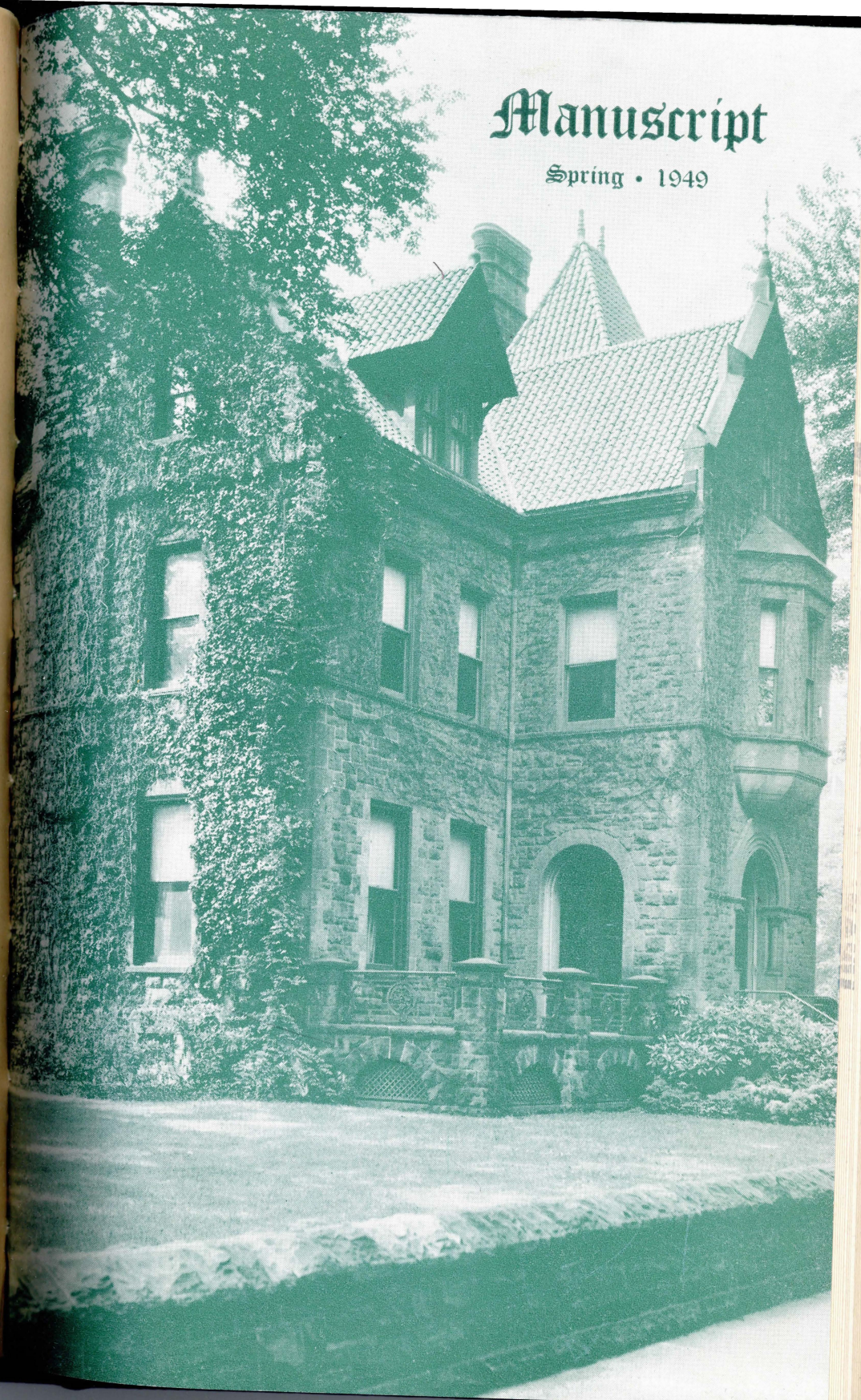


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I Brought Back Life

George Brody

The vast prairie rolled away from me until it joined the sky. I tried to imagine the greatness of my Country, but my imagination just wasn't big enough. This prairie was only one piece of it—one thousand miles wide, and one thousand miles from either ocean. I looked at how the heaven and the earth met all around me and thought that I could have no finer roof. Sheer mountain peaks pushed up from the ground, buried their heads in the heavens, and rested the blue mantle on their shoulders. I had to smile, because when I was a child I constantly puzzled over what held the sky up. Now I knew.

Beneath my feet was sand. I reached down, scooped up a handful, let it trickle between my fingers. Tired, worn out, aged soil. Soil that was once the breast on which endless miles of vegetation fed, now sucked dry and lifeless, unable to care for even a blade of grass. Tumbleweed rolled by in its never ending journey as though looking wearily for a place to put down roots and rest. If my buddies and I could save this gutted soil, that resting place would be here. We knew that nature took hundreds of years to make just one inch of topsoil. We had only days to restore it. But we were certainly going to try.

In one sense we were fortunate; the topsoil was here. All we had to do was to stop the sun from burning it to a crisp, the rain from rolling it in torrents down to the sea, and the ceaseless wind from sweeping it to some place that didn't want it anyway.

How the job was completed will remain a mystery. The crew knew as much about soil conservation as did the people who bled this land. They knew nothing! There was only Old Mose who insisted that there was no incident in history but the charge up San Juan Hill behind Teddy. And Big Lute who claimed that "San Juan was a cake party, but you shoulda been in the Argonne! We sure give it to the Kaiser that time!" Cactus Jack Dillingham, the third member who claimed that he cowpoked with Gene Autry, was never without his battered guitar. He constantly twangled it, moaning through his nose songs about the girl who left him; no one should ever trust a woman, and "they should all be kilt and did away with." Every sentence began, "When

me 'n' Gene Autry. . . ." Mose was always mad at Lute and Slim, Lute was always mad at Mose and Slim, Slim was always mad at Mose and Lute. I, the fourth member, was mediator, peace maker and treaty signer. The only trouble was that no one would permit me to mediate, make peace, or sign a treaty. Their differences had to go to the finish!

