had stood since they moved into the house. Only a bit of disheveled dirt marked their absence.

"Guess I'll go get us some lunch," He told Her, poking at the thorns lodged about his fingers. "No need for me around here no more."

And he left for town, his pickup familiarly grinding against the graveled driveway before pulling onto the main road and disappearing past the mesquite, wondering if the fourteen dollars in the jeaned crook of his thigh would be enough for three pounds of barbecued brisket.

## Captain Chaos

Ruth Lumpkin

Captain Chaos  
Is what we'll call him.  
Captain Chaos  
Has big, blue eyes  
Soft blonde hair  
And that  
Almost-but-not-quite-innocent face.  
Excitement dances  
Across his expression  
When there is a mess to be made,  
Cars to race, and wreck,  
All over the dining room floor,  
Dragons, or siblings, with which  
To fight ferocious battles  
And Captain Chaos  
Never Loses.  
The not-so-soft  
Pitter-patter of little feet  
Warns unsuspecting folk  
Of surprise attacks,  
Be the weapon foam or  
Absolute Adorableness.  
Captain Chaos  
Is what we'll call him.  
Even when he's old  
We'll remember,  
My siblings and I,  
The excitement,  
Frustration,  
And love  
From the time  
When Captain Chaos  
Was young.

**Saint Runaway**

**Raene Mathes**



## Ecclesiastes

By Miranda Parman

Before the white capped curvature  
Where there is shell-thick sand  
And the soft beat of synth raggae  
Pulses from the pocket of a boy with his  
IPhone on there were shouts passed about  
The ability to reason and discombobulation  
So before the lights don't turn back on  
And the sun doesn't rise  
When our hearts don't turn back on  
The day our lungs don't fill and our  
Chest doesn't rise we need to remember  
That today the water washes around our  
Bare bathing-suited bodies and that is a  
Blessing from a god you don't believe in  
In an ancient text you've never read but  
Seem to be an authority on  
Here where the waves kiss the soft cloth  
Of the bikini bottoms we purchased at  
Department stores we will talk about the  
Euro crisis and deportation and flaws  
In colonializational thinking  
Here we are with people who think about  
The world through print the same way  
We do and with that we lay our  
Opinions down in the sand with our towels  
So before the liquor stops numbing the pain  
Before the birds don't sing at sunrise  
When we don't want to part the curtains  
Because we don't want to wake up  
Anymore in this fallen paradise  
Realize that there are arms open  
That know the song in your heart  
The words on your lips and the  
Opinion hanging like gloss on your lips  
And they desire to give you answers  
About why you feel the need to prove  
Yourself with your art and your travel  
Your knowledge and your skill  
That will never fill you up and will  
Always leave you asking what little thing  
You must have missed that left you  
Desperate for more that isn't there for you  
There is a home and it wants you, too

## Collage Dream

By Lauren Speelman



## Cathedral

By Joseph Holmes

The flowers open, like round-dancing—  
yellow shawls, all of them,  
or perhaps like parishioners who,  
still in their infancy—hesitant and fearful—  
question some carnal redemption

The drum beats like a heart,  
which is nothing new: Who hears it?  
What I demand of myself lies down this path  
where squats the shell of a dead church,  
where leaves rattle, where everything sings,  
where yellow shawls open, like round-dancing

where, here in your center, opens a new vat  
of delicious sap. And the ribs of your vault  
sprout green buds and sparrows and seeding.  
Something is so close to my breath  
that my tears rise, and my lips part  
in wonder at the blue and blue and blue  
altarpiece, which demands nothing of me.

## **The Beautiful Desert**

**By Katie Rose Stoepler**

In the early 1900's the swampy, lake-filled southern San Joaquin Valley was the home to many kinds of elk, deer, bear and the Yokut Indians. Rivers flowed from San Francisco all the way down to Tejon Ranch. Today, all the rivers and lakes have been drained for farmland, the wildlife has been hunted, and the Indians have been put onto reservations. All that is left is a vast wasteland and a few small farms. Most people consider the Valley "a boring, hot desert," but to me it was a haven of exciting adventure where anything could happen and a place where I could dream of great things.

I can still remember riding my bike for miles on the hot, dusty dirt roads; through acres of almond trees and alongside the deep, dangerous canal that brought water in from the mountains to get to the small, muddy lake that is filled with reeds and cattails. My brother and I spent many blazing hot afternoons wading in the swampy lake, making rafts out of driftwood, or just lying on the warm, honey-smelling carpets of small yellow flowers that covered the hills. We loved to explore the old Indian camps, looking for arrowheads and odd-shaped holes in the rocks where the Indians ground their corn. Another exciting past-time was calling to coyotes. We would howl and bark and see how close we could get the coyote to come before it would find out we were human. We would also make small boats out of empty shot-gun shells and bark, set them in the canal, and then throw dirt-clods at them to sink them.

Even though the desert looks barren and desolate, there are still many kinds of fascinating wildlife and plants. There are many kinds of waterfowl in the swamps; cranes that fly in circles for hours when disturbed, egrets that stand over gopher holes waiting for the next unlucky gopher to show his head, majestic blue heron, funny black moorhen, and ducks who fly so close to the water it looks like they are running on the surface. Jack-rabbits and cotton-tails hop crookedly through the sagebrush, and little ground squirrels scamper hurriedly to their holes when a hawk flies overhead. In the fall, tumbleweeds roll furiously across the fields and in the spring; the hills are covered with carpets of white, yellow and purple wildflowers.

The desert would be a very boring place for people who live in the fast-paced city, but for me and the Yokut Indians it is a beautiful nature-filled place of adventure and excitement. Growing up in the deserts of southern San Joaquin Valley I learned a lot about the habits of wildlife and the Yokut Indians and the way they used the bark of wild willow trees as medicine, the way they moved from lake to lake during the different seasons because of severe flooding, and the way they used certain rocks to make their grinding holes because some of the rocks stayed warm for centuries from ancient volcanoes. While most people hate the hot, dry desert, I will always remember it as a place where I had some of the best times of my childhood.

## A Song of Ascents

By Frank Sobey

*for Saoirse*

in the dream a young warrior  
raises an ash bow  
to the heavens

the arrow is long and feathered  
with moonlight  
tipped with stars

he draws the taut string back  
before time  
and aims

(this is the part  
where i wake but not last night)

last night the piercing song  
of its flight  
across the world  
and through my heart

ended with a thud  
in the tree of life

when the mighty warrior  
looked down at the empty quiver  
i woke

and there you were  
asleep in the curve of your mama's arms

one day to be let loose

**Self Portrait**

**By Rusty Marnell**



## Revolution in *Breathless*

By Jon Alexander

“A revolution is an idea which has found its bayonets.” – Napoleon Bonaparte

In 1958, a handful of French film critics decided they were through merely criticizing the cinematic works of the day. They had had enough of the watered down nature of some of the Hollywood pictures in those times, and believed they could do better. They wanted to make their own movies. This would not have been any reason for pause if these film critics were not the ringleaders of a film revolution of sorts, a “New Wave” of moviemaking. These critics, which included François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, and Jacques Rivette among others, were writers for an innovative film magazine called the *Cahiers du cinema*, which was reexamining some forgotten or underappreciated films from decades past. They extolled the virtues of nontraditional directors such as Renoir, Hitchcock, Welles, and Ford, emphasizing the artistic merits of the films those men were making. Most importantly, they devised a concept known as auteur theory, which stressed that a director was the author of his movie---that a film is the sum-total of the creative visions of a director. It should come as no surprise that when these critics put their ideas into practice behind a camera, they followed this theory fanatically. They made then-radical films such as *Le Beau Serge* and *The 400 Blows*, both of which were highly successful by every measure. Yet it was Jean-Luc Godard’s 1960 volley, *Breathless*, that encapsulated the passion, the egoism, the rebellion of the French New Wave better than all the others.

