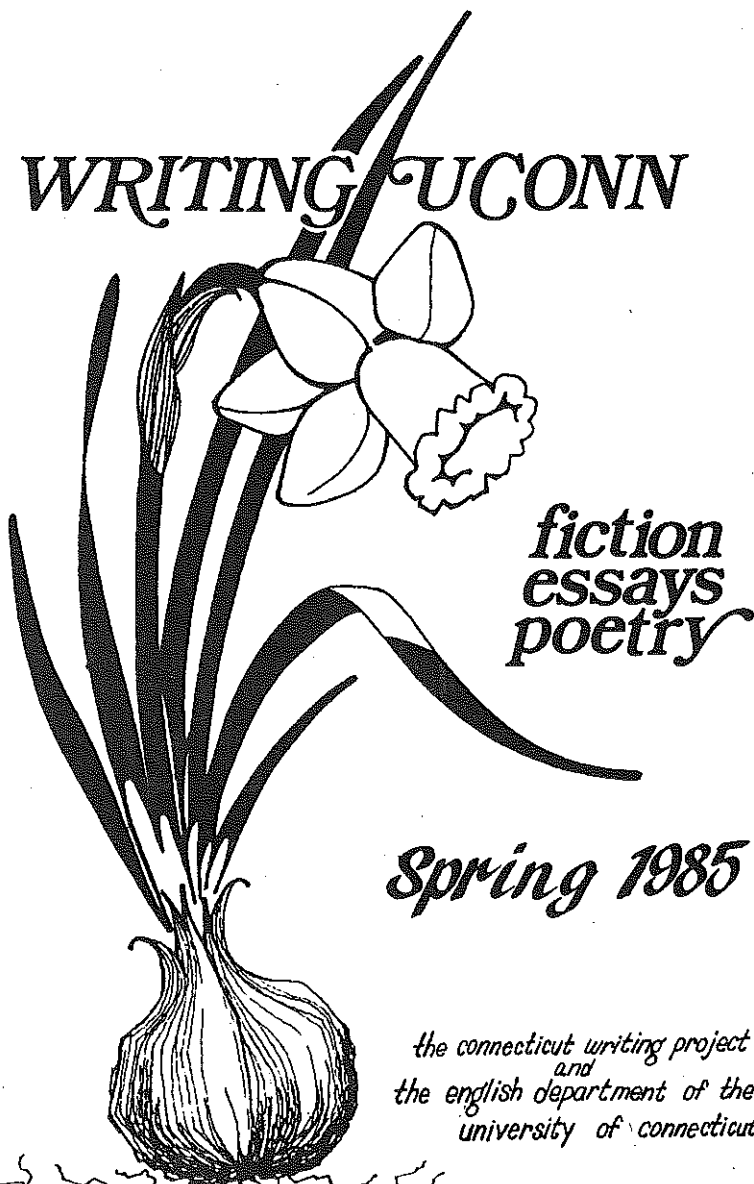


# WRITING UCONN



*fiction  
essays  
poetry*

*Spring 1985*

*the connecticut writing project  
and  
the english department of the  
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This third issue of WRITING UCONN has been prepared by Joan Joffe Hall and William Sheidley, with the assistance of Joanne Avery, James Cichy, Catherine Dietz, Pamela Grapes, Albert Inzero, Michael Sangree, Lynne M. Vail, and Robert Wyatt. The cover design is by Pat O'Hara of the UConn Co-op. Jean Hankins typed the manuscript, and the booklet itself was produced at University of Connecticut Publications.

Our objective remains the publication of the best student writing done at UConn, and we once again invite undergraduates to submit work for consideration. Regrettably we cannot print all the good writing we get. We wish we could. But we promise to give each submission a thoughtful review.

We hope that through the pleasure WRITING UCONN gives, all students will come to make good writing a real part of their lives.



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## POEMS BY JAMES PELLINO

### Sussex Gardens

The stars come out.  
Cars root the street.  
Both drone steadily as prayer.

The cats who dodged the bombs are dead.  
The women who lost their men now sit  
Splay-legged in shopping bag trenches  
Crying like the bitch who ate her litter  
At those who pass her doorway in guilty silence.

The compass of beauty lost in the mink and tweed laps of taxis  
Out for delicate evenings.  
All is lost, accused by the squint of her gutter-rag'd eye.

Once she sent her hopes to the sky  
Which spat back steel and fire.

She warms her body to the wind,  
The Arabs' loud  
Cooking in the square.

She sits in concrete.  
The world to her a kaleidoscope siren  
That just won't stop.

## Innocence

The hemp that God gave breath and growth  
Is now a noose around his neck.  
Things retreat inside him leaving two eyes that stare.

The crowd is silent as the noose is fitted.  
He tries to see God somewhere in the grim rows speckled with  
dazed children.

The preacher had counselled him in the moonlit cell  
Clutching the prayerbook thumbing the pages as he stood so  
close to fear.

Here the horse swells between his legs.  
He wonders why it shakes so, clutched with his heels.  
Protest ceases, gasping in the same flood as faith.

The preacher now looking for God  
anywhere  
the rope  
the noose  
hands you up to your creator  
like a flower.  
There must be resurrection  
As a man hangs a man.

The horse, with the whip sharp on its haunches, bolts  
And feels a new sensation, the rider disappears.

James Pellino is a senior English major. These poems were  
written for an independent study course he took in London.

## FEAR

Roger Phillips

As you go through life, you develop fears which can rule  
it. Sooner or later, a time will come when your fears will keep  
you from something you would really enjoy, and you then are  
forced to confront them. Dealing with these fears can be the  
most difficult thing you may ever encounter, but the first blow  
is half the battle.

As a child, I always dreamed about flight. I didn't dream  
about it in the sense of climbing in an airplane and doing it,  
but rather being able to flap my arms and achieve the sensation  
of flight as a bird. I still recall the dream vividly, standing  
in the backyard with my friends watching and taunting me as I  
would start to flap my arms. To their amazement, I would lift  
off the ground and hover. With an increase in the rate of beating  
my arms, I could climb. Even in this dream, reality would creep in  
and I would be forced to set down because my arms quickly grew  
tired.

I am still impressed that I was able to look down at the earth  
with a bird's eye view, and although I had never flown, the sen-  
sations I had dreamed were those I felt when my dreams were  
finally transformed to reality. It was almost as if in a previous  
life I had experienced flight and therefore was drawn to it.

I was fascinated by heights as a youth. There wasn't a tree  
in the neighborhood I hadn't climbed and perched in its lofty  
boughs. Much to my parents' disapproval, the roof of our large  
colonial home became my refuge. I sat on its peak for hours and  
watched the world go by beneath me. Occasionally I would see a  
hawk soaring on the thermals and I could almost envision myself  
in his place with the sky my kingdom.

Early one Sunday morning, when I was ten years old, I saw a  
hot air balloon that seemed to be descending in the field across  
the river. While dashing over to see it, I was joined by two  
of my friends who had also spotted it. When we arrived at the  
field, the balloon was coming down. The men in the balloon threw  
down a rope and asked us to hold on because the wind would blow  
them into the trees if we didn't help. Edward, Bruce, and I were  
dragged halfway across the freshly plowed corn field before we  
finally got it down. The chase car had just arrived as the men  
climbed from their basket. Apparently they had run out of fuel  
and were forced to make an uncontrolled landing. My friends and  
I were dubbed heroes and invited on a free ride.

With the empty gas cylinder replaced, we were led toward the  
basket. Bruce and Edward had already climbed in as I stood  
looking at this immense thing which was to take me on my first  
flight. The hair on the back of my neck felt as if it was standing  
out on end and my cheeks tingled with excitement. I felt a

strange nervousness; but my friends didn't seem to show it, so I shrugged it off and climbed in behind them.

A loud whoosh made the three of us instantly look at each other and finally the fear showed. The pilot pointed up and we saw the cause of our fright. A column of blue and orange flame was shooting into this cavern of nylon, making the sides ripple. Slowly we rose and the fear vanished, only to be replaced with a strange awe. We were flying. The earth seemed to fall away beneath us. We were seeing the world from a new perspective. Up we went, clearing the trees at the edge of the field and being caught in the grasp of the breeze which carried us across the river and toward my home. Soon we were over the backyard I had flown over in my dreams, and it was exactly the way I'd imagined it. This was my first time in the air, and I loved it.

The ride didn't last too long, but it was long enough to stir up something deep in me. Flying now became an obsession, a hunger for experience. The half mile walk from where the balloonist had left us went by in a blur. I was dazed. I had just experienced the thrill of a lifetime. I knew now I would never look at life in the same light again.

The opportunity for flight didn't arise again until I was a sophomore in high school. A man would come every weekend and give hang gliding lessons on a hill which was on the farm where I worked. Being the bold youth that I was, I marched up to the man, introduced myself and inquired about lessons. Fortunately, that day one of his students hadn't shown up, so he motioned toward a harness and told me to put it on.

In no time Dave Starbuck had me taking practice runs with the kite on my shoulders to get the feel for it. My attempts were anything but graceful, and the poor kite took a heck of a beating. Soon his next student arrived, so I made arrangements for the following Saturday to continue my lessons.

The following week, after a few practice runs on the flat of the field, I was told to start working up the hill. Midway up, I set the kite down and clipped myself in. I hoisted the kite on my shoulders and looked down the hill. In all the times I had climbed this hill, it had never looked so high. I started having second thoughts as to whether or not I was ready for this. I looked to Dave for support, but all I was given was a nod and a thumbs up. The kite felt heavier than it had before, and all I wanted was to get it off my shoulders, but I was committed. I couldn't acknowledge defeat by walking down that hill. There was now only one way down it.