Our only touch of civilization was the town of Hurley, New Mexico, fifteen miles across the sandy wasteland. Our only connection with Hurley was by foot. Hurley had a copper mine. She boasted of a theatre, too—an old barn that was stocked with folding chairs. The theatre opened on Wednesdays and Saturdays and divided its time between Gene Autry and Roy Rogers. That meant that every Wednesday and Saturday night we traveled afoot across the desert to ride herd with Rogers and Autry. Cactus strummed his guitar and covered the thirty mile round trip with wailing rhymes about two-timing women. Old Mose charged San Juan Hill a hundred times over, tearing off his shirt, time and time again, to show Big Lute the scar on his back that was supposed to have been a bullet wound. Big Lute walked the entire thirty miles in a crouch, ducking his head, and dodging behind sand dunes to show how he "give it to the Kaiser in the Argonne." Every mile was punctuated with heated words, Toe-to-toe-faces-close-together shouting. I grew hoarse from a constant chorus of "aw, look now fellas. . . ."

Blows were never struck. I look back at that fact with amazement. Despite the many threats, Cactus continued to strum and moan, Old Mose and Big Lute continued riding each other over the relative merits of the two wars. But most amazing of all, the work was getting done, our archaic methods and lack of knowledge notwithstanding. The hill-sides that were once striped with ruts due to a process called rill erosion were now striped with spreaders—modified low stone walls built at an angle sloping downhill. Their purpose was to catch the gushing rainwater and cause it to flow rather than tear its way downhill. In the chewed-up gullies, we built stabilizers. These, again, are stone walls, but of a different type. They are higher, straight up on one side, slanting to the ground on the other. The water pours down the gully, hits the sheer side, and is stopped. The soil settles to the bottom, the water rises and flows over the top.

The theory sounded good, but with San Juan, the Argonne, and "cheating wimmin" constantly interrupting, I couldn't for the life of me see how we could make it work. Looking at the endless miles of sand before us, Mose, Lute,

and Cactus just shook their heads, and declared "somebody was nuts if they thought this stuff could be made to grow something." But somehow between arguments the spreaders multiplied, the stabilizers grew in number. The rutted hills filled to a level that tempted wayward weeds to come and rest awhile. The torn gullies bared their wounds to our working hands, and gradually they were healed.

As men have learned through the ages, it is never pleading words or sane arguments that bring fellowship to mankind; it is always some sort of miracle. So it was with us. Months had passed, the work was nearly completed when our miracle came. We were sitting on the shady side of a hill taking a breather, when I reached down and plucked a blade of grass. Silently I held it in my hand and just looked. Big Lute sidled closer to me, and without a word held out his hand. I placed the blade in his palm. Cactus looked at us curiously, put down his guitar and came over. Old Mose followed him. In reverent silence they passed the blade of grass around. I looked at them again and saw that they had tears in their eyes. We had created life.

Peace and fellowship were ours. We knew we were working toward an achievable goal. We worked like mad to do more than the other crews. Cactus' music was gayer, and we even sang with him. Looking back, I think we might have done better if Lute and Mose hadn't sung, but at the time I would have tolerated anything.

The job ended. Strangely, I held no remorse. I felt exhilarated and satisfied. The sand was still there, the tumbledweed still rolled by, the sun still blazed down, the wind still blew. But I swear the wind was milder, the sand felt softer, and the tumbleweed looked hopeful as though choosing where it would rest. The earth's breasts were not quite so dry. Her wells were filling. Seedlings came to stay and be nursed.

On that last day, I packed my few belongings, threw a stick in the air and decided to travel in the direction it pointed. Lute and Mose went together across the desert, "Maybe to do some farmin' in California." Cactus "was gonna stay put. Looks like this place will be holdin' cattle soon, and I'd like a piece of it." My stick pointed east, back to Pennsylvania, and suddenly I realized it had been a long time. That odd feeling that comes to your stomach when you are lonesome for home was there. I reached down, took a handful of soil, felt its coolness, then threw it over my left shoulder. I plucked a blade of grass, smiled at it, put it in my pocket, and walked toward the early morning sun.

Relativity of Knowledge

George Shinaly

I could not seem to realize that my chance had finally come. "Gentlemen," I began, "you are here to evaluate a new theory. I shall attempt to explain, or rather propose, a solution of the intricate and perplexing problem of the relativity of knowledge. My approach does not entail any mathematical formulae, but it does concern spatial relationships.

"First, we must consider life as it would exist on a one-dimensional world. In such a world, all motion as it were, would be directed forward or backward on a linear basis only. Now, if the 'occupants' of this one-dimensional world were presented with the idea of two dimensions, the theory would be met with grave doubts. One could hardly expect these simple inhabitants to believe that they could possibly move in a vertical direction, thereby creating a 'world' consisting of a plane."

I realized that I must have the idea accepted without any other qualification, because it is the very essence of my whole supposition. "Now," I began, "consider the 'occupants' of a two-dimensional world, whose motion is restricted to linear and vertical direction. Would they not be astounded at the possibilities of performing action in a vertical, horizontal, and lateral plane—the very movement we in our own world are capable of performing?"

I studied the faces of my audience. Some of the wise, old heads nodded in assent, some swayed in complete disagreement, and others just frowned in dubious perplexity.

"Now, gentlemen, here is my proposition: please consider the reaction we, in a three-dimensional world, would register if we were told that a four-, five-, or even six-dimensional universe actually existed!" There, I did it; and now I expected to be bombarded with skepticism directed at an old theory with a new twist.

I cleared my throat to attract the attention of the audience. "Here is the point in question: What could these additional dimensions possibly explain? Could the very secret of life itself be brought to light? Could the quest for power, peace, and security be reduced to an obvious solution? Could time be recalled from the past? Could the future be determined and planned for?"

I was shocked to see a few of the members leave. I half expected to be met with some opposition, but this wasn't the battle—this was the challenge—the fight would come later, as the possibilities of extra dimensions were discussed.

My problem now was to connect my original premise with the possibilities presented. "Can any of you sincerely deny the existence of Heaven and Hell, a Heaven and Hell with at least a spiritual foundation? Then why not agree, or at least suspect, the presence of other 'worlds' with a more scientific basis? None of you can deny the knowledge of mathematical formulae which were absolutely useless as a practical measure of some physical or chemical action—yet, is it not true that there were many discoveries and inventions that had as their base these apparently useless formulae?"

At last I was met with a uniform surge of approval. It seemed as though these great men had forgotten some advanced college mathematics. Any college student who has studied any advanced mathematics knows of the existence of formulae which may be used in the future, but are apparently useless in the present.

I was now ready for my major question, "Gentlemen, why not accept the possibility of spatial relationships to explain what we do not know, or what we consider unexplainable?"



Destiny

A. A.

I'm part of a heavenly plan.
My little post on earth
Was given to me by God
At my birth;
I'm a man,
For He willed it
When He waved His magic rod.