The narrative of *Breathless* is fairly simple, and could be summarized easily in one or two sentences. But something about that story of a young crook and his involvement with a naïve young girl keeps the viewer enticed, and it never seems stale, even after repeated views. Perhaps there is something more to the writing than would appear at first glance. It is said that Godard and Truffaut merely wrote an outline for the action of the movie, with Godard writing lines for his actors to perform the day the scenes would be filmed. This simple technique gave the film an aura of spontaneity, so much so that even the most experienced viewer can find something new with each viewing.

Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg, who play the hopelessly beautiful main characters Michel and Patricia, make the film feel intimate. Belmondo’s Michel, with his cynical, chain-smoking, Humphrey Bogart-worshipping demeanor, is powerfully identifiable with young men. His desire to be a strong man even amidst his hidden fear of adulthood is something anyone can empathize with. He kills a cop, steals cars, and sells them on the black market; he loves, takes from, and leaves women, but none of this really matters. The viewer could see Michel do anything and still love him, for it is emotions that are significant. Seberg’s Patricia, by contrast, can be viewed through her lack of emotionality in the film. She is essentially in the same predicament as Michel, attempting to adjust to adulthood that no amount of school could prepare one for. Yet she is less sure of what she wants, more than Michel could ever be. While her spirit is never satisfactorily explored in the film, it is safe to assume she has major issues in her life. She has only recently emigrated to France and is still having issues acclimating. Her French sounds

very book-learned, with American twists on her pronunciations. She is very inquisitive, often asking Michel “Qu’est-que c’est?”, or “what is this?” She is playful, and yet one senses an undercurrent of pain. Another issue for her is that she might be pregnant and might just be in love with Michel. She doesn’t seem to know how to deal with these issues, which results in her ignoring any apparent considerations of her pregnancy and ultimately betraying Michel to his death to test her love for him.

Godard’s film is really a culmination of the French New Wave due to one thing: its style. One of the overlooked themes of Godard’s film is the streets of Paris, with their disorienting lights and sirens in abundance. Almost all of the action takes place on them, and even in a scene such as the sensuous apartment scene which it does not, the streets are never too far away. Godard did not get permission to film *Breathless* on the Paris “rues,” instead filming his shots in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the city’s daily life. However, this did cause the sound of the film to be indistinguishable from the street sounds, which resulted in studio dubbing over almost all of the scenes. This is perhaps the worst part of the film. He used the streets to film pan shots, or extended scenes that move along a single setting. This is not to say that there were no breaks in those scenes. *Breathless* is famous for its use of jump cuts, or breaks within a scene where something is edited out, with no attempt to mask the cut. Godard made these cuts when he realized the film’s runtime was too long. Instead of cutting whole scenes as most directors do, he cut pieces of dialog and action which he found uninteresting. Godard also made the brilliant decision to shoot the film “documentary style,” with a hand-held camera. This made the film feel raw, like it was really happening.

The jump cuts, along with the personal feel of the movie, give viewers a feeling that they are only getting a glimpse into a much bigger story, that they see only what they are allowed to see. The French title, *À Bout de Soufflé*, which means “at breath’s end,” emphasizes this. The audience sees a single breath of a vibrant coexistence between two young people, which ends when Michel stops breathing. Michel’s death scene is likely the most famous of the film: the police shoot him and he runs down the streets he has lived on for so long, clutching his back in pain. The sirens, once natural, now play his ominous requiem. It is simultaneously beautiful and haunting. Before he dies, Michel says to Patricia that life is a scumbag, which she mishears as an insult, asking him one last question, “What is a scumbag?” The meaning is open to interpretation in many ways, and the audience wishes to know more, but the breath is over; the story is dead.

*Breathless* was, in its time, a jolt of energy to the system of filmmaking. Nothing like it had ever been seen before, and little has been seen since which is comparable. It was a gunshot heard round the world, one fired by a camera. It took all of the ideas of the French New Wave and gave them bayonets, and it paved the way for modern cinema. How odd? That even a revolution in film should be fought in the streets.

# Staring

By Penny Frazier



## The Struggle of Re-Assimilation: A Character Analysis of Harold Krebs

By Skylar Brannon

Confusion, struggle, inevitable isolation, all words which soldiers would undoubtedly use to describe their return to their safe hometowns after living in the shadow of death during combat. In his short story "Soldier's Home," Ernest Hemingway explores the life of war veterans returning back to their homelands through the story of a fictional character by the name of Harold Krebs. The story follows Krebs' inner turmoil and difficulty in maneuvering through life in his hometown shortly after returning from combat. Foreigners overseas and aliens in their homelands, returning soldiers find themselves in limbo between two disparate lives. Through the narration of Krebs' struggle at home with courtship, incongruent values, familial relationships, and the necessity of lying, Hemingway focuses around this theme of a soldier's struggle to re-assimilate.

Upon his return, Krebs finds that he no longer understands the way which the girls in his hometown live their lives and struggles to learn how to mesh with them. The girls "lived in such a complicated world of already defined alliances and shifting feuds that Krebs did not feel the energy nor the courage to break into it" (Hemingway 68), isolating him from their world. His life in the war has caused him to grow so distant from their lifestyle that any interaction with them is highly difficult, if not impossible. He realizes that the girls would not understand him were he to engage them in conversation. They could not possibly understand what he has been through in the war, as they have experienced a static life in a small, quiet town. Therefore, daunted by the process that would be decoding the girls' culture and weaving into it, Krebs does not engage in courtship, but watches the girls "walking along the other side of the street" from his front porch (69). Clearly, Hemingway uses the girls in the short story as a symbol to support his central message. Krebs' experience with the girls represents that of the majority of soldiers who experience such a distance from society. "Nothing was changed in the town except that the young girls had grown up" (68), and this is the problem: Krebs, and soldiers like him, come back to a place that has not changed while they have been in the most dynamic situations of their lives.

