THE BOOK WAS DRENCHED

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY
OU_166989
UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY

OUP—43—30-1-71—5,000

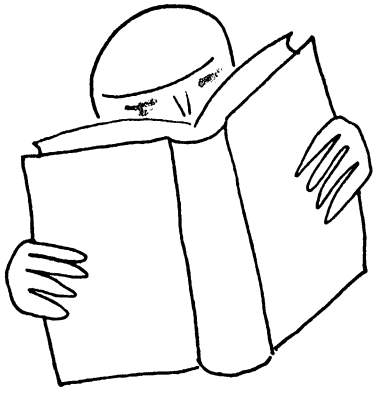
OSMANIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Call No. 820.8 H38R Accession No. G2219

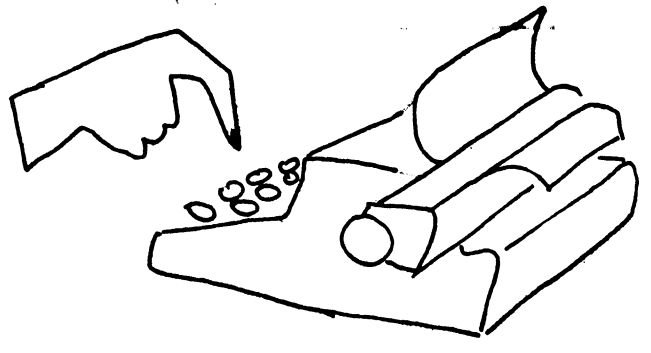
Author Hayford & Vincent.

Title Reader & writer 1954

This book should be returned on or before the date last marked below



READER and WRITER



Harrison Hayford · NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY *and*

Howard P. Vincent · ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

· WITH DRAWINGS BY W. B. SCOTT

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY · BOSTON

The Riverside Press Cambridge

COPYRIGHT 1954 BY HARRISON HAYFORD AND HOWARD P. VINCENT. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. THE SELECTIONS REPRINTED IN THIS COLLECTION ARE USED BY PERMISSION OF AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH THE PROPRIETORS OF THEIR RESPECTIVE COPYRIGHTS.

The Riverside Press
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Preface

THIS BOOK is offered in the belief that the main business of freshman English is reading and writing, and that these ends are best served when the technology of language and its human aims are considered as one. In recent years there have been two marked trends in freshman anthologies. One has been to center attention on the "life problems" of the student, and the other has been to concentrate on matters of rhetoric. We believe that the first of these approaches encourages the student to neglect his practical needs as a reader and as a writer, and that the second makes the readings so ancillary to strategy and drill that it runs the danger of draining their vitality away. This book attempts to wed the best in these two methods, and at the same time to keep the focus squarely where we think it belongs: on reading and writing, and on language and thinking as they are inextricably bound up with both.

In the belief that reading and writing, as subjects, should not be separated either from humanistic values or from technical considerations, we have designed this book to fuse the practical and the literary, the technological and the humanistic — to bring into efficient harmony the everyday needs of students with their interests. Reading and writing are interactive process and result. Unlike the passive radio receiver, the reader responds to what he receives and changes it. He analyzes *what* is sent to him, even if badly; and ideally he responds to how it is sent — he writes in his turn. By fusing the what and the how, *Reader and Writer* should help to make the reading process active, and in so doing should educate the writing-sending powers to greater effectiveness.

This sharpened sense of the aims of freshman English should make it easy for the instructor to relate this book closely and effectively to the handbook or rhetoric used in the course, supplementing the details of grammar and mechanics by putting them to work in a significant context. To this end, headnotes lead the student into the reading and writing problems which the selections present, and are a connective tissue to articulate the book. Questions and theme suggestions are further aids in rhetoric, vocabulary, and comprehension. They have been placed at the end of the book, where they will be out of the way of the teacher who prefers to develop his own. There is also an alternate table of contents, by literary types and purposes in writing, and a check list of selections particularly suited to the study of such topics as outlining, paragraph structure, sentence structure, and rhetorical devices.

The focus on reading and writing has made it possible to give each selec-

tion what might be called an organic setting. In each of the book's twenty-three sections, pieces in several genres are clustered round a central theme or problem. It has thus been possible to illustrate the almost infinite variety which is possible in the handling of themes and ideas by different minds working from different points of view. Prose and verse, story and essay, report and argument, are grouped in terms of subject where, at first, they can be made most meaningful to students. We believe that the subtle, significant relationship between craft and content, technique and subject, is best studied when a single subject is seen through different minds and eyes, from different intentions, and is manipulated in different styles and strategies. Journalists see (hence write) differently from poets, poets from essayists, essayists from short story writers, story writers from scholars; and all these (perhaps) differently from students. It is a valuable lesson to learn that the psychologist's view of the family differs from the poet's, and that each is just as valid, in its way, as the educator's, the sociologist's, or the short story writer's. It is useful through this multiplicity of genres and approaches to learn that "reality," which each seeks to capture, is elusive and complex, and each can capture but a part of it. For freshmen, many of them making their first foray into writing through reading and thinking, it should be illuminating to learn that there are many ways of saying a thing, and that this truth has close application to their own writing.

Our sequence is not sacred, and many teachers will find a different one more suitable to their purpose. As we have said, the alternate table of contents by types, and the check list of selections most suitable for analysis in the study of writing principles, will be of great service to instructors who prefer one of those approaches, either in place of our grouping or as an occasional supplement to it. Moreover, within each section there is abundance, and the teacher need not require every item in order to reach important conclusions about a general topic. The organization of the book also provides a rough gauge of difficulty, for within each section the pieces are arranged from easy to difficult, and in a more general way, the same is true of the sections and parts. The book is strictly organized, but not confining.

Finally, let us repeat: *Reader and Writer* attempts more openly than has been done before to bring together the major language problems as such — the problems of reading, writing, and thinking — with the literary and ideational interests of teachers and students. We hope and believe that the practical aims are thus made more attractive, that the intellectual voyaging is given immediate goals. The technology of language and its humanistic aims are made one — increasing, we feel, the efficiency of each.

HARRISON HAYFORD
HOWARD P. VINCENT

Contents

PART ONE Reader

Reading as Pleasure and Work

Advertisement, *The Greatest Pleasure in Life* 3
Paul D. Leedy, *How to Read More Efficiently* 5
Mortimer J. Adler, *How to Mark a Book* 10
Francis Bacon, *Of Studies* 14
Lin Yutang, *The Art of Reading* 15
John Ciardi, *What Does It Take to Enjoy a Poem?* 20
Marianne Moore, *Poetry* 28

Some Readers at Work

James Thurber, *Here Lies Miss Groby* 30
W. B. Scott, *Clutter Counters Everywhere* 33
Frank O'Connor, *The Idealist* 36
John Keats, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* 43

Readers and College Life

Roger W. Holmes, *What Every Freshman Should Know* 44
Robert Benchley, *What College Did to Me* 51
Mrs. Glenn Frank, *Heartache on the Campus* 55
Geoffrey Gorer, *Dating in America* 62
Sir Bernard Mosher, *A Student at His Book* 66
Samuel H. Scudder, *A Great Teacher's Method* 67
James Bryant Conant, *The University* 70
John Holmes, *The Bells Rang Every Hour* 80
Karl Shapiro, *University* 82
Thomas Gray, *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College* 84

PART TWO Writer

The Writer's Job

Stephen Leacock, *Anybody Can Learn to Write* 89
H. A. Overstreet, *The Psychology of Effective Writing* 93
Jonathan Swift, *A Writing Machine* 95
John Mason Brown, *Pleasant Agony* 97
Jacques Barzun, *How to Write and Be Read* 101
Herman Melville, *Art* 111
William Butler Yeats, *Adam's Curse* 111
Sir Philip Sidney, *Look in Thy Heart and Write* 113

The Writer's Aims

Sherwood Anderson, *Two Letters on Writing* 114
Ernest Hemingway, *Why I Wrote About Bullfights* 119
Robert Browning, *"To Find Its Meaning"* 122
A. E. Housman, *"Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff"* 123
William Shakespeare, *Sonnet 55* 125

Some Precepts and Examples

1. BEGINNING WITH TALK

William Hazlitt, *On the Differences Between Writing and Speaking* 126
Bess Sondel, *Everybody's Listening!* 131
James Boswell, *Dr. Johnson Converses on Composition* 135
Benjamin Franklin, *On Disputing* 137
Ring Lardner, *On Conversation* 138

2. WRITING LETTERS

Charles Dickens, *Sam Weller's Valentine* 140
Herman Melville, *Two Letters* 145
Jay Leyda, *Miss Emily's Maggie* 150
John Holmes, *The Letter* 161

3. SHAPING IDEAS
Rudolf Flesch, *The Shape of Ideas* 162
Student Paper, *Notes for a Portrait of Dummy Flagg* 170
Richard C. Blakeslee, *Revising a Theme* 173
Henry David Thoreau, *Thoughts on Composition* 176
John Holmes, *Talk* 178

4. GIVING THE FACTS
S. I. Hayakawa, *The Language of Reports* 181
Chicago Daily News, *How Propaganda Finds Its Way Into the Press* 185
Ken Macrorie, *World's Best Directions Writer* 190
Grace Brown, *The One-Egg Cake* 195
Sydney Smith, *Winter Salad* 196

5. GIVING SIGNIFICANCE
David Daiches, *The Literary Use of Language* 197
Howard P. Vincent, *Melville Writes of the Whale-Line* 200
William March, *A Sum in Addition* 203
John Ciardi, *On a Photo of Sgt. Ciardi a Year Later* 205

PART THREE The Arch of Experience

In and Beyond the Family

Alfred Adler, *The Family Constellation* 209
Edgar Lee Masters, *At Grandmother's* 215
Clarence Day, *Father Tries to Make Mother Like Figures* 218
Crary Moore, *Good-bye, Little Sister* 222
Sherwood Anderson, *Brother Death* 227
Walt Whitman, *There Was a Child Went Forth* 239
Constance Carrier, *Peter at Fourteen* 241
Robert P. Tristram Coffin, *The Secret Heart* 242
Emily Dickinson, *Returning* 243
Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Spring and Fall* 244

Self and Others

William James, *On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings* 245
Oliver Wendell Holmes, *John and Thomas* 248
Lloyd Lewis, *The Secret Evangel of Otto McFeely* 249
Katherine Mansfield, *A Dill Pickle* 251
Edwin Arlington Robinson, *Richard Cory* 257
Robert Browning, *My Last Duchess* 257
William Butler Yeats, *For Anne Gregory* 259

A Number of Things

Graham Hutton, *Midwestern Weather* 260
Editors of *Fortune*, *Riveters* 266
Paul Gallico, *The Feel* 267
George Orwell, *Shooting an Elephant* 275
Dorothy Baker, *Rick Discovers Jazz* 281
Walt Whitman, from *Song of Myself* 291

PART FOUR The Ways of Thought

The Mind's Ways

John Dewey, *Language and the Training of Thought* 297
James Harvey Robinson, *Four Kinds of Thinking* 308
James Thurber, *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* 316
Jules H. Masserman, *Experimental Neuroses* 320
E. B. White, *The Door* 329
Emily Dickinson, *Much Madness Is Divinest Sense* 333
Emily Dickinson, *The Brain Within Its Groove* 333

Some Logicians at Work

Robert Gorham Davis, *Logic and Logical Fallacies* 334
T. H. Huxley, *We Are All Scientists* 343
Jonathan Swift, *A Modest Proposal* 349

Russell Maloney, *Inflexible Logic* 356
Andrew Marvell, *To His Coy Mistress* 362

Beyond Logic

Walter B. Cannon, *The Role of Hunches* 364
John Livingston Lowes, *Imagination Creatrix* 371
Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Kubla Khan* 375
C. Day Lewis, *How a Poem Is Made* 377
May Sarton, *Dialogue* 382

Pitfalls of Thought

S. I. Hayakawa, *Symbols* 383
Bergen Evans, *Wolf! Wolf!* 390
Gordon W. Allport, *Prejudice: A Sickness of Individuals and Society* 395
William Faulkner, *Dry September* 401
John Godfrey Saxe, *The Blind Men and the Elephant* 410
Walker Gibson, *The Umpire* 411

Freedom for Thought

Northwestern University Reviewing Stand, *God and Man in the Universities* 413

PART FIVE The Ways of Language

The Life of Language

Edward Sapir, *The Social Functions of Language* 427
Albert H. Marckwardt, *What Is Good English?* 430
Dwight L. Bolinger, *The Life and Death of Words* 435
Samuel L. Clemens, *Buck Fanshaw's Funeral* 445
Bernard De Voto, *The Third Floor* 451

Vices and Virtues of Style

William Hazlitt, *On Familiar Style* 458
William B. Hale, *The Style of Woodrow Wilson at Twenty-two* 464
Samuel T. Williamson, *How to Write Like a Social Scientist* 468
Frank Sullivan, *The Cliché Expert Testifies on the Atom* 472
Elinor Goulding Smith, *Story for the Slicks* 478
William Shakespeare, *My Mistress' Eyes* 482

Some Nice Derangements of Language

Lewis Carroll, *Humpty Dumpty on Words* 483
Edith Wharton, *Henry James Gives and Asks Directions* 491
Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Pun Question* 493
Richard Brinsley Sheridan, *Mrs. Malaprop's Diabolical Instruments of Knowledge* 495
Arthur Kober, *The Guy Is Sittin' There, See, Hangin' with His Tongue Out* 498
Lewis Carroll, *Jabberwocky* 504

PART SIX The Mobilized Word

The Mass Media and Maturity

Wilbur Schramm, *A Brief Chronology of Mass Communications* 507
H. A. Overstreet, *What We Read, See, and Hear* 509
David L. Cohn, *Moonlight and Poison Ivy* 523
Gilbert Seldes, *The Art of Licking* 527
Robert Graham, *Adman's Nightmare: Is the Prune a Witch?* 532
Rolfe Humphries, *The Doubtcaster* 541

Toward Democratic Responsibility

Frank Luther Mott, *The Responsibilities of the Newspaper Reader* 544
Al Capp, *It's Hideously True* 551
A. R. Fulton, *It's Different from the Book* 556

STUDY QUESTIONS AND THEME TOPICS 565
TABLE OF CONTENTS BY KINDS OF WRITING 587
A SUPPLEMENTARY CHECK LIST OF TITLES PARTICULARLY USEFUL FOR THE STUDY OF IMPORTANT RHETORICAL PRINCIPLES 592
INDEX OF TITLES AND AUTHORS 594

Part  One

READER

WHATEVER WE DO, wherever we go, we are never independent of the written word for very long. A headline tells us that "Disaster Strikes Texas City." The billboard and the streetcar ad urge us to "Buy Snelling's Soap" or "Visit Slippery Rock." We are adjured to "Close Cover Before Striking," "Shake Well Before Using," "Open This End," and "Ask the Man Who Owns One." We can't even start a car without being reminded that one dial registers "gallons," another "miles per hour," a third "amperes" and a fourth "temperature." Imagine what it would be like if suddenly all these words were erased and we stared out at blank surfaces! We are all readers, and we couldn't function in a civilized society if we weren't.

But all this is "subsistence" reading. To enjoy the "comforts" and "luxuries" we have to be readers on higher levels, too. Success in college demands knowledge of fact and grasp of idea, much of it through the written word. It is shocking but true that through no defect of native intelligence, some students have to spend two or three times as long on any given page, chapter, or book as others do. And more times than not the slow reader struggles painfully and comes away from his task with only a vague or garbled notion of what he has read. To read competently is to grasp another's central meaning in proper relation to its parts, and thus to have a view of the whole, very much as one understands the parts of an automobile in relation to the whole machine, or the members of a team in relation to the game they play. This is the kind of reading we do in text

and reference books, in magazine articles, in anything from which we want information, ideas, or opinions. Because we read this way not only in college but all our lives, it is urgently important that we do it as well as we can.

Beyond this kind of reading — which we may call technological — is yet another kind. Do you find a pleasure in words, in their precision and their sensitivity? There are many people who savor them as a gourmet savors food or an athlete enjoys his game. Do you appreciate word structures? Do you agree, for instance, with Winston Churchill that the English sentence is a noble thing? Do you find books a door to truth, a road to understanding? Do you find them a source of comfort and pleasure? If you can answer yes to any of these questions, you are to that extent a "reader." The selections in the following pages will tell you why this is true — and what it can mean for you.



"Any questions on this paragraph?"

Reading as Pleasure and Work

The Greatest Pleasure in Life

This little essay was written to persuade people to join a book club. It is a model of composition that mocks itself by its rhetorical precision, at the same time that it really means what it says. Notice how a genuine feeling underlies the arguments for reading, even while they are humorously overstated.

THERE IS A GREAT DEAL to be said for sex. Nature has been wise to people the world with only two sexes, officially. What would we have done with a third sex, how might it not have interfered with our pleasures! When a member of the male sex and a member of the female sex look upon each other, and find each other good to look upon, how pleasurable is the glow which suffuses their bosoms! With what deeply felt joy does each go through the painful process of presenting that most vital of organs, the heart, to the other! In what a luxury of ecstasy does each write tender missives to the other! Enveloped in what cozy hedonism, does each receive messages conveying the other's regard! The presence of sex in the world

Reprinted by permission from an advertisement written by George Macy for The Readers' Club.

produces that tender emotion, love, which is one of our most luscious delights. To touch the lips of one's loved one, to encase one's loved one in one's arms, these are great pleasures indeed. There is much to be said for sex.

There is much also to be said for sports. When you go to bat against the opposing pitcher, and you take a deep lusty swing at the ball, and you hear the crack of the bat meeting the ball, and you see the ball sailing far over the center-field fence, this is a moment of tangible pleasure. When the opposing eleven is leading by seven to six, and there are twenty seconds to play, and the ball is in the possession of your team on the ten-yard line, and you drop back for a placement kick which will win the game, and you make good the placement kick which *does* win the game, this is a moment of tingling felicity. When your ball is twenty feet from the cup, and the green is rough, so that the ball must take three deliberate hops before it reaches the cup, what is your state of beatitude as you watch the ball drop into the cup! These are pleasures to be derived only from sports. There is a great deal to be said for sports.

One must not forget that there is a great deal to be said for drinking. To stand up at the bar, swapping yarns with the bartender and the other barflies, talking man's talk and comporting oneself generally in mannish fashion, this is a pleasure which is yet only the beginning of happiness. For you watch your drink being mixed and you hear the genial tinkle of the ice in the glass and you feel your mouth suddenly grown dry; then you pour the drink down your throat, wetting your mouth, warming your throat, rousing your innards; this is an entertainment of the senses closely approaching upon sensual bliss. Then you look out of the corner of your eye at the ladies wistfully waiting at the door, waiting for the hour to strike when they are permitted into the bar, when they are permitted to talk man's talk and comport themselves generally in mannish fashion; and, egged on by the spirits already inside you, you find yourself buried in beatitude. There is much to be said for drinking.

But there is a great deal to be said against *sex, and* against *sports,* against *drinking! Love is not always pleasure! Misunderstandings bring misery in their wake. Hearts may grieve and break into such small pieces that the stomach is affected, so that one may not eat. And one must not forget the aftermath of bliss: little ones brought into the world, nuisances to have their diapers changed, brats to keep one awake with their squalls in the night. ¶Sports are not always pleasurable! One does not always win, one often knows the grief of ignominious defeat. One may be hit with a pitched ball, and killed. One may have one's neck broken in a scrimmage. One may be beaned by a golfer who was too lazy to cry fore. ¶Drinking is not always pleasurable! One may drink too much, one may then quarrel with one's friend, or one's best girl, or one's friend's best girl. One may awake in the morning . . . ¶No, there is a great deal to be said against sex, there is a great deal to be said against sports, there is a great deal to be said against drinking.*

But nothing can be said against reading. It is reading which is the greatest pleasure in life. You may find yourself lonely, deserted by the world; in books you will find companions: noble and handsome and honorable men, beautiful and desirable and desiring women. You may have insomnia, and find yourself unable to sleep; there are books containing printed words the reading of which is guaranteed to put you to sleep. You may want to know how to win friends and influence people, you may want to know how to build a yacht, you may want to know how to keep your account books, you may want to know how to cultivate your garden; there are printed books the reading of which will give you any kind of education you desire. You may long for the sight of foreign shores, the smells of foreign peoples; there are books to whisk you miles away: books the reading of which will fill your eyes with the sight of foreign shores, fill your nostrils with the smells of foreign peoples.

Reading will educate you. Reading will entertain you. Reading will broaden your mind, reading will save you from boredom. There is no other pleasure in life which is so full of immediate satisfaction, so devoid of later regret. Yes, there is no other pleasure in life which can always be looked upon, in retrospect, with equal pleasure.

How to Read More Efficiently

Paul D. Leedy • 1903–

All scientific studies of reading habits show that any reader, no matter how fast or slow he reads, or how much or little he gets from his reading, can improve both his rate and his comprehension by conscious practice of the sorts of techniques Mr. Leedy recommends.

FORMAL READING instruction ceased for most of us in the elementary school. Through the upper grades, in high school, in college, and on through life the world has assumed that we knew "how to read." The stark and awful truth is that most of us read slowly, laboriously, and inefficiently. Few people have had the training necessary to make them masters of the skills of reading. Generally we crawl along the printways at a rate of one hundred to two hundred words a minute, whereas the efficient reader ought to fly

From *The Wonderful World of Books*, edited by Alfred Stefferud. Copyright, 1952, by Alfred Stefferud. The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., and Houghton Mifflin Co., co-publishers.

at six hundred to a thousand words a minute, and remember at least 80 per cent of everything that he has read! Check yourself against these specifications for the first-rate reader.

This chapter will suggest a few simple techniques for improving your reading skill. Put these simple suggestions into practice and watch the results.

First, settle clearly in your own mind just what your purpose in reading is. Is it that you want merely a rapid, general impression and a surface view of the text? In that case you will skim. Or do you wish to read more carefully, noting the facts and specific details in order to recall them accurately later? If so, you will read rapidly with attention to details. Perhaps you may wish to understand clearly the more complex organization of the thought, to be aware of every shade and nuance of reasoning, weighing fact against fact, and to form an opinion on the basis of what your author has said. This calls for critical reading. By its very nature this type of reading is slower and most exacting in its demands for highly developed reading skills.

In general, skimming is basic to most other types of reading. It is the skill that gives the "airplane view" of the printed page. Too many of us begin to read without first trying to discover the lay of the land or the topography of the thought. The normal procedure is to begin at the first word of the first paragraph and plod through to the last word in the final paragraph. By so doing, the average adult feels satisfied and congratulates himself upon "having read it all."

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Most of us think that when we look at each word — or the still less efficient reader, when he mumbles each word inwardly to himself — that we have "read" the selection. It does not trouble us that frequently we have lost sight of the organization of the selection as a whole, that the facts are jumbled and indistinct, that the material does not stand out with maplike clearness, nor the thought in bold relief.

The average reader is not aware of paragraph divisions. Before you begin to read, look down along the left-hand margin of the column of print. See those indentations?

To the skilled reader each indentation indicates the beginning of a new thought development. Try reading the first sentence — just the first sentence only, of each paragraph. Drive yourself through a chapter in a book, or an article in a magazine, reading only the first sentence of each paragraph. Before long you will be aware that this procedure is making a great deal of sense; that the thought is flowing smoothly and progressively. If the first sentence does not make sense, try the concluding sentence of the paragraph. The main thing is to go on, paragraph after paragraph, merely skimming the surface, like a dragonfly skimming over the surface of a pool.

When you have finished you will be aware of two things: first, you will have an over-all view of the entire selection which will be as thrilling

upon first experience as looking out over an expansive countryside from the cabin of a plane; secondly, you will be aware of motion — the onward, irresistible surge of thought. Until many people have had this latter experience, that of a conscious awareness that they were reading *thoughts* — not words — they have not known what real reading is! Too often we labor a lifetime under the delusion that reading words is reading. Words are merely the symbols through which the thought of the author is transferred to the mind of the reader. The skilled reader always recognizes that the thought flows through the lines of print as a message over a copper wire. The wire indeed is important, but far more so is the thought that it conveys. Read with only one question in the background of your consciousness: Does this make sense? If it does, spur yourself on. More thought lies ahead. Speed down the printways after it!

Occasionally you will find a writer with whom this method of skimming does not seem to bring results. Such writers are the more difficult ones to read. They may tuck the "key" sentence away at the end of the paragraph, or hide it in the middle. But writers usually follow a consistent pattern of thought development, and once you have cracked one or two paragraphs and understand how the author works, all the others will likely show a similarity of structure and plan. This semblance of structure we call an author's "style."

The skimming technique you may object to as being very superficial, and so it is. It was meant to be nothing else.

"But," you insist, "I want to read with more thoroughness." Good; let us go back to the beginning and read the chapter again, this time demonstrating the technique of rapid yet careful reading. You see, everything depends upon the *purpose* you have in reading. Your purpose now is a more inclusive, a more serious one. You seek a more comprehensive grasp of the written word.

At this point you plunge into the forest. Up to now you have merely surveyed its general extent and vastness, and noted the principal landmarks. Now, in among the towering trees you go. Every experienced woodsman knows that there is a right and wrong way to go into the woods. Just so, the skilled reader recognizes a right and wrong way to attack a page of print. What is the first step toward reading more comprehensively?

First, *note the main thought* of the paragraph. This is exactly what you did in skimming. Find it and fix it firmly and clearly in your mind. In most cases it will be the first sentence, but occasionally it may occur elsewhere. Do not attempt to memorize the words of the author, but grasp his central thought. See if you can immediately rephrase the main idea, mainly in your own words. This will help you to fix the thought in your own mind. Now, with the thought firmly anchored in your consciousness, read rapidly through the rest of the paragraph to glean contributory ideas which expand, explain, or enlarge upon the main thought. This is what teachers often refer to as the "development of the idea."

In reading rapidly look for the words within the paragraph that express ideas without adding unnecessary detail. Not all words are equally important. You recognize this fact when you send a telegram. The eye sees instantaneously much more than the mind actually "reads," and there are only certain words within each sentence that the mind needs to dwell upon to get the thought of the author. For example, read the following:

> Get the habit of looking for the significant, meaningful words in each line of print. Frequently they are few, and whereas your eyes race down the crowded printlanes, your mind idles because it need not digest every single, solitary word to get the meaning.

How many words did you read? There are 44 words in that selection, and unless you are a skillful reader, you probably read all forty-four of them. Here, however, is what you should have read:

> GET HABIT LOOKING FOR SIGNIFICANT WORDS. FREQUENTLY FEW. EYES RACE THE PRINTLANES, MIND IDLES. NEED NOT DIGEST EVERY WORD TO GET MEANING.

You have lost nothing of the thought. You have reduced your reading load by exactly 50 per cent! This means that if you read a 40,000-word treatise, you need not give your full attention to each one of the 40,000 words. While you *see* all of them, you *read* only about 20,000 or 25,000. You have sacrificed nothing of the meaning, you have merely sloughed off the unimportant verbiage. Practice this telegraphic reading. It is one of the principal secrets to reading faster, and more comprehensively.

Always check your reading for comprehension of the facts. This is most easily done by your telling yourself the details of what you have read. See if you can. Can you enumerate the points in the order in which the author made them? Do you know what the main idea of the first paragraph is? Could you outline clearly and coherently the thought of the author without referring to the text? These questions, and others similar, will test how well you comprehend. You should never fall below 80 per cent on any quiz you give yourself.

We also read faster when we see more. The eye picks up an eyeful of print as one might gather an armload of wood. As a child I was sent out to get wood for the fire. I came in from the woodpile, one stick in each hand. I had all, I thought, that I could carry. Then my father showed me how to carry an armload of wood. I immediately increased my carrying efficiency many times.

So with the reader. The word-by-word reader brings the thought from the printed page in dribs. Because of inefficient reading habits the eye of the poor reader has looked at a line of print and has seen only a very small fraction of it. When one fixes his eyes on any particular spot, he is aware that he is able to see on either side of this point with perfect clarity up to a peripheral area where the field of vision begins to blur. This readable area, that one sees with a single glance, is the "eye-span." Span can be

developed so that with proper training one can force himself to see more and more at one glance. Increased eye-span means greater intake; greater intake, more efficient reading.

A simple exercise with the daily newspaper will help you develop increased eye-span. Take any column of newsprint and locate a three- or four-letter word in the middle of the line. Beginning from either side of this chosen word, draw straight, diverging lines about four or five inches long with a pen or soft pencil, until the lines widen to column width and touch the printed lines that separate the columns. Now place a card or blotter over the marked area. Fix your eyes on a spot near the top of the triangle that you have drawn. Pull the card down quickly and shove it back into position, allowing about half a second of exposure. What words did you see between the two lines? Now fix your eyes farther down the column that is covered by the card. Repeat the pull-push technique. How many words did you see this time? Repeat this again and again. Practice every day. Soon you will realize that you are gradually seeing more and more at a single glance. Your eye-span will be increasing.

There are many other factors that may be mentioned in connection with learning to read faster and more comprehensively. One of these is the arresting of the impulse to glance back over the line of print one has just read in order to pick up a word or phrase that one thinks he has missed. Such backward glances are called "regressions." Most of the time they indicate that the reader is not mentally alert, or that he has formed a poor reading habit. For the sake of practice, when you find yourself tempted to look back to check on something you think you have missed or not seen correctly, arrest your impulse and drive yourself on. Drive yourself to get from the oncoming text its full meaning. Frequently you will find that you did see and comprehend quite adequately what you thought at the instant of the impulse to regress that you had missed. The eye sees more than we think it sees; the mind often records more word-meanings than we realize. Only when the thought goes completely to pieces should you check back to locate the difficulty.

Reading is an extremely complex visuo-psychological process. Marked reading retardation should have the best advice of a reading specialist. The quickest way for anyone to improve his reading efficiency is to seek the help of a reading center, such as are to be found at many of the leading universities throughout the country. But for much of our population these reading centers are not available. Nevertheless, the average adult can improve his reading rate and comprehension and, through persistent effort and intelligent application of the suggestions which have been very briefly outlined in this chapter, he should notice within a relatively short time that he is speeding over the highways of print with more efficiency and less effort.

How to Mark a Book

Mortimer J. Adler • 1902–

Good readers, reading for blood, know how much it helps to read armed with a pencil. Mr. Adler tells how, when, and why to use one.

YOU KNOW you have to read "between the lines" to get the most out of anything. I want to persuade you to do something equally important in the course of your reading. I want to persuade you to "write between the lines." Unless you do, you are not likely to do the most efficient kind of reading.

I contend, quite bluntly, that marking up a book is not an act of mutilation but of love.

You shouldn't mark up a book which isn't yours. Librarians (or your friends) who lend you books expect you to keep them clean, and you should. If you decide that I am right about the usefulness of marking books, you will have to buy them. Most of the world's great books are available today, in reprint editions, at less than a dollar.

There are two ways in which one can own a book. The first is the property right you establish by paying for it, just as you pay for clothes and furniture. But this act of purchase is only the prelude to possession. Full ownership comes only when you have made it a part of yourself, and the best way to make yourself a part of it is by writing in it. An illustration may make the point clear. You buy a beefsteak and transfer it from the butcher's icebox to your own. But you do not own the beefsteak in the most important sense until you consume it and get it into your bloodstream. I am arguing that books, too, must be absorbed in your bloodstream to do you any good.

Confusion about what it means to *own* a book leads people to a false reverence for paper, binding, and type — a respect for the physical thing — the craft of the printer rather than the genius of the author. They forget that it is possible for a man to acquire the idea, to possess the beauty, which a great book contains, without staking his claim by pasting his bookplate inside the cover. Having a fine library doesn't prove that its owner has a mind enriched by books; it proves nothing more than that he, his father, or his wife, was rich enough to buy them.