I ran down the hill with the kite getting lighter on my shoulders until I felt I had sufficient speed. Then I pulled back on the control bar and lowered my shoulders which while in the harness raised my butt and brought my feet off the ground. Skimming along the ground, building up speed, I pushed out on the control bar to gain altitude and then pulled

back on the bar to gain speed and to lose altitude. When I finally ran out of speed and altitude, I landed. My first landing could be described as dismal at best. I bellied in and left dark grass stains on the padded harness, the knees of my jeans and the tops of my sneakers.

When I picked myself up off the ground, I felt the most incredible adrenaline rush. As soon as I was unclipped, I hoisted the kite back onto my shoulders and ran with it back to the top of the hill to repeat the thrill. In the weeks that followed, I became a competent pilot and was able to flair properly so I could land on my feet just like a bird.

Then the day came when my perspectives changed. I had just lifted off, cleared the small ridge on the hill, and begun a slow turn into the wind when it happened. A slight gust of wind had been deflected up off the small ridge, and it caught the kite under its right wing, increasing my rate of turn. It was so sudden that I didn't have enough time or altitude to correct for it. I was flung back into the hillside, where I slammed heavily into the ground. The impact collapsed the left wing, and I swung into the hill, landing on my chest. Starbuck was there immediately, unclipping my harness and pulling the kite off me. I lay there gasping for breath and with each breath came a stabbing pain in my chest. The fall knocked the wind out of me, cracked a few ribs, and bloodied my nose. I was forced to give up gliding for a while until my wounds healed.

While I was recuperating, I started hearing about incidents of hang gliding mishaps. About a week after my accident, Starbuck's brother had a gliding accident which made him a paraplegic. Starbuck's girlfriend, who months earlier had hurt her back, found out that it wasn't healing properly and that she would have to be placed in a body cast for a while.

In all the time I had been enjoying this sport, I had never stopped to think about the danger involved. It was always one of those things which happened to someone else. All of a sudden it was happening to me and the people I knew.

The clincher came that fall. During Alumni Day, an accident occurred which finally frightened me away. An alumnus of our school had developed a motorized hang glider and was going to demonstrate it as an attraction during the day. The lower soccer fields were packed with observers to watch this man who was a pioneer of this new sport. On the other side of the field stood the latest innovation in glider technology. It was a delta wing kite just like the one I had flown, except this one had a small two cylinder engine with a long drive shaft and a propeller mounted on the end of it. The engine was hung just above the pilot's head, and a throttle was attached to the control bar.

Once the engine was started, the pilot hoisted the kite on his shoulders, gave it full throttle and with four steps was airborne. As he started his climb, it became evident he

wasn't going to clear the trees. When he turned to avoid the trees, his glider stalled and fell to the ground. Upon impact, the motor broke loose from its mounts and crushed his skull, even though he was wearing a helmet. I saw this in graphic detail not even 100 feet from where he crashed. I could even hear his scream above the whine of the engine. I decided this type of flying should be left for the birds.

That day my youthful fantasies disappeared. The dreams were replaced by nightmares and my obsession was replaced by fear. And this was the way I remained for a number of years.

My uncle was the director of a fly-in and air show in Florida. Since I was living in Florida then, he asked me to help. I was an unemployed welder, so I jumped at the chance to do something that would get me out of the apartment. It was at this air show that I was introduced to the world of general aviation.

I worked security during the fly-in and was able to observe not only the aircraft, but the people who flew them. There was a strange air of camaraderie about them. Here were people who had come together from all over the country, yet they treated each other like neighbors. Even I, though not a pilot, felt myself being drawn into this community.

Later that week, my uncle took me for my first small airplane ride. The excitement of flight returned. I felt more secure in cocoon of aluminum than I had with the kite. It didn't take long until the disease again took hold. Within the month I found myself at Branson Aviation with money in hand, ready for my first real lesson.

The first plane I flew was an old Aronica Champion and Doc Branson would just about let me end up going down the runway sideways before he would take the controls, straighten it out, and then turn the controls back over to me. Needless to say, I scared myself a few times before I got the hang of it.

After less than eight hours of instruction, I soloed. The feeling when Doc Branson jumped out of the plane after I had landed and told me to take it around the patch, was incredible. I was apprehensive about going alone, but if Branson felt I could, there was nothing I could do about it now but go for it. The excitement flowed through my body, but it didn't match the feelings I had when gliding. Seventy-four hours of instruction and six instructors later, I had my pilot's license. My frequent moves and constant shortages of money made my flying lessons stop and go.

I was only semi-content with the world of general aviation. I was starting to grow restless and bored with it. The fun was there, but the thrill wasn't.

Four years after my first Sun n' Fun Fly-In I finally was able to go back for a second. After four years, the show had tripled in size, yet there were still familiar faces in the crowd. There was a new attraction with this airshow--the ultra-light plane. I had heard my uncle joking about them, saying he wished they would select a crash site so the ambulance wouldn't

have to go all over the countryside picking up the bodies. Apparently, they fell from the sky rather frequently.

When I first saw one, it sent shivers up my spine. These ultralights weren't much different from the contraption that had taken the life of Bill Clark, a fellow alumnus. I was amazed at how frail they seemed. This aluminum tubing, nylon fabric, and piano wire seemed to be all these mechanical birds were made of. I guessed that if you were in a wreck, they could double as a stretcher. Everyone I talked to seemed to regard anyone who flew one of these contraptions as crazy. The only ultralights that were flying were being flown by the manufacturers whose pilots were paid to be crazy.

Late one afternoon during the Fly-In, my cousin came up to me and took me by the arm, saying that he had arranged a ride for me in something exotic. As we walked through the gate onto the flight line, we turned toward the area where the war birds were. The image of my getting a ride in one of those sleek P-51's crept into my mind. But just before we were at the line of fighters, Arthur turned, leading me--much to my horror--toward the ultralight area.

I tried to think of excuses for why I couldn't go: I had things to do, I wanted to eat, it was too cool, and I wasn't dressed properly. Any excuse would do except the truth. I was afraid. Arthur just waved off all my excuses, explaining that it would only take a few minutes and that I could borrow his jacket if I needed it. I found I was more afraid of admitting that I was afraid than I was of climbing into the plane.

My stomach felt queasy as I was led toward a two-place ultralight. Suddenly my mind flashed back to Bill lying in a field with glazed eyes, while people swarmed around him, trying to help. There hadn't been anything that anyone could do, so we had to stand there watching him die. There was a faint pulse and no breathing as a few of the spectators tried in vain to keep him alive. The ambulance arrived, and the attendants took over CPR as he was put on a stretcher and carried away. Bill didn't make the trip; he was pronounced dead on arrival. A cold sweat broke out as I was handed a helmet. What was I doing? Trying to join Bill? And why? Just so I wouldn't seem to be a chicken? To prove that I wasn't afraid?

While I squeezed on a crash helmet, the pilot explained what everything was. Even before I could climb into the craft, I had to sign a waiver that stated I realized flying to be a dangerous sport and would not hold the company responsible for any injuries incurred. If that wasn't a further confidence builder, I don't know what was. I finally reached that state of fear when you say "the hell with it," and "it's a lovely day to die." With that thought, I climbed in.

Strapped into the hang cage, with the engine perking, I took a deep breath as the pilot pushed full throttle. The little machine leapt ahead and we were off the ground.



Except for hang gliding, there had never been so much of nothing around me in the air. My fears vanished. My feet hung beneath me with the ground a quarter of a mile below my sneakers. The thrill of flight had returned.

I was again able to enjoy flight the way it should be. I once again felt as a bird must feel. A bird is a portable, light weight, self-sufficient, folding wing, open cockpit, minimum-fuel power glider--so is an ultralight. Unlike the bird, the ultralight is not beautiful to the eye. Its beauty is in the mind. Its beauty is in what it can do.

If you hold onto your dreams they may become true. But often things like fear distort the thought and blur the image. I had to overcome instances of fear to fulfill my dreams, but once I had, a clear and undistorted world lay under me again. My fears haven't disappeared, but instead of chasing me away from what I would enjoy, they teach me to have respect for the danger involved and accept the risk for the thrill.

Roger Phillips' essay won the 1984 Ratcliffe Hicks Prize for the best freshman English essay.

## AN INCOMPLETE PORTRAIT

Alison Monteiro

Women in sweatpants and plastic shoes plod through the red-carpeted hallways of the Shelby housing project. The smell of TV dinners seeps through cracks in the doors prone to slams. A stout man in a plaid jacket looks disdainfully at a pregnant cat sleeping next to the hallway heater and knocks on a door, trying to sell a Triple A membership.

Andrea wakes to the sound of the sharp knocking on her neighbor's door. She could feel the springs beneath her, and the flattened pillow left her neck aching. She sat up and saw her uniform sprawled on the floor; it had been a late night. Her last pair of nylons had one leg out of the wastebasket.

"Damn," she said, sliding out of bed, "I'll never get to work."

Her husband, Cowboy, started his motorcycle outside of their bedroom window. She didn't remember him kissing her goodbye. Standing in front of the mirror, she looked critically at her stomach, and felt the slight ache in her breasts.

Andrea showered and put on her wrinkled uniform. Friday nights the dinner crowd came in later, so she took the time to brush her hair into a bun and she smoothed blush onto her pale cheeks.

In the kitchen she drank a large glass of milk and reread the letter from her grandmother. The stories she told made Andrea think about what was really important in her life. She teased her grandmother, telling her that she would someday write a book and title it "The Great Mentor."