Following the pattern of profound change, Krebs has diverged from "orthodox" values and resists his mother's pressure to conform to small town values, communicating that he has placed other values into a higher priority. Such incongruity creates complication as he tries to figure out how he can peacefully exist in such a conflicted manner. His mother's religion receives the most outright denial by Krebs as he claims that he is "not in His kingdom" in reply to his mother's press for piety (71). Evidently, what Krebs has seen in the war has convinced him that religion is not of the utmost importance. Implying that his mother practices religion faithfully, the story poses the struggle of how Krebs is to blend beliefs without forgetting what he has seen or upsetting his mother and the balance of the family. Mrs. Krebs pushes her son to find a job to support himself and indirectly encourages him to find a female companion by allowing him to use the family car for dates. No doubt, these values, a stable job and a respectable relationship, are of the utmost importance to the Krebs family. Falling in line with the Midwestern values of their small town in Oklahoma, the family finds hard work and dedication to a significant other to be the marks of a put-together man who makes his fair

contribution to society by finding his rightful place. Krebs “want[s] his life to go smoothly” (72), but with such a disparity in core values and beliefs, turmoil is inevitable without forfeit. Krebs’ struggle mirrors that of a lot of war veterans in their quest to relearn their place in the family.

In a short yet profound statement which further exemplifies the need to relearn proper intra-familial behavior, Krebs declares that he “[does not] love anybody” (72), communicating his inability to feel strong, enduring feelings after experiencing battle. As his statement visibly upsets his mother, Krebs encounters another difficulty in adjusting to his new way of life. He must now relearn how to build trusting, loving relationships with his family if he wants a smooth life at home. This lack of feeling is understandable as soldiers experience the daily loss of fellow combatants. After enduring the death of a companion, human nature causes soldiers to protect themselves by distancing themselves from other people. Krebs has evidently gone through this process, and he has carried this habit back home.

Compounding his confusion and complication, by the time Krebs returns home, “[h]is town had heard too many atrocity stories to be thrilled by actualities” (67). Krebs’ stories were not exciting, so “he felt the need to talk but no one would listen” (67). Having seen what he saw, having done what he did, he cannot bear keeping silent about his experience in the war, but since the inhabitants of his home town had already heard their fair share of brilliant war stories, Krebs is forced to add excitement to his. He is forced to lie in order to be listened to. The fact of the matter is that civilians do not know how to deal with soldiers. They do not know how to interact with or react to soldiers as much as soldiers do not know how to handle the same situations. If the soldiers’ stories do not match the people’s schemas of war, their grasp on how to handle the interaction is hindered even more. Therefore, soldiers are forced to play into the people’s preexisting views, making the return easier and more comfortable for civilians but all the more difficult on the soldiers. On top of everything else with which he struggles upon his return, Krebs must also figure out what people want to hear. He must figure out how to be listened to. The difficulty presented here is with his conscience. Krebs “acquired nausea in regard to experience that is the result of untruth or exaggeration” (68); he literally became sick with himself after his lies. He did not want to lie, but society forced him to in order to rejoin without complication.

When soldiers go off to war, they leave their old lives behind, inevitably deviating from their previous beliefs, values, and comfort as they move into a life of intense trial and sacrifice. Civilian life continues to follow the same pattern while the soldiers are gone, causing an obvious distance between their new selves and the selves they once knew. Krebs’ story unquestionably depicts this idea and guides readers through the hardship that is life for soldiers returning home.

#### Work Cited

Hemingway, Ernest. “Soldier’s Home.” *Introduction to Literature*. Ed. Frank Sobey. Custom Ed. Boston: Pearson, 2011. 67-73. Print.

## PTSD Is Not Just a Problem for Veterans

By Kai Vrede

As I shut the door behind me to the Motor Pool, I began walking back to my shop when out of nowhere I heard a gunshot go off. To my surprise someone whom I had just finished saying hello to ten minutes ago lay on the ground bleeding from a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head. Kevin was addicted to steroids which is how his demons were able to conquer his emotions. Today, veterans are under tight scrutiny as they return home with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, substance abuse problems, depression and problems with the law.

The much anticipated return home is mixed with many emotions; many service members come back with emotional scars and issues that need to be dealt with immediately. The first thing everyone does once they have arrived back home is to get in-processed. This means they will visit a building called the Soldier Readiness Processing Center, better known as SRP. Once inside, they're thoroughly examined from head to toe and asked dozens of questions relating to their mental state. Towards the end of the soldiers' processing, they will meet with a counselor who will ask them a series of personal questions about their deployment.

Answering yes to certain questions will draw a red flag upon soldiers and they will be forced to meet with a psychiatrist. Having to meet with a psychiatrist brings much unwanted attention to soldiers because now they possibly might not be able to train and they will have appointments they must make, taking time away from doing their job and could just flat out find themselves being labeled as "that guy". The fear of being ridiculed by your peers, looked down on by your superiors, and not wanting to lose your job is enough to make any soldiers lie when they return home and say everything is ok so that they can stay under the radar and have a smooth transition back into civilization. When the soldiers have reintegrated back into society and with loved ones, the new challenge for them is being able to cope with their problems without reverting back to what they were taught and learned in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Once the war started in Iraq in 2003, "arrests of military personnel in the city of Colorado Springs increased by more than 300%" (Philips 180). The fact that the military allows the sale of alcohol on military installations twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week does not help soldiers dealing with PTSD symptoms who "have overall high prevalence of smoking and binge drinking when compared with civilians," according to Dr. Volkow of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (Volkow). Soldiers suffering from these symptoms self-medicate by drinking, and abusing prescription pills in order to deal with the stress. Many times as a result of this abuse, the family unit will suffer as well. Research done by the Dept. of Defense shows that the divorce rate went up from 2.6% in 2001 to 3.6% in 2009 and has remained at that rate into 2010 (Bushatz).

By 2011, America had been at war for ten years already and the military was "over-strengthened" because of a few factors: one, the economy, and the second reason being due to lowering its standards to keep numbers up. When the Army became over-strengthened, it looked for different ways to reduce numbers. One of these ways was called being "chaptered" out the Army. Once soldiers are chaptered out of the military, they will lose some or all of their military benefits. According to Daniel Zwerdling,

commanders have discharged more than twice as many soldiers for drug abuse since 2001 and have discharged 40% more soldiers for personality disorders (Zwerdling).

The military spends years and thousands of dollars training someone to become a lethal weapon; Iraq can spend almost as much time turning that person into a sociopath. However, once soldiers come home, the Army will barely spend one day trying to seek help for soldiers. Of all these soldiers who find themselves in these negative discharge categories once out of the military, many find themselves in jail, addicted to alcohol or addicted to drugs with no way of getting any kind of professional help. Left to self medicate and cope with their problems many often make bad decisions as a result of their PTSD and depression.

However in 2008 in Buffalo, New York, the first Veterans Trauma Court was opened to give veterans who meet the criteria of PTSD and depression a fair chance with the judicial system: "The veterans punishments are lessened if they follow precise programs, which can include everything from mental health counseling to job skills training, and, if applicable, test clean in frequent drug and alcohol tests" (Ruggeri). From personal experience, I've witnessed the Veterans Trauma Court save several soldiers careers and families as it gave them a second chance of keeping a clean record and being punished by the Army. The goal of Veteran's Court is to give veterans the right tools to be rehabilitated and become functional citizens again. These courts are popping up all over the country, mainly next to Army and Marine bases.