There are three kinds of book owners. The first has all the standard sets and best-sellers — unread, untouched. (This deluded individual owns woodpulp and ink, not books.) The second has a great many books — a

Reprinted by permission from *The Saturday Review of Literature*, July 6, 1940.

few of them read through, most of them dipped into, but all of them as clean and shiny as the day they were bought. (This person would probably like to make books his own, but is restrained by a false respect for their physical appearance.) The third has a few books or many — every one of them dog-eared and dilapidated, shaken and loosened by continual use, marked and scribbled in from front to back. (This man owns books.)

Is it false respect, you may ask, to preserve intact and unblemished a beautifully printed book, an elegantly bound edition? Of course not. I'd no more scribble all over a first edition of *Paradise Lost* than I'd give my baby a set of crayons and an original Rembrandt! I wouldn't mark up a painting or a statue. Its soul, so to speak, is inseparable from its body. And the beauty of a rare edition or of a richly manufactured volume is like that of a painting or a statue.

But the soul of a book *can* be separated from its body. A book is more like the score of a piece of music than it is like a painting. No great musician confuses a symphony with the printed sheets of music. Arturo Toscanini reveres Brahms, but Toscanini's score of the C-minor Symphony is so thoroughly marked up that no one but the maestro himself can read it. The reason why a great conductor makes notations on his musical scores — marks them up again and again each time he returns to study them — is the reason why you should mark your books. If your respect for magnificent binding or typography gets in the way, buy yourself a cheap edition and pay your respects to the author.

Why is marking up a book indispensable to reading? First, it keeps you awake. (And I don't mean merely conscious; I mean wide awake.) In the second place, reading, if it is active, is thinking, and thinking tends to express itself in words, spoken or written. The marked book is usually the thought-through book. Finally, writing helps you remember the thoughts you had, or the thoughts the author expressed. Let me develop these three points.

If reading is to accomplish anything more than passing time, it must be active. You can't let your eyes glide across the lines of a book and come up with an understanding of what you have read. Now an ordinary piece of light fiction, like say, *Gone with the Wind,* doesn't require the most active kind of reading. The books you read for pleasure can be read in a state of relaxation, and nothing is lost. But a great book, rich in ideas and beauty, a book that raises and tries to answer great fundamental questions, demands the most active reading of which you are capable. You don't absorb the ideas of John Dewey the way you absorb the crooning of Mr. Vallee. You have to reach for them. That you cannot do while you're asleep.

If, when you've finished reading a book, the pages are filled with your notes, you know that you read actively. The most famous *active* reader of

great books I know is President Hutchins, of the University of Chicago. He also has the hardest schedule of business activities of any man I know. He invariably reads with a pencil, and sometimes, when he picks up a book and pencil in the evening, he finds himself, instead of making intelligent notes, drawing what he calls "caviar factories" on the margins. When that happens, he puts the book down. He knows he's too tired to read, and he's just wasting time.

But, you may ask, why is writing necessary? Well, the physical act of writing, with your own hand, brings words and sentences more sharply before your mind and preserves them better in your memory. To set down your reaction to important words and sentences you have read, and the questions they have raised in your mind, is to preserve those reactions and sharpen those questions.

Even if you wrote on a scratch pad, and threw the paper away when you had finished writing, your grasp of the book would be surer. But you don't have to throw the paper away. The margins (top and bottom, as well as side), the end-papers, the very space between the lines, are all available. They aren't sacred. And, best of all, your marks and notes become an integral part of the book and stay there forever. You can pick up the book the following week or year, and there are all your points of agreement, disagreement, doubt, and inquiry. It's like resuming an interrupted conversation with the advantage of being able to pick up where you left off.

And that is exactly what reading a book should be: a conversation between you and the author. Presumably he knows more about the subject than you do; naturally, you'll have the proper humility as you approach him. But don't let anybody tell you that a reader is supposed to be solely on the receiving end. Understanding is a two-way operation; learning doesn't consist in being an empty receptacle. The learner has to question himself and question the teacher. He even has to argue with the teacher, once he understands what the teacher is saying. And marking a book is literally an expression of your differences, or agreements of opinion, with the author.

There are all kinds of devices for marking a book intelligently and fruitfully. Here's the way I do it:

1. *Underlining:* of major points, of important or forceful statements.

2. *Vertical lines at the margin:* to emphasize a statement already underlined.

3. *Star, asterisk, or other doo-dad at the margin:* to be used sparingly, to emphasize the ten or twenty most important statements in the book. (You may want to fold the bottom corner of each page on which you use such marks. It won't hurt the sturdy paper on which most modern books are printed, and you will be able to take the book off the shelf at any time and, by opening it at the folded-corner page, refresh your recollection of the book.)

4. *Numbers in the margin:* to indicate the sequence of points the author makes in developing a single argument.

5. *Numbers of other pages in the margin:* to indicate where else in the book the author made points relevant to the point marked; to tie up the ideas in a book, which, though they may be separated by many pages, belong together.

6. *Circling of key words or phrases.*

7. *Writing in the margin, or at the top or bottom of the page, for the sake of:* recording questions (and perhaps answers) which a passage raised in your mind; reducing a complicated discussion to a simple statement; recording the sequence of major points right through the books. I use the end-papers at the back of the book to make a personal index of the author's points in the order of their appearance.

The front end-papers are, to me, the most important. Some people reserve them for a fancy bookplate. I reserve them for fancy thinking. After I have finished reading the book and making my personal index on the back end-papers, I turn to the front and try to outline the book, not page by page, or point by point (I've already done that at the back), but as an integrated structure, with a basic unity and an order of parts. This outline is, to me, the measure of my understanding of the work.

If you're a die-hard anti-book-marker, you may object that the margins, the space between the lines, and the end-papers don't give you room enough. All right. How about using a scratch pad slightly smaller than the page-size of the book — so that the edges of the sheets won't protrude? Make your index, outlines, and even your notes on the pad, and then insert these sheets permanently inside the front and back covers of the book.

Or, you may say that this business of marking books is going to slow up your reading. It probably will. That's one of the reasons for doing it. Most of us have been taken in by the notion that speed of reading is a measure of our intelligence. There is no such thing as the right speed for intelligent reading. Some things should be read quickly and effortlessly, and some should be read slowly and even laboriously. The sign of intelligence in reading is the ability to read different things differently according to their worth. In the case of good books, the point is not to see how many of them you can get through, but rather how many can get through you — how many you can make your own. A few friends are better than a thousand acquaintances. If this be your aim, as it should be, you will not be impatient if it takes more time and effort to read a great book than it does a newspaper.

You may have one final objection to marking books. You can't lend them to your friends because nobody else can read them without being distracted by your notes. Furthermore, you won't want to lend them because a marked copy is a kind of intellectual diary, and lending it is almost like giving your mind away.

If your friend wishes to read your *Plutarch's Lives, Shakespeare,* or *The*

Federalist Papers, tell him gently but firmly to buy a copy. You will lend him your car or your coat — but your books are as much a part of you as your head or your heart.

Of Studies

Francis Bacon • 1561–1626

Shakespeare's wise and learned contemporary, Francis Bacon, wrote many important works, but his Essays *(1597, 1625), as he declared, "of all my works have been most current, for that, as it seems, they come home to men's business and bosoms." In them he distilled the practical wisdom of books and experience. Most of what can be or has been said about "studies" is implicit in this brief essay. It well repays the labor of interpreting its sometimes archaic English and pondering its compressed expression.*

STUDIES SERVE FOR DELIGHT, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgment and disposition of business. For expert men can execute, and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornament, is affectation; to make judgment wholly by their rules, is the humor of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience: for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need proyning,[1] by study; and studies themselves do give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty men contemn studies, simple men admire them, and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use; but that is a wisdom without them, and above them, won by observation. Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; [2] and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Some books also may be read by deputy, and extracts made of them by others; but that would be only in the less important arguments, and the meaner sort of books; else distilled books are like common distilled waters, flashy [3] things. Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore, if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, he had need have a present wit: and if he read little, he had need have much

[1] pruning, cultivating. [2] carefully. [3] tasteless.

cunning, to seem to know that[4] he doth not. Histories make men wise; poets witty;[5] the mathematics subtile; natural philosophy deep; moral grave; logic and rhetoric able to contend. *Abeunt studia in mores.*[6] Nay, there is no stond[7] or impediment in the wit but may be wrought out by fit studies; like as diseases of the body may have appropriate exercises. Bowling is good for the stone and reins;[8] shooting for the lungs and breast; gentle walking for the stomach; riding for the head; and the like. So if a man's wit be wandering, let him study the mathematics; for in demonstrations, if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again. If his wit be not apt to distinguish or find differences, let him study the Schoolmen; for they are *cymini sectores.*[9] If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call up one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyers' cases. So every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.

[4] what. [5] Poets make men witty, i.e., full of fancy, imaginative.
[6] Studies develop into manners (Ovid).
[7] obstruction. [8] kidneys. [9] hair-splitters.

The Art of Reading

Lin Yutang • *1895–*

To "study bitterly" — as Lin Yutang calls the kind of reading Leedy and Adler have in mind — is necessary for college students at work on their textbooks. But too often the hard work of college reading makes both student and teacher forget what ought to be a major purpose of any course in reading, to get a taste for reading and make a delightful habit of it.

READING or the enjoyment of books has always been regarded among the charms of a cultured life and is respected and envied by those who rarely give themselves that privilege. This is easy to understand when we compare the difference between the life of a man who does no reading and that of a man who does. The man who has not the habit of reading is imprisoned in his immediate world, in respect to time and space. His life falls into a set routine; he is limited to contact and conversation with a few friends and acquaintances, and he sees only what happens in his immediate neighborhood. From this prison there is no escape. But the moment he takes up a book, he immediately enters a different world, and if it is a good

Lin Yutang, *The Importance of Living* (New York: The John Day Company, Inc.). Copyright, 1937, by the John Day Company. Pp. 376–383.

book, he is immediately put in touch with one of the best talkers of the world. This talker leads him on and carries him into a different country or a different age, or unburdens to him some of his personal regrets, or discusses with him some special line or aspect of life that the reader knows nothing about. An ancient author puts him in communion with a dead spirit of long ago, and as he reads along, he begins to imagine what that ancient author looked like and what type of person he was. Both Mencius and Ssema Ch'ien, China's greatest historian, have expressed the same idea. Now to be able to live two hours out of twelve in a different world and take one's thoughts off the claims of the immediate present is, of course, a privilege to be envied by people shut up in their bodily prison. Such a change of environment is really similar to travel in its psychological effect.

But there is more to it than this. The reader is always carried away into a world of thought and reflection. Even if it is a book about physical events, there is a difference between seeing such events in person or living through them, and reading about them in books, for then the events always assume the quality of a spectacle and the reader becomes a detached spectator. The best reading is therefore that which leads us into this contemplative mood, and not that which is merely occupied with the report of events. The tremendous amount of time spent on newspapers I regard as not reading at all, for the average readers of papers are mainly concerned with getting reports about events and happenings without contemplative value.

The best formula for the object of reading, in my opinion, was stated by Huang Shanku, a Sung poet and friend of Su Tungp'o. He said, "A scholar who hasn't read anything for three days feels that *his talk has no flavor* (becomes insipid), *and his own face becomes hateful to look at* (in the mirror)." What he means, of course, is that reading gives a man a certain charm and flavor, which is the entire object of reading, and only reading with this object can be called an art. One doesn't read to "improve one's mind," because when one begins to think of improving his mind, all the pleasure of reading is gone. He is the type of person who says to himself: "I must read Shakespeare, and I must read Sophocles, and I must read the entire Five Foot Shelf of Dr. Eliot, so I can become an educated man." I'm sure that man will never become educated. He will force himself one evening to read Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and come away, as if from a bad dream, with no greater benefit than that he is able to say that he has "read" *Hamlet*. Anyone who reads a book with a sense of obligation does not understand the art of reading. This type of reading with a business purpose is in no way different from a senator's reading up of files and reports before he makes a speech. It is asking for business advice and information, and not reading at all.

Reading for the cultivation of personal charm of appearance and flavor in speech is then, according to Huang, the only admissible kind of reading. This charm of appearance must evidently be interpreted as something other

than physical beauty. What Huang means by "hateful to look at" is not physical ugliness. There are ugly faces that have a fascinating charm and beautiful faces that are insipid to look at. I have among my Chinese friends one whose head is shaped like a bomb and yet who is nevertheless always a pleasure to see. The most beautiful face among Western authors, so far as I have seen them in pictures, was that of G. K. Chesterton. There was such a diabolical conglomeration of mustache, glasses, fairly bushy eyebrows and knitted lines where the eyebrows met! One felt there were a vast number of ideas playing about inside that forehead, ready at any time to burst out from those quizzically penetrating eyes. That is what Huang would call a beautiful face, a face not made up by powder and rouge, but by the sheer force of thinking. As for flavor of speech, it all depends on one's way of reading. Whether one has "flavor" or not in his talk, depends on his method of reading. If a reader gets the flavor of books, he will show that flavor in his conversations, and if he has flavor in his conversations, he cannot help also having a flavor in his writing.

Hence I consider flavor or taste as the key to all reading. It necessarily follows that taste is selective and individual, like the taste for food. The most hygienic way of eating is, after all, eating what one likes, for then one is sure of his digestion. In reading as in eating, what is one man's meat may be another's poison. A teacher cannot force his pupils to like what he likes in reading, and a parent cannot expect his children to have the same tastes as himself. And if the reader has no taste for what he reads, all the time is wasted. As Yüan Chunglang says, "You can leave the books that you don't like alone, *and let other people read them.*"

There can be, therefore, no books that one absolutely must read. For our intellectual interests grow like a tree or flow like a river. So long as there is proper sap, the tree will grow anyhow, and so long as there is fresh current from the spring, the water will flow. When water strikes a granite cliff, it just goes around it; when it finds itself in a pleasant low valley, it stops and meanders there a while; when it finds itself in a deep mountain pond, it is content to stay there; when it finds itself traveling over rapids, it hurries forward. Thus, without any effort or determined aim, it is sure of reaching the sea some day. There are no books in this world that everybody must read, but only books that a person must read at a certain time in a given place under given circumstances and at a given period of his life. I rather think that reading, like matrimony, is determined by fate or *yinyüan.* Even if there is a certain book that every one must read, like the *Bible,* there is a time for it. When one's thoughts and experience have not reached a certain point for reading a masterpiece, the masterpiece will leave only a bad flavor on his palate. Confucius said, "When one is fifty, one may read the *Book of Changes,*" which means that one should not read it at forty-five. The extremely mild flavor of Confucius' own sayings in the *Analects* and his mature wisdom cannot be appreciated until one becomes mature himself.

Furthermore, the same reader reading the same book at different periods, gets a different flavor out of it. For instance, we enjoy a book more after we have had a personal talk with the author himself, or even after having seen a picture of his face, and one gets again a different flavor sometimes after one has broken off friendship with the author. A person gets a kind of flavor from reading the *Book of Changes* at forty, and gets another kind of flavor reading it at fifty, after he has seen more changes in life. Therefore, all good books can be read with profit and renewed pleasure a second time. I was made to read *Westward Ho!* and *Henry Esmond* in my college days, but while I was capable of appreciating *Westward Ho!* in my 'teens, the real flavor of *Henry Esmond* escaped me entirely until I reflected about it later on, and suspected there was vastly more charm in that book than I had then been capable of appreciating.

Reading, therefore, is an act consisting of two sides, the author and the reader. The net gain comes as much from the reader's contribution through his own insight and experience as from the author's own. In speaking about the Confucian *Analects*, the Sung Confucianist Ch'eng Yich'uan said, "There are readers and readers. Some read the *Analects* and feel that nothing has happened, some are pleased with one or two lines in it, and some begin to wave their hands and dance on their legs unconsciously."

I regard the discovery of one's favorite author as the most critical event in one's intellectual development. There is such a thing as the affinity of spirits, and among the authors of ancient and modern times, one must try to find an author whose spirit is akin with his own. Only in this way can one get any real good out of reading. One has to be independent and search out his masters. Who is one's favorite author, no one can tell, probably not even the man himself. It is like love at first sight. The reader cannot be told to love this one or that one, but when he has found the author he loves, he knows it himself by a kind of instinct. We have such famous cases of discoveries of authors. Scholars seem to have lived in different ages, separated by centuries, and yet their modes of thinking and feeling were so akin that their coming together across the pages of a book was like a person finding his own image. In Chinese phraseology, we speak of these kindred spirits as re-incarnations of the same soul, as Su Tungp'o was said to be a re-incarnation of Chuangtse or T'ao Yüanming,[1] and Yüan Chunglang was said to be the re-incarnation of Su Tungp'o. Su Tungp'o said that when he first read Chuangtse, he felt as if all the time since his childhood he had been thinking the same things and taking the same views himself. When Yüan Chunglang discovered one night Hsü Wench'ang, a contemporary unknown to him, in a small book of poems,

[1] Su Tungp'o performed the unique feat of writing a complete set of poems on the rhymes used by the complete poems of T'ao, and at the end of the collection of *Su's Poems on T'ao's Rhymes*, he said of himself that he was the re-incarnation of T'ao, whom he admired desperately above all other predecessors. [Author.]

he jumped out of bed and shouted to his friend, and his friend began to read it and shout in turn, and then they both read and shouted again until their servant was completely puzzled. George Eliot described her first reading of Rousseau as an electric shock. Nietzsche felt the same thing about Schopenhauer, but Schopenhauer was a peevish master and Nietzsche was a violent-tempered pupil, and it was natural that the pupil later rebelled against the teacher.

It is only this kind of reading, this discovery of one's favorite author, that will do one any good at all. Like a man falling in love with his sweetheart at first sight, everything is right. She is of the right height, has the right face, the right color of hair, the right quality of voice and the right way of speaking and smiling. This author is not something that a young man need be told about by his teacher. The author is just right for him; his style, his taste, his point of view, his mode of thinking, are all right. And then the reader proceeds to devour every word and every line that the author writes, and because there is a spiritual affinity, he absorbs and readily digests everything. The author has cast a spell over him, and he is glad to be under the spell, and in time his own voice and manner and way of smiling and way of talking become like the author's own. Thus he truly steeps himself in his literary lover and derives from these books sustenance for his soul. After a few years, the spell is over and he grows a little tired of this lover and seeks for new literary lovers, and after he has had three or four lovers and completely eaten them up, he emerges as an author himself. There are many readers who never fall in love, like many young men and women who flirt around and are incapable of forming a deep attachment to a particular person. They can read any and all authors, and they never amount to anything.

Such a conception of the art of reading completely precludes the idea of reading as a duty or as an obligation. In China, one often encourages students to "study bitterly." There was a famous scholar who studied bitterly and who stuck an awl in his calf when he fell asleep while studying at night. There was another scholar who had a maid stand by his side as he was studying at night, to wake him up every time he fell asleep. This was nonsensical. If one has a book lying before him and falls asleep while some wise ancient author is talking to him, he should just go to bed. No amount of sticking an awl in his calf or of shaking him up by a maid will do him any good. Such a man has lost all sense of the pleasure of reading. Scholars who are worth anything at all never know what is called "a hard grind" or what "bitter study" means. They merely love books and read on because they cannot help themselves.

With this question solved, the question of time and place for reading is also provided with an answer. There is no proper time and place for reading. When the mood for reading comes, one can read anywhere. If one knows the enjoyment of reading, he will read in school or out of school, and in spite of all schools. He can study even in the best schools. Tseng

Kuofan, in one of his family letters concerning the expressed desire of one of his younger brothers to come to the capital and study at a better school, replied that: "If one has the desire to study, he can study at a country school, or even on a desert or in busy streets, and even as a woodcutter or a swineherd. But if one has no desire to study, then not only is the country school not proper for study, but even a quiet country home or a fairy island is not a proper place for study." There are people who adopt a self-important posture at the desk when they are about to do some reading, and then complain they are unable to read because the room is too cold, or the chair is too hard, or the light is too strong. And there are writers who complain that they cannot write because there are too many mosquitos, or the writing paper is too shiny, or the noise from the street is too great. The great Sung scholar, Ouyang Hsiu, confessed to "three on's" for doing his best writing: on the pillow, on horseback and on the toilet. Another famous Ch'ing scholar, Ku Ch'ienli, was known for his habit of "reading Confucian classics naked" in summer. On the other hand, there is a good reason for not doing any reading in any of the seasons of the year, if one does not like reading:

To study in spring is treason;
And summer is sleep's best reason;
If winter hurries the fall,
Then stop till next spring season.

What, then, is the true art of reading? The simple answer is to just take up a book and read when the mood comes. To be thoroughly enjoyed, reading must be entirely spontaneous.

What Does It Take to Enjoy a Poem?

John Ciardi • 1916–

Many people, college students included, have the idea that poetry is not for them. Young children always like poems, but somewhere between early schooldays and the end of high school the taste is lost — or, we may fear, is destroyed by teachers like Thurber's Miss Groby in the essay following this one. "I too dislike it," declares Marianne Moore, one of the finest of contemporary poets, in her poem titled "Poetry": and then she goes on to what is probably the best explanation of the common dislike: ". . . we do not admire what we cannot understand." (See the whole poem, page 28.) Not only are poems too often taught by a Miss Groby, but poems beyond the interest and under-

standing of young people are selected and enforced upon student readers. John Ciardi, himself a poet represented in this book, clears away some of the underbrush of misunderstandings and seeks to put us back on the road to appreciation.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE to enjoy a poem?

Let us begin with a really difficult piece of symbolism:

Hickory, dickory, dock,
The mouse ran up the clock,
The clock struck one,
The mouse ran down,
Hickory, dickory, dock.

Not really complicated you say? Consider these questions: What does it mean? Why a clock? Why a mouse? Isn't it fairly unusual for mice to run up clocks? What is the point of inventing this esoteric incident? And since the mouse ran up it and down again, the chances are it's a grandfather clock. What does that signify? And isn't it a fairly obsolete notion? Why did the clock strike one? (To rhyme with "down"? But is "down" a rhyme for "one," or is this another slovenly piece of modernism? Why didn't the poem make the clock strike three and the mouse turn to flee? It didn't, of course, but why?) What is the origin and significance of all these unexplained symbols? (A symbol is something that stands for something else. What is the something else?) Or is this simply nonsense verse? (I find that hard to believe.) And even as nonsense, what is there in this particular combination of sounds and actions (symbolic actions?) that makes this jingle survive a long word-of-mouth transmission in the English voice-box? Why mightn't the poem as easily have read:

Thickery, thackery, tea,
An owl flew into the tree.
The tree's down,
The owl's flown,
Thickery, thackery, tea.

I submit: (a) that my parody is a bad poem, that the original is a good one, and that a serious and learned series of lectures might be devoted to the reasons why each is so; (b) that none of the questions I have raised are meaningless and that in fact many critics have made a career of asking this sort of question of less perfect poems, and (c) that neither you nor I know what the poem "means." I further submit that such considerations have frightened many readers away from good poems.

Originally printed in *The Saturday Review of Literature*. Reprinted by permission of the author.

But — and this is the point — the child in whose babble the poem is immediate and alive has no critical theories and no troubles. He is too busy enjoying the pleasures of poetry. The moral is obvious: do not ask the poem to be more rational than you are. The way to read a poem is with pleasure: with the child's pleasure in tasting the syllables on his tongue, with the marvel of the child's eye that can really see the mouse run up the clock, be panic-stricken, and run down again, with the child's hand-clapping, rhythmic joy. In short, to read a poem, come prepared for delight.

But if a child can do it why can't you?

That question deserves attention, but before considering it, I should like to say one thing of which I am fairly certain: everyone writes poetry sometime in his life. Bad poetry is what we all have in common. Such poetry generally occurs in three categories: as invective, as obscenity, and as love-yelps.

The obscenity I assume everyone to be capable of documenting. Here is an example of invective:

> Billy Billy, dirty coat
> Stinks like a nanny goat.

And here is a fair example of the love-yelp:

> Have you ever been in love?
> I ask you: have you ever been in love?
> Have you?
> I have..... I know!

"Billy Billy," you will recognize as a kind of "Georgie-Porgie puddin' and pie," but if you think it peculiar to your childhood or to grandfather's I urge you to look in the encyclopedia under Fescennine for an inkling of the antiquity of man's pleasure in jingling taunts at other men. "Billy Billy," as nearly as I know, was composed in our fourth-grade schoolyard by a former young poet now in the coal business and was used to taunt our local sloven, who has since washed-up, cleaned-up, grown-up, and joined the police force. Almost inevitably it earned its young author a punch in the nose: a fair example of the way criticism operates in our society to kill the poetic impulse. The love-yelp, a reasonably deplorable specimen of its class, was submitted for the Tufts College literary magazine when I was an undergraduate assistant editor. Anyone who will take the trouble to be reasonably honest can almost certainly summon from himself examples of at least one of these forms he has attempted at one time or another, and enjoyed attempting.

If, then, the impulse to bad poetry is so widespread (though I insist that "Billy Billy" is not at all bad), why is it so few people enjoy reading what passes as good poetry? Why is it, for example, that in a nation of 146 million presumably literate people, the average sale for a book of poems is

about 500 copies? Is it that the pleasures and outlets one finds in composing are purely private — that only one's creation, good or bad, is interesting? Considering the variety of egos which has banded together to pass as the human race, that seems one reasonably good guess, but there is obviously more to it that is worth some speculation:

First, it seems fairly obvious that the process of growing up in a nuts-and-bolts world inhibits the poetry impulse in most people. Somewhere along the line, they learn to say, "Let's face it; we must be practical." Dickens's School of Hard Facts is with us all, and poetry, like poor Sissy Jupe, is still required to blush because it cannot define a horse as "Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive." So the literalist on his rostrum demands the rational: "What *does* hickory-dickory-dock *mean*? It *has* to mean *something*." It does indeed, but not anything you can paraphrase, not anything you can prove. It means only what every child knows — delight. And delight is not a function of the rational mind. As Archibald MacLeish has written, "A poem must not mean, but be." Whereby, of course, it does mean, but not nuts and bolts. To see what it does mean, you need only go read Mother Goose to a child: you will then be observing a natural audience busy with the process of receiving poetry as it was intended to be received.

Point one, then, is delight: if you mean to enjoy the poem as a poem, stop cross-examining it, stop trying to force it to "make sense." The poem *is* sense. Or if you must cross-examine remember at least that the third degree is not the poem. Most poems do reveal themselves most richly after close examination, but the examination is, at best, only a preparation for reading the poem. It is never the reading itself.

More precisely put, an understanding of the rational surfaces of the poem (the prose part of the poem) may, in some cases, point a direction toward the poem. The poem is never experienced, however, until it is felt in the same complex of mind and nerve from which it arose — the subconscious. That experience sometimes happens immediately, and is sometimes helped along by our conscious (rational) perceptions. But to substitute rational analysis for the larger contact of the subconscious is to reject the poem. The kind of communication that happens in a poem is infinitely closer to that of music than to that of prose.

Second, poetry, must never be read as an exercise in "reading-speed," that deplorable mental-mangle for increasing the rate of destruction of text-book English. The fastest reader is not the best reader any more than the best conductor of Beethoven is the man who gets through the "Eroica" in the shortest elapsed time. Why not take a stop-watch to the Symphony, if this is your measure? Obviously because music declares its own pace. But so does good poetry. By rhyme, by the word-values of the poem, by the sequence of syllables, and by all these taken together, good poetry contains its own notation. "We broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff"

can no more be read at the same rate as "Bury the great duke with an Empire's lamentation" than *allegro vivace* can intelligently be played *adagio.*

Point two, then: leave your efficiency out of this and look for the notation within the poem. Every poem is in part an effort to reconstruct the poet's speaking voice. Listen for it. Listen to the poet on records and at public readings (but know the poems well before you do). You may discover more than you could have foreseen. In any case when reading a book of poems you must be prepared to linger. That thin volume will take at least as much reading as a detective story.

Third (and of course related to our second consideration): read it aloud. Few poems will come whole at one hearing. Few piano pieces will. But once you have *learned* either, their pleasure is always ready to repeat itself. Even difficult poems are meant to go into the voice-box. Put them there.

Fourth: there are still readers who must be specifically cautioned that twentieth-century poetry is not nineteenth-century poetry. That fact may seem rather obvious, but the point is not frivolously made. Your teachers and mine were products of nineteenth-century culture, and almost certainly the first poems you were given to read were nineteenth-century poems. I hasten to add that the nineteenth century was a great literary achievement, but it began with one dreadful flaw: it tended to take itself much too seriously. The mind of man seemed to suffer the illusion that it lived in a cathedral, and when man spoke he was not only too likely to pontificate, but he was pre-inclined to select from experience only the vast, the lofty, and divine-in-nature. The result was what Cleanth Brooks has called "the poetry of high-seriousness." Opposed to that tradition is the poetry of "wit," poetry in which the mind most definitely does not live in a cathedral but in the total world, open to the encounter of all sorts of diverse elements and prepared to take them as they come, fusing fleas and sunsets, love and charley-horses, beauty and trivia into what is conceived to be a more inclusive range of human experience. Judge the poet of "wit" by the standards of "high-seriousness" and he will likely appear crass and obnoxious; judge the poet of high-seriousness by the standards of wit and he will likely appear a rather pompous and myopic ass.

The point, then, is quite simple: judge the poet by his intent: if you tend to the illusion that you are on your way to church when you pick up a poem, stop off at the super-market and watch man against his background of groceries for a while. The church is still next door, and I am quite sure that one of the things "modern" (whatever that is) poetry is trying to say, is that the cities of our life contain both church-spires and Wheaties, and that both of them, for better or worse, impinge upon man's consciousness, and are therefore the material of poetry.

A fifth consideration I can best present by asking a question: how do you, reader, distinguish between your responses to a very bad portrait of dear old Aunt Jane, and a very good one of Old Skinflint, the gentleman

who holds your mortgage? The question is one that splits the reading audience straight down the middle: The tenacity with which the ladies of the poetry societies hold on to Aunt Jane with a bluebird in her hair, and the persistency with which they reject all-that-is-not-bluebirds, reaches so far into the problem of a satisfactory approach to poetry (both reading and writing) that it has been necessary to evolve two terms: "poetry" for that which exists as an art form, "poesy" for that which exists as the sentimental bluebird in Aunt Jane's hair. Confusion is inevitable when these terms are not properly applied. The writers and readers of poesy always refer to their matter as poetry or true poetry, and defend it with as much violence as possible from "the ugly." Here is a piece of poesy — a sonnet of course:

THRENODY

Truth is a golden sunset far away
Above the misty hills. Its burning eye
Lights all the fading world. A bird flies by
Alive and singing on the dying day.
Oh mystic world, what shall the proud heart say
When beauty flies on beauty beautifully
While blue-gold hills look down to watch it die
Into the falling miracle of clay?
Say: "I have seen the wing of sunset lift
Into the golden vision of the hills
And truth come flooding proud through the cloud rift
And known that souls survive their mortal ills."
Say: "Having seen such beauty in the air
I have seen truth and will no more despair."

This is a fair example of what I have learned to call "prop-room poesy." It fills the stage as a poem might, but it fills it with pieces discarded from other poems and left to gather dust in the prop-room of tradition. It makes a stage of the stage, and brings the stage's own dust on as the play, rather than bring on the life outside the theatre.

The result may look like a poem, but is really no more than a collection of poetic junk. For example: "golden sunsets far away" (question: have you ever seen a non-golden one nearby?), "misty hills," "burning eye," "fading world," "a bird flies by alive and singing" (question: have you ever seen a non-live one fly by?), "dying day," "the proud heart." . . .