Still part of a heavenly plan,
Though now only dust I be,
This also by order of God
Who willed me,
A vain man,
To dwell with worms in the sod.

Treat Him Right, Lady!

A. J. Andronaco

You are sleeping soundly. Dawn hasn't so much as hinted it would arrive, and the mercury is hugging the bottom of your back porch thermometer. Even the neighbor's rooster squats comb-deep in a dream of endless cornfields.

Then it happens. From right under your window come the most violent explosions ever heard outside a battle zone. Morpheus bolts, leaving you sitting rigid and shivering in your bed. This is what you've been fearing all along. Into your yawning mind's eye comes the hideous picture—the nose of a giant plane sticking right through the kitchen into the living room. Maybe it sheared a slice out of the entire first story! You wait for your room to fall down one level. It doesn't. Silence now. Then voices. Survivors? The spirit of Florence Nightingale pats you on the head—maybe they need your help.

You're right, lady, they do need your help. Will you, for the love o' mike, keep water from getting into your garbage cans in winter! How in the world do you expect the poor garbage man to get that solidly frozen mass out of your can without making a racket? As a humanity-loving ex-garbage man, I implore you, keep your garbage dry.

I recall with displeasure the numerous times I've patiently had to explain to some indignant (and not very brainy) housewife the elementary physical factor involved in the change from water into ice. Water expands, dear lady, it expands and wedges itself solidly in the can; to empty it we have to slam the can with all our might against the steel body of the truck. No, we can't remove it quietly. Can you split a twelve-ton boulder silently? Who's being silly?

Don't get the idea that we like to fight; we're a peace-loving tribe. I was most fortunate in being part of a privately operated collecting concern. We are the super-service boys; you do not have to bring your cans to the sidewalk for us—that's only for the lower species of municipal refuse workers—we come to your cans wherever you choose to keep them. We get to know the best cellars, and the worst.

Mrs. Feline, we found out, lives in constant horror that her twenty plus cats will bolt for freedom every time we open her cellar door. It's to our credit that nary a kitten has escaped in all the years of our service to her. Of course, we

have to climb over her crouched form in the cellar doorway every Monday when we empty her ash cans, but that's only one of the many annoyances suffered by the sensitive refuse collector.

Lady Ima Killjoy, who lives alone (we're not surprised) never produces more than a scuttle-ful of ashes a week, yet she insists we cover those ashes with several layers of newspapers to prevent the dust from polluting her spotless cellar. She could easily have been a friend of ours simply by trusting our ability to carry a few pounds of ashes without spilling some on her precious floor. But no, she posts herself in ten places at once, just to make sure. Incidentally, she's not even good for a pack of cigarettes at Christmas.

And let me tell you about the menagerie-minded dame whose garbage we collect weekly—gather weekly is more to the point, for after her assortment of cats, dogs, goats, sheep and ducks are through playing with it, said garbage is strewn for acres towards the four cardinal points of the compass. The only reason we take her can out to the truck at all is that the warped humor of her animals has prompted them to leave in the bottom of it two crumpled eggshells and half a teaspoonful of coffee grounds. This, combined with the overgrown barberry bush choking her kitchen path and scratching us coming and going, renders her worse than poison in our estimation. And the camel's back is really shattered when we find out she's two years in arrears in her payments. Her monthly "Bill Rendered" runs into three figures, not counting the two that follow the decimal point. Only God and the Boss know why we don't recommend her to our competitor.

Before I run the risk of branding us garbage men as possessors of persecution complexes, let me hasten to assure you, ladies, some of you are really fine.

Judging by your garbage (a good indication, and don't forget it), you, Mrs. Friendly, are neat and considerate. We have no statement of your numerous contributions to good causes, but we know your charity is real and not just a flashy gesture for the public's eye. Look how nice and dry your can is, how neatly all your junk is wrapped in paper. We never have to worry about stony driveway rakings in your can, or live rats, or last week's prunings from the old apple tree. Yes, you're very nice. Last Christmas you tipped us, too. You can trust us to treat you right, madam.

Down the same street lives Mrs. Ligature, lovely woman. She never leaves her car parked in the long driveway. She realizes her cans are heavy, and we must drive down to

them, otherwise risking a broken back or at least a double hernia lugging those weighty things out to the truck in the street. Just plain thoughtful, and we do appreciate it.

We cheerfully help Mrs. Ciro move her refrigerator or start her car or anything else her big heart desires. She's good to us, chats pleasantly, pays regularly, even swats her dog who always tries to nip us. That's an extraordinary lady for you, far different from Mrs. S. Register on Strawberry Ridge. One day as I was running down the latter's drive, clutching an empty wash tub in which I planned to carry away her garbage, I experienced the unmistakable sensation of canine teeth sinking into my flesh below my belt in back. I might have guessed it; there was the family police dog stealing a free ride. Postponing thoughts until a less painful future moment, I made a rapid U-turn, simultaneously ripping my pants seat (and the flesh beneath) out of the dog's mouth and cracking him neatly on the rump with the tub. Before I could even begin to formulate my favorite cuss words, out of the house rushed the wild-eyed lady. Reading the riot act to me in at least four languages she finally wound up with the English version of an old, old story.

"He doesn't bite!"

Through clenched teeth I hissed, "Lady, he has bitten!" And casting aside modesty in as gentlemanly a fashion as possible, I exposed my shredded *derrière* to her cold gaze. I was naive enough to hope for at least a Band Aid.

"Well," she declared, still fuming, "you didn't talk to him!"

I made a hysterical mental search for the proper synonyms for the foul language I wished to hurl at her, but time was flying, and I had to fly with it. Next to sloppily-kept garbage, I think our biggest beef would be vicious dogs on the loose.

The most amusing situations arise from the customer's mistake of underestimating the garbage collector's intelligence. Don't fool yourself, lady. Your trash man is a philosopher, psychologist, quiz kid, business man, scholar and good citizen all rolled into one. I pity you if he's a gossip, too! He can rattle all the skeletons in your most secret closet, just by watching your garbage. Fortunately for you he'd rather not talk shop when he's off duty. His educational background (aside from the formal twelve grades of schooling) is conditioned by the systematic reading of any and every publication you throw out, from June, 1912, "National Geographic" to the latest issue of

"Fortune." He even knows what house Jupiter happens to be in at the moment, and why it is inadvisable that he should take a long train ride towards the end of any given month. One glance is all he needs to tell whether a newspaper is printed in English, French, Yiddish, German, Hungarian, Chinese, or what have you. How often your garbage man can surprise you, if you egg him on!