Still, not everyone is on board with the direction the Veterans Court is going. Ruggeri reports, "critics including some veterans worry about what they see as the courts perpetuation of stereotypes. Others criticize the idea of creating a separate class of offenders solely on the basis of military service" (Ruggeri). There has been a growing number of people who feel that the PTSD complaint is being over used. At first, it seemed to be only officers and senior enlisted soldiers that felt that way and would make accusations, but the viewpoint is now shared by many psychiatrists. Their biggest concern, as stated by Sally Satel, is "VA Mental Health workers commonly believed-and many still do-that participation in war results in PTSD. In communicating this mistaken notion to veterans, they set up expectations of illness. Second, treatments themselves inadvertently contribute to problem" (Satel).

Serving my country and being able to call myself a veteran is something I'm proud of and can never forget. With more people supporting veterans and the disabilities they return home with, we as a country can ensure that history won't repeat itself as was the case for Vietnam veterans.

## Works Cited

- Bushatz, Amy. "Troop Divorce Rates Level in 2010." *Military.com* Web. 30 Oct 2011
- Phillips, David. *Lethal Warriors: When the New Band of Brothers Came Home*. New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2010. Print.
- Ruggeri, Amanda. "Giving Troubled Veterans a Second Chance." *US News Digital Weekly* (2009): *Ebsco*. Web. 30 Oct 2011.
- Satel, Sally. "Saving Our Vets Once They're Home: The Right Kind of Mental Health Treatment Is Vital." *Los Angeles Times*. Web. 30 Oct 2011.
- Volkow, Nora M.D. "Substance Abuse Among Troops, Veterans, and Their Families." *NIDA National Institute on Drug Abuse* (2009). Web. 30 Oct 2011.
- Zwerdling, Daniel. "Army Dismissals for Mental Health, Misconduct Rise." (2007). *NPR*. Web. 30 Oct 2011.

# The Winds of War

Sean Callahan



## The Religion of /

By J. Eric Dennis

Though Ayn Rand spent the greater part of her life denouncing religion in all its incarnations, her 1938 novella, *Anthem*, serves to demonstrate that she in fact advocated a sort of religion herself. Instead of proclaiming the Judeo-Christian God (or any other popular religious deity) as the object of her religion's affections, however, she deifies the individual human self instead. The evidence for this is seen in the fact that *Anthem* is laden with religious vocabulary and symbolism. Although it would be easy to dismiss this as a mere attempt at arguing against religion, the verbiage and symbolism are so prevalent that, at times, *Anthem* reads like a religious text itself. Moreover, the protagonist of *Anthem*, a man simply referred to as Equality-7-2521, does more than renounce the current religion, which is what you would expect an agnostic or atheist like Rand to do; he espouses a new religion (or, perhaps more accurately, a rediscovered one). Furthermore, virtually all of the characters of Rand's novella are common theological, even biblical, archetypes. Rather than serving as an argument against religion, *Anthem* is, in all actuality, the model for a very humanistic but decidedly individualistic religion.

One need go no further than the title page of *Anthem* itself to discover the first piece of evidence of Ayn Rand's religion. The word anthem is defined as "1. a sacred vocal composition with words usually from the scriptures OR 2. a song or hymn of praise or gladness OR 3. a usually rousing popular song that is identified with a particular subculture, movement, or point of view" (*Merriam-Webster's*).

In fact, there are passages in *Anthem*—particularly in the last third of the novella—that read like a passage from a religious text. For instance, early on in *Anthem*, Equality-7-2521 describes these words engraved on the front of an important government building: "There are no men, but only the great WE, one, indivisible, and forever" (Rand 19). Even more pointedly, there are striking similarities between certain passages in *Anthem* and specific scriptures in the Bible itself. Equality-7-2521 describes his three treasures at one point thusly: "I guard my treasures: my thought, my will, my freedom. And the greatest of these is freedom" (Rand 95-96). This is quite reminiscent of a well-known verse in the Bible which reads "And now these remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love" (*King James Bible*, 1 Cor 13:13). Similarly, at one point when describing himself, Equality-7-2521 says, "I am the meaning ... I am the warrant and the sanction" (Rand 94). This reminds one of the biblical passage "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6) which is attributed to Jesus Christ himself. In reference to these similarities, the editors of the web site *Shmoop* point out, "The resemblance might not be precise enough to call these allusions per se, but at the very least Rand's language is similar enough to be suggestive of scripture" ("Biblical & Mythological"). This "suggesting" is effective and enduring, as demonstrated when the reader reaches the conclusion of Equality-7-2521's story, and according to Professor Stephen Cox, "one hears a distinct echo of the Christian story of fall and redemption" (Cox). It is clear that the myth-like or scripture-like language is quite purposeful, and in using such, Rand succeeds in setting the reader up for the religious change which the protagonist sees as necessary for the "redemption" of man.

One of the main themes of *Anthem* centers on the desire of Equality-7-2521 to

renounce the current societal situation. This state of affairs is described by Rand as one in which the totalitarian government has all but abolished every notion of individuality and conditioned its people to accept its collectivist principles without question. As has been already noted, Rand, through Equality-7-2521, describes this societal framework in religious-like ways: “the Great Rebirth” (Rand 19), “the Great Truth” (Rand 20), “By the grace of our brothers are we allowed our lives ... Amen” (Rand 21), and “The will of our brothers be done” (Rand 26). Given the fact that Rand herself espouses atheistic beliefs, one would expect the protagonist to not only renounce this “religion” of sorts, but to repudiate all religions. This is not the case, though. Rather, Equality-7-2521 chooses to advocate a different religion—one that places man, each individual man, at the top of the theistic ladder. This is not a religion which he invents, but is one which he rediscovers in the ancient texts from “those Unmentionable Times” (Rand 19) that he reads. This long-lost religion of *Anthem* elevates the status of the individual *I* to that of godhood, and goes so far as to relegate the previously worshipped god, the collective *We*, to the role of the devil himself: “For the word ‘We’ must never be spoken ... else it becomes a monster, the root of all evils on Earth” (Rand 96).

Just as she creates a deity of sorts from the individual and makes a devil-like persona out of the collective, Rand uses the characters in *Anthem* to perform the roles of some tried-and-true theological archetypes. The man who is burned alive in the city square, whom Equality-7-2521 refers to as “The Transgressor” (Rand 50) and as “The Saint of the pyre” (Rand 51), is a classic example of someone who martyrs himself for the cause; in this case the cause is individuality and true freedom. Equality-7-2521 surrounds himself with a number of what he describes as “my few chosen friends” (Rand 101) and even says that they “will follow me, and I shall lead them to my fortress” (Rand 101). These close friends are in fact disciples, not too dissimilar from those found in other religious texts. Even Equality-7-2521 himself can be seen as a classic religious archetype. The reader perceives him as rebellious, naturally charismatic, and possessing of a steadfast perseverance; these traits, combined with an inherent “goodness” that permeates the novella, demonstrate that Equality-7-2521 is the perennial spiritual master, perhaps even spiritual savior, that is so prevalent in the religions of the world.