I have tried many times to explain to the enthusiasts of this school that any reasonably competent craftsman could concoct such a poem in a matter of minutes, and with his tongue in his cheek. I said exactly that from a public platform once and claimed I could turn out such an illusion-of-the-sonnet in three minutes flat. I was challenged and given a first line to start with, but I failed. I discovered it is impossible, simply mechanically, to write off fourteen lines in three minutes. It took four minutes and eighteen seconds. The "sonnet" I have quoted above was the poem pro-

duced in answer to that challenge, and by way of further experimentation I sent it off to a magazine for "traditional" poetry and had it accepted for publication. In a moment of cowardice I withdrew the poem for fear someone I respected might see my name attached to it. I was wrong, of course; no one whose poetic opinion I could respect would have been reading that magazine.

The fact remains beyond all persuasion, however, that the devotees of poesy are violent in their charges against Modern Poetry (their capitals) as ugly, coarse, immoral, and debased (their adjectives). My good friend Geraldine Udell, business manager of *Poetry, a Magazine of Verse,* the oldest magazine of good poetry in America, once showed me thirty-four letters received in one day's mail accusing the magazine of debasing the pure tradition of English poetry, and enclosing pages of poesy from two magazines of "traditional poetry" as specimens of what should be printed.

It is, you see, Aunt Jane and Old Skinflint with a vengeance. Poesy (which is always anti-poetry) wants it pretty. It wants comfortably worn-out props to which comfortable and vague reactions are already conditioned. Everyone understands the bluebird in Aunt Jane's hair; the response to it is by now so stereotyped that it will do for a birthday card. Poetry, on the contrary, insists on battering at life, and on making the poem capture the thing seen and felt in its own unique complex. It does not repeat, it creates. Therefore, some willingness to dismiss preconception from the reader's mind is necessary if one is to partake of the vital process. One is also required to get himself and his own loose-afflatus out of the way of the poem.

The fifth point then is simple: poesy is not poetry.

A sixth and related consideration follows almost immediately: it concerns the preconception that demands moral affirmation of oneself from a poem, just as poesy demands a loose emotional affirmation of oneself. Consistently adhered to, this application of one's own morality as a test of the poem can lead to ridiculous ends. It would require, for example, the rejection of Milton by all who do not agree with his theology. It might reject beforehand all poems containing the word harlot, since harlots are immoral, and by that test we should have to reject such great lines as Blake's:

> The harlot's cry from street to street
> Shall weave Old England's winding sheet.

Or, shifted to political concern, it might require a new Communist manifesto against any poem in which the lover is rich in his love, since it is bourgeois, decadent, and just plain indecent to be rich.

Similarly, I have observed many present-day reviewers to reject a poem because it seems cheerful ("withdrawal from reality"), because it does not ("defeatist and negativist"), because it is immediately understandable ("facile and slight"), and because it requires rereading ("obscurantist"). These are cartoons, of course, but they are cartoons of a real trend. The

simple fact is that none of us can hope to be wholly free of preconceptions of one sort or another. I must confess, for example, that I still find Milton's theology a bit silly, and that my feeling prevents me from experiencing "Paradise Lost" as richly as I might. Even Milton's language creates blocks for me that he could not have intended and for which I am solely responsible. For whatever reason, I cannot read of Satan mounted on his "bad eminence" without an impulse to smile. I don't know why I want to smile at such a phrase, but I am sure the reason is within me and that it has nothing to do with the poem. I am being blocked in this case by a pre-set subjective response. I must, therefore, recognize the obstruction and try to allow for it. Unless I can do so, I am not permitting the poet his right to his own kind of vision and existence.

Point six, then: the poem does not exist to confirm moral, political, or religious pre-judgments. The poem as a poem is in fact amoral. The poem, I say, not the poet. The poet may be the most moral of men, but when he writes poetry he is performing a ritual dance. He may even sermonize, but if the poem is to succeed as a poem, it must be a dancing sermon. What the poem says is always hickory-dickory-dock, that ineffable, wonderful, everlasting dance of syllables that moves the mouse and winds the clock over and over again, and sends the child to sleep among the swinging nebulae. Or perhaps it is hickory-dickory-God, but still what the poem says is what the child dreams: "Look, Universe, I'm dancing." There is no immorality more wretched than the habit of mind which will insist on moralizing that dance.

The last necessity for good reading that I shall discuss here is tradition. If you will grant me the existence of an unintellectualized basis for poetry upon which the responses of all readers may meet, we can probably agree that a fair example of such a response may be found in, say, Juliet on her balcony swooning into moonlight at the sound of Romeo's song rising from the shrubbery. Hers is centainly a non-intellectualized response. And a worldwide one: Black Jade in her moony garden in Peiping will respond in an almost identical way to Pao-yii's serenade from beyond the garden wall.

But wait; let us switch singers. Now Pao-yii is in Verona under Juliet's balcony, and Romeo is in Peiping outside Black Jade's garden. Both strike up a song. Why is it that both girls now hear not a swooning love-cry but something closer to the sound of sustained gargling? The answer is — Tradition.

For the fact is we are being educated when we know it least. We learn simply by the exposure of living, and what we learn most natively is the tradition in which we live. But the response acquired effortlessly within one tradition will not serve us in another, any more than speaking pure Tuscan will help us in Peiping.

In order to read poetry, then, one must read poetry. One may of course have read only bad poetry, and in that case he will read badly. The

criterion Matthew Arnold set forth as "the touchstone method" may well be applied here. This critical theory states simply that all poetry is judged by great poetry. Poetry may be called great only when it has been acclaimed by so many generations of different poetical taste that its merit and universality are beyond dispute. The way to come to a poem, then, is with memory of great singing in one's inner ear.

Greatness, however, can be a dangerous measure, for it immediately implies rendering a verdict. I for one cannot lose the belief that it is more important to experience the poem than to judge it. Certainly there is real pleasure to be had from poetry no one will ever consider great or near-great. Certainly, too, every mental action implies a kind of judgment. Nevertheless, it seems to me more desirable in every way for the reader to conceive of himself as a participant in the action of the poem, rather than as a trial judge pondering its claim to immortality.

Time, of course, will hand down that verdict, and in a way from which there is no appeal. It may then happen that the verdict will be against modern poets, and against the principles on which they write. But until that verdict has been achieved, it would be well to bear in mind that the reader is as liable to error as the poet, and that when the poem fails to communicate, the failure may as reasonably be charged against the one as against the other.

Poetry

Marianne Moore • *1887–*

☞ *For a comment on this poem, see the note which precedes Mr. Ciardi's essay, on page 20.*

I, TOO, dislike it: there are things that are important
beyond all this fiddle.
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one
discovers in
it after all, a place for the genuine.
Hands that can grasp, eyes
that can dilate, hair that can rise
if it must, these things are important not because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but
because they are
useful. When they become so derivative as to become
unintelligible,

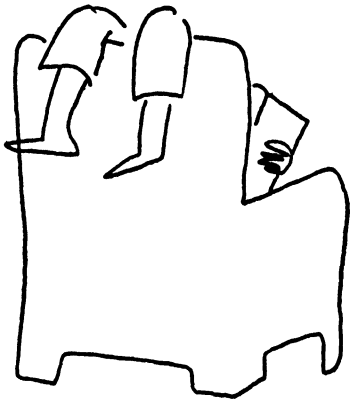
Marianne Moore, *Collected Poems* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951). Copyright, 1951, by Marianne Moore. Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company.

the same thing may be said for all of us, that we
do not admire what
we cannot understand: the bat
holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tire-
less wolf under
a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a
horse that feels a flea, the base-
ball fan, the statistician —
nor is it valid
to discriminate against "business documents and

school-books"; all these phenomena are important. One
must make a distinction
however: when dragged into prominence by half poets,
the result is not poetry,
nor till the poets among us can be
"literalists of
the imagination" — above
insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, "imaginary gardens with real toads in them,"
shall we have
it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,
the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness and
that which is on the other hand
genuine, you are interested in poetry.



"I suddenly sensed that I was being followed."

Some Readers at Work

Here Lies Miss Groby

James Thurber • 1895–

Here we introduce one who needs no introduction — who doesn't know Miss Groby, under whatever name? Teaching us literature, so she supposes, she can't see the woods for the trees, or to apply Thurber's figure, she confuses the container with the thing contained.

Miss Groby taught me English composition thirty years ago. It wasn't what prose said that interested Miss Groby; it was the way prose said it. The shape of a sentence crucified on a blackboard (parsed, she called it) brought a light to her eye. She hunted for Topic Sentences and Transitional Sentences the way little girls hunt for white violets in springtime. What she loved most of all were Figures of Speech. You remember her. You must have had her, too. Her influence will never die out of the land. A small schoolgirl asked me the other day if I could give her an example of metonymy. (There are several kinds of metonymies, you may recall, but the one that will come to mind most easily, I think, is Container for

Reprinted by permission of the author. Copyright, 1942, The *New Yorker* Magazine, Inc.

the Thing Contained.) The vision of Miss Groby came clearly before me when the little girl mentioned the old, familiar word. I saw her sitting at her desk, taking the rubber band off the roll-call cards, running it back upon the fingers of her right hand, and surveying us all separately with quick little henlike turns of her head.

Here lies Miss Groby, not dead, I think, but put away on a shelf with the other T squares and rulers whose edges had lost their certainty. The fierce light that Miss Groby brought to English literature was the light of Identification. Perhaps, at the end, she could no longer retain the dates of the birth and death of one of the Lake poets. That would have sent her to the principal of the school with her resignation. Or perhaps she could not remember, finally, exactly how many Cornishmen there were who had sworn that Trelawny should not die, or precisely how many springs were left to Housman's lad in which to go about the woodlands to see the cherry hung with snow.

Verse was one of Miss Groby's delights because there was so much in both its form and content that could be counted. I believe she would have got an enormous thrill out of Wordsworth's famous lines about Lucy if they had been written this way:

> A violet by a mossy stone
> Half hidden from the eye,
> Fair as a star when ninety-eight
> Are shining in the sky.

It is hard for me to believe that Miss Groby ever saw any famous work of literature from far enough away to know what it meant. She was forever climbing up the margins of books and crawling between their lines, hunting for the little gold of phrase, making marks with a pencil. As Palamides hunted the Questing Beast, she hunted the Figure of Speech. She hunted it through the clangorous halls of Shakespeare and through the green forests of Scott.

Night after night, for homework, Miss Groby set us to searching in "Ivanhoe" and "Julius Caesar" for metaphors, similes, metonymies, apostrophes, personifications, and all the rest. It got so that figures of speech jumped out of the pages at you, obscuring the sense and pattern of the novel or play you were trying to read. "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears." Take that, for instance. There is an unusual but perfect example of Container for the Thing Contained. If you read the funeral oration unwarily — that is to say, for its meaning — you might easily miss the C.F.T.T.C. Antony is, of course, not asking for their ears in the sense that he wants them cut off and handed over; he is asking for the function of those ears, for their power to hear, for, in a word, the thing they contain.

At first I began to fear that all the characters in Shakespeare and Scott were crazy. They confused cause with effect, the sign for the thing signified,

the thing held for the thing holding it. But after a while I began to suspect that it was I myself who was crazy. I would find myself lying awake at night saying over and over, "The thinger for the thing contained." In a great but probably misguided attempt to keep my mind on its hinges, I would stare at the ceiling and try to think of an example of the Thing Contained for the Container. It struck me as odd that Miss Groby had never thought of that inversion. I finally hit on one, which I still remember. If a woman were to grab up a bottle of Grade A and say to her husband, "Get away from me or I'll hit you with the milk," that would be a Thing Contained for the Container. The next day in class I raised my hand and brought my curious discovery straight out before Miss Groby and my astonished schoolmates. I was eager and serious about it and it never occurred to me that the other children would laugh. They laughed loudly and long. When Miss Groby had quieted them she said to me rather coldly, "That was not really amusing, James." That's the mixed-up kind of thing that happened to me in my teens.

In later years I came across another excellent example of this figure of speech in a joke long since familiar to people who know vaudeville or burlesque (or radio, for that matter). It goes something like this:

A: What's your head all bandaged up for?
B: I got hit with some tomatoes.
A: How could that bruise you up so bad?
B: These tomatoes were in a can.

I wonder what Miss Groby would have thought of that one.

I dream of my old English teacher occasionally. It seems that we are always in Sherwood Forest and that from far away I can hear Robin Hood winding his silver horn.

"Drat that man for making such a racket on his cornet!" cries Miss Groby. "He scared away a perfectly darling Container for the Thing Contained, a great, big, beautiful one. It leaped right back into its context when that man blew that cornet. It was the most wonderful Container for the Thing Contained I ever saw here in the Forest of Arden."

"This is Sherwood Forest," I say to her.

"That doesn't make any difference at all that I can see," she says to me.

Then I wake up, tossing and moaning.

Clutter Counters Everywhere

W. B. Scott • 1907–

A good reader won't be imposed on. He sees through the strategy by which a writer tries to make him follow a certain line of thought, and makes up his own mind whether he wants to go along or not. W. B. Scott in this humorous essay examines a piece of sales-promotion literature. The phrase "clutter counters everywhere" reminds him of the protean phrase "Haveth Childers Everywhere" in James Joyce's Finnegans Wake. *(The drawings in this book are also Mr. Scott's work.)*

MANY MONTHS AGO the writer of this Bulletin received a circular letter from the New York *Herald Tribune*. The letter struck him with such force that he immediately ceased the academic routine he had been engaged in when it arrived — tearing student papers into strips, doodling, staring pensively through the window, going for a drink of water, winding his watch, jotting down reminders to himself about the nature of tragedy, poking at a cavity, consulting the dictionary for the meaning of a word he had pretended to understand when a colleague used it at lunch, thumbing through *Time,* briskly bringing his desk calendar up to date — and settled down to think about it (the letter) and what it might portend. He is tired of thinking about it now, and hopes to purge himself of it by getting it into print, together with a few of the questions it has raised.

Dear Sir: [the *Herald Tribune* begins]
In these crowded days . . .
. . . when 69,392,699 magazines are published each week
. . . when busty pocket-books (the latter-day dime novel) clutter counters everywhere
. . . when TV is revolutionizing the pattern of American entertainment
. . . and when Western culture is facing its greatest threat since Charles V threw back the Turks
are you finding it hard to keep your students abreast of the really GOOD — the really IMPORTANT — books being published in the U.S.? Would you welcome — at no expense to you or YOUR COLLEGE — the weekly assistance of the foremost critics and authors writing today?

(There's more to the letter, but let's stop here.)

From *Furioso,* Winter, 1951. Reprinted by permission of the author and by courtesy of Reed Whittemore, editor of *Furioso.*

Now it's clear, in the first place, that to such questions only a chump or a traitor could unequivocally answer, "No!", so packed are these questions with all that an American holds dear — overwhelming statistics, the bust on the pocket book (or was this a misprint for *dusty*?[1]), the historical parallel with its flattering implications that the reader knows all about Charles V and the Turks, *plus* a chance to get something for nothing. And when the letter goes on to assert (as it does) that the *Herald Tribune* BOOK REVIEW *Magazine Section* is "generally accepted from coast to coast as THE authoritative publication in the field of literary criticism," the impulsive recipient of the letter is likely to hustle his note of acceptance off to the post office without even bothering to turn out the office lights or straighten his tie.

But the writer of this Bulletin is not an impulsive recipient, or at any rate an impulsive letter-answerer, partly owing to a firmly-rooted habit of not answering letters until months or years have passed, and partly because an early training in scientific method taught him to jump at conclusions *only when he feels like it.* He did not feel like it in this case, preferring (the scientific method churning up in his memory) simply to ask a few questions and suggest a few tentative answers. Here are the questions. There's nothing very systematic to them — you can get just so much mileage out of the scientific method.

(1) Is it really *true* that 69,392,699 magazines are published each week, or did the promotion people at the *Herald Tribune,* working under a terrific pressure to *get the letter in the mail,* simply grab that number out of the air? It is the sort of number that sounds right, as plain round numbers would not, and the writer of this Bulletin is perfectly happy to accept it. But he would like to know for sure before he risks tossing it out at a cocktail party (after painfully memorizing it), only to have the campus precisionist snort, "Nonsense!" or "Rubbish!" in the decisive way the campus precisionist has of snorting these words. Moreover, the campus precisionist is sure to go on and ask something shattering like, "How about certain magazines — *The Hudson Review,* for example — which are *not* published each week?" (He *might* ask, "How about *Furioso?*", but being a campus precisionist is not likely to.) Well, how about it? Or doesn't the *Herald Tribune* count non-weekly publications *as* magazines? If not, why not? What sort of big-city journalistic arrogance is involved here?

(2) Is "clutter counters everywhere" a deliberate echo of Joyce on the part of some suppressed genius in the *Herald Tribune's* circular-letter plant, or is it one of those fragments of accidental poetry which the world could ill do without? If it *is* a muted scrap of song by a hidden genius, is this

[1] Not likely, given the *Herald Tribune's* reputation for accuracy, and the fact that pocket books are usually placed, *not* on counters, but in racks with plenty of circulation, and are thus less likely to get dusty than to get tattered or dog-eared from being brushed up against by people rushing for trains or hurrying to have prescriptions filled. [Author.]

genius also responsible for the rather snide distinction implied in "foremost critics and authors"? Can it be that this genius, heavy with unborn novels and plays, an "author" in his own mind, is getting a bit of his own back (in advance) by this devious belittlement of critics? Would this genius do better to become an English instructor, given his tendency to phrases like "the latter-day dime novel"? At all events, what personal tragedies lie hidden behind the façades of great metropolitan newspapers anyhow?

(3) If the recipient of the letter has a sense of fair play (as every defender of Western culture has, including nowadays the Turks), he's sure to raise some questions about the New York *Times Book Review* and *The Saturday Review of Literature* before he decides to throw in with the *Herald Tribune* crowd. And surely those publications themselves are not going to take lying down the assertion that the *Herald Tribune* BOOK REVIEW *Magazine Section* is generally accepted from coast to coast as THE authoritative publication in the field of literary criticism. (No doubt they have long since let fly with their counter punches, but the writer of this Bulletin is apparently not on their mailing lists.)

All the same, what is a conscientious teacher, the dark splintery corridor outside his office jammed with restless, chattering students demanding to be kept abreast of the really GOOD — the really IMPORTANT — books being published in the U.S. — what is such a teacher to do? Read all three? God forbid! Read none of them? That way, in our culture, lies loss of face at the very least. One thing he might do, before he goes over to the *Herald Tribune,* is to demand that its critics and authors be able to match or top certain touchstone passages from the publication he is already committed to. For instance, if he is a *Saturday Review* boy, he might ask the *Herald Tribune* if it can come up with anything to equal this from the *SRL:* "In this novel Edward Lyons exhibits certain qualities that may produce a writer who will have enough to say, and who will say it dramatically enough to assure himself a certain future."

Or, he might ask, "How are the *Herald Tribune's* triple-adjectives compared with the following sampling from the *Saturday Review*?" — "revealing, competent, and important," "beguiling, intelligent, and well done," "colorful, provocative, completely absorbing," "absorbing, fast-moving, and plausible," "simple, moving, horrifying," "smooth, unpretentious, dove-colored writing," "dim, well-intentioned, squirming" (this last triplet from a review in which a character is compared to a sea-anemone — what do the *Herald Tribune* people know about sea-anemones?).

If the *Herald Tribune* can tie or surpass these, well and good. If not, let it wheedle and flatter as it will; the canny recipient of its propaganda will stick to his *SRL* (or his *Times Book Review*), Charles V and the Turks or no Charles V and the Turks.

(4) Finally, what about the statement, "at no expense to you or YOUR COLLEGE"? Why "YOUR COLLEGE" in caps and "you" in lower case? Do we have here an instance of the tendency in our society to put institu-

tions ahead of *people*? How about human dignity? Or is the *Herald Tribune* cynically suggesting that the recipient of its letter is the kind of person who will immediately hoof it around to the Chairman or the Dean to present this little scheme for saving money for the college, while incidentally calling favorable attention to himself? *Are* there such persons in American higher education? Or is this an appeal — even more cynical in effect — to some sort of school spirit on the part of the faculty? The answer is not clear, but behind these words we sense the New York promoter, sleekly and expensively tailored as befits the *Herald Tribune* — yet with all his glossy exterior, his *savoir faire,* his memories of the first night of *South Pacific,* a blood brother to the duke in *Huckleberry Finn,* with *his* cynical, "There, if that line don't fetch them I don't know Arkansawl"

* * *

Better tell those students in the corridor to come back after lunch.

The Idealist ✠ *Frank O'Connor • 1903–*

✠ *Reading has its dangers. An Irish schoolboy finds this out in Frank O'Connor's story. But look for more in the story than this discovery and the boy's wonderful, bitter conclusion about teachers; for Mr. O'Connor, one of the most skillful short-story writers not only of Ireland but of our time, has implied far more than he has stated in what at first seems a simple anecdote.*

READING? I was never struck on it. It never did anything for me but get me into trouble.

Adventure stories weren't so bad, but as a kid I was very serious and always preferred realism to romance. School stories were what I liked best. The trouble was that even they seemed to be a bit far-fetched, judging by our standards. The schools were English and quite different to the one I attended. They were always called "the venerable pile," and there was usually a ghost in them; they were built in a square that was called the "quad," and, to judge by the pictures, were all clock-towers, spires and pinnacles like the lunatic asylum with us. The fellows in the stories were all good climbers, and used to get in and out of the school at night on ropes made of knotted sheets. They dressed queerly; they wore long trousers, short black jackets and top-hats. When they did anything wrong they were

Reprinted from *The Stories of Frank O'Connor* by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., and by A. D. Peters, London, England. Copyright, 1950, 1952, by Frank O'Connor. Originally published in *The New Yorker.*

given "lines." When it was a bad case they were flogged, and never showed any sign of pain, only the bad fellows, and they always said "Owl Owl!"

Mostly, they were grand chaps who always stuck together and were great at football and cricket. They never told lies, and anyone who did, they wouldn't talk to him. If they were caught out and asked a point-blank question, they always told the truth, unless someone else was in it along with them, and then wild horses wouldn't get them to split, even if the other fellow was a thief, which, as a matter of fact, he frequently was. It was surprising in such good schools, with fathers who never gave them less than five quid, the number of thieves there were. The fellows I knew hardly ever stole, even though they only got a penny a week, and sometimes not even that when their fathers were on the booze and their mothers had to go to the pawn.

I worked hard at the football and cricket, though, of course, we never had a proper football, and the sort of cricket we played was with a hurley stick against a wicket chalked on some wall. The officers in the barrack played proper cricket, and I used to go up on summer evenings to see them.

Even so, I couldn't help being disgusted at the bad way things were run in our school. Our venerable pile was a red-brick building without tower or pinnacle a fellow could climb, and no ghost at all; we had no team, so a fellow, no matter how hard he worked, could never play for the school, and nobody had ever thought of giving us lines. Instead Murderer Molony either lifted you by the ears or bashed you with a cane.

But these were only superficial things. What was really wrong was ourselves. The fellows sucked up to the masters and told them everything that went on. If they were caught out they tried to put the blame on somebody else, even if it meant telling lies. If they were caned, they snivelled and said it wasn't fair; drew back their hands the least shade as if they were terrified, so that the cane only caught the top of their fingers, and then screamed and stood on one leg, and shook their fingers out in hopes of getting it counted as one. Finally they roared that their wrist was broken, and crawled back to their desks with their hands squeezed under their armpits, howling. I mean, you couldn't help feeling ashamed, imagining what chaps from a decent school would think if they saw it.

My way to school led me past the barrack gate. In those peaceful days the English sentries never minded you going past the guardroom to have a look; if you came at dinnertime they even called you in and gave you plum duff and tea. Naturally, with such a temptation on my way, I was often late. When you were late, the only excuse, short of a letter from your mother, was to say you were at early Mass. The Murderer would never know whether you were or not, and if he did anything to you, you could easily get him into trouble with the parish priest. Even as kids we all knew who the real boss of the school was.

But after I had started reading school stories I was always a bit uneasy about saying I was at Mass. It was a lie, and I knew the chaps in the

stories would never have told it. They were all round me like invisible presences, and I hated to do anything they wouldn't approve of.

One morning I was very late.

"What kept you till this hour, Regan?" asked Murderer Molony, looking at the clock.

I wanted to say I was at Mass but I couldn't. The invisible presences were all round me.

"I delayed at the barrack, sir," I said in panic.

There was a faint giggle from the class and Molony raised his brows in mild surprise. He was a big powerful man with fair hair and blue eyes and a manner that at times was deceptively mild.

"Oh, indeed?" he said politely enough. "And what did you do that for?"

"I was watching the soldiers drilling, sir," said I.

The class giggled again. This was a new line entirely for them. I suppose it was the first time anyone ever told the truth in that class. Besides, Molony had a dead set on the English.

"Oh," said Molony casually, "I never knew you were such a military man. Hold out your hand!"

Compared with the laughter the slaps were nothing and I did not flinch. I returned to my desk slowly and quietly without snivelling or squeezing my hands, and the Murderer looked after me, raising his brows again as much as to say that this was a new line for him too. But the other fellows gaped and whispered as if I were some strange animal. At playtime they all gathered round me, full of excitement.

"Regan, why did you say that about the barrack?"

"Because 'twas true," I replied firmly. "I wasn't going to tell him a lie."

"What lie?"

"That I was at Mass."

"Then couldn't you say you had to go on a message?"

"That would be a lie too."

"Cripes, Regan," they said, "you'd better mind yourself. The Murderer is in an awful wax. He'll massacre you."

I knew that only too well. I could see that the man's professional pride had been deeply hurt, and for the rest of the day I was on my best behaviour. But my best was not sufficient for the occasion, for I underrated the Murderer's guile. From the frown on his face he seemed to be puzzled over something in a book he was reading, and even when he spoke, in a low quiet voice, he scarcely raised his blue eyes from it.

"Regan, was that you talking?"

" 'Twas, sir," I replied in consternation.

This time the whole class laughed. They couldn't believe that I wasn't deliberately trailing my coat, and, of course, the laugh must have convinced him that I was. I suppose if people do tell you lies all day and every day it soon becomes a sort of perquisite and you resent being deprived of it.

"Oh," he said, throwing down the book, "we'll soon put a stop to that."

This time it was a tougher job, because he really was on his mettle. But so was I. I knew this was the testing point, and that if only I could keep my head I should provide a model for the whole class. When I had got through with it without moving a muscle and returned to my desk with my hands by my side, the invisible presences gave me a great clap, but the visible ones were nearly as annoyed as the Murderer. After school a half-dozen of them followed me down the playground through the smell of stale bread and butter.

"Go on!" they shouted truculently. "Shaping as usual!"

"I was not shaping."

"You were shaping! You're always showing off. Trying to pretend he didn't hurt you — a blooming cry-baby like you!"

"I wasn't trying to pretend," I shouted, even then resisting the temptation to nurse my bruised hands. "Only decent fellows don't cry over every little pain like kids."

"Go on!" they bawled after me. "You ould idiot." And as I went down the school lane, still trying to keep what the stories called "a stiff upper lip" and reminding myself that my torture was over until the next morning, I heard their mocking voices after me.

"Mad Bill! Yah, Mad Bill!"

I realized that if I were to keep on terms with the invisible presences I should have to watch my step in school.

So I did, all through that year. But then, one day, an awful thing happened. I was coming in from the yard, and in the porch outside our schoolroom I saw a fellow called Gorman taking something from a coat on the rack. Gorman was a fellow I disliked and feared; a handsome, sulky, spoiled, and sneering lout. I paid no attention to him because I had escaped for a few moments into my dream world in which fathers never gave you anything less than fivers and chaps who had been ignored suddenly turned up and saved the honour of the school in the last half of the match.

"Who are you looking at?" he asked threateningly.

"I wasn't looking at anyone," I said with an indignant start.

"I was only getting a pencil out of my coat," he added, clenching his fists.

"Nobody said you weren't," said I, thinking this a very queer thing to start a row about.

"You'd better not either," he snarled. "You can mind your own business."

"You mind yours," I retorted, for the purpose of saving face. "I never spoke to you at all."

And that, so far as I was concerned, was the end of it. But after playtime, the Murderer, looking exceptionally serious, stood before the class, balancing a pencil in both hands.

"Everyone who left the classroom this morning, stand out!" he said. Then

he lowered his head and looked at us from under his fair brows. "Mind, now, I said everyone!"

I stood out with the others, including Gorman.

"Did you take anything from a coat on the rack this morning?" asked the Murderer, laying a heavy, hairy paw on Gorman's shoulder and staring into his face.

"Me, sir?" Gorman asked innocently. "No, sir."

"Did you see anyone doing it?"

"No, sir."

"You?" he asked another lad, but even before he reached me at all I realized why Gorman had told the lie and wondered in panic what I should do.

"You?" he asked me, and his big red face was close to mine and his blue eyes only a couple of inches away.

"I didn't take anything, sir," I said in a low voice.

"Did you see someone else do it?" he asked, raising his brows and indicating quite plainly that he had noticed my evasion. "Have you a tongue in your head?" he shouted suddenly, and the whole class, electrified, stared at me. "You?" he added curtly to the next boy as though he had given me up.

"No, sir."

"Back to your desks, the rest of ye!" he ordered. "Regan, you stay here!"

He waited until everyone was seated again before he went on.

"Turn out your pockets!"

I did, and a half-stifled giggle rose which the Murderer quelled with a thunderous glance. Even for a small boy, I had pockets that were museums in themselves; the purpose of half the things I brought to light I couldn't have explained myself. They were antiques, prehistoric, and unlabelled. Among them was a school story borrowed the previous evening from another chap, a queer fellow who chewed paper as if it were gum. The Murderer reached out for it, and, holding it at arm's length, shook it out with an expression of deepening disgust as he saw the nibbled corners and margins.

"Oh," he said disdainfully, "so this is how you waste your time, is it? What do you do with these — eat them?"

" 'Tisn't mine, sir," I said against the laugh that sprang up. "I borrowed it."

"Is that what you did with the money?" he added quickly, his fat head on one side.

"Money?" I said, getting confused. "What money?"

"The shilling that was stolen from Flanagan's overcoat this morning," he added — Flanagan was a little hunchback whose people coddled him: no one else in the school would have had that much money.

"I never took Flanagan's shilling," I said, beginning to cry. "And you have no right to say I did."

"I have the right to say that you're the most impudent, defiant puppy in

the class," he replied, his voice hoarse with rage, "and I wouldn't put it past you. What else can anyone expect and you reading this dirty, rotten, filthy rubbish?" And he tore my school story in two halves and tossed them to the farthest corner of the schoolroom. "Dirty, filthy English rubbish! Now hold out your hand!"

This time the invisible presences deserted me. Hearing themselves described in those contemptuous terms, they fled. The Murderer went mad in the way people do whenever they're up against something they don't understand. Even the other fellows were shocked, and heaven knows they had little enough sympathy with me.

"You should put the police on him," they advised me afterwards in the playground. "He lifted the cane over his shoulder. He could get the gaol for that."

"But why didn't you say you didn't see anyone?" asked one chap.

"Because I did," I said, beginning to sob all over again at the memory of my wrongs. "I saw Gorman."

"Gorman?" they echoed incredulously. "Was it Gorman took Flanagan's money? And why didn't you say so?"

"Because it wouldn't be right," I sobbed.

"Why wouldn't it be right?" one of them asked, gaping.

"Because Gorman should have told the truth himself," I said. "And if this was a decent school no one would ever speak to him again for it."

"But why would Gorman tell the truth if he took the money?" he asked, as you'd speak to a baby. "Jay, Regan," he added pityingly, "you're getting madder and madder. Now look what you're after bringing on yourself!"