Not long ago the owner of a beautiful French Provincial type house came out to supervise the emptying of her garbage cans. I lifted one and proceeded to dump its contents into the truck. Looking around I saw her stomping madly on a family of crickets that had been living under the can I was holding.

"Please, lady," I cried, "don't kill them!"

By this time the good woman resembled perpetual motion on a pogo stick, muttering words about "these ugly bugs."

I managed to stop her long enough to acquaint her with the general harmlessness of crickets, to tell her how some people considered them lucky to have around, particularly in parts of China where they were sold in tiny wicker cages as good luck charms on certain festival days. Coming from a professor of entomology or any other exalted personage these words would not have moved a hair on her head, but from the garbage man! Was that lady ever astounded!

"How do you know such things?" There was both awe and suspicion in her voice. I seized the cue to show off.

"Oh, I've always been interested in zoology." I tried too hard to say it nonchalantly.

Believe it or not, that little episode netted me an invitation to have dinner with her the next day. Formidable visions of ties, tails and spats prompted me to decline with many, many thanks.

Here are a few statements from the garbage man's as yet unpublished etiquette book for customers:

Don't leave anything you value on or near your trash cans. Too many times your pieces of chamois are lost just because you drape them over the garbage can lid to dry. Your exquisite old Mah Jong sets belong in the attic or garage, anywhere except near the cans in the cellar. And those sickly potted plants you're trying to nurse back to health, can't you find a better spot for them than the top of the ash can? We're not mind readers (give us a bit more time) so don't blame us if we haul off to the incinerator the half-dead Korean cowslip you loved so much.

We're very patient about accidental losses. Spectacles, pieces of silverware, money-filled purses, false teeth, and the

like we return immediately—if we find them. Whatever your friends have told you to the contrary, we do not fine-comb your garbage, so don't brand us a bunch of thieves if we say we haven't seen the glass top of your percolator. Should you feel too strongly about it, we'll gladly give you a dime to buy a new one.

While I'm at it, I might as well bring up another unpleasant topic. Tell Junior to restrain his Frank Buck instincts, or at least to keep his one-man zoo out of the garbage cans. Live snakes, woodchucks, rats, skinks, skunks, and weasels shooting out of the can as soon as we take off the lid tend to discourage us. Sure, you do hear us laughing heartily when it happens, but it's bad laughter. When I'm the victim, my co-workers laugh; when they're the victims, I laugh. It isn't something we can all laugh at together. See? Just remember that the tiny cab of the truck is our home for the day; we can't afford friction of temperament there, the unavoidable friction of body is bad enough. So tell the little hunter to keep his menagerie away from the garbage cans.

And be nice to your garbage man, lady. He knows you and is anxious to like and serve you. Treat him as you would your mirror—give him a smile and he'll flash it right back to you, life size.



Frog

Norma Jeanne Persiani

The frog comes on
big webbed feet.
It squats croaking
over mud and slime on
double-jointed haunches
and then jumps
three feet
for no reason at all.

The Dirge

Leonard J. Shetline

Into the dark corners of this candlelit room,
Silence soft as combed cotton falls;
And air mystic with the scent of doom
Spins cobwebs on the cold hard walls.

The flame of the silver candlefire
Trembles and threatens to expire;
And ghosts whining still about their doom
Usher my loved one into the gloom.

The shriek of a spider enchants the air
As the passing ghosts disturb his lair;
And in the dusky sky an evening wind
Plays a dirge on his phantom violin.

Play, play, phantom-fingered wind,
Play your obsequies and slowly spin
Your mournful melodies, for I,
Knifed by sorrow, shall surely die.



The Falcon Spoke

Arthur Bloom

I had just become thoroughly engrossed in the morning paper when my thoughts were pulled back to the present by the sneering voice of Dick Roberst. Now, if you've been reading the papers lately, you'll recognize that name as the handle for one of the finest—and the hottest—pilots that Republic Aviation owns.

"Hello, 'Destiny's Tot,'" I mumbled. "I'm broke, there's no coke in the icebox, no cigarettes in the locker, and no one has phoned for you. Now, what do you want?"

"Why, 'Happy,'" Dick replied, "to hear you talk, one would think that I always want something. Now here I am, the hottest squirt-jockey this company has and you feeling that way. Where is your pride? Boy, I'm disgusted with you—ah, but give me the sport section of that rag you're trying to read and I'll let you back into my exclusive list of friends."

"Say, Dick, I hate to disturb you in your quest for higher learning, but how do you like the *Falcon*? Now, this *Falcon* is the newest nightmare that the slide-rule boys of research have doped up. It's a new design ship that seems to be all engine and no wing. Of course that means that it is on the strictly 'hush-hush' list, but still some rumors slip out."

Dick dropped the paper and got that same look a youngster gets when you ask him why he likes ice cream. Slowly his eyes met mine, then drifted over to the window. After a moment or two, he began to speak.

"Bill, that kite is human! She flies like a rocket and lands like a feather. But, Bill, that *Falcon* just isn't a lady. Why do I say that? Well, take the other day for instance. We went up to 40,000 feet for a couple of routine tests and while going along on the level the craft throated the jets and went over into a spin. Then, as pretty as you please, she levels herself out at 28,000. On Thursday the final blow fell. I hate to pull that Lindburgh stuff again, but on that day 'we' had another date with the altitudes. This time, I was slated to test the Very-High-Frequency radio that has been installed as experimental on this ship. Well, there we were, purring along on the 40,000 foot level with the air speed indicator hitting about 798 miles per hour when I tune in the set. Soon something like this comes in: '—the greatest thing we

have to fear is fear itself.' Honest, Bill, I heard Roosevelt speaking, and he gave that speech way back in 1932!"

"Okay, Dick. You'll find a couple of cokes under the chutes in the locker. I'll let you have one if you'll promise me that you won't go to any more of those super-mind things they've been showing down at the Strand. I'm sure that they're affecting your mind. Maybe you've been working too much. Now why don't you ask the front office to give you a nice vacation up in the—"

"Now look, I'm telling the truth," Dick pleaded, "I heard Roosevelt speak! At that speed this set must be able to pick up anything that's been said in the past. Oh gosh, I hope my wife never gets something like this. I'd be in the dog house for life. But, Bill, it's the truth. You're the only one who has any faith in me. Now how about it, will you please believe me?"