Using *Anthem*, Ayn Rand not only criticizes the ideal of collectivism from a socio-political standpoint, but also from a religious one. However, contrary to expectations—given that Rand is an atheist—Rand does not denounce religion in all its forms, but rather, advocates a religion which deifies the one, the individual, in place of some unknown and unseen God. She accomplishes this through the use of religious symbolism, as well as her employment of religious character archetypes. Ultimately, the protagonist of *Anthem* embraces not merely a new system of government, but a new religion; a religion which diminishes the collective at the same time it strengthens the individual. To put it succinctly, Ayn Rand’s religion—the religion of *Anthem*—is the religion of *I*.

## Works Cited

- "Anthem." *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 9th ed. 1983. Print.
- "Biblical & Mythological Overtones in *Anthem*." *Shmoop*, 11 Nov 2008. Shmoop University, Inc. Web. 20 Nov 2011.
- Cox, Stephen. "Ayn Rand's Anthem: An Appreciation." *The Atlas Society Page*, n.d. The Atlas Society. Web. 22 Nov 2011.
- King James Bible*. New York: The World Publishing Company, 1946. Print.
- Rand, Ayn. *Anthem*. New York: Penguin Group Inc, 1995. Print.

## The Sacramental Veil

By Ashley Abbott

“The Minister’s Black Veil,” written in 1836 by Nathaniel Hawthorne, has a theme that centers around alienation and a personal haunting through sin. The protagonist, Reverend Hooper, becomes “the reflector reflected, two steps removed from reality, [and] caught in the trap of appearances” (Barry 19). Hooper furthers his alienation by choosing “to make his black veil visible while others have kept their secrets in their own hearts” (Reed 4). The parable of the story is based on the abstraction of a visage, and the veil serves to separate the self-reflective from the self-ignorant. The symbolism of the different events that take place shows the reader the impact of the separation between Hooper and the rest of the community. Hooper’s internal conflicts contrast greatly with the external conflicts he faces against the society in which he lives. The reverend sees the world through a veil that embodies every struggle between man and God, and exemplifies both the descent of mankind and the descent of the self.

Starting off with the grand entrance of the visage, the sexton summons the ghost that haunts the minds of the men and women. Everyone gathers in amazement and dread at the sight of the reverend, and Goodman Gray stutters, “Our parson has gone mad” (Hawthorne ). The congregation keeps its distance; this time out of fear rather than reverence. The sermon casts a shadow over the recipients, and the pastor is more than one step away from the rest of the audience not only on the hierarchical ladder, but also on the metaphysical ladder. As the audience listens with bated breath, the words the parson recites send a quivering wind through the veil and into the crowd. Through this fear and isolation, the community begins to separate itself from the image they do not recognize or understand. The people are split between themselves on what to believe and “one or two affirmed that there was no mystery at all.” Squire Sanders even forgets to request the blessing of his food.

During the funeral service the visage is seen as fitting for the occasion and when the veil is uplifted between the deceased and the pastor, the corpse is said to have “slightly shuddered.” The face of the reverend is seen as one side of the duality between the light of love and the darkness of sin. When the face is revealed, it no longer becomes appropriate for the event, and instead it sheds a light on the procession as a sacrament to the dying. However, the townspeople at the procession do not see it as such. When one of the two citizens looks back, she wonders which is real—the minister or the maiden. Between the pastor and the spirit she sees an intimacy associated with a magician-like austerity, and the veil is seen, instead, as a deceiver of the self.

After the funeral, the minister attends the wedding, and the impatient crowd finds again that same grim visage which “could portend nothing but evil.” The bride shudders to think of receiving the same blessing that was received by the deceased before her untimely death. As the minister spills the toasting wine to the floor, the Earth consumes it, who is said to be wearing the same veil. This idea reverts back to the pastor’s decaying image and mankind’s retrogression—“of earth they were made and into earth they return together” (Ecclesiastes 3.20). During the final intimate meeting between the pastor and his fiancé, Elizabeth, she implores him to remove the veil but once in order to see the face

beneath it. When he refuses and claims that the veil is but a material emblem and that their souls will not be veiled in eternity, her final struggle to have him lift the veil embodies the final separation between the pastor and even his most intimate friends. The darkness that hung over the pastor becomes an abstraction that aided sinners in their darkest times but chilled them in their happiest hours. During their struggles the converts claimed that “before he brought them to celestial light, they had been with him behind the black veil.” He became an archetype for reverence and God-like mercy, “kind and loving, though unloved, and dimly feared; a man apart from men, shunned in their health and joy, but ever summoned to their aid in mortal anguish.”

The veil itself presents more than a material darkness. The donning of the veil creates an atmosphere unlike any seen before by these lovers of the light. Christ is seen as that human element that warms the hearts of those who follow his light, and the darkness that follows the veil is seen as a direct opposition to that element—one of an antichrist or a summoner of Lucifer. However, as Leviticus exemplifies, “the priest that is anointed shall carry of the blood into the tabernacle of the testimony...[a]nd shall dip his finger in it and sprinkle it seven times before the veil” (4.16-17). The veil is meant to be a symbol set before an offering of a ritual sacrifice to God. In these trials and tribulations the minister faces he distances himself from the rest of society through the material emblem, but he slowly understands the sacrifice necessary to cleanse himself of the darkness that “[hangs] between him and the world.” On his deathbed the veil creates a world visage of iniquity which holds an iron grip on his connection with the rest of the people around him. The abyss his veil typifies and the light Christ embodies are greatly contrasted, but the middle ground is Elizabeth. In her initial rejection of the minister due to his veil, she rejects him not from the same fear that everyone else does. She rejects him based on his inability to show his face, that light which spreads love to the world around it. But as time passes she does not grow cold toward him. When he is dying she is by his side as a friend who understands the importance and sacrifice the veil embodies, showing the unconditional love that is often seen as a unifying force between the darkness of isolation and the light of connection.

Hooper becomes too afraid to even see the visage he has haunted everyone else with in the course of his past. His feeling of alienation becomes overburdened by the image itself, and he is afraid to even see himself reflected through the eyes of the external society. He can no longer bless the people; instead, he is seen as a curse. Through his ascetic nature he becomes disconnected from the material world but understands the nature and the truly powerful force of God. His austerity is a symbol of understanding beauty and the beauty of understanding, and through his misery he becomes fully connected to the impact that higher states of consciousness have on the world.

With his final breath the veil shivers into the world, unifying the light with darkness. As Hooper lives and dies he shows society what it means to exemplify an archetype that is separated from the rest. Through his veil he is set apart from everyone else and feared, but is also seen as a person to be there for them in their time of despair and agony. By struggling through a truth and distorting it into an absolute, the minister experiences the full ferocity of one side of the duality of life. Though he does not experience Christ in its entire concept (because he did not experience the human element that Christ embodied), he experiences God more intimately through his societal disconnection. In this God-head connection he focuses only on one aspect of his nature—his personal sin. Meditating

upon this for a lifetime erases every other aspect of his nature, and his ego and pride slowly disintegrate as he moves closer to death. He loses all sense of self and swallows this absolute he has created for himself, and by doing so fails to understand the nature of being human but transcends to an idealistic mode of thinking.