Suddenly Gorman himself came lumbering up.

"Regan," he shouted threateningly, "did you say I stole Flanagan's money?"

Gorman, though, of course, I didn't realize it, was as much at sea as Molony and the rest of them. The only way he could explain my silence was by assuming that I was afraid of his threats, and now he felt the time had come to renew them. He couldn't have come at a moment when I cared less for them. Despairingly I lashed out with all my strength at his brutal face. He screamed, and his hand came away from his mouth, all blood. Then he threw off his satchel and made for me, but at the same moment a door opened behind us and a lame teacher called Murphy emerged. We all ran like mad and the fight was forgotten.

But it wasn't forgotten in other quarters. Next morning after prayers the Murderer scowled at me.

"Regan," he asked, "were you fighting in the yard after school yesterday?"

For a second or so I didn't reply. I couldn't help feeling that the game wasn't worth a candle. But before the spiritual presences fled for ever I made one last effort.

"I was, sir," I said, and this time there wasn't even a titter. The whole

class took it solemnly as the behavior of a chap who was quite out of his mind.

"Who were you fighting with?"

"I'd rather not say, sir," I replied, hysteria beginning to well up in me. It was all very well for the invisible presences, but they hadn't to deal with the Murderer.

"Who was he fighting with?" he asked lightly, resting his hands on the desk and studying the ceiling.

"Gorman, sir," replied three or four voices — as easy as that!

"Did Gorman hit him first?"

"No, sir. He hit Gorman first."

"Stand out," he said, taking up the cane again. "Now," he added, going up to Gorman, "you take this and hit him. And make sure you hit him hard," he added, giving Gorman's arm an encouraging squeeze. "Regan thinks he's a great fellow. You show him now what *we* think of him."

Gorman came towards me with the cane in one hand and a broad grin on his face. The whole class began to roar as if it were a great joke and even the Murderer permitted himself a modest grin at his own cleverness.

"Hold out your hand," he said to me.

I didn't. I began to feel trapped and a little crazy.

"Hold out your hand, I say!" he shouted, beginning to lose his temper again.

"I will not," I shouted back at him, losing all control of myself.

"You what?" he cried, dashing at me round the classroom with his hand raised above his head as though to strike me. "What's that you said, you dirty little thief?"

"I'm not a thief," I screamed. "And if he comes near me I'll kick the shins off him. You have no right to give him that cane. And you have no right to call me a thief either. If you do it again, I'll go down to the police and then we'll soon see who the thief is."

"You refused to answer my questions," he shouted, and if I had been in my right mind I should have known that he was suddenly frightened of something.

"No," I said through my sobs, "and I won't answer them now either. I'm not a spy."

"Oh," he retorted with a sarcastic sniff, "so that's what you call a spy?"

"Yes, and that's what they all are, all the fellows here — dirty spies! — but I'm not going to be a spy for you. You can do your own spying."

"That's enough now, that's enough!" he said, raising his fat hand almost beseechingly. "There's no need to lose control of yourself, my dear young fellow, and there's no need whatever to screech like that. 'Tis most unmanly. Go back to your seat now and I'll talk to you another time."

That day I did no work at all, and no one else did much either. The hysteria had spread to the class. I alternated between fits of exultation at the thought of how I had defied the Murderer to his face and panic at the

prospect of how he'd take it out of me after, and at each change of mood I put my head in my hands and sobbed all over again. The Murderer didn't tell me to stop. He didn't even look at me. The poor unfortunate man! When I think of it now I almost feel sorry for him.

After that I was the hero of the school for a whole afternoon. Even Gorman, when he tried to resume the fight, was told by two or three of the bigger fellows to hop off; a fellow that took the cane to beat another chap, he had no status at all. But that was not the sort of hero I wanted to be. I wanted something calmer, more codified, less sensational.

Next morning I was in such a state of panic that I didn't know how to face school at all. The silence of the school lane and the yard put me into a fresh panic. I was late again!

"What kept you, Regan?" the Murderer asked quietly.

"I was at Mass, sir," said I.

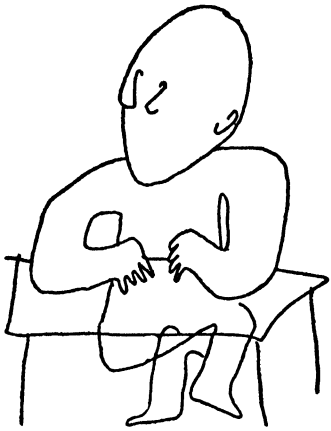
"Oh, all right," he said, though he seemed a bit surprised. What I hadn't realized was the immense advantage of our system over the English one. By this time half a dozen of his pets had brought the Murderer the true story, and if he didn't feel himself a monster, he certainly felt himself a fool, which is worse.

But by that time I didn't care. In my school-sack I had another story. Not a school story this time, though. School stories were a wash-out. "Bang! Bang!" — that was the only way to deal with fellows like the Murderer and Gorman. "The only good teacher is a dead teacher."

On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer

John Keats • *1795–1821*

MUCH have I travelled in the realms of gold,
  And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
  Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told,
  That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne:
  Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
  When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
  He stared at the Pacific — and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise —
  Silent, upon a peak in Darien.



"Forget your Uncle Edgar. Read Carlyle!"

Readers and College Life

What Every Freshman Should Know

Roger W. Holmes • 1905–

You will probably be surprised to find a professor — Mr. Holmes is professor of philosophy at Mt. Holyoke College — who will give you advice that comes so close to your own suppressed good-sense, and astounded to find a textbook that will pass it on to you. But professors and textbooks are sometimes more sensible than you think.

I NEVER FACE a class without wondering what would happen if students were not so docile. Why do you meet your professors and the academic taradiddle of college with such fear and respect? You are everywhere in chains because you accept a tradition about college work which at cost to you misrepresents its values and overestimates its importance. You remind me of the elephant chained to his stake at the circus. If the poor devil knew his own strength! And if you and your classmates but knew *yours!* The good things that might happen to our colleges if you would take matters into your own hands and pull up a few of the rotted stakes of academic tradition are worth dreaming about. Consider some confidential advice from one who would like to see you gain your freedom, who knows

Reprinted by permission of the author and the publisher from *The American Mercury*, November, 1940.

the weaknesses of academic life from the inside, and can give a few pointers on how to pull at those stakes.

One of the first things you are told is that you must study hard. But that is only half of the story. The other half is that beyond a certain point which is easily reached, the more you work the poorer the results. In my particular college you would be supposed to devote not more than fifteen hours a week to classes and another thirty to outside assignments. That means that you should be able to escape academic duties for one whole day each week and to take either the afternoon or the evening off almost every day. Work hard when you work. Mornings are the best times. But never work through both afternoon and evening. And take off part of Saturday and most of Sunday. Use three afternoons for exercise in the open air and three evenings for movies or concerts or plays or for that novel you want to read. Your college work will benefit.

You will be told that classes are the most important thing at college. Don't believe it. President Eliot of Harvard said that if he wished to found a college the first thing he would build would be a dormitory. If there were money left over, he would erect a library and fill it with books. And if he had money to burn he would hire a faculty and build a classroom building. Those of us who are willing to remember find it easy to recollect that the most valuable things that happened to us in college usually happened in our dormitories, and most of them after midnight. We also recall with considerable pleasure the few occasions when we had the time and audacity to enter the college library and just browse among books utterly unconnected with our courses. Somehow we remember those books. We read them not because we had to, but because we wanted to. The difference is tremendous.

You will be told that marks are important. But they are a meager indication of a student's worth. Someday we shall have the courage to scuttle the whole marking system, and with it, I hope, will go that awful and meaningless sheepskin. Marks provide the outward and visible sign of the whole academic tradition. I wish every college student might come behind the scenes and watch his instructors doling out grades on papers and blue-books. We have such curious foibles. The odds are definitely in favor of a paper read after rather than before dinner. A typewritten paper stands a better chance than one in longhand. And that factor of length! I know one student who got himself an A by sandwiching a dozen pages of economics notes into a long term-paper on Beethoven. It is a matter of record that given the same set of papers twice we will grade them differently. Given the same paper, moreover, various teachers will assign it grades ranging from D to A, even in mathematics. Some departments give as many as 40 per cent of their students A's, while others in the same institution allow only 5 per cent of the same students to get the highest marks.

You have probably been told that your academic record as an undergraduate will make or break your life. That simply is not so. Are you

going into teaching? There is not a college president worth his salt who does not know that a Phi Beta Kappa key is small indication of your promise as a teacher. Are you going to professional school? Countless men and women with average grades as undergraduates have done brilliantly in professional school. And in getting jobs, it is what they have been able to do in professional school that counts. Are you going to seek work as soon as you finish college? Letters of recommendation these days cover numerous items which have nothing to do with your academic achievement but are just as important. It would not be true to say that marks mean nothing, but if you will remember these facts every time you enter a classroom you will be on the right track.

Your professors form part of the academic taradiddle too. We stand on little raised platforms, the academic equivalents of the pedestal; we call ourselves "doctors" and smile with patient condescension when mistaken for medical men; we put high-sounding letters after our names; and we march in academic processions, clothed in magnificent medieval costumes. All in all we manage by such devices to convey the impression that we know what we are talking about. To be sure, we are not as pompous as some of our European colleagues in crime. Some of us even have the courage to sit on the same level and at the same seminar table with our students and listen to what they have to say. But it is not difficult to get the impression that your professors are founts of wisdom.

You will be told to take careful notes on their lectures and to commit those notes to memory. This whole business of note-taking is outmoded. Students started taking notes in the Middle Ages, before the printing press was invented. The student wrote his own books. Today, with large college libraries and with textbooks crowding and jostling one another for attention, the taking of notes is anachronistic. What you will do, if you are like the rest of the sheep, will be to produce pages and pages of notes, study them religiously for the examinations, then store them away. If you ever look at them again it will be simply to realize that the information they convey is far better presented in at least a dozen books immediately available, or that it is so thoroughly out of date that the notes are useless.

One of the major instruments of torture in collegiate education is the course examination. By this device the professor is enabled to discover how much of what he has said in class you have committed to memory. The night before the examination you cram the notes into your head. Next morning you enter a room heavy with the atmosphere of suspicion. You leave all notes and books in the hall, and you write on questions the answers to which you will have forgotten within a week, answers which in ordinary life no one in his right mind would ask you to remember because the information is available in the reference books where it belongs. Either you are working under the honor system, an unwitting accessory to the hocus-pocus, or you are annoyed and upset by a proctor who marches

around among the desks looking for trouble. The more you understand why you are in college, the less seriously you will take examinations. Some day you may even educate us to the point where we will compose tests which will measure your ability to use your knowledge with originality, rather than your ability to ape teacher. When that day arrives we shall let you bring notes, texts and even the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to examinations. And then you may take examinations seriously.

Now that you are in college and going to classes, pause long enough to ask yourself why *we* are teaching and *you* are learning. In spite of what you may have heard from us or your high school teachers or your parents, the answer is not that we know the final answers to the problems we are discussing. We are teaching because we have studied carefully subjects in which you are a beginner, and because we have had more worldly experience than you. But neither of these facts makes us omniscient. If the truth be known, there are those of you in our classes who are more intelligent than we are — who will outstrip us in our chosen fields. Question us. Doubt us. Raise objections. Make us think! Avoid us when we measure your achievement in terms of the proximity of your thinking to our own. Welcome us when we admit that we do not know the answers to your questions, when we help you to find your own answers, when we encourage you to consider views with which we do not agree.

Why are you going to college? Not to enhance your parents' social position; not to get high marks; not to get the ultimate answers, which not even *we* can furnish. To use our own professional jargon, you come to college to get a liberal education. We must admit that we do not altogether know what a liberal education is, but we have some fairly good ideas on the subject. We do not entirely follow these ideas. None of us, for example, believes that there is a magic in piling up a certain number of hour-credits. Yet, sixty credits and you get your diploma. And that diploma is supposed to admit you to the company of educated men and women. Why not fifty-five, or sixty-five? We do not know. Indeed if you pressed us we should have to admit that some students are liberally educated with thirty credits while others will not belong to the educated company if they take sixty times sixty hours of credit. Do not measure your education by simple arithmetic.

Elect your courses with care. If you go to a college which requires that you juggle five courses at once, you will do well to find one easy berth and sleep in it; otherwise you cannot do justice to the other four. This is a secret practice acceptable and accepted by all. But in general easy courses should be avoided simply because they are easy and do not give you your father's money's worth.

Do not select your courses with an eye to a specific job or type of occupation. More of you will make this mistake than not, and it is one of the most serious you can make. In the first place, we know at least that a

liberal education involves a balance and harmony of interests. Secondly, your interests and talents are by no means fully appreciated or explored when you come to us. You do not want to wake up in your senior year and wish that you had not missed many important and interesting things. Thousands of seniors do.

When you come to college you are intellectually very young and have not yet learned to proceed safely or efficiently under your own intellectual power. You are what your environment and your elders have made you. Your ideas are not your own. The first thing you must learn is to stand on your own ideas. This is why you should not take us and our ideas too seriously. Broaden your horizon so that as you become more and more able to take care of yourself you will move intelligently. Do considerable mental visiting in your first years in college. Try to encounter the major points of view represented on the faculty and among the students. Entertain them the more seriously the more they differ from your own. You may return to your own, but if you do it will be with greater tolerance and broader understanding.

You come to college to gain a liberal perspective. In gaining this perspective you must come to know the nature which surrounds and compels you, the society with which you must live and cooperate, the creative spirit which is your heritage, and the tools of language and of thought. To express it in this specific manner is helpful. It suggests certain intellectual virtues which you must possess before you can be considered an educated man or woman. This does not mean that there are particular courses which can alone provide you with these virtues. Do not take a course solely for its specific content.

For example, we have said that you must come to know the natural world. This does not mean that you must study physics *and* chemistry *and* astronomy *and* geology. It means that you must acquire the scientific attitude, understand the atmosphere and significance of the exact sciences, know their fundamental assumptions, their key concepts, their major contributions. And the same is true of the biological sciences. A course in botany *or* zoology *or* physiology *or* psychology is enough to give you an understanding of the important aspects of biology. You have not time for them all. But one is essential. Far too many are ignorant of the biological forces affecting human conduct. You should get into the laboratory while you are in college, and you should work in both the exact and the biological sciences.

You want also to know the society with which you must live and cooperate. And one of the ways in which you want to know it is the historical. You must be historically minded. You must recognize the importance of the past for the present. Man learns by experience, and history is social experience. Greek, Roman, European, American history — you cannot study them all, *but* you can become historically minded. And you can become socially minded in your view of the present world. Economic, social

and political forces have your world in their grips. You must study these forces, measure them, evaluate them.

Our heritage in the field of the arts has always been recognized as liberalizing. Not so much need to urge you here. Most of the greatest interpretation of human living is to be found in painting, sculpture, music and literature. What are some of the things which the great creative geniuses have told us about ourselves? What are modern artists trying to do? You must find out these things, not just that you may go to museums and concerts, but that you may *want* to go to museums and concerts. Elect some art or music, for pleasure, but also to increase your knowledge. Also, get a full and enthusiastic knowledge of the literature of your mother tongue. You will have discovered a source of wisdom, good taste and pleasure. Such studies need no recommendation.

Finally, you must come to understand the tools of language and of thought. And here urging is necessary. You ought to know another language, ancient or modern, inflected or non-inflected, so well that you dream in it. Such knowledge gives a far better understanding of your own tongue, both as a tool and as an art, than you could otherwise obtain. And you will have open to you another literature. Furthermore, you should be conversant with the structures and powers of thought as an intellectual tool, and you should be willing to examine fundamental assumptions. Mathematics, logic and philosophy are helpful here. You may think them difficult, but do not avoid them altogether.

If you will examine this program for the enlarging of your intellectual horizon you will see that it involves some eight subjects spread throughout the departments of your college. It is a program which you can complete in your freshman and sophomore years and one which you should carry through in order that you may be equipped intellectually to proceed to the second part of your college education. It will give you necessary breadth.

But you must also specialize, when the foundation has been laid. You must do this not because specialization will prepare you for a specific job, but because a certain degree of specialization is the second essential of true intellectual endeavor. Without specialization your college work is in danger of becoming that thin veneer of "culture" which we all recognize as superficial. And now you will find the faculty more cooperative. We are specialists and we like to encourage specialization. But still be on your guard, for we shall mislead you by overemphasizing the importance of our particular little corners of learning. The important matter is not *what* you specialize in, but that you specialize. Specialization for its own sake, that is my point. If you are going on to graduate work you will find the overwhelming advice of graduate school faculties to be that you specialize in *anything but* your subject of graduate study. If you are going into medicine, you might major in history. If you will be a lawyer, major in art or music.

Even your specialization should be carefully planned. In the first place, it will probably be advisable for you to do advanced work in each of the four major fields of study: natural science; social science; art and literature; and language, mathematics or philosophy. If you studied chemistry as a freshman, you might go on to more advanced chemistry and take elementary astronomy or geology as allied work. In short, in each major field in which you took two elementary courses as an underclassman, you should follow one elementary course into advanced work and at the same time gain some knowledge in an allied field.

But this will take only half of your time as an upperclassman. You should devote the other half of your last two years to intensive specialization in one subject in which you have the greatest interest and for which you have shown marked talent. Perhaps you have found history the most absorbing of subjects. Good! Go on in it. Devote half of your junior and senior years to history. Show that you can work intensively on the details of your chosen major, manipulate these details correctly, and fit them into a comprehensive picture of the whole. But remember — though your teachers will work against you here — remember that you are studying primarily for the sake of the intensive specialization and not of the history. Your roommate is getting the same thing from majoring in mathematics or English literature.

When you have avoided the Scylla of heterogeneous meanderings among elementary facts and concepts and the Charybdis of a study so narrow that you are ignorant of what is going on outside your own little corner of interest, you will have intellectual balance and perspective. Do not take us as your models. We represent a special world and we are an academic people. You are going into a broader world and a non-academic environment. Make us realize that our interests and understandings should spread into every field. Make us see that our students are at least as important as the subjects we teach. Make us understand that marks and examinations are mere administrative conveniences to be taken far less seriously than we take them. In short, insist that we get together as a unified organization and provide you with a liberal education. Strength to you! If you will do these things you will be performing a service to us and to yourselves.

What College Did to Me

Robert Benchley • *1889–1945*

Your college education — will it be a well-planned program of the sort Roger Holmes recommends, or will it turn out to be what Benchley declares his was not, but shows it really was, a "haphazard affair"? Benchley treats the subject humorously and makes us laugh, but like most good humorists, he makes us think too. For he is doing more than making fun: he is making fun of something. Of what, mostly? Of himself and what he got out of college? Or of college, for what it did to him, and does to most of us? Or both?

MY COLLEGE EDUCATION was no haphazard affair. My courses were all selected with a very definite aim in view, with a serious purpose in mind — no classes before eleven in the morning or after two-thirty in the afternoon, and nothing on Saturday at all. That was my slogan. On that rock was my education built.

As what is known as the Classical Course involved practically no afternoon laboratory work, whereas in the Scientific Course a man's time was never his own until four p.m. anyway, I went in for the classics. But only such classics as allowed for a good sleep in the morning. A man has his health to think of. There is such a thing as being a studying fool.

In my days (I was a classmate of the founder of the college) a student could elect to take any courses in the catalogue, provided no two of his choices came at the same hour. The only things he was not supposed to mix were Scotch and gin. This was known as the Elective System. Now I understand that the boys have to have, during the four years, at least three courses beginning with the same letter. This probably makes it very awkward for those who like to get away of a Friday afternoon for the week-end.

Under the Elective System my schedule was somewhat as follows:

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 11:00:
Botany 2a (The History of Flowers and Their Meaning)
Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11:00:
English 26 (The Social Life of the Minor Sixteenth Century Poets)
Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 12:00:
Music 9 (History and Appreciation of the Clavichord)

"What College Did to Me" is reprinted by permission from *The Early Worm* by Robert Benchley. Copyright, 1927, by Harper and Brothers.

Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12:00:

German 12b (Early Minnesingers — Walter von Vogelweider, Ulric Glannsdorf and Freimann von Stremhofen. Their Songs and Times)

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 1:30:

Fine Arts 6 (Doric Columns: Their Uses, History and Various Heights)

Tuesdays and Thursdays at 1:30:

French 1c (Exceptions to the verb *être*)

This was, of course, just one year's work. The next year I followed these courses up with supplementary courses in the history of lace-making, Russian taxation systems before Catharine the Great, North American glacial deposits and Early Renaissance etchers.

This gave me a general idea of the progress of civilization and a certain practical knowledge which has stood me in good stead in thousands of ways since my graduation.

My system of studying was no less strict. In lecture courses I had my notebooks so arranged that one-half of the page could be devoted to drawings of five-pointed stars (exquisitely shaded), girls' heads, and tick-tack-toe. Some of the drawings in my economics notebook in the course on Early English Trade Winds were the finest things I have ever done. One of them was a whole tree (an oak) with every leaf in perfect detail. Several instructors commented on my work in this field.

These notes I would take home after the lecture, together with whatever supplementary reading the course called for. Notes and textbooks would then be placed on a table under a strong lamplight. Next came the sharpening of pencils, which would take perhaps fifteen minutes. I had some of the best sharpened pencils in college. These I placed on the table beside the notes and books.

At this point it was necessary to light a pipe, which involved going to the table where the tobacco was. As it so happened, on the same table was a poker hand, all dealt, lying in front of a vacant chair. Four other chairs were oddly enough occupied by students, also preparing to study. It therefore resolved itself into something of a seminar, or group conference, on the courses under discussion. For example, the first student would say:

"I can't open."

The second student would perhaps say the same thing.

The third student would say: "I'll open for fifty cents."

And the seminar would be on.

At the end of the seminar, I would go back to my desk, pile the notes and books on top of each other, put the light out, and go to bed, tired but happy in the realization that I had not only spent the evening busily but had helped put four of my friends through college.

An inventory of stock acquired at college discloses the following bits of culture and erudition which have nestled in my mind after all these years.

THINGS I LEARNED FRESHMAN YEAR

1. Charlemagne either died or was born or did something with the Holy Roman Empire in 800.
2. By placing one paper bag inside another paper bag you can carry home a milk shake in it.
3. There is a double l in the middle of "parallel."
4. Powder rubbed on the chin will take the place of a shave if the room isn't very light.
5. French nouns ending in "aison" are feminine.
6. Almost everything you need to know about a subject is in the encyclopedia.
7. A tasty sandwich can be made by spreading peanut butter on raisin bread.
8. A floating body displaces its own weight in the liquid in which it floats.
9. A sock with a hole in the toe can be worn inside out with comparative comfort.
10. The chances are against filling an inside straight.
11. There is a law in economics called *The Law of Diminishing Returns,* which means that after a certain margin is reached returns begin to diminish. This may not be correctly stated, but there *is* a law by that name.
12. You begin tuning a mandolin with A and tune the other strings from that.

SOPHOMORE YEAR

1. A good imitation of measles rash can be effected by stabbing the forearm with a stiff whisk-broom.
2. Queen Elizabeth was not above suspicion.
3. In Spanish you pronounce z like th.
4. Nine-tenths of the girls in a girls' college are not pretty.
5. You can sleep undetected in a lecture course by resting the head on the hand as if shading the eyes.
6. Weakness in drawing technique can be hidden by using a wash instead of black and white line.
7. Quite a respectable bun can be acquired by smoking three or four pipefuls of strong tobacco when you have no food in your stomach.
8. The ancient Phoenicians were really Jews, and got as far north as England where they operated tin mines.
9. You can get dressed much quicker in the morning if the night before when you are going to bed you take off your trousers and underdrawers at once, leaving the latter inside the former.

JUNIOR YEAR

1. Emerson left his pastorate because he had some argument about communion.

2. All women are untrustworthy.
3. Pushing your arms back as far as they will go fifty times each day increases your chest measurement.
4. Marcus Aurelius had a son who turned out to be a bad boy.
5. Eight hours of sleep are not necessary.
6. Heraclitus believed that fire was the basis of all life.
7. A good way to keep your trousers pressed is to hang them from the bureau drawer.
8. The chances are that you will never fill an inside straight.
9. The Republicans believe in a centralized government, the Democrats in a de-centralized one.
10. It is not necessarily effeminate to drink tea.

SENIOR YEAR

1. A dinner coat looks better than full dress.
2. There is as yet no law determining what constitutes trespass in an airplane.
3. Six hours of sleep are not necessary.
4. Bicarbonate of soda taken before retiring makes you feel better the next day.
5. You needn't be fully dressed if you wear a cap and gown to a nine-o'clock recitation.
6. Theater tickets may be charged.
7. Flowers may be charged.
8. May is the shortest month in the year.

The foregoing outline of my education is true enough in its way, and is what people like to think about a college course. It has become quite the cynical thing to admit laughingly that college did one no good. It is part of the American Credo that all that the college student learns is to catch punts and dance. I had to write something like that to satisfy the editors. As a matter of fact, I learned a great deal in college and have those four years to thank for whatever I know today.

(The above note was written to satisfy those of my instructors and financial backers who may read this. As a matter of fact, the original outline is true, and I had to look up the date about Charlemagne at that.)

Heartache on the Campus

Mrs. Glenn Frank • 1900–

First a dormitory, then a library, then a faculty and classrooms: in his essay above, Roger Holmes quotes President Eliot of Harvard as listing the essentials of a college in this order. The order recognizes that much of what is valuable in a college education comes not from books or professors but from the social experiences of college life. For many students, fraternities and sororities play the most valued part in organizing social life. But for others do they play a cruel and crippling part? Notice that President Eliot listed a dormitory, not a fraternity house. In this essay Mrs. Glenn Frank (who states her qualifications), eloquently argues the case against the fraternity-sorority system, on the grounds of the essentially undemocratic and inhumane social attitudes she believes it inculcates in those who belong, as well as on the grounds of the suffering it inflicts upon those who do not. If you believe in the system, what answers can you find to her argument, on both grounds, not merely on the grounds of its benefits to those who belong?

A FEW WEEKS ago at a large middle-western university I talked with a student who had recently been discharged from the army for poor health. The boy said he liked the school, his courses and his professors. There was one thing, however, which he did not like. He had come to the university as a legacy to one of the leading fraternities, but after looking him over the fraternity brothers had not invited him to become a member.

"I guess the war had made me too old," he said, grinning, but for all his nonchalance I could see the hurt in his eyes. He had been cruelly snubbed. Right at the start of his college career he had discovered that the very democracy for which he had fought didn't exist at this great university.

His discovery is not unique. Reports of friction between returning veterans and the Greek-letter societies come from many other colleges and universities supported by taxpayers' money. Young men who have been matured in the hard school of war are finding themselves the victims of a ridiculous and juvenile caste system which is totally un-American. This should not be. It is time for the legislatures of this country to enact stringent laws abolishing both college and high school fraternities and sororities from coast to coast.

To some people that may sound like a strong remedy for a comparatively minor evil in our educational system. But I do not consider it minor.

From the *Woman's Home Companion*, April, 1945. Reprinted by the kind permission of the author.

For more than a quarter of a century, as a sorority woman myself and as the wife of the president of one of our largest state universities, I have had a close view of the operations of the Greek-letter societies. What I have seen has convinced me that any good which these societies accomplish is far outweighed by the unhappiness and heartbreak which they inflict upon thousands of young people every year, and by the class-consciousness, religious bigotry and race prejudice which they foment right in those institutions which should be the most liberal. They have no more place in our public educational system than a Hitler youth movement.

Yes, you may say, but if fraternities and sororities should be abolished, wouldn't students organize other cliques and clubs? I admit that they would, but such groups would be formed in a normal natural way. Students would be judged on their merits and find their own level. A boy or girl would not be relegated to a fixed position in campus society during the first days of school, as is provided under smug Panhellenic rules, merely because of the prestige or bank account of his parents, or because of the way he flipped a cigarette or handled a cup of tea.

Only the other day I heard of the case of a dull and unattractive youth who was taken into an exclusive fraternity merely because his father, a rich alumnus, had presented the chapter house with a pine-paneled library; and I know of another case, just as recent, where a brilliant and beautiful girl was kept out of a sorority because her father happened to be a railroad engineer.

"What a pity God couldn't have made him a doctor or a lawyer instead," one of the sorority members said, but, imbued with the snobbery of her group, she voted against the girl just the same.

Such discrimination is the rule rather than the exception and just as often students are casually black-balled because of some trivial or imagined flaw in their appearance, dress or manners. Over and over again I have known of a boy's being rejected by a fraternity because he failed to dance well or wear the latest cut of collar, or of a girl who was made to feel a campus outcast because she was a bit overweight, perhaps, or made the fatal mistake of cutting her lettuce with a knife.

The high school fraternities and sororities are, if anything, even more brutal than the college societies which they imitate because they are unsupervised and they victimize students of an even more impressionable age. Many needless tears are shed and many hearts are broken every year where they flourish. I even know of one adolescent girl who committed suicide because her high school sorority refused to admit her sister to membership.

I realize that in certain places where high school fraternities and sororities have been suppressed by law they have sprung up again in the form of sub rosa organizations, but this can be prevented by requiring students to sign pledges against joining secret societies as is now done in the Milwaukee schools. Our main objective, however, should be the college fraternities

and sororities. Once they are eradicated, their high school offshoots will wither and die quickly.

The appalling injustice and cruelty of the method by which students are rushed and pledged to fraternities and sororities was first brought home to me through personal experience.

The men of my father's family had for generations attended distinguished colleges and some of them had made distinguished records. My father felt that it was high time that the girls of the family should receive real educations too, and since there wasn't enough money to send me to Vassar, he decided to send me to the university of my home state, Missouri.

Before I left home, two of my mother's best friends said that since they had been Pi Phi's at Missouri they hoped I might become one too, and that they intended to write to the chapter recommending me. This conversation made me a bit apprehensive, but Mother brushed it aside. After all, I was going to the university to get an education, she said, not to become a Pi Phi. What difference did it make whether the sorority asked me or not?

But during my first hours at the university I was made to feel that sororities were the only thing that did matter. Although they represented only a minority of the women students, they had apparently taken over the campus. They were giving teas, luncheons and dinners. They were helping some freshmen to matriculate and escorting others around town in stylish carriages, but only those freshmen, of course, about whom they had received letters. The YWCA was arranging parties for all girls, but no one wanted to go to them.

The big event of the Pi Phi rushing program was an evening party at the chapter house where candidates for pledging were given a final once-over by the members. I shall never forget that party. While stunning girls, gorgeously gowned, looked us over critically, I felt the way a person must feel on his way to the gallows. My pink-dotted mull dress and hair tied with a ribbon were all wrong, I felt, and I knew that one false move, such as spilling my coffee, would bar me forever from Pi Phi. I was frightened and homesick and my throat was parched.

When I got back to my room that night, I wrote to Mother begging her to let me come home. I pleaded homesickness, not daring to tell her that I was a failure — that there was no use in staying on, no use getting an education or anything else, because the Pi Phi's hadn't asked me and apparently weren't going to ask me. Never before or since have I felt so rejected, so hopelessly unattractive.

I started packing, but one afternoon there was a call from the Pi Phi house. Would I come over? I was so excited that I thought my quaking knees would not carry me several blocks. When I got there, one of the members pinned the Pi Phi's colors on my jumper dress. I was in!

It is impossible for me to put into words the relief which I experienced at that moment. It was like a reprieve from death. If I live to be a hundred,

I shall never forget, either, the deep sense of inferiority which I felt during the period when I thought I was not going to be pledged. Life for me simply wasn't worth living.