She lived an hour away and didn't have a telephone so they wrote to each other every few weeks. Andrea had a hard time convincing Cowboy to visit her. He said that she was a "crazy old bat" because she didn't have a telephone or a television.

Andrea found it hard to believe that her grandmother and her mother were related. Her mother spent all of her money on perpetually redecorating her house, but was never satisfied with it. She never spoke of love, but only of comfort and security. From her mother she felt protectiveness, from her grandmother she felt love. She accepted them both.

Andrea left a bowl of milk in the hallway for the stray and remembered the argument with Cowboy about her wanting to take the cat in. She petted the cat and walked quickly down the stairs, trying to block out the sounds of early-evening outbursts and garbage disposals.

After punching in, she started her set-up work. She left the heavy trays of dirty dishes for the bus people, she wouldn't take any chances this time. Her miscarriage had been four months ago, coming only four weeks after their marriage and two weeks after her twenty-third birthday.

Her shift at work was profitable, she made enough money to pay the electricity bill. Now the after-work time alone was ahead of her. She punched her timecard into the clock and put on her coat to leave work.

"Andrea," her friend Jennie called from the kitchen, "wait for me and we'll go out for coffee."

The two women sat in a booth at Howard Johnson's, a pile of empty creamers between them.

"Andrea, are you glad that you're pregnant?"

"Of course! I don't know how Cowboy will feel though, so I haven't told him."

"Don't you think that you should?"

"I guess, but children don't seem to excite him too much. He has a sixteen-year-old son who he hasn't bothered to see in eleven years."

"How are things between you guys?"

Andrea looked away and shook her head, "I could be happier."

She went home and sat down to draw in her sketch pad. After a few warm-up sketches she began working on her latest full-body drawing. The form had started to look alive; Andrea smiled when she looked and saw the muscles clearly defined and tensed, the cords in the neck taut. Drawing made her forget the dark, paneled walls around her.

The drawing that she had started of Cowboy lay unfinished on her easel. He was never around long enough to sit for her, and he didn't have the patience.

The expectations that she had built around their life together would never be met. The day that they had met, Cowboy had shown an interest in her drawings that no one else had. She had been sitting at the reservoir, sketching a group of geese and Cowboy had sat down beside her, talking to her as she drew. Andrea thought now how quickly the interest had disappeared after they had moved in together.

Cowboy had promised to find a steady job. They would start a family, and she would have, what she then considered to be "substance" in her life. Waitressing was harder every day as she worked longer hours to try and meet their bills. Cowboy still spent most of his time as a bouncer for any bar that would take him.

The baby next door cried loudly but was unanswered. She hated the sounds around her and she hated the loneliness of waiting. Light from the hallway fell across her sketchpad as Cowboy walked in the door and headed for the bedroom.

"Honey," Andrea called from the couch, "what time is it?"

"About 3:00, I'm going to bed."

"Cowboy I need to talk to you."

He stopped but didn't turn to look at her. "I'm tired, we'll talk later."

She lay back on the couch and fell asleep, just as it was getting light outside.

Andrea woke, as usual, to an empty apartment. They had

planned on looking for a better apartment since they both had the day off. Depression and tears had taken over so many other days like this. She went out into the hallway and gently picked up the cat and brought it into the apartment.

"Today I'm going to direct my energy to a worthwhile concern, Cat, how would you like to come to my grandmother's? I think we'll like it there."

The cat purred loudly and Andrea began packing.

Alison Monteiro is a senior with an individualized major in Journalism, English, and Photography. She wrote this story in English 247.



POEMS BY LYNNE M. VAIL

Summer Uniform

I met you two weeks after Independence Day  
You taught me judo moves by demonstrating  
How you could strangle me without too much effort  
And left me gasping for oxygen

You joked about the trip home from Europe  
Reclining in your anatomically designed  
Widebody airline seat  
Plugged into "From the Air"

You said your favorite colors were  
Olive drab and black  
A mutual friend told me, later  
Your father had been in Nam

He said you carry  
The time without him  
Every day of your life and  
"When is Dad coming home?"

You were struggling every moment  
I could see it even three weeks  
After Independence Day  
While you sat there, staring back into 1967

Wrestling with the memory  
Rolling in the wet grass  
Of the dark soccer field--  
Wearing your father's uniform.

Untitled

dying white carnations  
in a tall black bottle  
petals fouled with wilted brown  
stubs of bent cigarettes,  
smoked hours ago,  
lying in an ashtray stolen from a restaurant  
in summer 1957--  
in someone else's lifetime.

the relationship equation

let  $x=1+1$   
let  $t=\text{time}$   
therefore  $x(t)=2t$   
include margin for error  
and other variables  
then  $2t-1t=1t$ ,  
or 1 alone with  $t$ ,  
or one alone with time

Night Windows

Lately I've been spending a lot of time  
Leaning out of windows.

It doesn't make too much sense--  
You probably think I'm suicidal.

But jumping four stories  
Wouldn't do it properly.

So I lean out of this particular window  
Several times a day, now  
(Actually, it's mostly at night)  
Watching for moving figures  
Behind the lit shades  
In the window diagonally to my left.

I know you're there--  
And you're not with another woman, either.

Lynne M. Vail is a freshman in the Honors Program.  
She wrote three of these poems in English 246.  
"Summer Uniform" was published in Pace.

## FRANKENSTEIN: THE FILM AND THE NOVEL

Ivy Morrison

Novels, even those which are not as complex as Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, are often difficult to translate into films, and almost as often suffer in the transition. James Whale's Frankenstein, based on a composition by John L. Balderston and adapted from a play by Peggy Vebling and the novel by Shelley, is an example of a film which differs in many ways from the renowned novel, yet is good enough to have withstood the test of time.

In 1931, Universal Pictures was one of the two smaller studios in the "studio system" of film production employed in the 1930's and 1940's. Within this system, studios became "genre-like"; each had a "house look." While Paramount concentrated on sophisticated comedies and Warner Brothers made detective films, Universal specialized in science fiction. Thus, a film version of Frankenstein was a logical project for Universal to undertake.

Much of the science fiction at this time (and today as well) was geared for children and adolescents. This, perhaps, is one reason for the tongue-in-cheek warning delivered at the beginning of the film in its original form. In "Alfred Hitchcock style" an unidentified man encourages the audience to leave, for what they will see may "thrill," "shock" or "horrify" them.

As an example of film in the early 1930's, Frankenstein displays an advanced level of achievement in the art form. Although the technique necessary for including the sound track on the film itself was not developed until 1928, for example, the picture/sound synchronization in this film is quite good. The use of varied camera angles to enhance the desired effects also indicates that this film is far above "primitive" quality.

Frankenstein is an expressionistic film. This style, which had its origins in Germany, is recognized by its use of surrealism, the distortion of realistic images. Beyond the obvious distortion of the human form found in the monster itself, the sets present distorted versions of the more normal "expected" scenes. Almost everyone has a preconceived notion of the place where Frankenstein lives and works, for example. The inside of the watchtower which serves the purpose in this film, however, stretches this stereotype into striking patterns. It is constructed of odd geometric shapes, all having straight lines and sharp angles. Doors and windows are often off balance and out of square. Row upon row of stone blocks are used to create the illusion of depth where there is none, and shafts of light superimpose triangular shapes upon the blocks. Also, all of the "rooms" in the watchtower have extremely high ceilings. This gives the audience distorted perspectives of the action when the camera is placed near the ceiling or floor.

In addition to this set, several of the "outdoor" sets are

surrealistic as well. The technique used in these instances is "deep focus," the relationship of foreground to background. The opening scene in the graveyard depicts sharp iron fences pointing at various angles into the sky, crosses which are leaning in many different directions, a skeleton which defies gravity and hangs at other than a ninety degree angle and a limb which juts across the whole screen. Nothing exists beyond this foreground, however. The scenery stops abruptly and the background consists entirely of cloudy sky. The scene when the angry mob is hunting for the monster, with its geometric silhouettes of rocks against the cloudy sky, also creates the illusion that one could step off the edge of the earth. It is evident that Whale has put the techniques of expressionistic style to good use in this film.

The art direction in Frankenstein (by Charles D. Hall) is also representative of its era. Between 1895 and 1928 the naturalistic approach, with scenes shot outdoors, was popular. Trees and other natural objects were often an integral part of the action. The thirty years between 1920 and 1950 saw the rise of the studio backlot, where anything and anyplace could be reconstructed. Frankenstein, filmed in 1931, during the heyday of the backlot sets, employed this technique of skillfully designed and created props and scenery. There appears, however, to be one exception. The scene by the lake when the monster and little Maria meet, appears to be a return to the naturalistic approach.

Another area in which this film is representative of its era is its portrayal of women. Through the 1920's women were generally depicted as subservient, never the heroes. With the onset of the 1930's, came the beginning of a reversal in women's roles. Slowly, it became more acceptable for women in film to "take the bull by the horns." In Frankenstein, although Elizabeth does have the spunk to say that she will bring Frankenstein home, she must ask Victor Moritz for help.

In addition, the credits give another, more subtle hint as to the position of women in 1931. The author of the novel is mentioned, not as Mary Shelley, but as Mrs. Percy B. Shelley. Based upon her introduction to the novel, it is doubtful that she would have been pleased by this billing, for although she acknowledges her husband for his encouragement and for writing the preface, she takes full credit for the ideas and incidents of the book herself.