#### Works Cited

- Barry, Elaine. "BEYOND THE VEIL: A READING OF HAWTHORNE'S 'THE MINISTER'S BLACK VEIL'." *Studies in Short Fiction* 17.1 (1980): 15. *Academic Search Complete*. EBSCO. Web. 11 Oct. 2011.
- Douay-Rheims Bible*. Ed. Richard Challoner. United Kingdom: London, 2008. Print.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "The Minister's Black Veil." Dr. Mary Dodson. Freshman Composition II. Course homepage. Aug.-Dec. 2011. Dept. of English, Amarillo Coll. Web. 16 Oct. 2011.
- Reed, Michael. "The Minister's Black Veil." *Masterplots II. Short Story Ser.* (2004): 1-3. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 13 Oct. 2011.

## Eternal Dusk

By J. Eric Dennis



# ***Spring 2012 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) 371-5472 or email Dr. Dan Ferguson, English Department Chair, at [dwferguson@actx.edu](mailto:dwferguson@actx.edu).

## OPEN TO INTERPRETATION

Grand Prize Winner

By Danielle Luce

In 2007, I graduated high school and set out on a journey to find who I was. It seemed that the world was open to interpretation. That's what they said in the valedictorian speech anyway. That's what they said at my house when we were getting ready for the graduation party. That's what they said when I went to the counselor to enroll in college. I knew what I wanted. I wanted to be a journalist and live in different countries so that I could immerse myself in other languages. My mother always said the easiest way to learn a language is when it is the only thing you can speak.

When I ended up pregnant in 2008, the interpretation seemed simple enough: Mom. That's who I would be from here on out. I wondered if "they" had all lied to me. Is it possible to still have what you want from life and become who you want to become when there is something else more important looking up to you for guidance? I needed guidance too. Who was I? It felt at that moment that the options were so narrow and constricting. Why did I have to be just this or just that? Then it hit me like a semi coming down the wrong end of the freeway. I am me, it is open to interpretation. Whatever I chose to be didn't stop me from being a mom, and it did not mean that I was selfish or uncaring to want to be more than that for my son or for myself.

I decided from that moment on being me meant doing things out of my comfort zone. If that meant going in to my job and coming up with ideas to take my boss to show my drive, then I would do it. If that meant cooking a meal that I had only seen on television a couple of times, then I would put on my apron like Betty Crocker and be in there for hours. I found that risks more often than not brought rewards. I now can cook a four course meal like it was right off of the Food Network, and I am Branch Manager at my job. I can say one thing: my life is and will always be open to interpretation because I am constantly changing to become better or more educated. I will not be held in a box where I am labeled one thing. I am a mom but I am also so many things. Who are you?

## COLLIDE

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

By Katharine Freedman

They met in a skating rink. John normally wasn't one for skating, or really any sort of sport, or activity, but his boss had made it very clear that he needed to get out more, and knew this delightful place that hardly anyone knew about. If hardly meant about a hundred people, that is. Sure, that was a relatively small number in a town of almost twenty thousand, but anything over at least five was too much in John's opinion. So he was forced to share a rink with what were most certainly *not* five people.

"Why am I here?" He grumbled as he shuffled awkwardly on the ice, trying his best to avoid the couples and others who appeared to be in about the same situation he was. When he was stable and didn't feel as though he was going to fall over, he pulled his jacket a bit closer, shivering miserably. His boss was going to get an earful come Monday. He began his awkward shuffle again, taking care not to bump into or be bumped by anyone. The last thing he needed was a trip to the emergency room for something that was easily avoided by not being there in the first place.

John's luck ran out almost immediately when he heard a slightly frightened, yet exhilarated shout heading straight for him.

*"Watch out!"*

He turned his head sharply to see a somewhat blurry figure zooming toward him, parting people who were smart enough to get out of the way. John hadn't been so lucky, and could only shuffle along the ice so fast. The resulting collision sent him sprawling sideways, and he just hoped that that loud snap had been the ice.

The momentum from the body that was still on top of him kept them going for quite a few feet before they came to a stop near the edge of the rink. The people who cared enough (or were just interested to see what had happened) crowded up around them as he heard a groan come from the heavy figure that was pinning him to the ice. John attempted to push the other person off with no luck, since a sharp stab of pain shot up his arm.

"Will you kindly *get off?*" He asked, teeth gritted in pain. The red head (he only knew the person's hair color because his or her hat had been knocked off in the collision) immediately retreated with an apology.

"My God, I'm so sorry! I couldn't stop! Are you okay?" John sat up, using the hand that didn't hurt to push up on the ice. He turned his head sharply to the left to inspect his attacker. It appeared to be a man, with rather curly ginger hair and bright bluish silver eyes. He took a moment before answering, noting the blood that had started to trickle down from the other man's hairline.

"I'm fine, but you might need to get your head looked at." That earned him an offended look.

"There's nothing wrong with my mental health! I was just going a little faster than I'd anticipated, and *you* didn't get out of the way!" John resisted the urge to roll his eyes. He hadn't meant to sound as if he was insulting the other man. But that might have had something to do with the fact that he always sounded a little grumpy.

"I didn't mean it like that. You're bleeding." He gestured to the ginger man's head,

where there was even more blood trickling down now. The other man blinked and raised a white glove to inspect, and brought his hand back down to look at the stain in awe. John really did roll his eyes then. "Now really. It seems ill advised to just sit there pondering it. Help me up and follow," he ordered, holding out his good hand. The other man scrambled up, steadying himself before helping out. It seemed lucky that John had noticed a first aid station on his way in (as if they were expecting people to get hurt, John snorted inwardly) and headed for it now, not even making sure that he was being followed.

It took him a couple minutes of shuffling before a hand pressed into the small of his back, causing him to flail around a little before turning to glare at whoever had the gall to push him. It was, of course, the red head. He was a bit taller than John had first expected, but that detail escaped his mind as he went in favor of scolding.

"I'm doing perfectly fine, Speed Racer. You don't have to push."

"Your pace is agonizingly slow. I'm just giving you a little nudge. And if you let me, I can get us there much faster."

"I don't think so. I'd prefer to keep my crashing to a minimal."

"Don't be like that. I was just messing around earlier. I'll just help you go faster. Put your feet out straight and bend your knees a little."

"Fine. But if you let go and I break something, I'm suing." John resigned and did as he was told, while the other man put the hand that wasn't still on the small of John's back onto his hip, and then they were moving. John panicked for a moment. "*Too fast! Slow down!*" The red head only chuckled and kept going at his pace, using one of his knees to stop John's from locking up occasionally as they headed for the other end of the rink.

It took him a bit to get used to it, and even longer to open his eyes, but John started to loosen up little by little, letting himself be guided to the outer part of the rink peacefully, so he could finally have someone look at his arm that was throbbing quite painfully. It did occur to him at least three times that he was letting someone with a head injury skate him towards possible doom, but at this rate, he really didn't care. They glided easily, finally making it to their destination.

The nurse that was on duty jumped up from her magazine immediately at the sight of blood, which was a little confusing, since John had made it in first, and the other guy was still behind him. Was he bleeding too? It took a moment of searching around his head for the nurse to finally realize that the blood was just from when the red head had apparently dripped a bit on him. He scrubbed his face, a little disgusted with the thought of someone else's blood on him. When he finished, he turned around to see the other man being treated.