All this happened a long time ago, but the heartless and undemocratic methods used in rushing and selecting pledges have not been changed one iota. In 1925, when my husband started his long term of office as president of the University of Wisconsin, I thought I might find conditions there different, because Wisconsin had a reputation for liberality. But I discovered the system there was just as brutal as at Missouri, and it still is.

Every autumn at Wisconsin, as at many colleges, there would come a Sunday which always seemed to me the saddest day of the year. It was the Sunday on which the sororities sent out their invitations. It might be a beautiful fall day, but in boarding houses all over Madison, I knew, hundreds of teen-age girls would be waiting tensely for bids which would never come. As dusk fell all hope would die in their hearts and many, many of those youngsters would cry themselves to sleep that night.

I know, moreover, that the injury which is inflicted upon a young student's pride and self-respect when he is turned down by a Greek-letter society is, all too often, a permanent injury.

Not long ago I had a chat with a woman who failed to make a sorority during her stay at Wisconsin and who now lives in a fashionable suburb of Chicago. She has a successful husband, a lovely home and devoted children, but she confessed to me that if a guest in her house mentions colleges she gets up and leaves the room for fear she may be asked what sorority she belongs to.

Yes, and there is the case of Zona Gale. A short time before her death she told me how, more than thirty years before when she was a student at Wisconsin, she had wistfully watched the Delta Gammas starting off on picnics and had wished they would ask her to go with them.

Think of it — Zona Gale! Wisconsin's most famous daughter! Possessed of beauty, character, genius. Winner of the Pulitzer prize and holder of the highest honorary degrees which the university could confer. Yet the old cut of being ignored by the sororities had never healed. It was not vanity. Zona Gale had the least vanity of any woman I have ever known. It was just plain hurt — hurt inflicted by a system which doesn't make sense.

The scars which fraternities and sororities deal out gratuitously to the thousands of students whom they turn down every year are reason enough alone, it seems to me, to condemn them to extinction, but they are guilty of other gross crimes against democracy.

Recently a pretty sorority girl told me that she had been invited to a glee club concert by a brilliant nonfraternity man whom she really liked. Did she accept him? No indeed. Her sorority sisters might have made remarks. Instead, she went to the concert with a nitwit whom she didn't like. He

didn't have an idea in his head, but he belonged to a good fraternity and her choice was highly approved.

Once in a sorority or fraternity, a student is compelled to conform to a caste system whether he approves it or not. If he doesn't join one, on the other hand, he is apt to find himself excluded from leadership in many college activities. Greek-letter students are a minority on most campuses but are so tightly knit and politically organized that they generally control elections.

At Wisconsin, for example, which is typical of most state universities, the highest social honor obtainable is that of being chosen king or queen of the junior prom, but only once since 1925 has a nonfraternity man been elected prom king, and there has been only one prom queen who was not in a sorority.

Some defenders of the fraternity and sorority system contend that this condition is proof positive that nonfraternity and nonsorority students lack inherent aggressiveness and leadership. That is utter bosh.

The most brilliant boy in my class at Missouri, a man who is now known throughout America, was rejected by the fraternities because he was considered countrified, and just a few months ago middle-western newspapers carried long obituaries about another nonfraternity man whom I knew years later. He wasn't considered good enough to enter a fraternity because his mother was guilty of the heinous crime of working for a living. He was good enough, though, to become a well-known lawyer in his state within a few years after leaving college, and to give his life for his country while serving with our air forces in the South Pacific.

No, under the present Panhellenic system, even Abraham Lincoln wouldn't possess leadership enough to make a fraternity, but a brief study of Who's Who in America proves that fraternities have no monopoly on ability. Just as many non-Greeks as Greeks make names for themselves after college.

Even more sinister than the other forms of snobbery is the religious bigotry and race prejudice which fraternities and sororities foster in the minds of the young.

The dean of women at one of our large universities told me only the other day that Catholic girls were admitted to sororities there under a quota system which permitted only a limited number of Catholics to be pledged each year. This quota does not in any way compare with the percentage of Catholic girls at the university. The same system prevails, I know, whether it is admitted or not, at many other colleges and universities.

As for Jewish students, they are excluded generally by leading fraternities and sororities. A few weeks ago I heard a group of liberal-minded youths in one fraternity at an eastern college who rebelled against this taboo. By threatening to resign all at once the group forced this chapter to pledge a popular Jewish student. That was splendid, but I regret to say it is the only

case of the kind I have ever heard of. In most houses, anti-Semitism is almost a part of the ritual.

In self-defense the Jews have formed their own fraternities and sororities, but they have been brutally snubbed year after year by a stuffy faction in Panhellenic which has refused to grant them national charters.

Now why, in a nation which is pouring out its substance to provide equal rights for all people, do we permit a cruel caste system to flourish in our public schools?

One of the reasons, I think, is the attitude of parents.

I knew a woman in Madison who devoted sixteen years of her life, from the time her daughter was born until the child was of college age, to making social contacts which would enable her to get her daughter into an exclusive sorority, and that kind of thing is not uncommon. At a cocktail party recently, I talked with a number of mothers of teen-age children. Almost without exception they were much more concerned about getting their sons and daughters into fraternities and sororities than getting them an education.

Those women were not hopeless snobs. Most of them agreed that fraternities and sororities are unkind and undemocratic. Others deplored the added expense to which they are put — a sorority girl has to be equipped with a wardrobe comparable to that of a society debutante — but, well, since these organizations existed, they naturally wanted their children to belong to the best ones.

This same viewpoint is too often found among college faculty members. Not long ago I received a letter from a professor, famed for his liberal views, in which he asked me to help him get his daughter into a certain sorority. Since the fraternity and sorority system is deeply entrenched, he and many other professors who personally don't approve of it seem to feel that we must have it with us always, like death and taxes.

Such an attitude, it seems to me, is lazy and un-American. This country of ours has had many other deeply entrenched evils in its day, including slavery and inhuman child labor conditions, but we found ways of getting rid of them.

Among the most ardent exponents of the Greek-letter societies are the professional alumni — I've noticed they are often people who have not been very successful since leaving college — who maintain that fraternities and sororities bestow a kind of magical polish upon the boys and girls who belong to them.

That is mostly pure nonsense. During twenty-five years around college, I have never observed that the Greek-letter students acquired any better manners than the others, but if they did it would be a petty gain indeed compared to the dangerous caste ideas they are likely to absorb at the same time.

The only valid argument which the defenders of the system can muster is that the abolition of fraternities and sororities would create a housing

shortage at many schools. True, but the problem isn't unsolvable. Why shouldn't state universities buy chapter houses outright and convert them into dormitories run under college management? The total value of chapter houses at both public and private colleges is about $100,000,000. A sizable sum, yes, but less than we were spending every day to fight a war for democracy. It would be a cheap price to pay for the democratization of education.

The time for this democratization is now. Because of the war, the fraternities are in a weaker position than they have been in a generation. Twenty per cent of all chapters are inactive, and most of the others are depleted in membership. More important, the war veterans who are entering our colleges are bringing with them a more adult point of view than the students of peace years. A man who has learned democracy in foxholes does not mold so easily to the fraternity pattern as a teen-age boy right out of high school.

Recently at one university I talked with a wounded veteran whose viewpoint, I believe, is typical of that of thousands of other servicemen. Because of his unusual heroism in a bloody action in the Pacific, three different fraternities tried to pledge him when he entered college a few months ago, but he turned them all down.

When I asked him why he did so, he said that he considered himself grown up and fraternities childish. Why should he, after what he had been through, scrub a sidewalk with a toothbrush during hell week because some upper classman ordered him to? Why should he let a lot of so-called brothers dictate what girls he might or might not go out with?

Yet we cannot depend upon this attitude of returning servicemen alone to end the fraternity and sorority evil. The Greek-letter societies cannot be laughed out of existence as they deserve to be. They are too deeply rooted. Concerted action by students, parents and educators will be needed before our legislatures can be expected to enact laws abolishing them.

I cannot repeat too often that this should be done right away. On foreign battlefields, a whole generation of American boys of college age jeopardized their lives, and many of them gave their lives, to safeguard democracy. Here at home, the most powerful agency for the preservation of democracy is the public school system from primary grade through university. To make that system wholly worthy of what our boys fought for, we must wipe out fraternities and sororities while the time is ripe!

Dating in America

Geoffrey Gorer • 1905–

When we read an anthropologist's account of the Trobrianders or the Australian Bushmen we are amused by the strange customs and rituals of those queer people. When an anthropologist turns his gaze on our own customs and rituals we find the shoe on the other foot and realize that we too behave from deep unchallenged ceremonials, act on unconsidered but potent assumptions. Here an English anthropologist studies one of the most interesting of campus (and off-campus) rituals.

THE PRESENCE, the attention, the admiration of other people . . . becomes for Americans a necessary component to their self-esteem, demanded with a feeling of far greater psychological urgency than is usual in other countries. This gives a special tone to the social relationships of Americans with their fellows (with the exception, on occasion, of marital and parental relationships): they are, in the first instance, devices by which a person's self-esteem is maintained and enhanced. They can be considered exploitative, but this exploitation is nearly always mutual: "I will assure you that you are a success if you will assure me that I am" might be the unspoken contract under which two people begin a mutual relationship. The most satisfying form of this assurance is not given by direct flattery or commendation (this by itself is suspect as a device to exploit the other) but by love, or at least the concentrated, exclusive attention which shows that one is worthy of interest and esteem.

It is only against this psychological background that what is probably the most singular feature of American social life can be understood: the "dating" which occupies so much of nearly every American's leisure time from before adolescence until betrothal, and which for many continues even after, if separation or satiety lessens the satisfactions to be derived from the betrothed, or if excessive individual anxiety demands more reassurance than betrothed or spouse or lover can give. "Dating" is idiosyncratic in many ways, but especially so in that it uses the language and gestures of courtship and love-making, without necessarily implying the reality of either. The overt differences of behavior which distinguish "dating" from courtship are so slight as to be barely perceptible; yet only in rare cases, and those involving unbalanced people, does confusion result — when both partners are American. "Dating" is a highly patterned activity or group of activities, comparable in some ways to a formal dance, in others to a very

Reprinted from *The American People* by Geoffrey Gorer. By permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Copyright, 1948, by Geoffrey Gorer; pp. 108–117. Also by permission of The Cresset Press, Limited, London, England.

complicated competitive game; it is comparable to a dance in that the gestures employed do not have the significance they would have in other settings (witness the bows and curtsies of the minuet, the close embrace of the waltz and later ballroom dances); but it is more nearly comparable to such a competitive game as chess, in which the rules are known to, and observed by, both parties, but in which each move, after the opening gambit, is a response to the previous move of the other player. As in dances and games, the activity is felt to be enjoyable and rewarding for its own sake, and the more enjoyable the more nearly the partners or players are matched in skill and other necessary qualifications. The comparison with competitive games, such as chess, can be carried further; both partners must play with concentration and seriousness, using all their ingenuity, within the accepted rules, to be the victor; apart from the pleasure of the game, there is also the pleasant enhancement to one's self-esteem that winning the game provides. There is one aspect, however, in which the comparison of "dating" to chess breaks down; in a successful date there should not be a loser; both parties should feel their self-esteem, their assurance, enhanced.

As far as I know, no other society has been recorded which has developed a similar institutionalized type of behavior for its young people. A number of societies, of which the Samoans and the Trobrianders are well-known examples, allow for a period of sexual license and experiment before betrothal and marriage; but these are, and are meant to be, years of sensual and sexual satisfaction, sought for their own sake. In American "dating" sensual and sexual satisfactions may play a part (though this is by no means necessary) as counters in the game, but they are not the object of the exercise; the object of the exercise is enhanced self-esteem, assurance that one is lovable, and therefore a success.

A further complication arises from the fact that the words and gestures of love are regularly employed in "dating" without either party taking them for anything but counterfeit, moves in the game; and yet Americans believe very deeply and passionately in love (a concept not shared by the Samoans, nor the Trobrianders, nor many of the people of whom we have adequate studies). It is difficult to find comparisons for thus using frivolously in one context words and gestures which may be of the greatest importance in another. A very far-fetched one could be derived from the game of chess. In a period of monarchical passions and court intrigue "Your queen is captured" or "Your king is threatened" could have completely different significance according to the settings in which the phrases were used.

There is, finally, the complication that "dating," employing and being known to employ the words and gestures of love-making, is admitted and abetted by parents and teachers who, many of them, hold the puritan attitudes toward sex and the pleasures of the body, even though these attitudes do not seem to be held by most of the younger generation.

Because "dating" is so idiosyncratic to Americans (though the generality of Americans do not suspect this, believing, like the rest of the world, that the behavior they are used to is "human nature") and because it employs

the form — but not the content — of love-making, it has been the cause of innumerable and serious misunderstandings whenever young Americans have come in contact with foreigners of the opposite sex. An invitation to a "date" — a pleasant and mutually profitable evening to enhance each other's self-esteem and demonstrate one's skill in the game — is almost always interpreted by a non-American as an attempt at seduction; if it is indignantly repudiated, both parties are left angry and dissatisfied: if it is immediately acceded to, the American, at least, feels defrauded, as if one had set out for a hunt and the fox had insisted on sitting down in one's back yard.

In a "date" the opening move, at least overtly, should come from the boy, in the form of an invitation to the girl to spend the evening in his company. The basis of selection is somewhat different for the boy and for the girl. For the girl the object is to have as many invitations as possible, so that she can choose among them the partner whom she thinks can give her the best time, or who will be the most fun to compete with; for the boy the object is to have as his partner the girl who is most admired and most sought after by his companions and fellow rivals. A girl who only got a single invitation to an important social event (say a commencement dance), even though it was from the most desirable boy, the captain of the football team, would be doubtfully pleased (this, of course, on condition that they are not courting); a boy whose invitation is accepted by the local "belle" in similar circumstances has already gained a major social triumph. Consequently, participation in the "dating" pattern is somewhat different for the two sexes: all boys can and should take part in it, the level to which they aspire being dependent on their qualifications; but only the most successful and popular girls in each set do so fully, the rest having to be content with a steady boy friend, or even the companionship of a fellow unfortunate.

Unless an American boy is very poor, very maladjusted, or for some reason almost totally excluded from social life, "dating" and earning money for "dates" will occupy the greater part of his leisure time from early adolescence until betrothal. The social pressure toward doing so is very great. Thus in a typical Midwestern college fraternity the senior members insisted that the juniors have at least three "dates" a week; and further that these "dates" should be with girls who did honor to the fraternity, and, barring betrothal, should not be too frequently with the same girl. Such open control and supervision is unusual, but few Americans would quarrel with the standard of behavior demanded.

The experience of girls is much less uniform, since they are dependent on the boys' invitations, and the boys will invite the most popular girls obtainable. As a consequence some girls will have almost all their time taken up by "dates," while others have at most an occasional one, and many others drop out of the competition altogether until betrothal. The picture is clearest in formal dances. The hostess attempts to have at least three men for every two girls, so that at any moment at least a third of the men are in

the "stag line," whereas all the girls are dancing. A man from the stag line "cuts in on" a dancing couple by tapping the man on the shoulder and taking his place. By etiquette one cannot refuse to be cut in on, nor can one cut in on one's immediate successor; a third man must intervene before one can resume one's partner and conversation. A man should not abandon his partner until cut in on; and one of the greatest humiliations a girl can bear is not to be cut in on before her partner is satiated with her company. Such an unfortunate girl is not likely to be invited again, nor, if invited, to accept.

For many girls, consequently, the "dating" period is one of humiliation, of frustration, of failure. But though it is painful, it is not usually psychologically crippling. Such unsuccessful girls are often betrothed and married earlier and better than the "belles" who, many of them, find it difficult to give up such prebetrothal triumphs: and moreover a "belle" is rated by the amount of money spent on her, among other things, and the standard is too high for most young men to maintain regularly.

The "date" starts as an invitation from a young man to a girl for an evening's public entertainment, typically at his expense, though since the depression girls occasionally pay their share. The entertainment offered depends on the young man's means and aspirations, and the locality; but it is in a public place always, and nearly always includes eating food together, the food being anything from an ice-cream soda at the local drugstore to the most elaborate and expensive meal that the locality can provide. Besides the food, the most usual entertainment is dancing — the place of the dance ranging anywhere from the cheap roadside café with a jukebox to the most expensive cabaret or country club. The male (the "escort") should call for the girl in a car (unless he be particularly young or poor) and should take her back in the car. If the entertainment proposed is of a formal or expensive nature, the man should provide a corsage — flowers for the girl to wear on her dress or in her hair.

The corsage is the first sign of the man's estimate of his partner for the evening, partly through the expense of the flowers, and partly according to the extent to which they are particularly suited to the girl's appearance, personality, or costume. Every item of the subsequent entertainment gives further signs; the relative amount of money spent is important for the girl's self-esteem, and not in itself.

"Showing the girl a good time" is the essential background for a "date," but it is not its object, as far as the man is concerned; its object is to get the girl to prove that he is worthy of love, and therefore a success. In some cases superior efficiency in dancing will elicit the necessary signs of approval; but typically, and not unexpectedly, they are elicited by talk. Once again, the importance of words is paramount.

Since, on first "dates" the pair are normally comparative strangers to one another, a certain amount of autobiography is necessary in the hopes of establishing some common interest or experience, at the least to prove that one is worthy of the other's attention. These autobiographies, however,

differ at most in emphasis, in tone of voice, from those which should accompany any American meeting between strangers. What distinguishes the "date" from other conversation is a mixture of persiflage, flattery, wit and love-making which was formerly called a "line" but which each generation dubs with a new name.

The "line" is an individual variation of a commonly accepted pattern which is considered to be representative of a facet of a man's personality. Most men are articulately self-conscious about their "lines" and can describe them with ease; they are constantly practiced and improved with ever differing partners. The object of the "line" is to entertain, amuse, and captivate the girl, but there is no deep emotional involvement; it is a game of skill.

The girl's skill consists of parrying the "line" without discouraging her partner or becoming emotionally involved herself. To the extent that she falls for the "line" she is a loser in this intricate game; but if she discourages her partner so much that he does not request a subsequent "date" in the near future she is equally a loser. To remain the winner, she must make the nicest discriminations between yielding and rigidity.

The man scores to the extent that he is able to get more favors from the girl than his rivals, real or supposed, would be able to do. The proving time is the return journey from the place of public entertainment to the girl's home. A good-night kiss is almost the minimum repayment for an evening's entertainment; but how much more depends on the enterprise of the man, the self-assurance of the woman, and the number of "dates" the pair have had together. This love-making is still emotionally uninvolved; it is still part of the game, though the gestures and intimacies and language are identical with true love-making; it is not, save most rarely, an attempt at seduction; and the satisfactions sought are not, in the first instance, sensual but self-regarding. The man should demonstrate his enterprise and prove that he is worthy to be loved by pressing for ever further favors; but the girl who yields too much, or too easily, may well be a disappointment, in exactly the same way as too easy a victory in tennis or chess may be a disappointment.

A Student at His Book

Ascribed to Sir Bernard Mosher • 1497–1580?

Perhaps old Sir Bernard Mosher's sixteenth-century student should have had the advantage of reading Geoffrey Gorer's twentieth-century explanation that dating isn't to be confused with courtship. Anyway, his wry little poem is a warning against a too-hasty running from book to wife.

A STUDENT at his book, so placed
That wealth he might have won,
From book to wife did fleet in haste,
From wealth to woe did run.
Now, who hath played a feater cast,
Since juggling first begun?
In knitting of himself so fast,
Himself he hath undone.

A Great Teacher's Method

Samuel H. Scudder • 1837–1911

What makes a teacher great? A great personality? Great learning? A great method? Thinking of the poor, ineffectual Miss Groby's (see pages 30–32), think also of great teachers you have known and try to analyze what made them great; or take only one whose teaching has made a real difference in your life and try to explain how that teacher achieved the effect. In this instance, Scudder shows how Agassiz used an apparently simple method to teach a great lesson.

IT WAS more than fifteen years ago [about 1858] that I entered the laboratory of Professor Agassiz, and told him I had enrolled my name in the Scientific School as a student of natural history. He asked me a few questions about my object in coming, my antecedents generally, the mode in which I afterwards proposed to use the knowledge I might acquire, and, finally, whether I wished to study any special branch. To the latter I replied that, while I wished to be well grounded in all departments of zoology, I purposed to devote myself specially to insects.

"When do you wish to begin?" he asked.

"Now," I replied.

This seemed to please him, and with an energetic "Very well!" he reached from a shelf a huge jar of specimens in yellow alcohol.

"Take this fish," said he, "and look at it; we call it a haemulon; by and by I will ask what you have seen."

With that he left me, but in a moment returned with explicit instructions as to the care of the object entrusted to me.

"No man is fit to be a naturalist," said he, "who does not know how to take care of specimens."

I was to keep the fish before me in a tin tray, and occasionally moisten

From *Every Saturday* (April 4, 1874) 16, 369–370.

the surface with alcohol from the jar, always taking care to replace the stopper tightly. Those were not the days of ground-glass stoppers and elegantly shaped exhibition jars; all the old students will recall the huge neckless glass bottles with their leaky, wax-besmeared corks, half eaten by insects, and begrimed with cellar dust. Entomology was a cleaner science than ichthyology, but the example of the Professor, who had unhesitatingly plunged to the bottom of the jar to produce the fish, was infectious; and though this alcohol had a "very ancient and fishlike smell," I really dared not show any aversion within these sacred precincts, and treated the alcohol as though it were pure water. Still I was conscious of a passing feeling of disappointment, for gazing at a fish did not commend itself to an ardent entomologist. My friends at home, too, were annoyed when they discovered that no amount of eau-de-Cologne would drown the perfume which haunted me like a shadow.

In ten minutes I had seen all that could be seen in that fish, and started in search of the Professor — who had, however, left the Museum; and when I returned, after lingering over some of the odd animals stored in the upper apartment, my specimen was dry all over. I dashed the fluid over the fish as if to resuscitate the beast from a fainting-fit, and looked with anxiety for a return of the normal sloppy appearance. This little excitement over, nothing was to be done but to return to a steadfast gaze at my mute companion. Half an hour passed — an hour — another hour; the fish began to look loathsome. I turned it over and around; looked it in the face — ghastly; from behind, beneath, above, sideways, at a three-quarters' view — just as ghastly. I was in despair; at an early hour I concluded that lunch was necessary; so, with infinite relief, the fish was carefully replaced in the jar, and for an hour I was free.

On my return, I learned that Professor Agassiz had been at the Museum, but had gone, and would not return for several hours. My fellow-students were too busy to be disturbed by continued conversation. Slowly I drew forth that hideous fish, and with a feeling of desperation again looked at it. I might not use a magnifying-glass; instruments of all kinds were interdicted. My two hands, my two eyes, and the fish: it seemed a most limited field. I pushed my finger down its throat to feel how sharp the teeth were. I began to count the scales in the different rows, until I was convinced that that was nonsense. At last a happy thought struck me — I would draw the fish; and now with surprise I began to discover new features in the creature. Just then the Professor returned.

"That is right," said he; "a pencil is one of the best of eyes. I am glad to notice, too, that you keep your specimen wet, and your bottle corked."

With these encouraging words, he added:

"Well, what is it like?"

He listened attentively to my brief rehearsal of the structure of parts whose names were still unknown to me: the fringed gill-arches and movable operculum; the pores of the head, fleshy lips and lidless eyes; the lateral line, the spinous fins and forked tail; the compressed and arched

body. When I had finished, he waited as if expecting more, and then, with an air of disappointment:

"You have not looked very carefully; why," he continued more earnestly, "you haven't even seen one of the most conspicuous features of the animal, which is as plainly before your eyes as the fish itself; look again, look again!" and he left me to my misery.

I was piqued; I was mortified. Still more of that wretched fish! But now I set myself to my task with a will, and discovered one new thing after another, until I saw how just the Professor's criticism had been. The afternoon passed quickly; and when, toward its close, the Professor inquired:

"Do you see it yet?"

"No," I replied, "I am certain I do not, but I see how little I saw before."

"That is next best," said he, earnestly, "but I won't hear you now; put away your fish and go home; perhaps you will be ready with a better answer in the morning. I will examine you before you look at the fish."

This was disconcerting. Not only must I think of my fish all night, studying, without the object before me, what this unknown but most visible feature might be; but also, without reviewing my discoveries, I must give an exact account of them the next day. I had a bad memory; so I walked home by Charles River in a distracted state, with my two perplexities.

The cordial greeting from the Professor the next morning was reassuring; here was a man who seemed to be quite as anxious as I that I should see for myself what he saw.

"Do you perhaps mean," I asked, "that the fish has symmetrical sides with paired organs?"

His thoroughly pleased "Of course! of course!" repaid the wakeful hours of the previous night. After he had discoursed most happily and enthusiastically — as he always did — upon the importance of this point, I ventured to ask what I should do next.

"Oh, look at your fish!" he said, and left me again to my own devices. In a little more than an hour he returned, and heard my new catalogue.

"That is good, that is good!" he repeated; "but that is not all; go on"; and so for three long days he placed that fish before my eyes, forbidding me to look at anything else, or to use any artificial aid. "Look, look, look," was his repeated injunction.

This was the best entomological lesson I ever had — a lesson whose influence has extended to the details of every subsequent study; a legacy the Professor had left to me, as he has left it to many others, of inestimable value, which we could not buy, with which we cannot part.

A year afterward, some of us were amusing ourselves with chalking outlandish beasts on the Museum blackboard. We drew prancing starfishes; frogs in mortal combat; hydra-headed worms; stately crawfishes, standing on their tails, bearing aloft umbrellas; and grotesque fishes with gaping mouths and staring eyes. The Professor came in shortly after, and was as amused as any at our experiments. He looked at the fishes.

"Haemulons, every one of them," he said; "Mr. —— drew them."

True; and to this day, if I attempt a fish, I can draw nothing but haemulons.

The fourth day, a second fish of the same group was placed beside the first, and I was bidden to point out the resemblances and differences between the two; another and another followed, until the entire family lay before me, and a whole legion of jars covered the table and surrounding shelves; the odor had become a pleasant perfume; and even now, the sight of an old, six-inch, worm-eaten cork brings fragrant memories.

The whole group of haemulons was thus brought in review; and, whether engaged upon the dissection of the internal organs, the preparation and examination of the bony framework, or the description of the various parts, Agassiz's training in the method of observing facts and their orderly arrangement was ever accompanied by the urgent exhortation not to be content with them.

"Facts are stupid things," he would say, "until brought into connection with some general law."

At the end of eight months, it was almost with reluctance that I left these friends and turned to insects; but what I had gained by this outside experience has been of greater value than years of later investigation in my favorite groups.

The University

James Bryant Conant • *1893–*

What is a university? What are its functions? How does it differ from a college? For the national good, not simply for personal advantage, who should have a higher education? The earlier essays in this section take up some issues of college life and learning, but mostly in immediately recognizable, personal terms of students and teachers, their life and ways. In this essay James Bryant Conant, until recently president of Harvard, goes into some basic questions about the nature and functions of our institutions of higher learning. You will probably find the essay rather difficult because the terms are impersonal, the perspective broadly historical and philosophical, and the language somewhat abstract. But you will also find it valuable to your understanding of your actual situation, for the chances are that, like most students, you have moved up from high school into college or university with only the haziest conception of what these advanced schools are, in their institutional nature and functions.

Reprinted by permission of the publishers from James Bryant Conant, *Education in a Divided World.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, Copyright, 1948, by The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Pp. 153–171.

THE CRITICAL PERIOD in a young man's life as far as the relation of his education to his career is concerned lies between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one. If he drops out of high school, or finishes high school and does not go on to a university, many roads are barred; for example, only with the greatest difficulty can he become a doctor, lawyer, or engineer. On the other hand, if he graduates from a four-year liberal arts college, in many cases he will consider that his "higher education" was thrown away if he takes up an occupation largely recruited from non-college men. Assuming for the moment that all barriers of economics and geography and national origins were swept aside by a magic wand, how would a wise educator proceed to plan the education of thousands of young men in any one of the forty-eight different states? Is everyone to go to college? If so, what kind of college? If not, on what basis are some to be denied "the privileges of a higher education"?

To my mind the crux of the problem is to be found in such phrases as "the privileges of a higher education." If we could eliminate the word "higher" we could at least make a start toward thinking more clearly about the relation of our colleges to the structure of American society. For the adjective "higher" implies at once that those who do not go to a university or a four-year college are forever on a lower plane. And any discerning teacher in our secondary schools will testify that the social implications of "going to college" weigh quite as heavily with parents and children as does proven aptitude for college work. Furthermore, any placement officer of a college knows full well that it is a rare holder of a bachelor's degree who is eager to take up as his lifework a trade or vocation for which he might have been trained in a technical high school.

In the last fifty years in many sections of the country the colleges have been considered to no small degree as vocational ladders (though many a professor would shudder at the term) not because of the intellectual content of their curricula or the training of the mind, but because of the "friends one made." The tendency of management to hire only college men as junior executives is merely one manifestation of the undefined but very definite recognition on the part of ambitious people that "without a college education you cannot get ahead." The practice of the Armed Services during the war and the public statements of some high ranking officers have increased this feeling. The extent to which such ideas confuse our thinking about education beyond the high school can hardly be exaggerated.

Let us eliminate all the hierarchical overtones from the word "higher" and get squared away for a discussion of high school and college in terms of the ideal of equality of educational opportunity. Instead of raising the question, "Who should be educated?" let us rather consider the problem, "How long should be the education of the members of each vocation?" Of course, those who consciously or unconsciously reject the premise of working toward a more fluid social order should stick to the phrase "higher education" and underline the adjective. Anyone who wishes to solve our

educational problems along hereditary class lines is well advised to support an educational pattern in which collegiate training is primarily for students who can pay for it — this training to be suitable both for those who enter the professions and for those who are to be managers of industry and commerce. Public education would then be largely concerned with providing another type of terminal schooling for future clerical workers, still another for manual workers, and so on through a close-knit stratified social system. The exceptionally brilliant boy, measured in academic terms, can be taken care of under such an arrangement by a relatively inexpensive system of scholarships, or at least he can in theory.

On the other hand, if we want to move toward a more flexible social structure, we must consider the final years of formal education not as a privilege of those who can afford to pay, or to be won by a few with high scholastic skill — but something open to all who deserve it and *need* it. And the emphasis on the word "need" is all-important, provided we define "need" in terms of subsequent vocation.

It seems evident at first sight that certain vocations require longer periods of formal training than do others. As now conceived, public health tops the list; medicine and the academic careers requiring a Ph.D. in arts or letters are next; research in science is not far behind; then come law and engineering — to name only a few of the well-recognized professions. All of these have demanded, in the past, at least four years beyond high school, medicine usually eight. Not only do these vocations require a long period of formal education, but the nature of the general as well as the specialized work corresponds to the orientation of the able student measured in terms of college grades. The path to these occupations might well separate from the main educational road at the end of high school. In the first years of this century this path was the main road and indeed almost the only way to the learned professions. The universities supplied professional education; the four-year colleges either as separate institutions or within the universities fed the university professional schools.

But, as already indicated, during the last fifty years the four-year colleges have been the pathway not only to the professions but to white-collar jobs in business. The number and nature of the professions have expanded, to be sure, and the success of the agricultural colleges has blurred the distinction in certain states. By and large the opinion that higher education is to be equated with a bachelor's degree from a four-year institution has been gaining ground for a generation.

I hope to show in this and the following chapter that this pattern can and should be altered. The time has come, it seems to many educators, when we must distinguish more clearly between professional training (the characteristic educational function of a university) and a combination of general education and vocational training which may be accomplished in local two-year terminal colleges. In presenting this thesis, it would be logical to consider the two-year college first and then go on to analyze the

functions of a university. But such a procedure would be unrealistic, for today the two-year local college is still in the process of development whereas the university has already assumed a very definite status. Before urging reforms, therefore, which alter to some degree the accepted pattern of education beyond the high school, we need to examine the present state of advanced education in the United States. In particular, we must understand the history of American universities and the way their growth has reflected some of the characteristics of our society.