"Are you kidding? You claim that this set will pick up anything that has been said in the past?"

"That's right. It must have something to do with the plane going faster than the speed of sound. I don't know how it works—but it does work. Why, later I was able to pick up conversations between Truman and Stalin. But, you should have heard what Dewey said to his manager after the election!"

"Okay," I agreed, "I'll believe you if you are able to do this. You know that drug store down the street, don't you? Well, they will give two hundred dollars to the person that guesses the number of beans in a jar they have in the window. Now, 'Dreamer', only two people, as far as I know, have knowledge as to the total number of beans—the manager and the chief clerk. So, you just get your crystal ball to pick up some conversation between those two and give me the right answer—then I'll believe you."

"That suits me," countered Dick, "thanks for the coke, and next time you try to hide your cigarettes, pick a better place than between the bed and the wall will you—too hard to get to there."

The next day Dick came by and told me to bet that there were 84,500 beans in the jar. That afternoon I placed that number down on the list and about two days later the druggist called and asked me when I'd be by to pick up my check. I was about as calm as a UN discussion when Dick came in that night.

"Man, am I glad to see you! So help me, I'll believe everything you say from now on. That set is our little key to fortune. Now look, tomorrow you tune in and find out the

name of the mystery tune—we'll make millions! I can see it all now. Hey, what's the matter? You look lower than a villain's brow?"

"Remember me telling you that the *Falcon* was no lady? Well, yesterday I took her up and turned on that set again. Just before it came in on the receiver, the ship went into another of those freak spins. When we came out, the set and all the rest of the instruments were a shambles. When I was able to land, the engineers took one look at the mess and decided to give up the whole project—both ship and radio. So, your scheme of making millions isn't going to pan out. You know, some days you just can't earn an honest cent."

It's funny, but to this day I still don't know if Dick Roberst is a downright liar or a very frustrated gentleman.



Puddles in the Road

A. A.

Puddles in the road,
Holes through which I see
A world that's upside down . . .
Inverted fantasy.

A hundred centuries down
Below my feet is sky,
A wood of hanging trees,
Oh, look! Right there . . . that's I!

I smile . . . he smiles,
We're very glad to know
That upside down or right side up
Our worlds in beauty grow.

He moves . . . I move,
Oh, shame! A zephyr, impish soul,
Skimmed across the pool
And covered up the hole!

This Is Only Today

Wendell Clark

In 1939, when I was seventeen, the lingering effects of the depression prevented me from galloping off full-tilt to conquer the nearest city, as I had planned to do upon graduation from high school. My school years, spent in a small Missouri town, had fully equipped me with a business education, but all my applications for employment were returned marked "No Openings." Although the immediate prospect was discouraging, I sent more applications and returned to the farm home of my parents to await the answers.

My failure to obtain a job was an anticlimax after my years of enthusiastic planning, and made me fretful and restless; consequently my behavior was annoying to the few people who lived around me. In this sparsely settled community, the people had formed a closely-knit kinship and accepted strangers only when their merits had been proven. I found that my absence of four years had made me a stranger.

For several reasons, including my own shortcomings, my life in the community was unpleasant and, at times, almost unbearable. First, when I visited the crossroads store, I could not sit comfortably in a cracker barrel session and listen to the Old Guard monotonously repeat their humdrum philosophies, their tedious jokes, and their interminable gossip. Second, when the community gathered at farmer dances, pie suppers, and charivaris, a few embarrassing incidents were provided for the entertainment of the crowd. They were usually at my expense. For instance, at one charivari (a mock wedding serenade), my contribution to the din of clanging anvils, clattering kettles, and ringing bells consisted of firing an ancient musket into the air. Someone secretly tripled the charge of powder; the resulting explosion not only exceeded his fondest expectation of noise, but also furnished him with hours of laughter at the stunned expression on my face, as I sprawled on the ground with the smoking musket across my chest. For weeks, I nursed a badly bruised shoulder and a smoldering resentment against my neighbors.

Finally, and here was the source of the trouble, my graduation from high school gave me at least four years more education than most of my acquaintances. They perceived a conceit in me that I could not see, and, in their own way, they tried to eliminate it. Although they were preparing

me for friendship, I lacked patience with their methods. I had neither the ability nor the desire to search for the rich personalities hidden behind the rugged, sun-tanned faces of these people; and, lacking any other source of interest, I turned to the forests to seek greater freedom in thought and in action.

In the land of the west wind, nature assumes a provocative role. At first, I roamed the hills and valleys sporadically; then, as my senses sharpened to an increased range of experiences, my excursions into the forests became more frequent. The "tastes and smells and sounds and sights" filled me with a sensuous delight. The air was heavy with the fragrance of white clover, the pungent odor of cedar, the perfume of wild honeysuckle, and the rank smell of thick underbrush. I saw dew-laden spider webs sparkle in the early morning sunlight, while a beady-eyed spider waited, in silent patience, in a dark corner. I heard golden-voiced thrushes sing their haunting melodies, while killer hawks screamed in flight. Squirrels chattered and frolicked in the trees; broken-eared rabbits thrust trembling, inquisitive noses into clumps of grass; dusty, brown woodchucks padded along the trails on important missions. In the clean air and warm sunlight, a feeling of happiness predominated.

The animals of the forest lived with a freedom and a sureness that I envied. There was an unmistakable purpose behind their actions. They were aware of each danger; to them, nothing was unknown or obscure. Fatal errors resulted from a mistake in judgment, not from an inability to perceive the danger. Living by a fixed plan, their laws of conduct were based on non-interference with the rights of each other. When they failed to obey these laws, they died. But while they observed this savage code, they were as free as the unceasing wind that sighed restlessly in the tree tops.

In my enjoyment of this existence, I had almost forgotten my original intention of placing my mark on the world. This intention was recalled violently, and with some misgiving, when I received a telegram offering me employment in a large Eastern city. Events followed with whirlwind rapidity. On the day I received the telegram, I packed; the next day I spent on a train; and, on the third day, I stepped out of a huge train terminal into the heart of the city. The transition was rapid and startling, as though a giant hand had plucked me out of the green, leafy forests and dropped me in the middle of a humming, vibrant, and insanely noisy world. I was bewildered by the massive piles of concrete and steel, the swarming mobs of people, and the endless rush of

heavy traffic. I wandered the streets, terrified by the incessant thunder around me, until I found a furnished room that I could afford to rent. The furnishings consisted of a narrow bed, a chair, and a dresser. The room had four bare walls, and a single window opening out on a desert of roofs.