"You may have a concussion, dear. I think you ought to go to the hospital. Maybe he," She gestured in John's direction, "could take you?" John glared at her for a moment at being volunteered. Then again, he seemed to be the only option. He turned to the other man.

"You didn't come with anyone?"

"No. You didn't either."

"How would you know?" The red head rolled his eyes and tapped his head before wincing. John snorted. "Okay. I came alone. I'll take you to the hospital, but only because I'm going there myself."

The other man looked delighted and smiled brightly, to which John grunted and walked out of the tent, cradling his bandaged arm close before retrieving his shoes and

turning in his skates, which was mimicked by his new companion, who was still smiling like an idiot. A sudden thought occurred to John.

"You didn't come in a car, did you? Because I don't really want to drive all the way back up here." The ginger shook his head carefully.

"I live close by. I walk here sometimes." John made a noncommittal noise as he led them to his car.

The drive to the hospital wasn't actually that long, but it seemed like *hours* since the other guy wouldn't shut up.

"So... Who are you?"

"I'm nobody. Who are you?"

"Connor Jameson. I'm a veterinarian."

"Yes, I've heard of you. You're the only one here. I'm pretty sure you put my cat Sam to sleep a couple years ago."

"Oh. Yes... Gray cat with blue eyes?"

John was a little surprised.

"Er... Yeah." Connor nodded slightly, thankfully knowing that the subject needed to be dropped. They were silent until about a mile from the hospital.

"So are you going to tell me your name, or...?" John sighed. He wasn't going to give up, apparently.

"John Malik, consulting psychologist for the police department." He paused for a moment before adding, "Nice to meet you." Connor had a look of mild surprise on his face.

"I'd wondered where I'd seen you before. My brother went to you for a couple sessions before..." John could hear the rest of the sentence in his mind, even though Connor hadn't finished it. *Before he killed himself.* Now that he thought of it, Jameson had sounded familiar. But that case had been a decade prior to this meeting. Connor could have only been about what, fourteen? His brother Cooper had been a respected detective before he was taken hostage in his last case ever, and went a little crazy. John immediately felt horrible.

"Uhm... I'm sorry about that." Connor waved a hand, as if swatting away the apology.

"Don't worry about it. That was ten years ago. I don't blame you." John could sense the sincerity in the younger man's voice, which just made him feel worse. They finally pulled into the hospital parking lot and made their way inside in silence, not speaking until they got to the reception desk of the emergency room to explain their situation.

"Yes... And would you like to be in the same room?" The nurse raised an eyebrow at them, as if she was judging, making John's face flush deep red. Before he could say, no, no they didn't, he felt an arm fling itself over his shoulder. He looked up to see Connor's almost blinding smile.

"If you wouldn't mind, kind ma'am." If John hadn't already been red, he was sure he would have been by then. He could almost feel a growl rising in his throat as they were led away to an empty room to wait for a doctor.

"Get off me, you moron." John shrugged out from under the arm of the other man, who was shaking with laughter. "It's not funny. Now people are going to... *think.*" Connor shrugged and smiled.

"So? I don't care." John rolled his eyes and sat in a chair while the red head sat on the bed, still grinning.

They waited there for about ten minutes until the doctor finally came in, giving them a strange look, which John inwardly cursed Connor for, and tended to their injuries. John's wrist was indeed broken, so he was placed in a ridiculous cast, as Connor snickered off in the corner with a bandage on his head. When they were finally finished there, John stalked out of the room as Connor stayed behind to ask the doctor something that John didn't really care enough about. He went to the waiting room and stopped, realizing he would probably have to drive the idiot home. There wasn't any way he was going to be the bad guy and let him walk five miles in the cold weather. So he waited for only a couple minutes more. When Connor saw him, he smiled, and practically skipped next to him on the way to the car, giving John directions.

"What did you need to talk to the doctor about, anyway?" John asked, trying not to sound too interested. Connor laughed and shook his head.

"Confidential. But I'm sure you'll find out soon enough." Out of the corner of his eye, John could see the red head patting his jacket pocket. It was suspicious, and John didn't like it at all.

They spent the rest of the short ride without talking, until John pulled into a small driveway that lead to Connor's house.

"Okay. Here we are. Nice to meet you, get out." Connor smiled and held out his hand to shake. But it was the corresponding one to John's casted arm. He gave the other man an exasperated look.

"Just trust me," Connor grinned. John reluctantly held out his casted arm, which the other man promptly took and pulled close, taking it out of the psychologist's line of vision.

"H-Hey!" He protested, trying to pull his arm back. Connor was surprisingly strong for his stature, and kept it firmly in his grip, without hurting John. When he finally let go, the ginger smiled and shook John's good hand, and got out of the car.

"Bye!" He waved and jogged up to his front door before disappearing inside of the house. John stared after him in confusion before starting up the car again and heading for his own home.

On the drive, he noticed something black on his all white cast, which was cause for inspection. It took him a moment before he blushed and smiled. They were definitely going to meet again. Hopefully *not* in the skating rink.

*John, coffee at ten tomorrow morning?*

*Love, Speed Racer*

## **Smiling Away the Pain**

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

**By Mariela Mundo**

Arranged are the smiles that scatter throughout  
A place full of laughter and matters of how  
When the land is made “free” and nobody agrees  
Then a fake little smile will come and make peace.

In a corner an old man is smiling waving goodbye  
Oh, how his outfit shines with that beautiful vivid light  
And nobody imagines his life being recklessly rough  
‘til one day he screamed, “God, that is enough!”

Little girl smiling holding her momma’s ring  
Tries to persuade herself with a laugh and a grin  
That to a better place her momma has gone  
As she turns her eyes towards the nice clear dawn.

For the truth in a smile makes a woman shine  
The fakeness in a smirk lies hidden like wine  
“We [all] wear the mask that [carries] grins and lies”  
Maybe even positioned as a game rolled with dice.

## When You Are Blessed

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

By Phyllis Bates

She looked in the mirror without an expression on her face. "How could I have been so stupid?" she asked herself looking into her own blank stare. "I should have done better." She dropped her head into her hands and began to cry. The phone rang, and she thought I don't want to answer the phone. "Please just make it go away," she said with a sob in her voice. The phone rang the second time. This time she answered it.

"Darling are you alright?" The male voice on the phone asked her.

"Please not now, Thomas. I don't feel like talking." She hung up the phone with the push of a button.

It had been three days since it happened. Her mind was so numb from thinking about it. Over and over the thought of the incident was like a movie that played in her mind. "Mom can me and Karen go to the park?" She could still hear her little girl's voice. She felt like she made a good decision at the time. Now she was doubting her ability to be a good parent. "Who would do such a terrible thing, put a parent through so much anguish?" Anne was a single parent. Her daughter was the jewel of her life. Carly was a happy ten-year-old child. Her laughter made Anne's heart melt each time she heard her. The madness she felt when her child had been taken from her. Karen and Carly loved going to the park down the street about a block away. She watched them skip down the street hand in hand on the way to the park many times. Tuesday evening they didn't return. They were taken by a man but unwilling to go. Tears came to Anne's eyes when she pictured that in her mind. Her child's picture along with Karen's was splashed across the news media. Posters were pasted on every street corner.