A century and a half ago no one could have foreseen that the university tradition as imported to this continent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was to undergo a significant mutation. No one then could have predicted that exposure to the social and political climate of the United States, to alternate blasts of Jeffersonian and Jacksonian democracy in particular, was to bring about an academic revolution and that the state universities were to play a leading role in the transformation; but such was in fact the case.

Only in the last fifty years has the reality of the change in species become apparent to all observers, and only in the last twenty-five years has the true significance of the alteration been widely understood. Even today there are those who regard the change as a mere temporary and extremely regrettable aberration to be attacked by drastic surgery — pruned or cut back, as it were, to conform to the older European model of a perfect university.

But what is this university tradition which has undergone a revolution in American hands — a revolution equivalent to a biological mutation? Indeed, what is a university? How shall we define the *genus*? For nearly a thousand years there have been universities in the Western World; to understand the present institutions, we must therefore comprehend something of their history. For while there have been several clear and distinct changes in the pattern, the essence of the university tradition has through all these years remained constant. We can describe a university, it seems to me, as a community of scholars with a considerable degree of independence and self-government, concerned with professional education, the advancement of knowledge, and the general education of the leading citizens. To accomplish these three ends, it has been found desirable often — but not always — to incorporate into the community of scholars a community of students. Thus arose what has been termed the "collegiate way of living." Thus came about the emphasis on what we now call the "extracurricular" educational values.

As the university tradition came to America, it was based on four ultimate sources of strength: the cultivation of learning for its own sake, the educational stream that makes possible the professions, the general educational stream of the liberal arts, and, lastly, the never-failing river of student life carrying all the power that comes from the gregarious impulses of human beings. According to my view, universities have flourished when these four elements have been properly in balance; on the other hand, when one or

more of these same elements has diminished or dried up, the academies of advanced instruction have failed signally in performing a relevant social function.

The cultivation of learning alone produces not a university but a research institute; sole concern with student life produces in these days either an academic country club or a football team maneuvering under a collegiate banner; professional education by itself results in nothing but a trade school; an institution concerned with general education, even in the best liberal arts tradition, divorced from research and training for the professions is admittedly not a university but a college. Therefore, to my mind, the future of the American university depends primarily on keeping a balance between these four traditional elements of strength. These four elements were the basis of the properly balanced plan in a time when universities were flourishing; they must continue to be in balance if the American university is to fulfill its proper functions in the times that are to come.

But what is there new, one may ask, about the American university, and how does the novelty (if any) affect the prospects for its future? The mutation, I believe, occurred in two of the four historic elements of which I speak: namely, professional education, and general education of the leading citizens. The first was a change in content, an enormous growth; the second, a change in type of student. Both represent a vast broadening of the educational goals; both present us with problems still unsolved. The changes have been to a large degree unconscious responses to social forces, and often the rationalization of the transformations has been in other terms than I shall use.

As public secondary education expanded in the last decades of the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth, the colleges and universities likewise expanded. Not only were the applicants more numerous, they were much more heterogeneous as to backgrounds and ambitions. Furthermore, the political, social, and economic development of the United States vastly altered the way in which the public regarded education. As the years went by, it became more and more evident that in our complex industrialized society mere ability to read and write, added to native wit, was not enough. With the passing of the frontier, the pioneer spirit was turned away from new lands toward new industries. And to manage modern industry requires more than a high school education — at least for all but the very exceptional man.

With increasing industrialization went increasing urbanization, a higher standard of living, and a vast number of services available for city and town dwellers, more and more new mechanical and electrical devices distributed widely among the population — automobiles, electric refrigerators, and radios, to mention the most obvious examples. All this industrial expansion required more and more men and women with a larger and different educational experience than would have been necessary fifty years earlier to run a farm, a store, or even a bank.

The pressure on the universities, therefore, to educate men and women for specific vocations both increased and diversified. Beginning with the Morrill Act, the public had recognized the need for education in agriculture and the mechanical and industrial arts. Many a state in the Union made the significant step of combining the new agricultural and industrial arts colleges with an older state college of arts and letters. Perhaps one could say that from this union came the new American university. But, if so, the transformation rapidly spread elsewhere. Even before the great influx in numbers, the pattern had been set in publicly controlled and privately controlled universities alike; the mechanical and industrial arts (later to be known as engineering) and agriculture were recognized as being on a par, at least in theory, with divinity, medicine, and law.

As the twentieth century grew older, both the enrollments in our universities and the diversity of the training increased with each decade. The word "profession," in danger of being stretched beyond the elastic limit, was supplemented by the phrase "semi-profession." But soon the voice of the critic was heard in the land. Able and distinguished citizens became alarmed at this transformation of the idea of a university in American hands. When you once abandon the concept of a university as a home of learning, a place where the life of the mind is to be cultivated at all costs, you destroy our centers of higher education, they declared.

But in spite of those outcries and lamentations, the development proceeded on its way. One of our oldest universities strengthened its school of business administration, another continued to give degrees in forestry and nursing, while privately controlled universities in urban areas were as catholic in their offerings as any financed by the state. One element of the ancient four — professional education — had received nourishment from the combination of democracy and industrialization. It was forced to proliferate in a way to shock the admirers of the ancient stem. All manner of new vocations were assimilated within the sacred walls of a university, and graduates armed with special training in a variety of skills stood on the commencement platform as proudly as the future members of the clergy or the bar.

In short, in the course of seventy-five years or so the forces of democracy had taken the European idea of a university and transformed it. The American university today is as different from the nineteenth-century British or Continental universities as the Renaissance universities of Italy and the Netherlands were different from those of the Middle Ages. Personally, I think the basic philosophy which almost unconsciously has shaped the growth of the modern American university is sound, for it is none other than a philosophy hostile to the supremacy of a few vocations: it is a philosophy moving toward the social equality of all useful labor.

As an offset to this increased emphasis on professional training (for I regard all university vocational education as a derivative of the ancient professions), there came about a strong movement to make American universities centers of scholarly work and scientific investigation. This move-

ment was not only to some degree a counterbalance to the educational forces associated with the agricultural and mechanical colleges, but also a response to a challenge to make of some of the older institutions something more than advanced boarding schools for a special group.

In the middle of the last century the head of one of the Oxford colleges, an eminent scholar and educational reformer, saw no evidence that the university tradition had ever taken root in the United States. "America has no universities, as we understand the term," he wrote, "the institutions so-called being merely places for granting titular degrees." Taken literally this harsh judgment is undoubtedly false; yet it probably is not a gross exaggeration of the situation which then existed. The new spirit moving within the educational institutions of the country had not become evident to those outside our academic walls.

It was not until the Johns Hopkins University was opened at Baltimore that the idea of a university as a center of advanced learning came to have a prominent place in the public mind. It was not until Gilman had boldly proclaimed that "all departments of learning should be promoted" and that "the glory of the university should rest upon the character of the teachers and scholars . . . and not upon their number nor upon the buildings constructed for their use" — it was not until then that scholarship came into its own again as part of the university tradition of the United States.

From this development, as we all know, came the growth of the graduate schools of arts and sciences, the introduction of new standards of excellence in regard to original work by scientists and scholars, and the growth of what is now sometimes referred to as the Ph.D. octopus. All this was slow at first but, like the other changes in the universities of America, gained speed during the period just before and just after the first World War. As a consequence, the American university has been in recent years something of a mental patient suffering from a schizophrenic disorder: on one day, or during one administration, the disciplines grouped under the banner of the arts, letters, and sciences represent the dominant personality; on another day, or during another administration, it is the vocational procession led by law and medicine that sweeps all before it.

But, as so often happens in the delightful chaos of American democracy, the various pressure groups to a large degree canceled out. Looking back over the history of this century, we can see that the American universities drew strength from many different sources. The fact that the forces making for the new developments were not only often totally unrelated but at times apparently working one against another made little difference; the expansion and strengthening of the entire institution continued almost without interruption. The nature of the typical American university had emerged; whether any given institution was state-controlled or privately supported made little difference in the pattern. In some states there was a comprehensive system comprising several constituent members; in others all work was included in one academic institution.

As to the variety of the vocational training, one university or one uni-

versity system might show considerable divergence from another; as to the strength of the faculties, there were, of course, wide differences; but as to their ideas of undergraduate education and their devotion to the welfare of the students, there was remarkable uniformity among them all. The significant fact was that no university which gave degrees in the ancient professions of medicine or law remained aloof from also giving degrees in such modern subjects as business administration, engineering, journalism, forestry, architecture, nursing, or education. And many were awarding the bachelor's degree for courses of study in vocational fields very distant, indeed, from the traditional disciplines of the arts and sciences.

To complete this brief and inadequate account of the Americanization of the university idea, it remains only to discuss general education as apart from vocational education. I have earlier referred to the "general education of the leading citizens" as one of those traditional elements in the university pattern which have remained constant through the centuries. A volume would be required to do justice to this aspect of the work of universities in different countries and in different periods of history. In a sense, this phase of university education is a by-product of the two main preoccupations of the scholars: the advancement of learning, and education for the professions — which includes, of course, the training of new scholars. In a sense, it is a by-product — yet a by-product which in the public eye (including the eye of future students) has often loomed as large as all the other functions of the university put together. And the larger it loomed the more emphasis we find put on student life, which has manifested itself in ways as different as the Oxford colleges, the German dueling clubs, and the American zest for intercollegiate athletics.

If we examine the role of the universities in the English-speaking countries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we find a fair proportion of the students preparing not for the church or the bar, but for public service or a career in letters. In England only slowly, in the Colonies more rapidly, the merchant families came to send their boys to a college or university in order to obtain the sort of general education required by the business positions they would later occupy. In terms of the total population, the number of young men who pursued this road, however, was small indeed. For the most part, only a special set of relatively wealthy families patronized the colleges and universities for this purpose; the poor boy entered only if he desired to become a scholar or a member of a learned profession.

The numbers were small in the eighteenth century and the first part of the nineteenth, because, except to those in the professions I have mentioned, the education thus acquired was of but little significance in later life. The same may be said of the situation throughout America as late as the middle of the last century. But then matters began to change. As part of the educational expansion more and more boys began to enter colleges and universities, not to study for the professions but for a general education as a preparation for later life in the business world. An acute observer

reared in another culture might have seen at the turn of the century that American educational policy was steering American educational philosophy toward an ugly problem. As long as education beyond the high school was a matter for a very small fraction of the population and, except for learned and literary men, of no great moment in terms of subsequent success, it mattered little who went to college. But as more and more doors of opportunity in an increasingly industrialized society became closed to the non-college man, the question of who went to college raised new social and political problems. Today we are faced with the awkward questions raised in the beginning of this chapter: Have we real equality of educational opportunity at the college level? If not, what is the proper remedy? Is everyone to go to college?

Of one thing we can be sure — not everyone should have a professional training, even using this word in the broad American sense. This proposition requires no documentation. A second premise, almost equally obvious to those who are convinced of the validity of our American ideals, is that those who do obtain a professional education should be chosen on the basis of pure merit. This follows as a consequence of the doctrine of equality of educational opportunity which has been emphasized so frequently throughout this book. But it may be supported on entirely different grounds on the basis of the welfare of the nation. A modern industrialized, highly urbanized country can prosper only if the professions are full of capable, imaginative, and forward-looking men. We must have extremely able lawyers, doctors, teachers, scientists, and public servants. There is no place for nepotism in the recruitment of this corps of specialists. To the extent that we now fail to educate the potential talent of each generation, we are wasting one of the country's greatest assets. In the world today a highly industrialized nation simply cannot afford this type of waste. Yet no one familiar with the situation would deny that such a waste occurs.

In spite of the fact that America had remade the university and expanded the facilities for university students several fold, before the war there were many able youths for whom the professional world was barred. Evidence on this point has already been presented in Chapter 3, and it need not be repeated here. In the immediate postwar years, 1946–1948, thanks to the G. I. Bill, the universities and colleges have been crowded, and because of the large amount of Federal money expended, it is true that any adequately prepared veteran who wants a college education can obtain it. But when this war generation has been educated, what is then to come? Shall we revert to the prewar situation? Can we afford to do so either in terms of our ideals or our need for talent?

We must remember that as matters stand today the opportunities for professional education at low cost are very unequally and unfairly distributed in the United States. As was pointed out earlier, the urban family with a low income is in a relatively favored position since every city of any size has one or more universities (often tuition free). By living at home

the student can receive professional training with only a small outlay in cash. On the other hand, those who grow up in smaller cities, towns, and rural areas are with rare exceptions beyond commuting distance to a university. For these young men and women, to attend an academic institution which gives professional training means living away from home with a consequent high expense. Clearly scholarships, loan funds, and opportunities for part-time work are the methods by which youths from rural areas must surmount the economic barriers which bar the road to the professions.

Since the major cost of advanced education, if the student is away from home, is board and lodging, one can argue that as far as possible the expansion of public education beyond high school should be arranged locally. Otherwise in order to offer equal opportunities we should have to envisage using public funds to provide years of free board and room for a considerable fraction of our high school graduates. But there are various types of professional and vocational education which can be given at only a few centers in even a very populous state. It is literally impossible, for example, to give adequate instruction in clinical medicine except in cities of sufficient size to support large hospitals. Similarly, advanced work in the arts, sciences, and letters can be done only where adequate libraries and laboratories are at hand. It is clearly in the national interest to find all the latent talent available for the lengthy training that research careers demand. Yet to establish research centers at every point in the United States where general education beyond the high school is desired would be not merely uneconomical, but impossible. The alternative, to strengthen our present universities and establish a national system of scholarships, seems the only answer. The way this might be done and how it might be financed will be the subject of the next chapter.

I venture to conclude this discussion of the universities by returning to my original proposition: the health of our universities depends on keeping a balance between the advancement of knowledge, professional education, general education, and the demands of student life. From time to time, every institution will be threatened by the overgrowth of one of these four elements or the atrophy of one or more. But by and large it seems clear that in the next few years it is the advancement of knowledge which will be in need of the greatest encouragement and support. I say this in spite of the present public concern with supporting research in the physical and biological sciences. I say it in part because of this concern. I am afraid that there will be so many research institutes founded by industry and philanthropy for very specific purposes that the university faculties will be drained dry of their productive men. Few laymen seem to realize the simple fact that it is men that count, and that first-rate investigators and original scholars are relatively rare phenomena and require long and careful training. That is why, to me, the spending of the taxpayers' money on a scholarship policy is fully as important as the establishment of a National Science Foundation to support basic research in our universities.

The Bells Rang Every Hour

John Holmes • 1904–

Looking backward upon his college days, Holmes tries to evoke the feeling of what college was like and what its experiences meant to him. Contrast his celebration of the enriching personal values of college life with Benchley's humorous exposure of its poverty of significant meaning, and also with Shapiro's indictment of its spiritual bankruptcy. Remember that each of the writers is limiting himself to effective literary expression of a single attitude among the many possible ones.

THE BELLS RANG every hour from the tower in the trees
In the springtime every day. A bell said, Go,
And we went, from gym to Greek to chlorophyll,
To coffee at ten in the morning, back to the Bible,
And met the girls we were in love with, after class.

We had been fourteen when the War was over, too young
For that one; then, as it happened, too old for the next.
We were graduated in nineteen-twenty-nine, a year,
We were told at Commencement, great, the greatest,
Opening out like a broad road up the map
From youth to yonder, to heaven, to anywhere.

We shall never know so much as long as we live
About God or verbs again, or be so in love.
Here it is: bells, books, coffee, evenings in spring.
Here's the night we walked. Streetlights. Leaves in rain.
We made notes. We were very good at making notes
On what the professor thought we thought he said,
And at gazing at him and thinking of something else,
Poems, maybe . . . or maybe last night . . . or something.
Not Sacco and not Vanzetti, in the papers then.
We were very important, were very busy, expected
At all the dances, and always seen there dancing.
We spoke our mind in print, in the college weekly,
Definitely against the examination system.

The bells rang every hour from the tower in the trees.
What was it going to be like, we had asked ourselves?

Everyone reading, we thought. The books! The books!
Not drudgery, but all blown in a new exciting light,

Reprinted from *Map of My Country* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1943). Copyright by John Holmes.

Fiercely, and not indoors, but everywhere,
Walking, working, talking everywhere about new ideas.
College is a place where no one reads the papers.
College is a long four years that will never end.
But the secret of civilization was ours to ask for:
A magic: kneel in the classroom, rise, and know all.

The thing for the map is the thick crowd of names,
Not of heroes or readers, but names of those who were there,
Assigned to our dormitories by the registrar,
Chosen by upperclassmen to join our clubs,
Beside us in lectures because of the alphabet,
Therefore our friends.
Only the careless and hard,
The gay, the stubborn, the wild self-powered, were worth it,
And most of them never obeyed or heard the bells
In the stone tower, at twenty minutes past the hour.

Their hour was midnight, or after, reading aloud,
Talking, eating, listening to Bach and to Beethoven,
Drinking coffee, laughing, talking, reading aloud,
Working their way to France on a freighter, and home,
Crazy and glorious, poor, always poor, and talking.
Maybe the secret of civilization was this, off-campus,
Proving that Dante is best if read in Italian,
And somebody's new album of Brahms' First Symphony;
Witty and careless, with coffee and more music, and midnight.

In the morning the President, by special appointment,
Would see the editor, campus figure, and sleepy.
If only he could be told about Brahms, and Italian,
And coffee and civilization and books and no money.
And he could have been told, but I couldn't tell him.
I couldn't tell him, and now I can't tell even myself.
I can't call back what it was I wanted to say.
And what if he'd asked me how I liked the college?

It was not what we thought. *Better?* Well, different.
Duller? No. Different, not what we thought. *Worth it?*
Yes, worth it. But not for the reasons they told us. *Then what?*

For the people. For the professor of chemistry I hated,
Who knew it, and showed me his dearest research, as if
Two artists consulted, so shouldering me toward my art;
For the professor whose B was precious, as some A's were not;

For Tommy, for Peg, for Larry, for Chan, for Duke;
And for the letter-carrier, and the night watchmen.

The seeing so many people, and naming them every day.
For the people; the place; the times hung in memory;
Nights on the Chapel steps whispering closely, or not;
The crazy excitement of May in our senior year, —
The last classes, the last everything, the remembering
Supper hours warm and noisy at the fraternity house,
The tired silence when at last the presses were running
Too loud for talk when the college paper was yours
And you knew every word in type in the forms by heart.
O God, you say, that was all good, and it was good.

Then they all come in a whirl of mornings and faces,
Too many men and women, a photograph-album world.
Here's the spring night we walked in, after the movies,
Here's Braker Hall, I think this was our junior year.
The book riffles. There's Gene remember Gene Goss he
Played the banjo he died there's Henry remember Henry
Thompson he died look there's what was her name look
Mark's married who's that Jim I saw Jim the other day
He asked for you who's-that-who's-Dave-there's-Joe-
Where's-Joe-he-used-to-be-very-funny-shut-the-book.

Shut the book. It's a good book. But a long time ago.

University

Karl Shapiro • 1913–

In a quite different tone from Holmes, Karl Shapiro, a leading contemporary poet, indicts the university for its institutional denial of the democratic values envisioned by Jefferson (to whom allusion is made in the last stanza as founder of the University of Virginia), and championed by Mrs. Frank and President Conant in their essays above.

To HURT the Negro and avoid the Jew
Is the curriculum. In mid-September
The entering boys, identified by hats,
Wander in a maze of mannered brick

Karl Shapiro, *Person, Place and Thing.* Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc. Copyright, 1940, by Karl Shapiro.

Where boxwood and magnolia brood
And columns with imperious stance
Like rows of ante-bellum girls
Eye them, outlanders.

In whited cells, on lawns equipped for peace,
Under the arch, and lofty banister,
Equals shake hands, unequals blankly pass;
The exemplary weather whispers, "Quiet, quiet,"
And visitors on tiptoe leave
For the raw North, the unfinished West
As the young, detecting an advantage,
Practice a face.

Where, on their separate hill, the colleges,
Like manor houses of an older law,
Gaze down embankments on a land in fee,
The Deans, dry spinsters over family plate,
Ring out the English name like coin,
Humor the snob and lure the lout.
Within the precincts of this world
Poise is a club.

But on the neighboring range, misty and high,
The past is absolute; some luckless race
Dull with inbreeding and conformity
Wears out its heart, and comes barefoot and bad
For charity or jail. The scholar
Sanctions their obsolete disease;
The gentleman revolts with shame
At his ancestor.

And the true nobleman, once a democrat,
Sleeps on his private mountain. He was one
Whose thought was shapely and whose dream was broad;
This school he held his art and epitaph.
But now it takes from him his name,
Falls open like a dishonest look,
And shows us, rotted and endowed,
Its senile pleasure.

Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College

Thomas Gray • 1716–1771

Is college, or should it be, a refuge from the "real world"? Is it a cloistered, ivied, bell-ordered little world of unreality where, as Holmes says, "no one reads the papers," where "regardless [unaware] of their doom, the little victims play"? The eighteenth-century poet, Thomas Gray, looks upon Eton College (actually what we would call a prep school) from a distance, and upon his own happy days there from a distance in time; and he reflects on the contrast between the innocent happiness of the schoolboy world and the evils of the real world that lies ahead. He concludes with the famous lines, "Where ignorance is bliss, 'Tis folly to be wise." Is this a satisfactory conclusion, to you?

YE DISTANT spires, ye antique towers,
That crown the watery glade,
Where grateful Science still adores
Her Henry's holy shade;
And ye, that from the stately brow
Of Windsor's heights th' expanse below
Of grove, of lawn, or mead survey,
Whose turf, whose shade, whose flowers among
Wanders the hoary Thames along
His silver-winding way.

Ah, happy hills! ah, pleasing shade!
Ah, fields beloved in vain!
Where once my careless childhood strayed,
A stranger yet to pain!
I feel the gales that from ye blow,
A momentary bliss bestow,
As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
My weary soul they seem to soothe,
And, redolent of joy and youth,
To breathe a second spring.

Say, Father Thames, for thou hast seen
Full many a sprightly race
Disporting on thy margent green
The paths of pleasure trace,
Who foremost now delight to cleave
With pliant arm thy glassy wave?
The captive linnet which enthrall?
What idle progeny succeed

To chase the rolling circle's speed,
  Or urge the flying ball?

While some on earnest business bent
  Their murmuring labours ply
'Gainst graver hours, that bring constraint
  To sweeten liberty:
Some bold adventurers disdain
The limits of their little reign,
  And unknown regions dare descry:
Still as they run they look behind,
They hear a voice in every wind,
  And snatch a fearful joy.

Gay hope is theirs by fancy fed,
  Less pleasing when possessed;
The tear forgot as soon as shed,
  The sunshine of the breast:
Theirs buxom health of rosy hue,
Wild wit, invention ever-new,
  And lovely cheer of vigour born;
The thoughtless day, the easy night,
The spirits pure, the slumbers light,
  That fly th' approach of morn.

Alas! regardless of their doom,
  The little victims play;
No sense have they of ills to come,
  Nor care beyond to-day:
Yet see how all around 'em wait
The ministers of human fate,
  And black Misfortune's baleful train!
Ah, shew them where in ambush stand
To seize their prey the murderous band!
  Ah, tell them, they are men!

These shall the fury Passions tear,
  The vultures of the mind,
Disdainful Anger, pallid Fear,
  And Shame that skulks behind;
Or pining Love shall waste their youth,
Or Jealousy with rankling tooth,
  That inly gnaws the secret heart,
And Envy wan, and faded Care,
Grim-visaged comfortless Despair,
  And Sorrow's piercing dart.

Ambition this shall tempt to rise,
  Then whirl the wretch from high,
To bitter Scorn a sacrifice,
  And grinning Infamy.
The stings of Falsehood those shall try,
And hard Unkindness' altered eye,
  That mocks the tear it forced to flow;
And keen Remorse with blood defiled,
And moody Madness laughing wild
  Amid severest woe.

Lo, in the vale of years beneath
  A grisly troop are seen,
The painful family of Death,
  More hideous than their Queen:
This racks the joints, this fires the veins,
That every labouring sinew strains,
  Those in the deeper vitals rage:
Lo, Poverty, to fill the band,
That numbs the soul with icy hand,
  And slow-consuming Age.

To each his sufferings; all are men,
  Condemned alike to groan,
The tender for another's pain;
  The unfeeling for his own.
Yet, ah! why should they know their fate,
Since sorrow never comes too late,
  And happiness too swiftly flies?
Thought would destroy their paradise.
No more; where ignorance is bliss,
  'Tis folly to be wise.

Part Two



WRITER

EXCEPT under rare conditions of shyness or stress, few people are tongue-tied. But nearly all of us are pen-tied when faced with the painful necessity to write a theme, an essay, or an examination. Paper and pen mysteriously dry up the stream of thought and the easy flow of words, and what finally squeezes out is likely to be no more like us than a bad snapshot or a reflection in a warped mirror.

How can we account for this strange difference between writing and ordinary speech? One reason is that we talk far more than we write. Another is that writing is a kind of full-dress performance — we have to be on our best behavior as we seldom do in conversation. An even subtler reason is that we are deeply convinced that writing is something special. The same words won't do; our thoughts have to be organized, our sentences correct; we have to have an introduction, a conclusion, well-rounded paragraphs, and topic sentences.

Of course all this is true, to some extent. Most of your writing — the writing you do for your classes, at any rate — is more formal than talk, requires more orderly development and more careful planning before the actual writing is even begun. But there are more similarities between writing and talk than we are likely to realize, and recognizing these similarities can help you break through the barrier which the act of writing so often imposes. Whether you talk or write, you are *you* — an individual human being, unique in all the world. And you are trying to establish communi-

cation with other human beings. You have things to say (many more than you probably yet realize) that will be of interest to others, and you can interest them best by being your honest and natural unassuming self. Most of the words you write are the words you speak, and if you try sincerely to be yourself as you write, your words will have the natural ring of your voice in them, and the rhythms of your speech. For good writing, by all modern standards, is natural writing.

Good writing is something else: it is packed; it is continually saying something. Every sentence and every word adds to the thought and the experience. And much thought goes into it which does not necessarily appear on the surface — like an iceberg, which is nine-tenths out of view.



"But you can't write a theme in twenty minutes!"

Anybody Can Learn to Write

Stephen Leacock • *1869—1944*

What's likely to bother you as you begin writing in college is the twofold problem: what to say, how to say it. You may think you have nothing to say, no information, no ideas, nothing worth mentioning; and you probably suppose you must write in a quite different way than you would ordinarily speak. The thing college students somehow find hardest to learn is to be themselves in writing, to discover the endless wealth of idea and experience they have already accumulated, and to set it forth in a natural and straightforward way. Leacock says: Don't think your knowledge, your interests, your experiences, your ideas, can't be any good because they're merely yours, and don't be afraid to put them into your own familiar words. If you learn this much in your whole freshman writing course, you will have learned the most important lesson of all about writing.

WE HAVE DECIDED then that writing has got to be done deliberately. We can't wait for it to come. On these terms, I claim that anybody can learn to write, just as anybody can learn to swim. Nor can anybody swim with-

Reprinted by permission of Dodd, Mead & Company from *How to Write* by Stephen Leacock. Copyright, 1943, by Dodd, Mead & Company, Inc.

out learning how. A person can thus learn to swim up to the limits imposed by his aptitude and physique. The final result may not be worth looking at, but he can swim. So with writing. Nobody can learn to write without having learned how, either consciously or unconsciously. But it fortunately happens that what we call our education supplies to all of us the first basis for writing, the ability to read and to spell. Indeed our ordinary education, even in any elementary school, gives us a certain training in putting words together. Under the name of "composition" we go through a harrowing set of little exercises in correcting errors in the use of English; we put poetry back into prose, and go as far as to reach up to writing a composition on *An Autumn Walk,* or *The Fidelity of the Dog.* This is not "writing" in the sense adopted in this book but it is as essential a preliminary to it as learning to drive a nail into a board is to carpentry. People of exceptional native ability and no schooling sometimes write, and sometimes have reached great eminence without such training. But that is because the bent of their minds was so strong in that direction that unconsciously they weighed and measured words and phrases, fascinated with the power of expression, as an artistic genius, a young Giotto, with the pictured line.

Indeed, an ordinary environment of today gives us an even further start, and nowadays our sight and hearing, through moving pictures, introduces us to a vast world of history, of actual events, and imaginary stories. These and the little circumstances of our own life give us plenty of material for thought. If we put our thoughts into words and write them down, that is *writing.* There's no more to it. It's just as simple as that.

In other words, anybody can write who has something to say and knows how to say it. Contrariwise, nobody can write who has nothing to say, or nothing that he can put into words.

Now it so happens that most of us have a good deal to say, but when we try to turn it into writing it gets muddled up by all kinds of preconceived ideas of how writing should be done, or is done by other people. So much so that when we write anything down it sounds false from start to finish. Each one of us is the custodian of *one* first class story, the story of his own life. Every human life is a story — is interesting if it can be conveyed. The poet Gray wrote down the "short and simple annals of the poor" sleeping under the elm trees of a country churchyard, with such pathos and interest that they have lasted nearly two hundred years. But the poor couldn't have done it for themselves. Neither can we. We can't surround the story of our life with the majestic diction and the music of Gray's *Elegy.* But it is interesting, just the same, if we can tell it. Have you never noticed how at times people begin to tell you of their early life and early difficulties, and tell it utterly without affectation or effort, and how interesting it is in such form? Like this:

Our farm was fifteen miles from a high school and it was too far to walk, and I didn't see how I could manage to go, and I couldn't have, but Uncle

Al (he was the one who had gone out West) heard about it and he sent me fifty dollars and I started. I boarded Monday to Friday and walked home Fridays after school . . . and so forth.

That's the way the man talks in an unguarded moment. But set him down to write out his life and see what happens. Either he sits and chews his pen and can't start, or he writes — with the result a hopeless artificiality. The same facts are there but dressed with a false adornment like ribbons on a beggar's coat. Something like this: *Our farm was situated some ten miles from the nearest emporium of learning, to wit, a high school, a distance beyond the range of Shank's mare, the only vehicle within reach of my, or my family's, pecuniary resources . . .* etc., etc.

This failure happens because the man in question has been, unknowingly, taught how not to write. The necessarily somewhat artificial training of the school-room has led him unconsciously to think of writing as something elevated above ordinary speaking — like company manners. This knocks out at once the peculiar quality of "sincerity" which is the very soul of literature. "Sincerity" is the nearest word for what is meant; it implies not exactly honesty but a direct relation, a sort of inevitable relation as between the words used and the things narrated. This is the peculiar quality of many of the great writers who wrote without trying to write. Caesar wrote like this and John Bunyan, and better than all as an example is the matchless, simple Greek of the New Testament as put before us by King James's translators . . . *They were all with one accord in one place . . . and suddenly there came the sound as of a rushing mighty wind.* Or again: *And they said "Behold! There is a lad here that hath five barley loaves and three small fishes, but what are they among so many?" And he said, "Make the men sit down." And the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And there was much grass in the place . . .*

Now we can see from this the difficulty so many young people find when they try to "practise" writing. They are suddenly attempting to be someone else. Thus it often happens that when the conscious age of trying to write begins, young people use their correspondence with their friends as a form of practise. Ebenezer Smith, let us say, writes from Temagami camp a letter to a friend. Hitherto he had just written letters straight off, after this fashion: *We got the canoes into the water about five o'clock, just after the sun rose. The lake was dead calm and we paddled down to the portage in half an hour. I never saw the lake so calm.* But suddenly Ebenezer becomes sophisticated and when he sits down to write, the result is such a passage as this:

A clear morning with just a faint sheen of mist before the sun kissed it away. I watched it vanish from the still surface of the lake and thought it seemed like some thin cerement, reverently drawn from the still face of death. Oh, no, you didn't, Ebenezer! You thought that afterwards; stick to the canoe and portage stuff. It's more like Xenophon.