That night I ventured forth to familiarize myself with the city. The hard glitter of electric lights hurt my eyes and gave an eerie significance to the shadowy sidestreets. As I walked, I memorized street names and landmarks for future reference and noted the locations of laundries, restaurants, and tailor shops. At one of the busiest, noisiest intersections, I saw a cemetery, and I wondered how the dead could sleep.

The people I encountered during my walk were hardly the type with whom to make lasting friends. Perhaps it was the way I dressed, the way I walked, or my general appearance; or else I had grass in my hair, mud on my shoes, and a long stalk of timothy hay between my teeth. At any rate, the peddlers and panhandlers flocked around me like iron shavings drawn to a magnet. They followed me through the streets, offering to sell me a variety of items at outrageous prices. They whispered insidious advice in my ear and endeavored, in a multitude of ways, to part me from my scant funds. At last, in desperation, I fled to my small furnished room which was the only haven I knew. For the rest of the night I sat on the edge of my bed, staring out of the window, until the sun's red, smoky rays slanted across the long stretch of roofs.

For weeks after this first experience, I confined myself to my work and room; I wandered around the city only on rare occasions and seldom at night. In my loneliness, I longed for the solitude of the forests. I was hungry for familiar, beautiful things, and I could see none of the beauty around me. I was hemmed in by walls, frustrated by the greedy actions of people, and restrained by countless social laws, written and unwritten, that were entirely new in my experience. My dream of conquering revealed itself as a foolish hope, born of fancy. I would have returned to my home but for my pride and a sensitive regard for the inevitable gossip. And so I stayed, but at night, when the wind blew gently in my window, my thoughts leaped back to other days; for

It's a warm wind,
The west wind,
Full of birds' cries;
I never hear the west wind,
But tears are in my eyes . . .

My job turned out to be my salvation, in a number of ways. For one thing, the people with whom I worked were intelligent, well-educated, and represented several races and creeds. Gradually my interest was aroused in the happy life they led and the broader outlook on life they had achieved. This interest grew into a keen enjoyment of my daily meetings with them, and I began to come alive again. In another way, these people helped me to gain a sense of appreciation for music, literature, and various forms of art. Although this appreciation was shallow and counterfeit, it was better than none. Finally, in adjusting my interests to agree with those of the people around me, I acquired a veneer which was notable both for permitting me to walk the streets unmolested and for allowing me to participate, more or less unnoticed, in social functions and gatherings. With this added accomplishment, I was on my way to a better understanding and a greater enjoyment of the urban manner of life.

In 1941 there was uneasiness in the world, but I, with other young men of my age, went out of my way to ignore it. In fact, I was too busy appreciating the finer things in my newly-found world to think about the uglier ones. The tempo of life was too great; and, for me, the seed of reflective thought had not yet sprouted. No one thinks less, and with more reason, than a busy young man of eighteen, who, in a single day, works eight hours, sleeps six hours, and plays rapidly for the remaining ten hours.

Then the restlessness in the world flared up; the cycle of events completed itself, and war was declared. The evil forces hanging in the background, like the spider in the web, raged beyond control.

The impact of the war on my personal life was far less than the jolt it delivered to my way of thinking. Throughout my life I had watched conflicting forces at work and, by no effort on my part, I had arrived at the conclusion that the secret of life was harmony. I took this as much for granted as I did the natural law of gravity. I believed that the world had sought and found harmony; I believed that I had found it; now both beliefs were proven wrong.

The different aspects of military service served as a mental stimulant; rebelling inwardly against regimentation, restriction of freedom, and the loss of personal identity, I outwardly accepted them as being necessary to the cause. I was understandably curious about this cause which disturbed my pleasures, wasted my years of youth, and jeopardized my life. In my wonder, I discovered that the

primary phase of the cause was the obvious necessity of winning the war; its secondary phase was to make a lasting peace. I was jarred by the thought that the second phase does not reasonably follow the first. I searched, but found no evidence that the cycle could be prevented. If the world returned to a lethargic peace, the cycle would repeat itself. Yet I could not, and would not, believe that it was inevitable. Where had harmony failed?

In discussing this problem among my friends, I noticed that the word "paradox" entered into, and usually ended the discussion. Having spoken this word, people shrugged their shoulders and conceded that nothing could be done about it. But I was not satisfied. What could I do?

Out of the turmoil of the war years, no definite answer came to my questions. I did form a vague, unsatisfactory personal philosophy; a point on which I could stand and work constructively toward the predetermined goal of harmony; a goal for which I could find no satisfactory substitute. I based this philosophy on the belief that knowledge is necessary for understanding; that understanding is an essential quality of harmony; that where these qualities exist, independent of each other, there can be only dissension and strife; and that where these qualities are united, there, and there alone, is harmony.

Today, I believe that integrating these qualities in myself is my purpose in life, a prerequisite to establishing them in the world. Yet I am not content; I still seek better ways. However, this is only today, and experience has not ended; tomorrow, for me, is a lifetime.

Democracy Begins at Home

Stephen Kester

In these days of world struggle between ideologies and the various forms of nationalism, our so-called democracy, whatever its shortcomings, becomes more and more significant to peoples everywhere. "Our way of life" has become a prime topic of discussion throughout the world. Indeed, many nations look upon us as their only ray of hope for the future. But what of our own citizenry? What does democracy mean to us? Is it merely a system which grants us freedom of speech, of worship and of the press? Unfortunately, too many Americans confine their concept of democracy to these basic principles without any further exploration of their inherent duties and obligations as citizens. It is a common trait among Americans to limit their interest in government to legislation which affects them directly. Even in cases where pending legislation should be of direct concern to us, we seem to fall into a lackadaisical "wait and see" stupor. But as soon as any legislative program has an adverse effect upon us, such as increased taxation, we suddenly respond with violent criticism. This passive form of interest in government is as bad as no interest at all. In the final analysis, the strength or weakness of our democracy is largely comparable to the amount of active interest manifested by our citizens in matters of government. If, ultimately, our ideology is to supplant totalitarianism wherever it may exist, we ourselves must strive to improve our democratic system of government. Democracy begins at home.

Words, Marching Up and Down

Norma Jeanne Persiani

Free verse is wonderful.
You can do anything you like with it.
A word here and there
And you've caught the knack of it already.
Why, you can have a line eleven words long, like this one.
Or you can make it
Short, like this.

And there's no end to all the patterns you can form!