The doorbell rang. Anne slowly rose to her feet to answer it. When she opened the door, Donna and her husband Damien were standing there. They both looked weary and tearful. Karen was their only child.

"How are you today?" Donna asked.

"Girl I'm trying to make it," Anne answered. "Damien you look like hell," she added.

"Thank God it's over---they are processing the bastard as speak," Damien said.

Donna was looking out the window. "They are here!" Donna screamed. All three adults ran to the door. Anne opened the door. Two little girls emerged in the entrance. Laughing and smiling with open arms, they each ran to their own mother. A huge police officer stood in the door. "They are home now. To God be the glory". Donna and Anne were crying tears of joy. Damien cleared his throat and said "Does anybody want to give me a hug?" Everyone laughed; Anne stood there with Carly still in her embrace. She was thinking in her mind about a quote "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may" by Robert Herrick. She smiled and said out loud, "I have a garden to be thankful for---and I'm going to stop and smell the roses

## 2011 COMMON READER WRITING COMPETITION WINNERS

The Common Reader program is designed to help incoming freshman interact with the larger AC community through the shared experience of reading a book. The 2011 Common Reader was *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by bestselling author Jonathan Safran Foer.

The book tells the story of a 9-year-old self-described inventor, tambourine player and pacifist as he searches New York for the lock that matches a mysterious key left by his father, who died in the infamous terrorist attacks on 9/11.

The Common Reader Writing Competition asked students to write a personal narrative, short story or poem in which they explored how they have been affected by one or more of the issues in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*.

**First Place  
Common Reader Competition**

**Daddy, Come Home**

**By Danni Kiker-Pruett**

This morning I was placed into a casket  
and lowered six feet into soil.  
As I descended, my box scraped along the walls  
sprinkling dirt on top of me.  
Sounded like rain.

Daddy, I still hate you for leaving me  
ten years ago on my birthday.  
You promised to be back from L.A. by evening,  
but things don't always go like we want them to,  
at least that's what mom always taught me.

Toy stores are a lot like foster homes,  
innocence plastered across the walls.  
You can always look, but please don't touch.  
If you break it you buy,  
but most everything is already chipped and scratched  
so be careful not to shatter it.

At eleven years old I sucked down the hard meanings of life  
and avoided the tough questions like  
"Where does you dad work?"  
or  
"Are you parents divorced?"  
with knuckles bloodied in school yard fights  
and sitting alone in the backrooms of detention.  
Back then I missed the freakin-ba-jeebus out of you  
and all these days later  
you don't answer the phone like you used to  
because I've never had the courage to forget your number  
or the sense to quit dialing it  
like on some off chance you might answer.

My mother was never the religious type  
but that morning you brought her to her knees  
like gravity sent Isaac an apple.  
School was let out early,  
in my simplistic view I thought it was a birthday surprise.  
I burst through the door to not see you with a five story teddy bear

but mother beside the front room table crying  
“Lord, have mercy!”

These days I drag your love around town in a coffin  
shackled to me with ten years of anger and fear  
and the realization my daddy wasn't coming back.  
That even Superman sometimes said no,  
Batman got killed too,  
and heroes are just as fickle as I am.  
And now I still cry when I watch *The Lion King*  
because I still need you like Simba needs Mufasa.  
And I still love you like Kel loves orange soda.  
I'm a dead season with potential for color,  
but the leaves already fell off my trees.  
I'm a dead mind with potential for direction,  
but I'm all things to all people, overextended and drained.  
Be assured, the sadness comes in waves  
but that doesn't stop them from crashing like a tsunami in Haiti.

Dad, I wish I knew your favorite color.  
I want to say it was blue like the sky  
just after the sun would peek through the clouds at dawn  
or the water on the first day you took me to the ocean  
as the cold waves nipped at our toes.  
Maybe it was dark green like the trees  
we would spend hours walking with no direction  
just you with me sitting on your shoulders.

I can't caress my own flesh wounds  
The bones of my ribcage will always braid questions like  
Did you ever love me?  
Why did you leave me?  
Will I ever be good enough?  
I learned the hard way to grow up slowly.  
Tried too many years to carry the weight on my back  
but always came up short of a miracle.  
I guess what I'm saying is anger doesn't get you very far  
and hatred may very well just be love when it's difficult.  
So if I could see you once more I would say,  
“I love you, God I miss you and I forgive you.”

**Second Place  
Common Reader Competition**

**The Flame and the Flower**

**By Kyla Matthews**

standing proud  
standing tall  
the happiness is overwhelming  
seeing life at its best  
suddenly a flame catches  
it burns gently at first  
slowly climbing burning  
the flame continues to grow  
happiness starts breaking down  
its base of life gives out  
the flame climbs higher  
it finds the heart  
falling it crashes  
everything changes  
that happiness turns to anguish  
anguish to anger  
the flame burns brighter  
feeling broken hurt burned  
can it be stopped?  
finally it burns itself out  
the result seems permanent  
there is no fixing the damage  
but underneath the ash and debris  
a flower lives



*landing? Don't look into their eyes. They will see right through you. They will sense your fear. She's crying, 3A is crying and, my God, 14B has a newborn in her lap. STAY CALM. STAY CALM. I need to call my parents. Wait. They are in Paris—and your cell is in your bag anyway and they will see your hands trembling. Something is wrong. Something is terribly, terribly wrong. Your fists are dripping sweat. Unclench your fists. They see your fists. Breathe. Why is my heart slowing down? Shouldn't it be racing? Does it feel death lurking 30,000 feet in the air? What if the landing gear is jacked up, and he's just not telling us? Shit, I am going to die on this plane. I am 20 years old and I am going to die. What if there is a hole and everything breaks in half? That's not possible right? We won't all get sucked out of some gaping hole into thin air? Dear God, please just let us land safely. I beg you, for myself, I am 20 years old. I have so much life left to live, but mostly for these innocent people, babies crying, mothers patting, heads bowing. God, forgive me for all the crappy things I've done in my life. I'm sorry I had too many beers at happy hour and I'm sorry for using a fake ID to get into happy hour. Do you hear me God? I am not old enough to die. I am not even old enough to drink. I'm sorry for not going to church enough. I am a glorified cocktail waitress. I am not prepared to be the last hope these people have. God, I will do ANYTHING you ask. I will STAY CALM.*

*What the hell? We are circling. Why are we circling? Why aren't we landing? This is taking entirely too long. People are shifting; their shoulders lowering. They know. They feel the scales teetering. They are reaching. Their breaths are becoming rapid. Will it be their last breath? Should they write a note? Ha. Should they make a call? STAY CALM. STAY CALM. Enough. I'm going in there and asking them what in God's name is going on.*

*"A hijacked plane has flown into the World Trade Center. STAY CALM."*





**Amarillo College**

P.O. Box 447  
Amarillo, TX 79178  
[www.actx.edu/english](http://www.actx.edu/english)  
(806) 371-5170