This collapse of Ebenezer Smith's correspondence as a method of begin-

ning to write, leaves us still with the problem, how *do* you begin anyway? Where do you get the start and the practise?

We have just said that the ordinary education of the great mass of people, who go to school but don't go to college, supplies them with at least a sort of elementary beginning in "composition," in the expression of thought in words. What they get is at least something; indeed it is much. But it is mainly negative. It says what not to do. It tells them what errors to avoid. But you can't avoid anything if you are writing nothing. You must write first and "avoid" afterwards. A writer is in no danger of splitting an infinitive if he has no infinitive to split.

It might, therefore, be thought that in order to become a writer it is necessary to go on from school to college, and learn the "real stuff." Fortunately for the world at large this is not true. To go to college may be helpful but it is certainly not necessary. Writing is a thing which, sooner or later, one must do for oneself, of one's own initiative and energy. Those who are debarred from the privilege of attending college may take courage. The college kills writers as well as makes them. It is true that a gifted professor can do a lot; he can show the way, can explain what are the things in literature that the world has found great and why, in his opinion, they are so. Better still, he can communicate his own enthusiasm, and even exalt his pupils on the wings of his own conceit. More than that, the college gives companionship in study; it is hard to work alone, harder still to enjoy. Appreciation grows the more it is divided.

But as against all that, college training carries the danger of standardized judgments, of affected admiration, of the pedantry of learning. Students read with one eye, or both, on the examination, classify and memorize and annotate till they have exchanged the warm pulsation of life for the *post-mortem* of an inquest.

But the main point is that writing, whether done in and by college or without a college, has got to be done for and by oneself. If you want to write, start and write down your thoughts. If you haven't any thoughts, don't write them down. But if you have, *write* them down; thoughts about anything, no matter what, in your own way, with no idea of selling them or being an author. Just put down your thoughts. If later on it turns out that your thoughts are interesting and if you get enough practise to be able to set down what they really are in language that conveys them properly — the selling business comes itself. There are many things in life, as we have said, that come to us as it were "at back rounds." Look for happiness and you find dust. Look for "authorship" and you won't find it; look for self-expression in words, for its own sake, and an editor's check will rustle down from Heaven on your table. Of course you really *hoped* for it; but you won't get it unless and until self-expression for its own sake breaks through.

What do you write about? You write about anything. Your great difficulty will be, as soon as you apprehend this method, that you can *think*

things but can't say them. Most people live and die in that state; their conversation is stuffed with smothered thought that can't get over.

Take an example: Two people are walking out with the crowd from the roar and racket of a football game, just over. One says, "I don't know that I quite believe in all that rooting stuff, eh?" And the other answers, reflectively, "Oh, I don't know; I'm not so sure." That's as far as they can get. What the first man means is that organized hysteria is a poor substitute for spontaneous enthusiasm; and what the other means is that after all even genuine enthusiasm *unless* organized, unless given the aid of regularity and system — even spontaneous enthusiasm degenerates into confusion; our life, itself artificial, compels a certain "organization." They can't say this, but either of these two spectators would read with pleasure a well-written magazine article under such a title as *Should Rooting Be Rooted Out?*

The Psychology of Effective Writing

H. A. Overstreet • 1875–

The all-important discovery about writing is that you do have something, many things, to say. Actually, when you say something, aloud or on paper, you almost always say it in such a way that people grasp your bare meaning. But they may not believe it, they may not think it is important or interesting, they may not take it as you wish it to be taken. Overstreet bids you to remember your reader — that you are writing to somebody, with the purpose of affecting him in a certain way. The "rules" of rhetoric, that is of effective composition, are easy to understand if you think of them in this way.

THERE ARE MANY excellent books on the art of writing; but they approach their subject chiefly from a literary point of view. One finds among them scarcely any consideration — certainly no systematic one — of the psychological aspect of writing. Grammar, sentence and paragraph structure, logical sequence, proportion, metaphors, similes, etc. All of these are important; nay, the knowledge of them is quite indispensable. Writing, however, like speaking, is something more than a mechanics of word-combination. It is essentially a psychological enterprise. It has the aim of arousing the attention and holding the interest of readers. It is, in short, a form of

Reprinted from *Influencing Human Behavior* by H. A. Overstreet. By permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Copyright, 1925, by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Pp. 87–95.

stimulus which seeks to win favorable response. Now it is obvious, of course, that if one uses unclear words, confused sentences, and drearily long paragraphs, no favorable response is likely to be evoked. Hence there is indispensable value in training along these lines. But it is a question whether expertness in these literary matters is enough. Must one not go farther and understand the psychological factors involved in good and in poor writing?

Writing, we have said, is a form of stimulus which seeks a response. Good writing does something to the reader. Poor writing does something else. What is it that good writing does, and that poor writing fails to do? Most of us who write at all, simply write, without any thought of how certain quite fundamental matters affect our readers. . . .

What makes writing dull? Apparently one or more of the following:

1. *Stodginess.* No "unfamiliar in the familiar." No phrases that hit off the ideas in ways that are different. *Clichés,* platitudes, "standard verbal equipment."

2. *Verbosity.* Too many verbal stimuli for the required effect, inducing weariness, tempting us to skip.

3. *Circumlocution.* The stimulus always coming; never arriving; hence the reader always uncertain, impatient, irritated. "Do, in heaven's name, get to the point!"

4. *Lack of clearness.* Involved phrases, long sentences, ideas badly arranged. The stimulus never quite clear. The reader makes no swift favorable response, because he does not know what it is all about.

5. *Lack of dramatic quality.* No "luring" quality. No awakening of the reader's curiosity. Hence the reader nods.

6. *Abstractness.* No vivid pictures. Pale. Slips out of the mind. Leaves no impression.

7. *Absence of Rhythm.* Nothing that "carries on." Jerky, disordered, clumsy.

8. *Monotony of Rhythm.* Movement all the same. No variety. . . .

It should be clear that in the above we have been considering matters which are fundamentally psychological. When is writing dull, we asked — and of course we replied, when it is dull to the reader. When is it fascinating to the reader? Apparently, so the answers ran, it is dull or fascinating when the writing-stimulus does or does not evoke certain fundamental responses in the reader. Commonplace phrasing, for example, is not just a literary quality. It is a psychological one inasmuch as it implies no effective response to the "novelty wish" of the reader. Verbosity, circumlocution, lack of clearness are psychological in that they "fog" the stimulus. Abstractness is psychological in that it places too great a tax upon our essentially concrete minds. Lack of dramatic quality is psychological in that it fails to arouse the reader's basic interest in the "chase." And so on. Once we note this, that the qualities which have been found to be requisite in good writing are requisite because they are kinds of stimuli which

evoke kinds of responses, most of the mystery which resides in the "principles" of the art of writing disappear. The reason, in short, why every one of the above excellent qualities is excellent is that the reader likes them. There are, in other words, no canons of literary art which prescribe them. They are prescribed, simply and solely, by the likes and dislikes of the reader.

One who wishes to write well, therefore, will make his most effective approach to the art, not by asking "What does the art of writing require of me?" but rather, "What does my reader require of me?"

A Writing Machine

Jonathan Swift • *1667–1745*

You probably think of Gulliver's Travels *(1726) as a delightful book for children, and so it is, in shortened versions that leave out much of its real meat. Actually it is a profound and savage attack upon the vices and follies of Swift's time and of human nature at all times. On his third voyage, to Laputa, a floating island where philosophers, scientists, and other learned men are pretty much "up in the air," Gulliver visits a laboratory where some experimenters are carrying on various preposterous projects. By these Swift meant to ridicule contemporary scientific pursuits which he thought were vain and useless, but he was getting at more fundamental follies. What common human shortcomings are illustrated in the following attempt to invent a machine to take over the labors of composition?*

THE FIRST PROFESSOR I saw was in a very large Room, with forty Pupils about him. After Salutation, observing me to look earnestly upon a Frame, which took up the greatest part of both the Length and Breadth of the Room, he said perhaps I might wonder to see him employed in a Project for improving speculative Knowledge by practical and mechanical Operations. But the World would soon be sensible of its Usefulness, and he flattered himself that a more noble exalted Thought never sprung in any other Man's Head. Every one knew how laborious the usual Method is of attaining to Arts and Sciences; whereas by his Contrivance, the most ignorant Person at a reasonable Charge, and with a little bodily Labour, may write both in Philosophy, Poetry, Politicks, Law, Mathematicks and Theology, without the least Assistance from Genius or Study. He then led me to the Frame, about the sides whereof all his Pupils stood in Ranks. It was twenty Foot Square, placed in the middle of the Room. The Superficies

was composed of several bits of Wood, about the bigness of a Dye, but some larger than others. They were all linked together by slender Wires. These bits of Wood were covered on every Square with Paper pasted on them, and on these Papers were written all the Words of their Language in their several Moods, Tenses, and Declensions, but without any Order. The Professor then desired me to observe, for he was going to set his Engine at Work. The Pupils at his Command took each of them hold of an Iron Handle, whereof there were fourty fixed round the Edges of the Frame, and giving them a sudden turn, the whole Disposition of the Words was entirely changed. He then commanded six and thirty of the Lads to read the several Lines softly as they appeared upon the Frame; and where they found three or four Words together that might make part of a Sentence, they dictated to the four remaining Boys who were Scribes. This Work was repeated three or four times, and at every turn the Engine was so contrived, that the Words shifted into new Places, or the square bits of Wood moved upside down.

Six Hours a-day the young Students were employed in this Labour, and the Professor shewed me several Volumes in large Folio already collected, of broken Sentences, which he intended to piece together, and out of those rich Materials to give the world a compleat Body of all Arts and Sciences; which however might be still improved, and much expedited, if the Publick would raise a Fund for making and employing five hundred such Frames in *Lagado*, and oblige the Managers to contribute in common their several Collections.

He assured me, that this Invention had employed all his Thoughts from his Youth, that he had employed the whole Vocabulary into his Frame, and made the strictest Computation of the general Proportion there is in the Book between the Numbers of Particles, Nouns, and Verbs, and other Parts of Speech.

I made my humblest Acknowledgment to this illustrious Person for his great Communicativeness, and promised if ever I had the good Fortune to return to my Native Country, that I would do him justice, as the sole Inventor of this wonderful Machine; the Form and Contrivance of which I desired leave to delineate upon Paper as in the Figure here annexed. I told him, although it were the Custom of our Learned in *Europe* to steal Inventions from each other, who had thereby at least this Advantage, that it became a Controversy which was the right Owner, yet I would take such Caution, that he should have the Honour entire without a Rival.

Pleasant Agony

John Mason Brown • 1900–

Swift's writing machine, in the passage above, is one labor-saving gadget we can sadly predict will never be perfected. The job of expressing what is in your mind is your own job; no machine can do it for you, and no nine easy lessons can make you a master at it. Even for professionals it is hard work. As Brown says here, the job is often an agony if you are taking it seriously; but it is a pleasant agony; nothing can give you more satisfaction than struggling with it successfully.

AT A SEASON'S END, when the country is calling, it may be permissible to talk shop before shutting it up, however temporarily. For four and a half years now, mine has been the privilege, hence the pleasant agony, of filling these pages each week, or almost every week. I say pleasant agony because I know of no other words with which to describe what writing is to me.

I claim no singularity in this. There may be, there must be, writers to whom writing comes as effortlessly as breathing. There may even be (though I doubt it) writers whose happiness is complete while they are actually writing. But most of us who live by putting words together are not so fortunate. We are tortured while we write and would be tortured were we not allowed to do so. Although when we are done we feel "delivered," as Sainte-Beuve put it, this delirium of delivery is not accomplished without labor pains for which medicine has, as yet, provided no soothing drugs. If all attempts to coerce words into doing what we would have them do are at best painful pleasures, the pains and pleasures of summoning the right words to meet a weekly deadline are of a special kind.

A cook faced with getting dinner when lunch is over knows something of the routine, if not all the anguishes, of a columnist. No mortals, however, have appetites as insatiable as a column's. A column is an omnivorous beast. Its hunger is never appeased. Feed it, and almost at once it demands to be fed again.

Though he used a different image to express this same idea, even Shaw, seemingly the most easeful of writers, knew this. When he abandoned the job of drama critic on London's *Saturday Review,* he protested against the weekly deadlines which had confronted him for nearly four years. He likened himself to a man fighting a windmill. "I have hardly time," wrote

From *The Saturday Review of Literature,* June 25, 1949. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright 1949 by Saturday Review Associates, Inc.

he, "to stagger to my feet from the knock-down blow of one sail, when the next strikes me down."

His successor in the same job on that same fortunate magazine shared an identical dislike of deadlines. For twelve years, Max Beerbohm admitted in his valedictory article, Thursdays had been for him the least pleasant day of the week. Why Thursday? Because that was the day, the latest possible one, he set aside each week to get his writing done. On every Wednesday, therefore, he would be engulfed by "a certain sense of oppression, of misgiving, even of dread." It was only on Friday, when once the danger was passed, that the sun would shine again. Then he would move on dancing feet.

I quote my betters to console myself by the reminder that they, too, knew the pangs of weekly columnizing. Yet the consolation I seek is denied me when I discover, for example, that it took Beerbohm one, and only one, short day of pain to turn out the delectable copy which he could write. Shaw, I am certain, was also a one-day man. I wish I were. I wish even more ardently that I could claim any of the merits which glorify their reviews for what it takes me two, three, or sometimes five days of ceaseless sweating to produce as fodder for these columns.

Beerbohm ascribed his disrelish for the act of writing to "the acute literary conscience" with which he had been cursed. It was this conscience, he maintained, which kept his pen from ever running away with him. I know what he means. Unblessed with any of his gifts, I am none the less cursed with something of his conscience. Beerbohm insisted that "to seem to write with ease and delight is one of the duties which a writer owes to his readers." If he worked hard at his sentences, it was because Beerbohm hoped they would read easily. In other words, he was in complete agreement with Sheridan's "easy writing's vile hard reading." One statement of Beerbohm's I could truthfully apply to my own efforts for the *SRL*. It runs, "I may often have failed in my articles here, to disguise labor. But the effort to disguise it has always been loyally made."

There is a passage in "The Goncourt Journals" which has haunted me since I read it. Envy has kept it green for me, and wonder (or is it disbelief?) has kept it alive. I have in mind Gautier's boast that he never thought about what he was going to write. "I take up my pen," he explained, "and write. I am a man of letters and am presumed to know my job. . . . I throw my sentences into the air and I can be sure that they will come down on their feet, like cats. . . . Look here: here's my script: not a word blotted."

When I think of the one-legged kittens that land on my pages; when I remember the false starts, illegible scribblings, unfinished sentences, discarded drafts, changed constructions, and altered words which mark my beginnings, my continuings, and my endings, I blush with shame and, like the voyagers in Dante's realm, abandon all hope.

In these journalistic days the first word that pops into an author's mind

is held to be the acceptable, if not the best, word. We are supposed to smile because Wordsworth, at a day's end, was wearied from his quest for the exact word. But where Wordsworth the man may win a smile, Wordsworth the writer, fatiguing himself by doing what is a writer's duty, is far from laughable. The *mot juste* is not just any word. Even if it eludes its pursuer, the search for it seems to me to remain among the obligations of authorship. Indeed, the true hope of anyone who loves the language and respects it is to stumble upon, not the correct word or phrase, but the word or phrase which is so right that it seems inevitable.

The word and the phrase are not the only hurdles — and joys — of authorship. The sentence and the paragraph, by means of which points are made, thoughts communicated, emotions transferred, pictures painted, personalities caught, rhythms established, and cadences varied, offer other challenges and should supply their own sources of delight and pride. When so much hurried writing is done for hurried reading, I find it comforting to have Shaw, a veritable geyser with words and ideas, admit in his "Sixteen Self Sketches" how depleting he found his labors as a weekly feuilletonist for ten years. Why? Because, says he, of "taking all the pains I was capable of to get to the bottom of every sentence I wrote."

One of the modern world's luckier occurrences was what happened at Harrow when a boy named Winston Churchill was being "menaced with Education." Three times, he tells us in "A Roving Commission," his backwardness as a classical scholar forced him to remain in the same form and hence repeat the same elementary course in English. "Thus," writes he (and who can question him?), "I got into my bones the essential structure of the ordinary British sentence — which is a noble thing. . . . Naturally I am biased in favor of boys learning English. I would make them all learn English: and then I would let the clever ones learn Latin as an honor, and Greek as a treat. But the only thing I would whip them for would be for not knowing English. I would whip them hard for that." One trembles to think how many of us whose profession is writing would be flogged today if lapses in English, or American, were whippable offenses.

Later on in that same grand book, Churchill has his more precise say on the subtleties, intricacies, and possibilities of the writer's craft. It is his opinion, and one worth heeding, that, "just as the sentence contains one idea in all its fulness, so the paragraph should embrace a distinct episode; and as sentences should follow one another in harmonious sequence, so the paragraphs must fit on to one another like the automatic couplings of railway carriages."

I quote Churchill and these others belonging to the peerage of prose-writers because, for any author with a memory, one of the disheartening and humbling aspects of writing is the recollection, as his own pen moves, of how those whom he admires have faced and solved identical problems. This recollection of what has been done, this sensing of what could and

should be done, this awareness of what one hopes to do regardless of whether one can or cannot do it — these are parts of that literary conscience, mentioned by Beerbohm, which keeps a writer's pen from running away with him. I know they are factors in retarding my own pen (meaning my typewriter, pencil, or dictation) even on those happy days when a subject seems to write itself, when sentences come easily, and one paragraph gives way to another.

Style is a strange and mysterious thing. Some contemporary writers appear to get along without it and to want to do so, and most of us rightly disparage it when it shows the effort that has gone into it. Few of us, for example, can read Pater today without being irritated and put off by the deliberate intricacies and involutions of his sentences. His style, once held to be a model, remains a model, although as we see it it is one to be avoided rather than followed. Pater could not bring himself to say a simple thing simply. His orchestration is so elaborate that the melody of his thought is lost.

Hazlitt comes closer to present-day tastes. More than being the enemy of the gaudy and "Occult" schools of writing, Hazlitt was not only a champion but at his best a matchless practitioner of "The Familiar Style." Although he had the art to make a long sentence seem short, he knew the value of short sentences. "I hate anything," wrote he, "that occupies more space than it is worth. I hate to see a load of band-boxes go along the street, and I hate to see a parcel of big words without any meaning in them."

The perpetual challenge of writing, the challenge presented by each new sentence is to say exactly what one wants to say exactly as one wants to say it. This is where the anguish of composition mixes with the delights. This is where, too, style, as I see it, comes into the picture. Style is merely the means, chosen or instinctive (doubtless both), by which a writer has his precise say.

Certainly, style is not affectation. Conscious though it may be, when self-conscious it is an obstruction. Its purpose, to my way of thinking, is to give the reader pleasure by sparing him the work which the writer is duty-bound to have done for him. Writers, notwithstanding their hopes or ambitions, may or may not be artists. But there is no excuse for their not being artisans. The style is the man, we are told. True in the final and spiritual sense as this is, style is more than that. It is the writing man *in print*. It is, so to speak, his written voice and, if it is truly his voice, even in print it should be his and his alone. The closer it comes to the illusion of speech, perhaps the better. Yet the closeness of the written word to the spoken can, and in fact should, never be more than an illusion. For the point of the written word is planning, as surely as the charm of the spoken one is its lack of it.

Without shame I confess that, regardless of how unsatisfactory the results may be, I labor when writing these weekly pieces to lighten the labor

of those who may read them. That I fail again and again I know to my own chagrin, but I can honestly say I try. I not only rewrite; I often rewrite and rewrite again. I do this though I am well aware that the result is sentences and paragraphs which do not bear rereading. I rewrite partly in longhand, partly by dictation, occasionally sitting down, sometimes walking, but most often snaking my way across the floor on my stomach. My desk, a migratory one, is the small piece of beaverboard I push before me. On it are sheets of typewritten paper darkened with hieroglyphics which must be deciphered immediately to be read at all.

Endeavoring to square my writing with my writing conscience, and having to live with the difference between what I would like to have done and am able to do, is one of the reasons why writing is to me an agony, however pleasant. There are other contributors to the pleasures and the agonies of trying to keep these columns fed. Upon these I shall touch next time. Since there is no earthly reason why anyone should be interested, this can be taken as a threat, not a promise. I can delve into these personal problems of authorship only at a season's end. What is more, I find I want to do so. Surely this is as good a reason for writing as any, and a better one than so regular an offender as the conductor of a weekly column can always claim.

How to Write and Be Read

Jacques Barzun • 1909–

Here and there a touch of good grammar for picturesqueness.

— MARK TWAIN

Like Swift and Brown, Barzun looks at writing as a job, one that is too often not done in a workmanlike way. In this essay he is speaking not to students but to teachers, from a teacher's point of view. You may find it enlightening to see your problem from this novel perspective, by eavesdropping on a teachers' discussion.

WRITING comes before reading, in logic and also in the public mind. No one cares whether you read fast or slow, well or ill, but as soon as you put pen to paper, somebody may be puzzled, angry, bored, or ecstatic; and if

From *Teacher in America* by Jacques Barzun by permission of Little, Brown & Company and the Atlantic Monthly Press. Copyright, 1944, and 1945, by Jacques Barzun. Pp. 47–60.

the occasion permits, your reader is almost sure to exclaim about the schools not doing their duty. This is the oldest literary tradition, of which here is a modern instance: —

WHAT KIND OF TEACHING IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS?

BY "DISGUSTED"

Recently a letter came into my office from a boy who described himself as a first-year high school student. He wanted *infirmation* about *Africia,* because for his project in the social studies class he had *chozen Africia.* If we could not help him, *were* could he write? In closing, he was ours *sinceerly.* His handwriting was comparable to that of my 6-year-old nephew.

Too bad, but I am not alarmed. This student of "Africia" may or may not learn to spell: it is not nearly so important as his diction and his sentence structure, which the plaintiff withheld, though they would have better enabled us to judge what the schools were really doing. What I fear about this boy is that when grown-up and provided with a secretary who can spell, he will write something like this: —

DEAR SIR: —

As you know, security prices have been advancing rapidly in the recent past *in belated recognition of the favorable fundamentals that exist.* [Italics mine]

What is decadent about this I shall shortly explain. Meantime, the fact should be faced squarely that good writing is and has always been extremely rare. I do not mean fine writing, but the simple, clear kind that everyone always demands — from others. The truth is that Simple English is no one's mother tongue. It has to be worked for. As an historian, I have plowed through state papers, memoirs, diaries, and letters, and I know that the ability to write has only a remote connection with either intelligence, or greatness, or schooling. Lincoln had no schooling yet became one of the great prose writers of the world. Cromwell went to Cambridge and was hardly ever able to frame an intelligible sentence. Another man of thought and action, Admiral Lord Howe, generally refrained from writing out his plan of battle, so as to save his captains from inevitable misunderstanding. Yet Howe managed to win the famous First of June by tactics that revolutionized the art, and led directly to Nelson's Trafalgar plan — itself a rather muddled piece of prose. Let us then start with no illusion of an imaginary golden age of writing.

Which leaves the problem of doing the best with what nature gives us. And here I have some convictions born of long struggle, with myself and with others. First, I pass by all considerations of penmanship and elementary spelling to remark only that I think it a mistake to start children writing on typewriters, and worse yet to let them grow up unable to do anything but print capitals.

Above the beginner's level, the important fact is that writing cannot be

taught exclusively in a course called English Composition. Writing can only be taught by the united efforts of the entire teaching staff. This holds good of any school, college, or university. Joint effort is needed, not merely to "enforce the rules"; it is needed to insure accuracy in every subject. How can an answer in physics or a translation from the French or an historical statement be called correct if the phrasing is loose or the key word wrong? Students argue that the reader of the paper knows perfectly well what is meant. Probably so, but a written exercise is designed to be read; it is not supposed to be a challenge to clairvoyance. My Italian-born tailor periodically sends me a postcard which runs: "Your clothes is ready and should come down for a fitting." I understand him, but the art I honor him for is cutting cloth, not precision of utterance. Now a student in college must be inspired to achieve in all subjects the utmost accuracy of perception combined with the utmost artistry of expression. The two merge and develop the sense of good workmanship, of preference for quality and truth, which is the chief mark of the genuinely educated man.

This is obviously a collective task, in which every department and every faculty has a common stake. But it is not enough to give notice that these are the faculty's sentiments. Even supposing that all teachers were willing and able to exert vigilance over written work, there would still be many practical problems of detail. And first, what motive for writing well can the student be made to feel? There is only one valid motive: the desire to be read. You will say that most students have no urge either to write or to be read. True, but (*a*) they know that they have to write and (*b*) most of them want to be well thought of. They should accordingly be made to see that reading the ordinary student paper can be a nuisance and a bore to the teacher, and that the proper aim of writing should be to make it a pleasure. This is another way of saying that most school writing is bad because student and teacher play at writing and reading instead of taking it seriously. The teacher expects second-rate hokum and the student supplies it. Let the teacher assert his rights just as the students do: in many college classes the men protest — quite rightly — when they are asked to read a dull or ill-organized book. Similarly, the instructor may warn the students that when they turn in filler and padding, jargon and lingo, stuff and nonsense, he will mark them down, not only in his grade book, but in his violated soul.

Naturally, this conscious brutality must go with a helping hand; in fact a revision of all usual practices is in order. The embargo on hokum will already work a healthy elimination of bad prose. Then the long Term Paper must be discarded and replaced with the short essay, not more than five typewritten pages in length. Students always ask how long a final paper should be and they are absolutely right in believing that most instructors are impressed by mere bulk. But when one knows how difficult it is to articulate even three measly thoughts around a single point, it is folly to ask eighteen-year-olds to produce thirty- or forty-page monographs that

shall be readable. What they produce is an uncarded mattress of quotations, paraphrase, "however's" and "Thus we see's." Size being aimed at, there is no time for rewriting or reordering the material culled from half a dozen books, and the main effort goes into the irrelevant virtues of neat typing, plentiful footnotes, and the mannerisms of scholarship.

The short paper — and I speak from a large pile accumulated over twelve years — aims and arrives at different ends. It answers the reader's eternal question: Just what are you trying to tell me? It is in that spirit that student writing must be read, corrected, and if need be rewritten. When first presented, it must already be a second or third draft. The only reason I can think of for the somewhat higher average of good writing in France is that the *brouillon* is a national institution. The *brouillon* (literally: scrambled mess) is the first draft, and even the concierge writing to the police about anarchists on the third floor begins with a *brouillon,* later found by his heirs.

Of course it is no use telling an American boy or girl that the essay must be written, laid aside, and rewritten at least once before handing in: the innocents do not know what to do after their first painful delivery. So the simplest thing is to ask early in the term for a good five-page essay, which turns out to be pretty bad. This is fully annotated by the reader and turned back before the next one is called for. But the corrections on it are not merely the conventional *sp., ref., punc.,* and *awk.* which the writers have seen in their margins from the seventh grade on. The comments are intensely and painfully personal, being the responses that an alert reader would feel if he were encountering the essay in print. The result is that even the best students feel abashed, if not actually resentful. To which one can only say that they should resent the neglect in which all their previous teachers have left them.

This neglect has not damaged their grammar so much as their vocabulary. Since the last thing any writer learns is the uses of words, it is no wonder if untutored youths of ability write like the stockbroker whom I quoted about "favorable fundamentals that exist" — spineless, vague, and incoherent prose. Indeed, the exact parallel comes this moment under my hand, taken from a very able student's report on Newman's *University Sketches:* "A University that rests on a firm financial foundation has the greater ability to unleash the minds of its students." Despite the difference in names, the stockbroker is that boy's putative father. Their failure comes from a like inattention to meaning — their own and that of the words they use.

This means that words and tone are the main things to be taught. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation do not precede but follow in the order of importance. They follow also quite naturally in the order of facility. Accordingly, the teacher-critic must slowly and carefully explain to the student what each word conveys in its particular context. I find that in the essay just cited I have written such comments as: "I can't follow — This repeats

in disguise — 'avocational fruit' suggests alligator pears: why? — We now have about eight 'problems' on hand: Begin! — What! more issues and problems? — Commercial lingo — Who is 'we'? — Why 'cradle': the metaphor is lost — Who says this? — 'Patina' is not 'clothing' — Don't scold and then trail off in this way — This is your point at last." In addition, images are changed, synonyms proposed, and bad sentences recast, sometimes in alternative ways, in order to show precisely how the original misleads and how clarity is to be reached.

Tone grows naturally out of diction, but the choice of words betrays feelings of which the young writer is usually unaware. "Are you pleading, denouncing, coaxing, or laughing? Do you back up this exaggeration? Why suddenly talk down, or turn pedant? If you want to change the mood inside the piece, you must modulate, otherwise your reader will stumble and you will lose him." The student who learns to quiz himself in this fashion over his first draft is learning not only something about English, about writing, and about thinking, but about the human heart as well.

At the risk of tediousness I repeat that what has to be done is to dramatize the relation between writer and reader. The blunt comments are just a device to break the spell of routine, and though they administer an unpleasant shock at first, they are also flattering. "Somebody cares about what I want to say." The teacher is no longer a paid detective hunting stray commas.

To point these lessons up in minute detail to a student of average powers is of course time-consuming — but what else is the teacher there for? Time spent on reading and writing, in any subject, is never a waste, and the reward almost always comes, often astonishingly great. The excitement aroused by the discovery that words live is like finding that you can balance on skates. A new world of motion and of feeling is opened out to the student, a source of some anguish balanced by lifelong delight. George Gissing writes somewhere that he saw an excursion steamer advertised as being "Replete with Ladies' Lavatories" and he comments on how many people could pass by the sign without a smile. My own favorite recollection is of a guarantee pasted on a modest shop window: "Hats fitted to the head exclusively" — fun in every ad and at the company's expense.

The pleasure to be taken in words is as innocent and satisfying as the moral effect is clear: unless words are used deftly to set the imagination on its travels, language, literature, conversation, and friendship are full of snares. Much of our modern anxiety about the tyranny of words and of our desire for foolproof Basic comes from the uneasy suspicion that we have lost the art of diction and with it the control over our own minds. This is more serious than it seems, for there is no doubt that the world outside the school largely checks what present instruction attempts, as we shall see. But having spoken of the imagination, let me first meet a likely objection to the advice here proposed. I can fancy some reader for whom school compositions were torture shaking a skeptical head and saying: "Most

young children have very little to say and school assignments blot out even that little." I agree and the second great practical problem is, What to ask boys and girls to write about?

The don'ts are easy. Don't ask them for "A vacation experience" or "My most embarrassing moment," or "I am the Mississippi River." Such topics will only elicit the driest kind of hokum, though to be fair I must say that they are an improvement on the older practice of expecting infant moralizing and "What the flag means to me." Although as a child I enjoyed writing — history chiefly — I can remember the blankness of mind that overtook me when we had to do a *dissertation morale.* I still have a school text with some of those themes checked as having been done — for example: "*The Faithful Dog.* — A poor man has resolved to drown his dog. Thrown into the river, the dog tries to scramble up the bank, but his master lunges out to kill him with a stick. In so doing, he slips and falls. The dog saves him. Remorse of the owner."