Shelley's story of Frankenstein and his monster is set within a frame formed by letters written by a sea captain. Acting as a narrator, the captain communicates his own conviction that the story is true, thereby making this fantastic tale a bit more believable for the reader. Whale uses this technique, "distancing," however, to a different end. His frame, the warning which appears before the actual story begins, the comic element which pervades it and the rest of the film, serves to remind the audience that "it is only a movie." Fritz's stumbling, mumbling and vain attempts to keep his sock up, and Baron Frankenstein's wry comments are examples of 1930's humor at its best.

Unfortunately, much was lost when Shelley's frame, containing its scenes of the Arctic Ocean and others depicting the landscape which are so integral a part of the novel, were not included in the film. The cold climate and topography (pp. 93-94) used to mirror Frankenstein's cold, barren soul, were among the most effective images in the book. It is clear, however, that Whale's intent was quite different from Shelley's and these scenes would not have suited his purpose.

Through the "secondhand" tale, readers of the novel are allowed inside information about Frankenstein. Details of his childhood and motives for his endeavor are provided, and a portrait of a vain, weak and self-centered man is revealed (pp. 52, 56-57, 74). Shelley provides Henry Clerval as a foil for Frankenstein; Clerval loves enterprise, hardship and danger. He is "occupied . . . with the moral relations of things" (p. 37), while Frankenstein is driven by passion and desire for notoriety.

In the novel, at the moment in which the monster receives the gift of life, far more attention is devoted to Frankenstein's sensibilities than to the description of the physical process taking place. While Frankenstein's view of his endeavor is reversed, readers are given only a minimal picture of the lab, and told simply that "the dull yellow eye . . . open[ed] [and that] it breathed hard" (p. 56). As a result of this sudden reversal, Frankenstein rejects the monster immediately and so thoroughly that he races out of the room and later out of the house (pp. 56-57).

After the monster begins his rampage, Frankenstein's guilt is emphasized repeatedly (pp. 74, 85). He blames himself for William's murder and Justine's execution, and as far as the reader is concerned, rightly so. Frankenstein then embarks on a journey sure to end in his death. Through the savage conditions of the Arctic, he pursues his creation with one goal in mind: its destruction. He does receive his just desert, for not only does he pay for his wrong motives with his life, he does not succeed in ending the life of his monster (pp. 206-207). Thus Shelley creates, for the reader, an intrinsically baneful and morally irresponsible Frankenstein.

The portrait of Frankenstein provided in Whale's film is quite different from that of its predecessor. This Frankenstein is a victim of circumstances for which he is not responsible. At first, Dr. Waldman describes his aim as his "innocent ambition to create life." As Frankenstein becomes obsessed with this ambition, he is relieved of the responsibility for its consequences as he goes "insane." His statement that he "doubt[s] his own sanity" at the outset of his experiments is only the first of many such references.

As Elizabeth, Victor Moritz and Dr. Waldman watch Frankenstein prepare the final steps of his experiment, he declares "Quite a scene, isn't it? One man crazy, three very sane spectators!" Once again, the audience is shown that he is "not guilty by reason of insanity." He then raises the monster's body up to a hole in the ceiling. In a scene much more vivid than the

novel provides, lightning flashes, thunder peals, and his equipment is suddenly alive with brilliant lights and buzzing electrical sounds. He lowers the body and, in one of the most effective moments of the film, the creature's hand moves--into a pose resembling Adam's hand in Michelangelo's *Creation*. Frankenstein, upon realizing his success, laughs wildly and waves his arms like a madman.

He is not held accountable even for the cause of his insanity, as his father the Baron blames the watchtower: "This place seems to drive everybody crazy." The Baron's statement is supported by Elizabeth when she tells Frankenstein that he will be well again as soon as he returns home, and proven when her assertion proves true. When removed from the watchtower, Frankenstein does become the man he once was.

Shelley's Frankenstein subjects his monster to scorn and rejection from its first moment of life. Therefore, he is responsible for much of the monster's bitterness. During the first moments of its life in Whale's film, however, the monster is the object of its "mother's" fascination and pride. Fritz, in addition to his role as the procurer of the abnormal brain (thus relieving Frankenstein of blame for the monster's behavior) has also been used here to provide the monster's initial exposure to antagonism. Thus, he is the immediate cause of its violent reaction to man. Frankenstein intercedes in the monster's behalf when Fritz taunts and whips it, saying "Come away Fritz. Leave it alone: leave it alone." Yet Fritz continues.

Even when it becomes obvious to Frankenstein that his creation of the monster has been a grave error, he regards Waldman's suggestion to destroy it as "murder." Thus, to absolve Frankenstein of such a crime, the first attempt to kill the monster is made by Waldman. Although Frankenstein later vows, "I made it with these hands and with these hands I'll destroy it," the murder of little Maria incites a mob of townspeople to do it for him, and Frankenstein's "hands" remain clean.

In a conversation with Waldman, the "innocent" Frankenstein defends "taking risks," "experimenting," and "curiosity" in a speech reminiscent of Shelley's description of Clerval. He states that the possession of these qualities "dooms a man to be labelled crazy." Thus Whale's "complete" Frankenstein fares much better than Shelley's, whose character remains so morally lacking in those qualities evident in Clerval, that he cannot be saved.

Just as the different ends desired by Whale and Shelley dictate a great disparity between the two Frankensteins, a dissimilarity between the monsters is also indicated. Initially, the reader sympathizes with Shelley's monster, despised from the first by its creator. However, her monster possesses a very human quality; the ability to reason. "He" is portrayed not as an animalistic creature whose actions are motivated solely by instinct and reaction to the treatment it receives from men, but as a rational creature capable of hatred (p. 96). Regardless of

the emotional and physical torture to which the monster is subjected, the reader cannot help but feel that this ability to reason, evident in the monster's plea for a companion (p. 138), should redeem "him." Had "he" not been intrinsically evil, this monster would have risen above the hell of "his" existence. The reader, then, cannot forgive "him" when "he" murders poor William and Clerval out of sheer vengeance against Frankenstein, and frames Justine out of hatred for all mankind. "His" fate, whether it is an eternity of wandering or death in the icy waters, seems well deserved.

Whale's monster, however, is human in form only. It has no capacity to reason and thus can be assigned no responsibility for its actions. At first docile and tranquil, this monster acts only in response to Frankenstein's mimed commands. Its complete lack of rationality is demonstrated by its attempt to grab a shaft of light. Also illustrative of its animalism is its instinctive fear of fire.

The sympathy of the audience for the monster grows as it is tormented by Fritz. Because it is an amoral creature rather than an immoral human, it remains blameless when it strikes back and kills Fritz. The audience sighs, at least partly in relief, for Fritz will torture it no more. Even when the monster kills Waldman the audience is forgiving, for the issue is basic survival; kill or be killed.

The creature's gross lack of understanding is emphasized by the incident with little Maria. It does not possess the insight necessary to generalize the sins of mankind against it, to her. Therefore, when she regards it with kindness, it mirrors her behavior. Then, in mocking her action of throwing the flowers into the water in an "apish" manner, the monster throws Maria into the water and she drowns. Again, it is innocent of blame, for it could not know the consequences of its action.

Although the audience may be relieved when the monster is finally killed (for it is clear that the established pattern will continue) the pity evoked as it struggles to free itself in the fire is undeniable. Whale's monster is, indeed, a creature wronged by man.

The story ends on a happy note in Whale's film version. The parting shot depicts Frankenstein recovering in bed, attended by Elizabeth, and the old Baron raising his glass in a toast "to a son to the House of Frankenstein." With this toast, a tribute is paid to the monster (unwittingly) and hope is expressed for future generations.

Although neither Frankenstein nor the monster fares very well at the end of the novel, it does conclude on a hopeful note as well, for the captain sees the error of his ways. He learns what Frankenstein did not learn until it was too late; the danger of unchecked passion.

Many of the concerns of Shelley's novel lurk below its surface. The duality of the monster and its creator, and the

relevance of this to Shelley's life, for example, certainly rate the attention of the reader. The vision of the novel as "prophetic of an intellectual world to come, . . . a Prometheanism that is with us still" (p. 213, Bloom) should also be regarded with consideration. Although the film does not address these concerns, this is not to say that it has no value. Whale's Frankenstein is a worthy example of a literary work brought into the realm of the general public. Beyond its entertainment value, if the film inspires anyone to read Shelley's novel, then it has achieved an important goal.

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## THE SHRINKING ROOM

Karen Kotrba

It was all that I could afford, a vermin-infested two-room apartment. It had always been small, but I had always been comfortable, that is, until the walls began their steady encroachment. I never thought I'd....no, I suppose I'd felt it all along. I had been under such pressure. I had lost my job. And had no way to pay the rent. I'd always been fearful....Only it's just not the same, now that I'm locked in, and now that Harold has taken to speaking. The first time he spoke was about two days ago. I was curled up on the floor, trying to make the walls go away, and Harold was watching me, the way that cats always do. He had cocked his head to one side, and laid his ears back, and quite hesitantly said, "You know, it won't work that way, you've got to push against them, they should fold out, like a Murphy bed, and then you can sneak out where the corners no longer meet."

I wondered for a moment why Harold hadn't spoken sooner. I thought that he had probably enjoyed watching the suffering which I had been experiencing, and I cast him an uneasy glance before heeding his suggestion. I stood up (Harold still watching me with his glassy gaze) and cast myself against the wall. Harold smiled a greasy cat smile and blinked.

I guess the wheels must be rusted pretty badly, because I've only succeeded in moving the wall about one inch since then. It squeaks and thuds as though the gears are kicking in somewhere inside, but it's going to take a while before I loosen them up enough to move it. I wish Harold would help me instead of just sitting in the middle of the floor, breathing shallow sand-paper breaths. I tell him, "Harold, you're no help. No help at all." He just sits. And blinks. Sometimes I try to outstare him. He always wins. I think I caught him cheating once, but don't tell anyone. This is between you and me.