Just leave a word off the end of each
Line and before you know it there's
A pyramid forming, from the
Upper left-hand corner to
The lower left-hand
Corner to the upper
Right hand
Corner.
See?

Maybe it's a little lop-sided
But you
Get the
General
Idea.

Oh, there's no end to
What you can do or say.
Most of the time, though, conjunctions are
Left all alone on one line
And
The poets thrill at the **STRENGTH** of it all.
Why, for heaven's sake,
I just did it myself
And
I'm thrilled with the **POWER** of it all!

Free verse is also a boon
To the writer who wants to
Fill up a lot of pages

With
 Nothing much, just as long as
 It looks good.
 And
 It does.
 Try it.

I like the fellow who rants and raves about
 The Beating rain, the Pounding surf, the
 Tumultuous roar, the Slashes of lightning,
 And goes on and on, filling up the page with
 Loud words, and then winds up with a
 Smiling Daffodil.

Now, something like that
 Leaves me with a sense of
 Loneliness,
 That poor little daffodil,
 All alone,
 With those heavy words sitting on it.
 But that's free verse.

Write anything in a blank manner
 And
 You're considered a radical or
 A genius
 Or something.
 It's great for the ego.
 I feel swell!

The Apostate

Leonard J. Shetline

It was raining still. The one hundred and fifty-first day of
 rain. And the flood waters were mounting higher.

But old Father Paul was not worried. He knew that the
 rain would stop and the flood waters would recede. Had not
 God Himself promised that there should never be an all-
 destroying flood?

In fact, Father Paul was secretly pleased. No one else could
 have survived this flood, and therefore it was he who had
 been chosen by God to lead his faithful followers to the
 creation of a new and better world. He was a second Noah.
 Only, he would do better than Noah.

"We are the last people on earth," Father Paul heard
 himself saying. "We have been chosen by the Lord to per-
 petuate mankind. Let us thank Him for his graciousness
 and pray that His mercy shall guide us to a world free from
 sin."

*O Lamb of God that takest away the sin of the world
 have mercy on us
 O Lamb of God that takest away the sin of the world
 have mercy on us
 O Lamb of God that takest away the sin of the world
 receive our prayer*

The prayers were answered by the renewed pounding of
 the flood waters on the oaken doors and the granite walls
 of the Church. Whipped to demonic fury by a frenzied rain,
 the angry flood waters were frothing with frustration as the
 oak and the granite refused to yield. Inside the Church the
 numb lips of the people were moving tirelessly and hopefully.

*O Lamb of God that takest away the sin of the world
 receive our prayer*

The wild god of the heavens was laughing with insidious
 glee as he hurled his jagged lightning mixing-rods into the
 midst of the black clouds and stirred the chemicals of the
 sky into a seething maelstrom.

Father Paul frowned as he heard the mounting storm.
 This was not supposed to happen. The Church could only
 stand so much, and then....

Father Paul hugged the Bible close to his heart as a little bit of heretic doubt edged into his mind. What if the Bible were not true? Was it possible that the end of the world had really come? Had he studied and preached and believed for nothing?

He opened the Bible and began to read.

And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. . . .

And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.

Father Paul was reassured. But all of a sudden. . . . The flood waters rushed into the Church. And doubt rushed back into Father Paul's mind.

The people became panic stricken as the water swirled around their feet and steadily surged upward. The candles were extinguished, the Church was darkened, and the people jostled and pushed as they tried to climb the church walls. The statues of the saints were pushed over, and the cross of Jesus Christ was torn loose from the wall. Father stepped on son and daughter knocked down daughter in a vain attempt to survive.

Father Paul stood by his altar, and as the flood water slowly reached up past his waist, he lifted his Bible above the flood, and in the darkness he attempted to read God's promise once more. If he were going to die, he wanted to die believing.

A flash of lightning illuminated the page of the Bible. Father Paul read the Lord's promise once again. As he felt the swirling flood waters reach his shoulders, suddenly he grasped the Bible and with vengeful hate, he cast it into the flood.

Then he shook his wet, clenched fists at the sky and screamed to the heavens, "LIAR!"

The Curtain Rises, Darn It!

A. J. Andronaco

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen of the radio audience. This is your Opera Matinee announcer, Crilton Moss, speaking to you from the Iron Horseshoe of Hoboken's lovely Municipal Opera House. During this intermission between Acts II and III of today's opera, *Lucia on the Lam*, I'd like to clear up some of the questions sent in by you members of our widespread radio audience. Without further ado, then, let's start with the letter of Mrs. Quincy Rettel of Moosehead, Maine, who writes: "Dear Mr. Moss, When I went to the mailbox to pick up my copy of your latest book, *Operatic Foots and Spots*, I found to my dismay that Santiago, my wolfhound, had chewed up pages 231 through 235. Would you kindly give a quick résumé of what was on those pages?"

For your benefit, Mrs. Rettel, and for the benefit of those of the audience who cannot read, I'll skim through the missing material. You will recall that in the beginning of Chapter VII I discuss the lives of some of our most prominent singers. I related the story of Enrico Pastafazula's first appearance in *El Hobôhème* at the La Scala in Avoca, Pennsylvania. In the first act duet, "Ah Mama! Che Brute Baccala!" (Mother, Your Codfish Stinks!) Mr. Pastafazula tripped over a grace note, completely throwing his partner, Alma Noldcowhand. Later on he placed the entire blame on a member of the audience who kept tossing bouquets of sunflowers on the stage all through the first act. One of the bouquets landed in Pastafazula's mouth. After the show he admitted that not only had he tripped on a grace note, but he had also flatted two full rests, and diminished a third when he should have augmented it. Miss Noldcowhand, who was the only native American in the cast, and who was making her debut in the role of Chibaba O'Toole in *El Hobôhème*, felt the incident was a blow to the prestige of the United States at large and Pennsylvania in particular. To this day the case rests in the files of the Commission of Arts and Flowers of the United Nations.

The greatest thrill in the life of Nina Carina occurred when she was on a South American tour with the opera, *The Walking Wolverine*. The composers, Long and Island, had made a special Italian translation of the libretto for this

tour, and in the third act they had secretly inserted a new song for the basso profundo. Imagine Miss Carina's surprise when right after her famous aria, "Oh!" (Oh!) the basso, Chauncey Botticellar, broke out with "Che Cochina, Nina Carina?" (What's Cooking, Nina Carina?). As if that weren't enough, after the performance, when the cast was at the Club Niblick in Montevideo, the orchestra of Red Pectum and his Five Pilots played a popular version of the Che Cochina song, changing it to "Now you're gassin' with cooks!"