I awakened this morning, and the room was definitely smaller. Last night I had marked the edge of the last floor tile with a small 'X marks the spot' sign, like on a treasure map, and it's gone now. Harold never sleeps, so I'm sure he was awake, but he won't tell me what happened. He just sits, paws crossed, glassy-eyed, and smirks a jagged cat-smile. Sometimes I think that he's conspiring against me. I think he wants to take over my apartment. They all want to. I won't let him know that I've caught on to his tricks. Not just yet.

I've pushed the wall almost five inches now, but there are no gaps in the corner like Harold said there would be. I think the walls are curving, but the corners refuse to separate. Lately, time has been so oddly distorted. There is a clock, hanging grey and small on the wall, but I saw Harold sitting

beneath it, and I have a sneaking suspicion that he has been playing with the minute hand. And I've found pawprints in odd places. I am constantly wiping them from the cabinets and the furniture. Lately it has seemed almost normal that they should be there. Whenever I watch Harold, he seems to be at rest. He must move while I'm not looking. The telephone buzzes. It doesn't ring anymore, it just buzzes like an intercom. It buzzes and I hear Harold's voice in the night. He answers the phone and they are talking about me, although I'm not certain just what it is that they say. I am beginning to think that Harold can no longer be trusted.

I think about a day has passed now, and Harold has become unusually large, although lately I am uncertain whether Harold is larger, or the room is smaller. I have become too weak to stop the walls' encroachment. I fear that they will engulf me entirely. Harold has been talking on the telephone quite regularly, and he sometimes speaks in foreign tongues. I pretend that I am sleeping, but I hear his voice, and I know.

This morning I awakened to find Harold standing by my side, staring at me. Watching. I asked him why he was there and he just smiled a filthy cat smile. And blinked. I think that he was planning to smother me in my sleep, and now I am just glad that I awakened in time.

I feel as though I am in grave danger now. The eyes are always watching, I hear the purr in the night. I have decided that it is time to do away with Harold. I find it impossible to sleep in the presence of his icy gaze. I must take him by surprise. This will be quite difficult, since Harold never sleeps, just sits, plotting my demise. I will use a knife. I must hunt for one, for Harold has hidden them away. A few well-placed wounds and I shall be delivered from this wrath. I will be safe. For a while, at least.

Strange events have transpired since I last spoke, leaving me weak with dread. Having decided to carry out my plan last night, I awakened to hear Harold speaking on the telephone. I crept to the kitchen in search of a knife. Harold had hidden them in the highest cupboards, but he must have underestimated my height, because I reached them with no problem. Harold was in the other room and, having hung the phone up, was sitting deep in contemplation. I heard his throbbing purr echoing in my ears like the beat of a drum. It filled my head and caught in my throat, until I was gagging with the hatred. I ran urgently into the room and, flailing the knife frantically about, I sliced a large, curving gash in Harold's side. There was a flurry of fur and claws, and I stabbed many more times, to be certain that he was dead. As I looked tentatively down at his body, I saw no blood, no paws twitching with the last spark of life. I looked again, rubbing my eyes in disbelief. Stuffing: I saw white stuffing. Fluffy stuffing spilled from the gash in his side. Matted stuffing from one front leg. Vile stuffing seeped from between smiling teeth.

I sat down for a moment, the room spinning beneath my weight. The walls were laughing, and the telephone buzzed rhythmically like the purr of a calico cat.

Karen Kotrba is a sophomore. She wrote this story for English 109. About "The Shrinking Room" she says:

I patterned this short story after "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Charlotte Gilman. The climax of the story is at the end with all of the preceding events building up to it. This story dealt with a woman imprisoned by her own mind, and the final liberation she experiences while tearing down these imaginary walls. In the short story which I wrote, I attempted to use many of the techniques of the author, among them the use of sentence fragments to magnify the confusion and terror felt by this woman, and the use of first person perspective in order to make us feel as though we are part of the story. I also wrote the story as though the main character was writing in a journal, or some sort of book, and ended it abruptly just after the climax.

## POEMS BY MARY ELLEN OLSON

### I

Benchmen know how quickly mauve movements  
wither black.  
They retreat wisely  
(buried under the warmth of wednesday's news)  
and surrender to wrought-iron silence.

Only Madam Autumn  
saunters through Central Park  
seeking pieces of her golden fall.

Winter warns with flurries  
as her soft skirts flash through milky snowlight--  
her grace stinging hot;  
then numbing stiff.

Now she wanders alone,  
shivering under subtle rays,  
and wonders why frost-heavy men  
have forgotten September silliness.

### II

Counting out the quarters  
dumping lunchtime dregs  
from the cold coffee cups  
the Penthouse people dirty,  
the washer packs another  
load.

Her swollen hands,  
cleaning  
more than goldfish swim,  
stab hard pins into limp, hanging  
hair  
and smooth away  
sticky, morning sweat.

Mirrorless,  
She cleans; wondering if  
slick-city-pink  
(smeared thick  
and bloodlike on white rims)  
would glisten on minimum wage  
lips.

### In Good Faith

Today a man comes selling faith by door.  
Across the way a pig-tailed girl sells apples.  
He pulls pamphlets from a slick leather briefcase.  
She pulls ripe succulent fruit from a wooden bin.

The girl sells apples,  
rich with the juice of the sun...  
75¢ a bushel.

The man sells faith,  
forged from the fires of Hell...  
50¢ a page.

### The Flocks

Dirty fingernailed children  
with scarlet lips  
and glowing eyes  
play in the alleys with non-toxic men.

Little envy green men  
of puncture proof plastic.  
Tiny men,  
with broad chairback shoulders  
and rigid rock-like legs.  
Tight men,  
with sleek rifles  
reaching,  
    stretching,  
        pointing  
high and straight  
above frozen faces.  
These men---  
scarecrow militia.

Growing children,  
tender,  
    eager,  
        children:

Move these men with pride,  
    (deploy your future)  
regiment your laughter.

Mary Ellen Olson is a freshman in the Honors Program. She wrote these poems on her own.

### RICHARD II: REFLECTIONS ON A KING

Kenneth R. Gosselin

If King Richard II of England had consulted Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, for a piece of sound political advice, Hamlet would probably have responded in this manner: "Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature."<sup>1</sup> Richard might have thought about Hamlet's words for a moment, nodded his head in recognition, and thrown out this response: "Be merry, for our time of stay is short."<sup>2</sup>

Richard's outward personality--and existence--is too dependent on drama and spectacle to allow for an economy of words. Richard lives his life in the high dramatic style--almost reminiscent of the overplayed emotional response popular during the silent film era. Of course Shakespeare endows Richard with a voice--thereby magnifying the silent screen effects of exaggerated body movement to an even greater extent: "O God! O God! that e'er this tongue of mine/ That laid the sentence of dread banishment/ On yon proud man..."<sup>3</sup> However, the drama is not supported by any decisive action. Even though most of Richard's lines are highly charged with emotion, they fail to ignite any spark of resolute action in Richard. This inaction reduces Richard to an actor portraying many roles--from ceremonious monarch and autocratic ruler to self-righteous king and self-pitying fool. In each role, his proud discourses are undercut by his inaction. Richard is unaware of his theatrics throughout much of Richard II. However, when he smashes the mirror in Act IV, he finally recognizes--in symbolic fashion--all the ineffective roles he has played as they lay scattered in fragments at his feet. The broken mirror image of Richard as king signals the transition from a spoiled monarch to a man with a real insight into himself as a human being.

One of the larger fragments on the floor of Westminster Hall is the reflection of a man playing king. Cubeta suggests that "Richard moves with serene confidence as he covers political intrigue with ceremonious ritual and administers justice with formal rhetorical flourishes empty of content."<sup>4</sup> For example, during Act I, Scene 1, Richard relies upon legislative jargon when administering to the dispute between Bollingbroke and Mowbray--a dispute that publicly implicates Richard in the Duke of Gloucester's murder. In order to avoid an unpleasant confrontation with Bollingbroke over the subtle accusation, Richard surrounds the court intrigue with a veneer of spectacle. Richard's subsequent dropping of the warder--halting the joust between Bollingbroke and Mowbray--is both ceremonial and dramatic, but its immediate effects only last for a moment:



Let them lay their helmets and their spears  
And both return back to their chairs again.  
Withdraw with us, and let the trumpets sound,<sup>5</sup>  
While we return these dukes what we decree...

Now an adept political maneuver is necessary, and Richard can no longer use dramatizing as a stalling technique. He must make a decision; and when he does, Richard evades the issue hoping that it will go away. This is his rationale for banishing Bollingbroke. If Bollingbroke is out of the country, then he will cease to be a threat. Clearly, Richard's play acting a king does not include careful evaluation of the far-reaching effects of political action. Richard is more comfortable clouding the issue with spectacle and rhetoric. As a result, Bollingbroke, who is a political animal, wastes no time in raising a rebellious faction while he is in exile. Richard is more accomplished as a performer than as a politician.

Richard's domestic diplomatic policy, forming another mirror fragment, is by no means from the school of Henry Kissinger. Instead of courting the nobles, he antagonizes them with insults and with constant reminders of who is king of the English mountain. For instance, when Richard learns of Gaunt's death, he passes it off lightly and, in the next breath, he usurps Hereford's inheritance for war finances:

His time is spent, our pilgrimage must be;  
So much for that ...  
And for these great affairs do ask some charge  
Towards our assistance we do seize to us  
The plate, coin, revenues, and movables  
Whereof our Uncle Gaunt did stand possessed.<sup>6</sup>

In an attempt to proceed in an efficient political fashion, he has undermined his position with the nobility. Richard denies the rights of primogeniture through his unethical acquisition of Hereford's legacy. Ironically, it was these same rights that placed Richard on the throne; and by denying them Richard is loosening his grasp on (and claim to) the title of king. Meanwhile, the nobles are infuriated because they know Richard has emptied the state's coffers with his lavish court expenses. However, Richard sees nothing wrong with a fashionable court because he believes this facade is what being a king is all about.

The facade is what most concerns Richard at court. He maintains it by acting yet another role contained in a mirror fragment: a director. For example, in Act I, Scene I, he ensures a polished performance through careful direction of the challenge between Mowbray and Bollingbroke. Richard instructs them to throw down the gage in the proper Medieval style. The finer points of court etiquette are strictly observed. Richard carries it all off because he is comfortable in the trappings of the office. He wears his clothes and jewels well. Richard pictures himself in the legendary tradition of past English monarchs. He realizes too late that the job

description of a king extends well beyond the stereotyped image in history books. The governing expertise far outweighs the pomp and circumstance.

However, words sustain Richard's facade and breathe life into it momentarily. Altick proposes that "Richard cannot bring himself to live in a world of hard actuality; the universe to him is real only as it is presented in a fine package of words."<sup>7</sup> Richard's longer speeches, which take on the quality of monologues even though they are spoken in the presence of other characters, are the reality Richard creates for any given moment. He talks himself into a fleeting feeling of solace and security even though he is at the apex of a troubled society. This escapism is especially prominent in Act III when he tries to bolster his spirits as his army deserts: "Is not the king's name twenty thousand names?/ Arm, arm, my name! a puny subject strikes/ At thy great glory."<sup>8</sup> Such exclamations provide a psychological outlet for an escape to classical visions of glory on the battlefield. Although the words sound heroic, they are dreams that border on unreality.

Reed claims that "Richard's incapability of taking action against Bollingbroke...arises from his repeated compulsion to indulge in self-abasement and self-pity...as the means of mitigating the pain of an intolerable situation."<sup>9</sup> For instance, when Richard learns that Bushy, Bagot, and Green have been executed by Bollingbroke, his despair paralyzes his sense of priority. Instead of devising a new strategy to defeat his enemy, he contemplates what a tragic death he might die in order to gain immortality as a legend: "For God's sake let us sit upon the ground/ And tell sad stories of the deaths of kings."<sup>10</sup> Richard feeds upon the pity derived from his favorites and it invigorates him in a peculiar way. The emotional support reassures Richard that there is still a loyal framework of nobility beneath him lending credibility to his reign.

Richard's emotional flare-ups are directly related to his unwillingness to deal with the situation at hand. His emotions are unbridled and they border on the manic depressive. In the crucial Act III, Richard runs the gamut of emotional response. When Richard and his company return to England from participation in the Irish Wars, Richard is riding the crest of the wave. At this point in time, even Bollingbroke's internal rebellion seems only of the slightest consequence:

...So when this thief, this traitor, Bollingbroke,  
Who all this while hath revelled in the night  
While we were wandering with the Antipodes,  
Shall see us rising in our throne, the east  
His treason will sit blushing in his face,  
Not able to endure the sight of day.

Richard's language has a classical flavor and, he even compares himself to the sun. He draws his courage from the traditional heroic images--without giving any real thought to his strategy for overcoming Bollingbroke. However, this triumphant feeling is short-lived as Salisbury relates the desertion of royal

soldiers to Bolingbroke's side. Richard's courage, supported only by words, collapses under the weight of the bad news. He then draws upon his only remaining source of strength to rally his courage for the final confrontation with Bollingbroke at Flint Castle: "I had forgot myself: am I not king?"<sup>12</sup> Richard's only recourse is to retreat into the hollow security of his royal name which is only a symbol--and a word.<sup>13</sup> Richard never took care to reinforce his power and influence beyond decorum and appearance. As long as everything "looked" all right, Richard was content in his false security.

Reed suggests that the image of Richard throughout the play is a public image: "The public image of Richard is a portrait of an anesthetized mind--autocratic and remarkably short of vision."<sup>14</sup> Richard makes the mistake of only imitating the traditional heroic images. He does not understand that the most successful kings plan their political and military strategies carefully in order to achieve the desired outcomes. Richard is a legend in his own mind until he smashes the mirror at Westminster Hall. Later, at Pomfret Castle, the audience sees a side of Richard's personality that they have never seen before: the private man who is capable of emotional warmth that transcends his shallow public image.

The transition from public to private image gains momentum at Flint Castle with the visual and dramatic climax of the play; but it is not until the formal abdication sequence at Westminster Hall that the audience witnesses the true shedding of Richard's public image. According to Ure, ". . . the smashing of the mirror is . . . an act of self-destructive violence, for he has destroyed the image of the face with which he must henceforth live in as manly a fashion as possible."<sup>15</sup> In smashing the mirror he is denying his former self as ineffective. The lesson of the mirror teaches Richard that the internal mechanism of character strength is more important than all the external fluff: ". . . O flatt'ring glass:/ Like to my followers in prosperity./ Thou dost beguile me . . ."<sup>16</sup> Richard compares the mirror to his flatterers at court because it does not record any changes in his visage even though he is no longer king. In a similar manner, Bushy, Bagot, and Green supported Richard with good words regardless of whether his decisions were right or wrong. These men gave Richard a false sense of security just like the mirror. Richard is beginning to realize he is better off living with his feet firmly planted on the ground--evaluating his own actions for what they are really worth. Sometimes even the smallest gestures, such as Richard's good will to the Groom in Act V, are a greater index to the private man than all the external dramatics taken together. However, Shakespeare carefully sustains Richard's character continuity by retaining a hint of the public man--even in the exchange with the Groom. For instance, Richard launches into a rhetorical harangue on the

disloyalty of his horse: "Would he not stumble? Would he not fall down,/ Since pride must have a fall, and break the neck/ Of that proud man that did usurp his back?"<sup>17</sup> Richard's character growth cannot happen all at once nor can the change ever be truly complete.

The smashing of the mirror initially appears as merely another theatrical gesture by a Richard acting out a command performance. Bollingbroke wryly observes: "The shadow of your sorrow hath destroyed/ The shadow of your face."<sup>18</sup> Bollingbroke's comment contains sarcastic overtones implying that Richard is acting in the grand style again. However, the comment strikes an inner chord with Richard:

. . . 'Tis very true; my brief was all within  
And these external manners of laments  
Are merely shadows of the unseen grief  
That swells with silence in the tortured soul.<sup>19</sup>

Richard is struck with the insight that outward shows of emotion cannot fully convey the depth of his complex feelings of despair and loss. Richard understands that he is the only one who can experience these feelings at their full extent. More importantly, Richard's emotional outbursts will not help him cope with a world that is in a constant state of flux. He must live the best way he can within his unstable environment. Cubeta states that Richard "turns from the surface images of kingship, too long his only concern, and sees instead an inward illumination and new sense of identity."<sup>20</sup> Ironically, he has these insights just moments before his death. Upon reflection, Richard knows that he was ineffectual as a king: "Thus play I in one person many people/ And none contented."<sup>21</sup> Richard realizes that he is human and makes the same mistakes as the most common of his subjects. His divine right to the throne does not guarantee infallibility. However, it is only at this point in the play that he learns his problems are his own fault and they are not caused by the world around him: "I wasted time, and now doth Time waste me."<sup>22</sup> His soliloquy in Act V, Scene 1, which is the first time in the play when he is completely alone, is not shallowly rhetorical but packed with sincere emotion and self-knowledge. Richard is not trying to impress or garner pity because he is alone. In a reversal of his "public image," his thoughts probe and search his soul. Richard actually takes inventory of all his faults without making excuses for them. Shakespeare's appropriate placement of this soliloquy directly before Richard's murder in Pomfret Castle allows Richard a more manly death. He is a compassionate, worthy human being who cares for other people and not just for himself.

Richard's new-found character dimension emerges to the surface when he temporarily fends off his murderers. For the first time in his life, Richard recognizes his life as worthy enough to defend. And when he dies, he evokes a cathartic effect: "Mount, mount, my soul; thy seat is up on

high,/ Whilst my gross flesh sinks downward here to die."<sup>23</sup>

Richard is cleansed spiritually as he leaves the mortal Richard behind while aspiring to something higher--perhaps heaven.

Shakespeare allows Richard II crucial character insight, thus elevating Richard to the position of a tragic figure. This insight leads to a transformation that adds depth to his shallow facade. At last, Richard recognizes his own finite humanity:

Cover your heads and mock not flesh and blood  
With solemn reverence. Throw away respect,  
Tradition, form, and ceremonious duty,  
For you have but mistook me all this while.  
I live with bread like you, feel want,  
Taste grief, need friends. Subjected thus,  
How can you say to me I am a king?<sup>24</sup>

For the first time, Richard knows how closely the human is entwined with the divine.

#### Notes

1. William Shakespeare, The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark (New York: Signet/New American Library, 1963), p. 47, Act III, Scene ii, ll. 21-24.

2. William Shakespeare, The Tragedy of King Richard the Second (New York: Signet/New American Library, 1963), p. 73, Act II, Scene i, l. 223. Subsequent references are to this edition.

3. Act III, Scene iii, ll. 132-134.

4. Paul M. Cubeta, "Introduction to Shakespeare's Histories," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Richard II, ed. Paul M. Cubeta (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 7.