On the same tour another noted singer was honored, namely Al Louette. In Lima during a matinee performance of the same opera, *The Walking Wolverine*, the tenor, Tito Crudo, sang his aria, "La la la, Poco Fa" with all the la's reversed so that they would spell Al. The audience didn't even notice the inversion, but before the act was over, Al Louette was choking back tears of joy and gratitude. When the curtain came down, he rushed to Crudo and crushed him in his arms. The only shadow on this happy moment fell when two of Crudo's ribs cracked under the pressure, but he insisted on singing out the complete five acts before being carried in a coma to the Hospital Nacional. Rumor has it that the Peruvian surgeons had to replace the two ribs with bones taken from a freshly-killed llama, and to this day Crudo's voice has a slight tendency to "maa" in the high register.

I think this covers all the pages missing from your copy of my book, Mrs. Rettel. I'm afraid I won't have time to answer any more of our readers' questions during this intermission. I will, however, be able to relate a few incidents highlighting recent events in the world of song.

When Kalamazoo's own Sherwin Williams, whose scheduled tour covers the earth, gets back to this country, his manager will have a surprise for him. He will be given the lead opposite Amelita Gatti-Batti in the new work by Shostagigolo, the Russian expatriate. While the name of the new work has not yet been made public, we do know that the finale has a stirring triumphal march called, "Anisette dolce Anisette," which doesn't lend itself easily to an English translation, although Dr. Hugo Whitefoot of the Harvard Classical Languages department says that it may be paraphrased as "Run Into the Roundhouse, Nellie, They Can't Corner You There!"

There was a near-riot at the Denver opening of Benal Benson's new work, *Alexander Ameche Bell*. In the tenor's second act aria at the end of the first line, "I poota da neekel

een," a behind-the-scenes stagehand accidentally furnished the "bong" sound characteristic of the quarter slot instead of the usual "ping" of the nickel. Naturally the audience tittered at this departure from realism, much to the discomfort of Eugenio Nazzo-Grosso, the tenor. Like a trooper, however, he carried on until he got to the line, "Da talafono no reeng; no reenga, no reenga, no reeng." At that precise moment the same stage hand absent-mindedly sat on the effects box, pinning down the telephone bell switch. By this time the audience was screaming with laughter, and Mr. Nazzo-Grosso had torn his way through a flat painted to resemble a hotel lobby marble fountain. The stagehand is not expected to recover.

Ladies and gentlemen, our conductor, Irving Stencil, has just returned to the orchestra pit. The house lights are lowered, and the poignant tuba strains usher in the third act of *Lucia on the Lam*. This is your announcer, Critton Moss, who will be with you again in just three-quarters of an hour.

Review

H. R. Kessler

It is an odd fact that few great moderns have attempted to portray the family as a group, an individual entity. The implication is, presumably, that the family is meagre artistic fare. True, many great writers have given us noteworthy and penetrating family portraits. A few of the memorable ones are the turbulent Gants in *Look Homeward, Angel*, the distressed Joads of *The Grapes of Wrath*, the passionate Dedaluses of *A Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man*. These works illuminate the family but subordinate it to the authors' other purposes. Wolfe and Joyce use it to show the roots of their heroes' characters; Steinbeck shows the destructive impact of social upheaval upon a family. Each, of course, is justified. Many writers, usually women, give us warm and sentimental pictures of the family. There exists a noticeable rash of the latter. They are entertaining, but too limited for consideration as artistic achievement. These books rarely live beyond the month in which they are printed. It is significant, then, to read a book written by a brilliant author, which devotes itself to the supremely important institution, the family; not a first work such as many have attempted, but a later work when her singular talents had fully matured. On many counts we are indebted to Virginia Woolf for *To The Lighthouse*. Here, the family is subordinated only to that baffling enigma, life.

As in all Virginia Woolf's work, the striking feature is the style. Her works are masterpieces of poetic beauty in a prose style. The sentences are incredibly alive and have the rhythmic sweep of complete spontaneity. The rhythms hold the reader as forcefully as music. If one reads her aloud the euphonic perfection is obvious. She chose with astute fastidiousness and precision. One is struck with amazement at the number of sentences that well up from the context, with such completeness, having an individual beauty and charged with meaning. For example, this:

"The spring without a leaf to toss, bare and bright like a virgin fierce in her chastity, scornful in her purity, was laid out on fields wide-eyed and watchful and entirely careless of what was done or thought by the beholders."

Then, there are fascinating passages that have the intense emotion of lyric poetry. Her obsessions, time and life and

hidden meanings, strike one as being the obsessions of the poet from time immemorial and her flashing revelations are inherent only in poetry.

With what rare skill she handles the "stream of consciousness!" With this device the reader borrows the mind and senses of each character to view and to feel the full pageantry of life. This is the penultimate achievement of art. Virginia Woolf and James Joyce were the artists that gave to literature the invaluable "stream of consciousness." Few writers have so revolutionized the craft. Woolf's technical artistry, alone, makes her a writer's writer. She uses to fullest advantage all her skill in *To The Lighthouse*.

To give us better insight into the basic struggle of family with life, she isolates the Ramsays on an English sea coast. The backdrop is the ocean and solitude, and in this primitive setting she measures the emotionality of a family without the intrusive artificial distractions of urban life. She enhances our perceptions by letting us look at the group through the eyes of highly sensitive characters. They are both articulate and nostalgic, and their soliloquies are pointed. She delineates her characters through their relationships to time, past and present, and their significance to each other. How aware one becomes of the vital impact of human natures. Conflict evolves from the hunger and necessity of the individual for expression. Without the invention of action to hold the book together she explores the sacred confines of the family with the calculating objectivity of the scientist and the understanding and sympathy of the great artist. It is of added interest that the family so drawn is Virginia Woolf's own family.

But the family is not static. The inscrutable thing, time, clutches it as mercilessly as the grubby hand of a street urchin encloses a penny, and carries it onward to its destiny. Time makes its erasures and additions and it is part of man's tragedy that he is aware of this. Virginia Woolf illustrates this fact with remarkable feeling in the brilliant passage, "Time Passes."

Virginia Woolf was obsessed in her probing for elemental truths. For her not all truth was pleasing; but she knew that one can not, dare not, evade it. Most of her strength lies in the fact that she recorded what she saw with rare fidelity. Others find the hidden meanings of life but only few can convey its poetry and beauty.