5. Act I, Scene iii, ll. 119-122.

6. Act II, Scene i, ll. 155-162.

7. Richard D. Altick, "Symphonic Imagery in Richard II," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Richard II, ed. Paul M. Cubeta (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 77.

8. Act III, Scene ii, ll. 85-87.

9. Robert Rentoul Reed, Jr., Richard II: From Mask to Prophet (Pittsburgh: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1968), p. 44.

10. Act III, Scene ii, ll. 155-156.

11. Act III, Scene ii, ll. 47-52.

12. Act III, Scene ii, l. 83.

13. Cubeta, p. 7.

14. Reed, p. 39.

15. Peter Ure, "Introduction to Richard II," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Richard II, ed. Paul M. Cubeta (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 88.

16. Act IV, Scene i, ll. 278-280.

17. Act V, Scene v, ll. 87-89.

18. Act IV, Scene i, ll. 291-293.

19. Act IV, scene i, ll. 294-297.

20. Cubeta, p. 9.

21. Act V, Scene v, ll. 31-32.

22. Act V, Scene v, l. 48.

23. Act V, Scene vi, ll. 111-112.

24. Act III, Scene ii, ll. 173-177.

Kenneth R. Gosselin graduated as an English major in December 1984. He wrote this essay in English 231.

POEMS BY PAMELA GRAPES

Relic

On a strategic corner,  
before an unnamed bar,  
Tijuana's only burro  
stands long days  
while the old man shouts  
"Hev you peecher tak' wi' burro,"  
coughs, and grabs tourists by the arm.  
The burro stands  
beside a freshly painted sign  
with neon letters two feet high  
that scream M-E-X-I-C-O  
into the black box camera.  
The burro winks.  
The old man stands  
between tourist's camera and burro  
he guards, and warns,  
"You wan' peecher?  
AY tak you peecher wi' heem!"  
The camera stands,  
black box on stick tripod,  
a serape its makeshift hood.  
Flies buzz from camera to burro  
to sign to man.  
The burro shifts,  
vents a small mound  
of interest to the flies  
and chews at the zebra stripes  
painted on its hide.

Ritual

Espresso marathon  
caffeine and words  
filling  
our mouths  
with steaming speech  
pressure brewed  
for eighteen hours  
deep in talk--  
not looking at  
the small fresh cup  
you bring again--  
we never spill  
and our hands  
never touch.

Pamela Grapes is a senior majoring in English. She wrote these poems in English 246.

## LITHIUM HOLIDAY

Michael Sangree

Parking lots and graveyards were lost. The drifts changed into Connecticut landscape, emphasizing little bald hillsides, burying depressions and details. The plows churned through it all. Robie could see their stupid orange lights traveling above the tops of the snow banks, flashing dull and soft through the blowing snow. He laughed at them--there was no traffic for the lights to warn: the plows were just trying to console themselves, as if an orange light might somehow ward off the white, white, wind.

The outside world was scary in an exciting sort of way for him, for even a few steps out the door he could no longer tell where he was. It wasn't the not knowing that bothered him, it was the idea of where he would be found the next day, after the snow had settled, somewhere out in the middle of the lawn, frozen in an odd shape like a lost glove. It was with this in mind that he had strung a length of rope from the basement door to the woodpile by the animal sheds, and he had come to depend on it for his way, feeling like a resourceful pioneer. He held tight to it, blindly making his way into the stinging wind, bringing food and water to the snowbound animals and returning with wood enough to keep the house warm for another day.

The wind finally died, and Robie discovered yellow snow and frozen excrement on either side of the line--the dogs had been as timid of straying as he. He laughed at them. "Jack London would be disappointed in you, dogs," he said sternly. He waded off the beaten track of the line and fell face down in the deep snow. When he looked up he saw the dogs watching him soberly from the path. He thought of his Jack London joke and laughed some more. No call of the wild for these dogs.

Then his thoughts turned to the question of what kind of an angel would result from a grande mal seizure in the snow. He made several energetic attempts before he realized that he really had no idea what a seizure was like. Still, he liked the angels he had created and decided that they were probably very close to the real thing. It struck him as funny, that this question had never been answered, and he began to laugh about it. Lately he had been laughing nearly all the time.

It was a wonderful week of isolation. He had stopped his medication, taking what he called a "lithium holiday." His parents were in California, school was out, and his only responsibilities were the animals and Grandmother, plus the two fires. He couldn't have been happier feeding the

assorted mouths of the hungry beings and the wood furnace--he was getting credit for behaving responsibly, yet he had more than enough freedom to go off the deep end without consequence.

He sat for hours down by the furnace, looking in at the burning wood, smoking serenely on his water pipe. When he was sufficiently stoned he could go cook a meal, or he could talk old times with Grandmother. He might sit with his chainsaw and further dismantle it, or he could brush the dogs, all five of them, and work on their toenails. He had a notebook in which he recorded inspirations as they came to him, writing such things as 'Idea: color coded car keys for the blind.' The hours felt so good rushing by, faster than he could enjoy them, and he kept trying to slow them down, to make them last. He wished he could be high forever.

Grandmother still did not understand why she couldn't get her New York Times. "The paper has never been stopped by snow as far as I can remember."

"Grandmother," he shouted to her, "the roads are closed. They have been closed since yesterday. We don't have the paper because we don't have anything else. We're out of milk. We're almost out of dogfood."

"I don't see why that means we have no paper," said Grandmother. "The Volvo handles perfectly well in the snow."

"The roads are closed," he shouted furiously. Somehow it seemed easy to become angry when he was already shouting in the first place. "And don't talk to me about the Volvo. I don't want to hear it. I swear, I will attack it with a sledge hammer, wham! wham! wham!" He spun around the room swinging an imaginary hammer.

"I just want the paper the way I always have it." She slumped back into her chair. A piece of green wood hissed and whined in the fireplace. It was her personal fire, from which she rarely strayed in the wintertime. "There have been storms worse than this," she continued, gazing out the window toward the horse pasture. "Your grandfather used to get quite a kick out of driving in the snow. I would help him put the chains on the old Ford, and he would say to me, 'Margaret, it's going to be tricky!'" She turned to him as if to say, now what is your excuse?

He went to the phone and picked up the receiver. "Yes, operator, get me the Euthanasia Hotline," he said urgently. "Yes, this is an emergency. She's liable to hold on forever!"

In the basement Robie got to work on his skis. He lit the propane torch and began spreading the tar-like base wax onto the wood, smearing it in gobs and then burning it in with the coolest part of the flame. He followed the progress of the flame with a large cork which smoothed out the wax. In general, he hated working with skis and wax, but he loved using the torch. First there was the "poof!" as the gas ignited, and then the high-throated "ahhh!" as the fire streamed out of the little tank. He would always think to himself: look out, this

kid means business, stand back now.

The world looked new to him as he skied to town with the dogs. The storm was a memory now. The air was dry and clean, and he could smell different kinds of wood being burned, hickory, then sweet pine, then stinking garbage. Everyone was digging out their driveways, smiling at the bleached blue sky. A noise that reminded Robie of the "U.S. Amphetamine Speedway" soundtrack came from the woods as children on snowmobiles crashed through the underbrush.

A small sweat gave him the excuse to strip his sweater to show the red skin of his arms. He stopped at a traffic light for anyone who might be watching. Skiing down Main Street, with all the dogs, barely wearing a shirt! He felt very high. If anyone doesn't like it, he thought to himself, they can go fuck themselves.

He arrived home as daylight was fading, and as he lugged his pack of groceries toward the light of the house, he knew he was standing at the center of the universe: the pony was peering from his shelter, nickering anxiously, and the chickens were roosting on the doorstep of their house. Grandmother had the radio on at top volume. Everyone was waiting, waiting for him to feed them. I am the life-giver, he thought, I am the philosopher king.

He snuck up on his grandmother and dropped a Times in her lap. She read it, automatically, unimpressed, then exclaiming, "The Governor has closed the roads! Record snowfall!"

"Do you know how to do shrimp, Grandmother?" he asked. "Disembowel them, you know, whatever it is you're supposed to do to shrimp."

"Are these fresh or frozen?" she asked suspiciously.

"I caught them myself," he said. "They were huddling under a discarded Christmas tree, yelping pitifully. I put them out of their misery; or do they feel misery? Vegetarians eat them, so they must be vegetables, incapable of pain. Or do vegetarians only eat things that are expensive?"

"Why is the bag full of ice chips?" she said. "There is hardly any taste at all to frozen shrimp. We might as well be eating pollock!"

Down at the furnace, sucking on the sweet, sweet smoke, listening to it bubble up through the water of his pipe, Robie pondered the fate of poor bland pollock. Do the pollocks know that they are bland, he wondered, and is there anything they could do about it? Do pollocks get invited to parties? Does God hear the prayers of pollocks, are their sins significant? Is sex a big deal for pollocks, or would they just as soon cuddle?

"Well, I'm no pollock," he said, fondling his bag of dope. "I smoke the best pot! My tennis racket is boron impregnated. If I ever get mono, it will be leukemia." He began to laugh and laugh. He loaded the furnace and then went to tend to the outdoor animals; by the time he had finished with the chickens, he

was laughing about something entirely different.

Dinner that night was special. He figured that his parents would be feeling guilty out in California, and that he would be able to get away with extravagance--if he couldn't, so what, he would deal with that later. He opened a jar of caviar and arranged it with crackers to impress his grandmother, but he ate it all while preparing the curry and decided not to tell her. He took an old bottle of wine from his father's secret stash in the basement. (Robie had found the cases when he had been looking for a good place to hide his pipe; now he figured that anything findable was fair game.) For dessert he served the last of the summer's raspberries from the freezer, burning out of control in a bath of cognac. He made coffee, even though both he and his grandmother were under medical orders to avoid it.

Grandmother was reminiscing about Grandfather. "Oh, he used to fiddle, he used to just go and go, it would take your breath away. People always danced. But I loved the times that he played the violin, those were the best. When he was blue he would just go off to some out of the way place and play the prettiest songs. He would say, 'There are times to fiddle, but now it is time to play the violin.'"

"I don't get it," Robie said. "They're the same instrument, right?"

"You see, there are different ways to play it. He couldn't fiddle all the time. No one can. It gets tiresome."

"Okay," he said. "I've got one for you." He took a dried date out of the fruit bowl at the center of the table and moved it around the surface of the table. "What is this?"

She studied the date as it randomly bumped into things on the table. "Why, it's, it's a date that doesn't know where it's going. It's a clumsy little piece of fruit. I believe the date is lost."

"Wrong!" he said. "It's a blind date." He went into a fit of laughter. Grandmother, not a good loser at any game, smiled in spite of herself.

In front of the fire, with the dogs at their feet and the cat maneuvering around, they drank another cup of coffee and let the warmth of the cognac wash over them. They were intoxicated.

"Are you talking?" she asked suddenly. "Speak so I can hear you."

"I'm just repeating a chant that's been running through my head, ever since I went skiing. 'Keep those feet dancing, keep those feet dancing,' it has a nice rhythm to it. I feel like dancing. I want to dance and talk in tongues and prophesy to the leaders of the world. That sort of thing."

She turned a dog's ear over and over in her hands, reflecting. She said, "I don't think you are taking your lithium."

"My lithium is my own fucking concern, I thank you," he

said, taking advantage of her deafness. More audibly he added, "I'm getting the doses in, Grandmother."

"Your behavior has been awfully manic. You are acting quite high. None of us want to see you back where you were."

"Oh, I really need this!" he said. He rose from his chair and fell over the mass of dog bodies. From the floor he continued in an injured tone, "Nothing about the meal I just made, nothing about the things I do, just lithium, lithium, lithium. You with your shock treatments, you with your suicidal family. Maybe I like to get manic. I'm not out jumping in front of subway trains!"

She acted as if she hadn't heard him. Her deafness was funny in that way--it came and it went selectively. Sometimes she caught things said under one's breath, other times she missed things said at a shout. The fire reflected on her pale eyes. Robie could tell she was thinking, because her lips had stopped their puckering motion. It was usually a giveaway in Scrabble that she had a bad tray of letters when her face became still.

She told him that he had a disease, just like diabetes or anything else, and it was up to him to take care of it. She told him that he had inherited the same kind of mind as the others, but that he should be thankful, because he had lithium and good psychiatric care, which the others never had. There was no excuse for mania or depression or suicide anymore. The only reason his cousin John had killed himself was that he wasn't taking his lithium. His grandfather had never even had the chance to take it. Robie should thank God for the chance, he should thank God that there is such a drug.

He went to work on the fire, stripping coals off the wood with the hooked part of the poker. Sparks went up the chimney. He knew she was crying and so kept his attention on the fire. He explained to her that it was all a matter of words. Manic depression was not a disease, it was a gift. It was the way his mind worked. He could do things when he was high: his senses were sharper, his reflexes, his whole body was faster. The other night he had put a finger on the piano as he was feeling his way through the dark, and he heard a tone, and he lifted his finger off, and the tone stopped, and he realized that it was his pulse, traveling through the tip of his finger, gently rocking the piano, that caused the tone to resonate. When he was high, everything was like that. His presence was causing all these tiny reactions to go off around him; there was a cascade of reverberations from his life force, and he was at the level at which all this could be perceived. Another example: most people cannot detect the improvement in the television signal that occurs when they approach a set, but Robie, with his acute awareness, could not only see the sharpening of the image, he could actually feel the waves using his veins and arteries

as an antenna.

He was operating at the level of the wavelength; just because everyone else was operating at the inferior level of awareness did not make him the crazy one. It was not sick to be excessively good at living. He was not diabetic. Lithium made him want to puke.

"I remember when you were depressed this fall. You left school. You withdrew to your room like an invalid. That accident with the Volvo was mostly not an accident, but that isn't my point. Cars can be replaced. It is you that cannot be replaced. You can't live with these swings forever, you need to bring yourself closer to the center. You drive yourself with drugs and wild living, and then it all falls apart, it always falls apart for you. You are pretty pathetic if you won't do anything to help yourself."

"Grandmother," he said, holding the poker like a tennis racket, "it just isn't my cross to bear. I like this, I like it on top. I'm not a pollock, no, I'm not. I can't be frantic, I am calm in the face of panic. So I'm manic, I'm in control, you know I am. Depression is irrational, and I am in the light of rationality. Lithium's a superstition. Don't you see? Sure, I might be Christ right now, but if I am, I'm not going to make a big deal out of it. That's control. Hypersanity. I'm not going to upset the uninitiated."

"You are grandiose," she observed.

"Well, I'm pretty grand these days," he said. "Is realism delusional, is grandeur a danger?"

"You are sick and I think you know it," she said. "Now I am tired of listening to you. You have given me a headache. Go start your medicine."

"Well, your fire is almost burnt out, so it must be time for you to go to bed. Me, I'm going to tuck in the chickens and bring back enough wood to keep the wolf from the door for another night." He walked to the door and stood gazing at the shape of his grandmother surrounded by the various shades of brown dogs: he wanted to say something more to her. Even when he was high, she still could make him feel guilty. He wished there was someone who could understand what he was going through. "Let's go, dogs," he said quietly.

As he left the house with the dogs swirling around him he heard her call out, "Take your lithium," sounding vaguely like the voice of reason, his conscience speaking. He thought, but what would the voice of Crazy Eddie have to say?

Crouching down at the outdoor faucet, he filled a bucket of water for the pony. "Dogs, listen to this one: Crazy Eddie gets depressed," he said, shifting into a mournful tone. "We've got video, audio, microwaves, digital--prices so low we're giving them away. Might as well. Fuck it, it's all junk. What's the use? Garbage. Giant New Year's clearance. I can't take another year of this. Crazy Eddie's, where prices



are innn-saaane!" He began to laugh again. The idea had real promise; it just wasn't right for Eddie to be so rabidly excited all the time. It was a whole new concept in marketing, he decided, and it would have to be written down in the notebook.

The sky was full of big stars and everything else was black. He followed the path alongside the rope to the woodpile. "I guess we won't be needing this anymore," he told the dogs, lifting the rope out of the snow. There was the slightest wind.

The chickens were perched closely together on top of an old saddle they had claimed. They made small noises of concern as he slammed shut the door to their pen. "Any varmints get in here," he said to the birds, "tell them that I'm the baddest man in the whole damn town."

As he loaded his arm with wood he heard the pony chewing on a sapling in the wooded part of the pasture. High above murmured a jet, looking only like a group of stars patiently going someplace. I don't want to be like that plane, he thought, and I don't want to be like the people inside it either. I want to be a missile of some kind, going up so fast that I will never come down. I am not going to be a business class pollock going New York to Boston. Three doses a day to be normal! I don't have to make that deal, I'm not that pathetic.

He dropped the wood by the basement door and looked in his grandmother's window. She was reading her newspaper, smiling to herself. He felt his head rush as it hit him: she knew he was going to take the lithium. He was sure of it, she was smiling her victory smile. "Maybe you're right," he said to the glass, "you've seen enough craziness to know." He continued on in his head, God damn you, you professional survivor, why can't I at least have a choice?

He walked back for another load of wood trying to find the words for what he wished. The highs always ended, there was nothing new in that, it was just that the defeat was so total. It was sad to go back: back to the lithium--the nausea, the blood levels, the psychiatrist waiting rooms--with everything magical left behind.

"I just wish I wasn't so scared," he said, falling to his knees to embrace a dog. "If I could live without it..." He studied the dog's face for a reaction. There was none.

"But no," he said, "you were raised a dog and I, a Protestant. It would never work for us; our parents hate each other. Don't look at me like that, dear, there will be others. Next time you will find someone from your own species."

Robie swept his arm dramatically toward the house. "It's her fault! She hates the Irish! She's had nothing but ill will towards you, from the very day I brought you home!"

The snow was not good for snowball making, but it did the trick. He set up a little supply of snowballs a fair

distance from her window and commenced his attack. "Fire away! Oh dogs, we're taking the offensive now! Down, down, incoming all around us! Prepare the Sea Slug surface to air, that's you Winnie, fire, fire, remember the Falklands, where's that damn Sea Slug? Look out..." The snow slowly covered the window until nearly all the light was obscured.

Down in the basement, with the bottle of wine and the bottle of lithium, he sat in his chair staring in at the never-ending flames. He rolled a capsule out and cupped it in his hand, saying, "This is my body, this is my blood. Cheers, Jack." He chased the pill down with a long pull on the wine; then he put his hand near the mouth of the furnace and tried to read his watch. There was some time before the drug reached a therapeutic level, there was still time.

He drank the rest of the wine and smoked on his pipe until he was too uncoordinated to manage. Impulsively he threw the rest of the dope into the furnace, and he stretched back and smiled, knowing how upset he would be with himself the next day, but loving the gesture all the same.

He started to think about how if you knock out the 'a' from 'last' you get 'lst', and how that must have been why Christ had said what he said. This was a very clear thought, but the question of the omega started to nibble at the edges of the clarity, and soon everything gave way to sleep. When a dog woke him up, he wondered where he was.

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