I regret to say that French school life is stuffed with such thorns as these, but I am not sure that the opposite "progressive" extreme of turning children into researchers on their own is desirable either. The eleven-year-old son of a friend of mine once told me that he was writing a "project" on Papyrus. Why papyrus? Well, the class had been "doing" Egypt and each child was assigned one aspect of Egyptian civilization. Where was the information to come from? From encyclopedias, museums, friends, and paper manufacturers — hence such letters to strangers as the one about "Africia" quoted earlier. As I see it, two things are wrong with this scheme. One is that it gives a false freedom; the other is that it hardly trains in the art of composing. Did this boy care at all about Egypt, let alone about the technicalities of papyrology? A child should select a topic that truly engages his interest. To eliminate pretense he must be helped to do this by means of questions and suggestions. At any age, it is very reassuring to be told that you don't really want to write about the Tariff. After two or three casts a real subject emerges, satisfactory to both parties.

Next should come into play the single good feature of the French dissertation, namely its furnishing a plan or program. Depending on the child's age a briefer or longer table of contents should be set out for each theme, either in logically organized form, or pell-mell for the student himself to disentangle. After all, what is wanted is prose, not a riot of fancy. In my experience, even examination questions are answered better when they consist of five or six sentences outlining a topic for discussion. This means further that brevity should never be accounted a fault in itself. After thirty, we can all spin tall tales, mostly secondhand,[1] but students, even of college age, have had very little conscious experience of life or books and it is no wonder their minds are bone dry. One should moreover

[1] No course, therefore, should ever be called Creative Writing. Let us have at least a collective modesty and leave to charlatans the advertising of "How to Write Powerful Plays." [Author.]

keep in view the possibility that in some of them brevity may come from genius. American schoolmarms who relate the anecdote of Lincoln's "failure" with the Gettysburg Address are just as likely to say at one glance, "Jane, this is too short." How do they know? Perhaps they unwittingly agree with the Gettysburg crowd that Everett's speech, being longer, was better.

Some secondary schools, particularly the private ones, require the writing of verse as well as of prose. If the students are really shown how to go about versifying and are not expected to be "poetic," there is no harm in it. Verse writing is excellent practice for the prose writer and the striving for correct rhythm and rhyme gives the student of literature a feeling for words that may not otherwise be obtained. What can be done in this way before college by a gifted teacher has been shown by the experience of my friend, the poet Dudley Fitts, formerly at Choate and now at Andover. In collegiate circles, it is now well known that a freshman prepared under him is a literate, sometimes a polished writer, who can be safely allowed to skip into advanced work. No doubt Fitts has had his failures like all of us, but it is the successes we are looking for and that count in leavening the mass.

II

I am not so foolish as to think that carrying out my few suggestions would get rid of illiterate A.B.'s. I am too conscious of my initial point about "Education," which is that the school does not work in a vacuum but rather in a vortex of destructive forces. As regards writing, we in the twentieth century must offset not only the constant influence of careless speech and the indifference of parents, but the tremendous output of jargon issuing from the new mechanical means at man's disposal. Worst of all, circumstances have conspired to put the most corrupting force at the very heart of the school system. It is not newspapers, radio scripts, and movies that spoil our tongue so much as textbooks, official documents, commencement speeches, and learned works.[2]

The rise, at the turn of the century, of what James called "the softer pedagogy" is responsible for a debasement of language beyond all bounds of forgiveness. The desire to be kind, to sound new, to foster useful attitudes, to appear "scientific," and chiefly also the need to produce rapidly, account for this hitherto unheard-of deliquescence. In the victims, the softness goes to the very roots of the mind and turns it into mush. And among the "new" educators thus afflicted, the Progressive vanguard has naturally outstripped the rest. I shall not multiply examples from cata-

[2] See Mr. Maury Maverick's excellent denunciation of what he calls Gobbledygook in the *New York Times* for May 21, 1944. The rebuttals attempting to show that roundabout expressions spare shocks to the sick are hardly to the point. The healthy ought to be able to stand directness and even mention of "death and taxes." "Loss of life" and "fiscal levies" cost just as much in the end. [Author.]

logues, reports, and speeches, though over the years I have gathered a blush-making collection. I want only to identify the evil because it spreads like the plague.

It consists mainly of what our forefathers called "cant phrases," strung together without continuity, like wash on a line. At a faculty meeting, a teacher asks the Director of Admissions why there seem to be more music students applying than before. The Director replies, "Well, I should say that the forces undergirding the process are societal." Or a committee chairman wants to know what we do next. "I think," says the secretary, "that we should go on to institute actual implementation."

Teachers steeped in this medium are bound to ooze it out themselves, particularly if weekly and daily they receive official instructions like these: "Specify the kinds of change or permanence the student seems to crave, reject, or fear; the reasons given for liking-disliking, giving up-persistence; complaining-boasting. . . . It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the observations of characteristics associated with age and background are not being made in the general area of adolescent behavior but under specific and limited conditions — those set by the aims, emphases, and assumptions of one particular faculty.[3] Moreover, the observations of what appear to be the interests of freshmen conceal a possible ambiguity. The term 'interests' may refer to fairly superficial interests in the sense of surprise, pleasure, enjoyment, which are comparatively temporary; or 'interests' may involve an awakening curiosity which leads to consistent inquiry along the lines of some project." The reader must imagine not merely a paragraph taken at random, but pages and pages of similar woolly abstractions, mimeographed at the rate of nine and one-half pounds per person per semester. If the words "specific" and "objective" were blotted out of the English language, Progressive Education would have to shut up . . . shop.

As for students in teachers' colleges, the long climb up the ladder of learning comes to mean the mastering of this ghoulish *Desperanto,* so that with the attainment of the M.A. degree, we get the following utterance:—

> In the proposed study I wish to describe and evaluate representative programs in these fields as a means of documenting what seems to me a trend of increasing concern with the role of higher education in the improvement of interpersonal and intergroup relations and of calling attention in this way to outstanding contributions in practice.

Some readers might think this quotation very learned and highbrow indeed. But in fact it says nothing definite. It only embodies the disinclination to think. This is a general truth, and nothing is more symptomatic of the whole jargon than the fantastic use and abuse it makes of the phrase "in terms of." The fact is worth a moment's attention. "In terms of" used to refer to things that had terms, like algebra. "Put the problem in terms of

[3] I regret to say that "faculty" here means "faculty member" — a usage so far confined to the progressive schools. [Author.]

a and *b*." This makes sense. But in educational circles today "in terms of" means any connection between any two things. "We should grade students in terms of their effort" — that is, *for* or *according to* their effort. The *New York Public Library Bulletin* prints: "The first few months of employment would be easier . . . and more efficient in terms of service . . ." — that is, would yield more efficient service. But no one seems to care how or when or why his own two ideas are related. The gap in thought is plugged with "in terms of." I have been asked, "Will you have dinner with me, not tonight or tomorrow, but *in terms of* next week?" A modern Caesar would write: "All Gaul is to be considered in terms of three parts." [4]

From this Educator's patois, easily the worst English now spoken, we ought to pass to the idiom of textbooks, since they are written either by educators or by teachers. Happily, there is a standard set by other books — trade books — and it is not true that all textbooks are as badly written as those on education. On the contrary, it is very encouraging that the leading ones in every field are usually well planned *and* well written. The success of Morison and Commager's *Growth of the American Republic* is only the most recent case in point. Students, nevertheless, are asked to read many ill-written books. There is no excuse for this, though it is by no means the only source of error. We must remember that students do not read only books; they read what every man reads, and this would do no harm — it does no harm — when the mind is trained to resilience by the kind of writing practice I have advocated.

Unfortunately, with the vast increase in public schooling since 1870, an entirely new notion of what is good English has come to prevail. Awakened by free schooling, the people have shown worthy intentions. They want to be right and even elegant, and so become at once suspicious of plainness and pedantic. They purchase all sorts of handbooks that make a fetish of spelling, of avoiding split infinitives, of saying "it is I" (with the common result of "between you and I") — in short, dwell on trivialities or vulgarisms which do not affect style or thought in the slightest. But with this intolerance towards crude and plain error goes a remarkable insensitivity to inflated nonsense. Most bad journalism is only highbrow verbosity, yet the popular mind continues to believe that the pedantry which it likes is simple and the simplicity which it finds hard is complex. Here is the opening of a serial thriller in a Boston paper: —

> Strange things happen in Chinatown. But even that exotic and perverse district seldom presented drama as fantastic as the secret that hid among the silk and jade and porcelain splendors of the famous House of the Mandarin on Mulberry Lane.

There is a certain art in this, and I take note of "porcelain splendors" as the *mot juste* for bathtubs on exhibit. But the passage as a whole contains

[4] The objectionable phrase is now to be found in newspapers, business reports, and private correspondence. It is a menace *in terms of* the whole nation. [Author.]

nothing but arty and highfalutin words, joined by the good will of the reader rather than the mind of the writer. Still, every newspaper reader feels he understands it. Take now a well-known sentence composed of common words, all but two of them single syllables: "If there are more trees in the world than there are leaves on any one tree, then there must be at least two trees with the same number of leaves." Read this aloud and almost any listener will respond with "Huh? Say that again." For this sentence records a thought, and the Chinatown "drama" did not.

The close logic in the truly "simple" sentence makes the contrast sharper, but it would be just as sharp between a feeling clearly put and a feeble attempt to thrill. Thus there is a superstition that the novels of Henry James are written in a "difficult style." Yet if you examine them, you will find that the words and sentences — in *The Ambassadors,* for example — are in themselves quite usual. But the feelings they convey are unusual and subtle, and require attention. At the same time they also compel it, which is all that an artist takes pains for in writing.

Conversely, the only thing that can be asked of a writer is that he should know his own meaning and present it as forcibly as he can. The rule has not changed since Byron affirmed that "easy writing makes damned hard reading." Hence there is great value, as I think, in having college graduates recognize good prose when they see it, know that a tolerable paragraph must have gone through six or seven versions, and be ready to follow athletically on the trail of articulate thoughts, rather than look for the soapy incline to muddled meaning.

One does not have to go very far for the enjoyment of precise, sinewy writing. The same newspaper that furnishes tripe for the morning meal also brings such rarer tidbits as these: "They [the robot bombs] are of much the same shape and size as a small fighter plane, with stubby wings. They come over with tails aglow from the propelling rocket force, like little meteors moving at a nightmare pace by dark, and by day like little black planes with tails afire." This is perfection; and here is poetry: "Mr. McCaffrey, himself the father of two children, *and therefore schooled in apprehension,* ran across the street . . . shouting a warning."

When the daily reporter, harried by falling bombs or hustled by a city editor, can write like this, it is depressing to return to agencies closer to the school and find verbal laziness encouraged and imbecility taken for granted. One publisher of reference works sends out a circular stressing the fact that his books give the pronunciation of "all difficult — 'hard-to-say' — words." Is this where we are after fifty years of quasi-universal literacy? Is the word "difficult" so difficult that it has to be translated in its own sentence? The question is one for readers, and it is to the subject of reading that I now turn.

Poets, too, have written of their problems. But writing is writing, whether it be labeled "freshman theme," "journalism," "business English," "technical report," or "literary art." The difficulties these poets talk of are relevant to your own writing problems. To Melville, the hard thing is to bring all the conflicting qualities of his emotional and intellectual nature into harmonious response to life, to express the fullest human significance of his subject. To Yeats, the struggle is with the materials, words: every fine thing since Adam's fall needs much laboring; poetry, woman's beauty, love, must seem spontaneous, but each requires labor — and the practical world these days cares little for any of these as an art. Sidney, struggling to find arguments and present them artfully to his beloved, discovered that the most moving words would be the most direct expression of his feelings.

Art

Herman Melville • *1819–1891*

IN PLACID HOURS well-pleased we dream
Of many a brave unbodied scheme.
But form to lend, pulsed life create,
What unlike things must meet and mate:
A flame to melt — a wind to freeze;
Sad patience — joyous energies;
Humility — yet pride and scorn;
Instinct and study; love and hate;
Audacity — reverence. These must mate
And fuse with Jacob's mystic heart,
To wrestle with the angel — Art.

Adam's Curse

William Butler Yeats • *1865–1939*

WE SAT together at one summer's end,
That beautiful mild woman, your close friend,
And you and I, and talked of poetry.
I said, 'A line will take us hours maybe;
Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.

William Butler Yeats, *Collected Poems* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950). Copyright, 1940, by Bertha Georgie Yeats. Reprinted by permission of Mrs. William Butler Yeats and of The Macmillan Company of Canada, Ltd.

Better go down upon your marrow-bones
And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones
Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;
For to articulate sweet sounds together
Is to work harder than all these, and yet
Be thought an idler by the noisy set
Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen
The martyrs call the world.'

And thereupon
That beautiful mild woman for whose sake
There's many a one shall find out all heartache
On finding that her voice is sweet and low
Replied, 'To be born woman is to know —
Although they do not talk of it at school —
That we must labour to be beautiful.'

I said, 'It's certain there is no fine thing
Since Adam's fall but needs much labouring.
There have been lovers who thought love should be
So much compounded of high courtesy
That they would sigh and quote with learned looks
Precedents out of beautiful old books;
Yet now it seems an idle trade enough.'

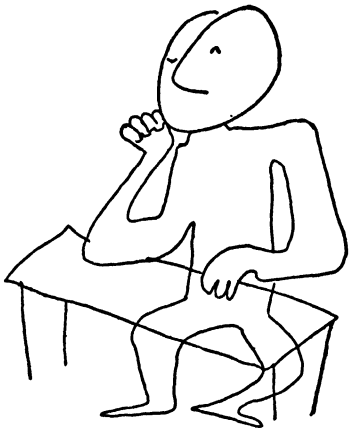
We sat grown quiet at the name of love;
We saw the last embers of daylight die,
And in the trembling blue-green of the sky
A moon, worn as if it had been a shell
Washed by time's waters as they rose and fell
About the stars and broke in days and years.

I had a thought for no one's but your ears:
That you were beautiful, and that I strove
To love you in the old high way of love;
That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown
As weary-hearted as that hollow moon.

Look in Thy Heart and Write

Sir Philip Sidney • 1554–1586

LOVING IN TRUTH, and fain in verse my love to show,
That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe;
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain,
Oft turning others' leaves to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sun-burned brain.
But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay;
Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's blows,
And others' feet still seemed but strangers in my way.
Thus, great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite,
"Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart and write."



"Is that really what you meant to say, Miss Tomkins?"

Two Letters on Writing

Sherwood Anderson • 1876–1941

An American writer who did as much as any other to free later writers to deal honestly and directly with their own experience was Sherwood Anderson, whose brooding fictional account of small-town life in Winesburg Ohio *(1919) brought Americans of his generation face to face with themselves. Here are two letters of advice and encouragement he wrote to a young writer.*

TROUTDALE, VIRGINIA, *August* 27, 1938

DEAR GEORGE FREITAG:

It sometimes seems to me that I should prepare a book designed to be read by other and younger writers. This not because of accomplishment on my own part, but because of the experiences, the particular experiences, I have had.

It is so difficult for most of us to realize how fully and completely commercialism enters into the arts. For example, how are you to know that really the opinion of the publisher or the magazine editor in regard to your

From *The Letters of Sherwood Anderson.* Selected and edited by Howard Mumford Jones, in association with Walter B. Rideout (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1953). Reprinted by permission of the publishers and of Mrs. Eleanor Anderson.

work, what is a story and what isn't, means nothing? Some of my own stories, for example, that have now become almost American classics, that are put before students in our schools and colleges as examples of good storytelling, were, when first written, when submitted to editors, and when seen by some of the so-called outstanding American critics, declared not stories at all.

It is true they were not nice little packages, wrapped and labeled in the O. Henry manner. They were obviously written by one who did not know the answers. They were simple little tales of happenings, things observed and felt. There were no cowboys or daring wild game hunters. None of the people in the tales got lost in burning deserts or went seeking the North Pole. In my stories I simply stayed at home, among my own people, wherever I happened to be, people in my own street. I think I must, very early, have realized that this was my milieu — that is to say, common everyday American lives. The ordinary beliefs of the people about me, that love lasted indefinitely, that success meant happiness, simply did not seem true to me.

Things were always happening. My eyes began to see, my ears to hear. Most of our American storytelling at that time had concerned only the rich and the well-to-do. I was a storyteller but not yet a writer of stories. As I came of a poor family, older men were always repeating to me the old saying: —

"Get money. Money makes the mare go."

For a time I was a laborer. As I had a passion for fast trotting and pacing horses, I worked about race tracks. I became a soldier, I got into business.

I knew, often quite intensively, Negro swipes about race tracks, small gamblers, prize fighters, common laboring men and women. There was a violent, dangerous man, said to be a killer. One night he walked and talked to me and became suddenly tender. I was forced to realize that all sorts of emotions went on in all sorts of people. A young man who seemed outwardly a very clod suddenly began to run wildly in the moonlight. Once I was walking in a wood and heard the sound of a man weeping. I stopped, looked, and listened. There was a farmer who, because of ill luck, bad weather, and perhaps even poor management, had lost his farm. He had gone to work in a factory in town, but, having a day off, had returned secretly to the fields he loved. He was on his knees by a low fence, looking across the fields in which he had worked from boyhood. He and I were employed at the time in the same factory, and in the factory he was a quiet, smiling man, seemingly satisfied with his lot.

I began to gather these impressions. There was a thing called happiness toward which men were striving. They never got to it. All of life was amazingly accidental. Love, moments of tenderness and despair, came to the poor and the miserable as to the rich and successful.

It began to seem to me that what was most wanted by all people was

love, understanding. Our writers, our storytellers, in wrapping life up into neat little packages were only betraying life. It began to seem to me that what I wanted for myself most of all, rather than so-called success, acclaim, to be praised by publishers and editors, was to try to develop, to the top of my bent, my own capacity to feel, see, taste, smell, hear. I wanted, as all men must want, to be a free man, proud of my own manhood, always more and more aware of earth, people, streets, houses, towns, cities. I wanted to take all into myself, digest what I could.

I could not give the answers, and so for a long time when my stories began to appear, at first only in little highbrow magazines, I was almost universally condemned by the critics. My stories, it seemed, had no definite ends. They were not conclusive and did not give the answers, and so I was called vague. "Groping" was a favorite term. It seems I could not get a formula and stick to it. I could not be smart about life. When I wrote my Winesburg stories — for the whole series I got eighty-five dollars — such critics as Mr. Floyd Dell and Henry Mencken, having read them, declared they were not stories. They were merely, it seemed, sketches. They were too vague, too groping. Some ten or fifteen years after Mr. Mencken told me they were not stories, he wrote, telling of how, when he first saw them, he realized their strength and beauty. An imagined conversation between us, that never took place, was spoken about.

And for this I did not blame Mr. Mencken. He thought he had said what he now thinks he said.

There was a time when Mr. Dell was, in a way, my literary father. He and Mr. Waldo Frank had been the first critics to praise some of my earlier work. He was generous and warm. He, with Mr. Theodore Dreiser, was instrumental in getting my first book published. When he saw the Winesburg stories, he, however, condemned them heartily. He was at that time, I believe, deeply under the influence of Maupassant. He advised me to throw the Winesburg stories away. They had no form. They were not stories. A story, he said, must be sharply definite. There must be a beginning and an end. I remember very clearly our conversation. "If you plan to go somewhere on a train and start for the station, but loiter along the way, so that the train comes into the station, stops to discharge and take on passengers, and then goes on its way, and you miss it, don't blame the locomotive engineer," I said. I daresay it was an arrogant saying, but arrogance is also needed.

And so I had written, let us say, the Winesburg stories. The publisher who had already published two of my early novels refused them, but at last I found a publisher. The stories were called unclean, dirty, filthy, but they did grow into the American consciousness, and presently the same critic who had condemned them began asking why I did not write more Winesburg stories.

I am telling you all of this, I assure you, not out of bitterness. I have had a good life, a full, rich life. I am still having a full, rich life. I tell it only to point out to you, a young writer, filled as I am made aware by

your letter to me, of tenderness for life, I tell it simply to suggest to you plainly what you are up against. For ten or fifteen years after I had written and published the Winesburg stories, I was compelled to make my living outside of the field of writing. You will find none of my stories even yet in the great popular magazines that pay high prices to writers.

The Winesburg stories, when first published, were bitterly condemned. They were thrown out of libraries. In one New England town, where three copies of the book had been bought, they were publicly burned in the public square of the town. I remember a letter I once received from a woman. She had been seated beside me at the table of a friend. "Having sat beside you and having read your stories, I feel that I shall never be clean again," she wrote. I got many such letters.

Then a change came. The book found its way into schools and colleges. Critics who had ignored or condemned the book now praised it.

"It's Anderson's best work. It is the height of his genius. He will never again do such work."

People constantly came to me, all saying the same thing.

"But what else of mine have you read since?"

A blank look upon faces.

They had read nothing else of mine. For the most part they were simply repeating, over and over, an old phrase picked up.

Now, I do not think all of this matters. I am one of the fortunate ones. In years when I have been unable to make a living with my pen, there have always been friends ready and willing to help me. There was one man who came to me in a year when I felt, when I knew, that I had done some of my best and truest work, but when, no money coming in, I was trying to sell my house to get money to live.

He wanted, he said, one of my manuscripts. "I will lend you five thousand dollars." He did lend it, knowing I could never return his money, but he did not deceive me. He had an affection for me as I had for him. He wanted me to continue to live in freedom. I have found this sort of thing among the rich as well as the poor. My house where I live is filled with beautiful things, all given to me. I live well enough. I have no quarrel with life. And I am only writing all of this to you to prepare you. In a world controlled by business, why should we not expect businessmen to think first of business?

And do bear in mind that publishers of books, of magazines, of newspapers are, first of all, businessmen. They are compelled to be.

And do not blame them when they do not buy your stories. Do not be romantic. There is no golden key that unlocks all doors. There is only the joy of living as richly as you can, always feeling more, absorbing more, and, if you are by nature a teller of tales, the realization that by faking, trying to give people what they think they want, you are in danger of dulling and in the end quite destroying what may be your own road into life.

There will remain for you, to be sure, the matter of making a living, and I am sorry to say to you that in the solution of that problem, for you and

other young writers, I am not interested. That, alas, is your own problem. I am interested only in what you may be able to contribute to the advancement of our mutual craft.

But why not call it an art? That is what it is.

Did you ever hear of an artist who had an easy road to travel in life?

TROUTDALE, VIRGINIA, *August* 27, 1938

TO GEORGE FREITAG:

Writing can be, like the practice of any other art, a way of life. It is what we all want, to find a way to live. There is this town, the people of the town or of a city street, trees along a street, familiar fields, old houses with children playing in the yard, a fat prosperous-looking man coming out of a big house set far back from the street. What is he like?

He is rich. He employs a chauffeur to drive his car. He cannot help wondering what his chauffeur thinks of him. Many of our rich people are a little frightened when they think of their wealth.

We live in a world in which most of the channels of public expression are ruled by the advertisers, and it is difficult to write of human life, giving yourself to the life immediately about you, without getting upon forbidden ground.

It can be done. Trick writing can be learned. It is a trade, not an art. It may be all right. Formerly I used to grow indignant because so many writers seemed to be selling out. Now I think it doesn't matter. I think every man writes as well as he can. Ordinary people need to be amused, taken away from thought. Life itself is too terribly real for them. We hear of great statesmen, scientists, etc., who spend their leisure hours reading detective stories. Why not? The statesman might begin thinking of how he got to where he is. The scientist had made some great discovery, but he is using his knowledge for his own private ends. He is no better or worse than the rest of us. But above all things he doesn't want to think.

We live, you see, in a thin age. We can't take it. There may have been times, periods in the history of man, when man did face the moral obligation of living. In our age we can't do it. Don't blame us too much.

I have become a veteran among American writers. Where have the years gone? How little I have done.

Young writers, new men among writers, are always writing letters to me. They come to see me. "How can I write as I please and still make a living?" It is a question for which I have no answer. To tell the truth, I am not interested in how you make a living.

I am interested only in what you give me, in how much you extend my own knowledge of life. You came from a different environment. You were born in a rich or a well-to-do family, while I came from a poor one.

What was the tone of life in your house? How did you feel? What made you what you are?

There are a thousand questions I want to ask you. Tell me in your work. Tell me. Tell me. The tales you tell, the way you tell them, the tone, color, form, all of these should reveal yourself to me. Give me a little of yourself. Extend a little my own knowledge, my own capacity for feeling, for understanding. I am a lustful man. I want everything. I knew a painter once who said to me, "I want to make love to a thousand, a hundred thousand women." I understand him. He didn't really want to bed the women. He wanted to go into them, penetrate into the mystery of women. It was because of something he wanted in his art.

It seems to me that we shall have more and more writing. People, it seems to me, are becoming more conscious of thinness. Now[a]days I myself no longer hope or want to be a popular writer. I write for myself and for other writers. It doesn't matter to me now that I am often misunderstood. I have come to realize that I have dreadful limitations. Once I thought, I will write so well, so clearly, will tell my tales so clearly, with such verve and gusto that everyone must accept me, but now I do not care for such acceptance. If you are mine, I cannot lose you. If I am yours, I will remain yours.

It is a way of making love. It is a way of losing self. It must be that the painter, as he paints, becomes always more and more conscious of nature, its moods, of the strange beauty coming unexpectedly out of what seems to others commonplace scenes. Why should I care whether you, the young writer, have had your breakfast, whether or not you have money to pay your rent or buy a car? I care only that you may broaden my own vision, increase my own capacity to feel, add a little to my understanding of others.

Why I Wrote about Bullfights

Ernest Hemingway • *1898–*

These are the opening paragraphs of Hemingway's magnificent exposition of bullfighting, Death in the Afternoon *(1932). Here the artistic purpose he has faithfully followed through his distinguished career in fiction is directly and simply stated.*

AT THE FIRST BULLFIGHT I ever went to I expected to be horrified and perhaps sickened by what I had been told would happen to the horses. Everything I had read about the bull ring insisted on that point; most people who wrote of it condemned bullfighting outright as a stupid brutal business,

Reprinted from *Death in the Afternoon* by Ernest Hemingway. Copyright, 1932, by Charles Scribner's Sons. Used by permission of the publishers.

but even those that spoke well of it as an exhibition of skill and as a spectacle deplored the use of the horses and were apologetic about the whole thing. The killing of the horses in the ring was considered indefensible. I suppose, from a modern moral point of view, that is, a Christian point of view, the whole bullfight is indefensible; there is certainly much cruelty, there is always danger, either sought or unlooked for, and there is always death, and I should not try to defend it now, only to tell honestly the things I have found true about it. To do this I must be altogether frank, or try to be, and if those who read this decide with disgust that it is written by some one who lacks their, the readers', fineness of feeling I can only plead that this may be true. But whoever reads this can only truly make such a judgment when he, or she, has seen the things that are spoken of and knows truly what their reactions to them would be.

Once I remember Gertrude Stein talking of bullfights spoke of her admiration for Joselito and showed me some pictures of him in the ring and of herself and Alice Toklas sitting in the first row of the wooden barreras at the bull ring at Valencia with Joselito and his brother Gallo below, and I had just come from the Near East, where the Greeks broke the legs of their baggage and transport animals and drove and shoved them off the quay into the shallow water when they abandoned the city of Smyrna, and I remember saying that I did not like the bullfights because of the poor horses. I was trying to write then and I found the greatest difficulty, aside from knowing truly what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel, and had been taught to feel, was to put down what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion that you experienced. In writing for a newspaper you told what happened and, with one trick and another, you communicated the emotion aided by the element of timeliness which gives a certain emotion to any account of something that has happened on that day; but the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion and which would be as valid in a year or in ten years or, with luck and if you stated it purely enough, always, was beyond me and I was working very hard to try to get it. The only place where you could see life and death, *i.e.*, violent death now that the wars were over, was in the bull ring and I wanted very much to go to Spain where I could study it. I was trying to learn to write, commencing with the simplest things, and one of the simplest things of all and the most fundamental is violent death. It has none of the complications of death by disease, or so-called natural death, or the death of a friend or some one you have loved or have hated, but it is death nevertheless, one of the subjects that a man may write of. I had read many books in which, when the author tried to convey it, he only produced a blur, and I decided that this was because either the author had never seen it clearly or at the moment of it, he had physically or mentally shut his eyes, as one might do if he saw a child that he could not possibly reach or aid, about to be struck by a train. In such a case I suppose he would prob-

ably be justified in shutting his eyes as the mere fact of the child being about to be struck by the train was all that he could convey, the actual striking would be an anti-climax, so that the moment before striking might be as far as he could represent. But in the case of an execution by a firing squad, or a hanging, this is not true, and if these very simple things were to be made permanent, as, say, Goya tried to make them in *Los Desastros de la Guerra,* it could not be done with any shutting of the eyes. I had seen certain things, certain simple things of this sort that I remembered, but through taking part in them, or, in other cases, having to write of them immediately after and consequently noticing the things I needed for instant recording, I had never been able to study them as a man might, for instance, study the death of his father or the hanging of some one, say, that he did not know and would not have to write of immediately after for the first edition of an afternoon newspaper.

So I went to Spain to see bullfights and to try to write about them for myself. I thought they would be simple and barbarous and cruel and that I would not like them, but that I would see certain definite action which would give me the feeling of life and death that I was working for. I found the definite action; but the bullfight was so far from simple and I liked it so much that it was much too complicated for my then equipment for writing to deal with and, aside from four very short sketches, I was not able to write anything about it for five years — and I wish I would have waited ten. However, if I had waited long enough I probably never would have written anything at all since there is a tendency when you really begin to learn something about a thing not to want to write about it but rather to keep on learning about it always and at no time, unless you are very egotistical, which, of course, accounts for many books, will you be able to say: now I know all about this and will write about it. Certainly I do not say that now; every year I know there is more to learn, but I know some things which may be interesting now, and I may be away from the bullfights for a long time and I might as well write what I know about them now.

"To Find Its Meaning"

Robert Browning • *1812–1889*

In the dramatic monologue Fra Lippo Lippi *(1855), from which these lines are taken, a painter-monk of the early Renaissance in Italy expounds the theory of art that leads him to paint things as he sees them, "realistically," rather than in a way that "instigates to prayer." He loves the physical things of this world too much to blur them for other-wordly purposes.*

. . . You've seen the world
— The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises, — and God made it all!
— For what? Do you feel thankful, aye or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What's it all about?
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course! — you say.
But why not do as well as say, — paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works — paint any one, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
Are here already; nature is complete:
Suppose you reproduce her — (which you can't)
There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted — better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though! How much more,
If I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.

"Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff"

A. E. Housman • 1859–1936

☞ *You will have no trouble understanding the writer's aim set forth here if you notice that the quotation marks indicate two speakers in the poem: a poet's friend accuses him of writing "stupid stuff" that is just too melancholy — he wants "a tune to dance to"; the poet, Terence, replies that there are better means of cheering yourself up than poetry, and goes on to justify his writing poems that dwell on the dark side of life. Housman's famous book,* A Shropshire Lad *(1896), from which this poem is taken, pipes many melancholy but lovely lyrics that carry out this purpose.*

"TERENCE, this is stupid stuff:
You eat your victuals fast enough;
There can't be much amiss, 'tis clear,
To see the rate you drink your beer.
But oh, good Lord, the verse you make,
It gives a chap the belly-ache.
The cow, the old cow, she is dead;
It sleeps well, the hornèd head:
We poor lads, 'tis our turn now
To hear such tunes as killed the cow.
Pretty friendship 'tis to rhyme
Your friends to death before their time
Moping melancholy mad:
Come, pipe a tune to dance to, lad."

Why, if 'tis dancing you would be,
There's brisker pipes than poetry.
Say, for what were hop-yards meant,
Or why was Burton built on Trent?
Oh many a peer of England brews
Livelier liquor than the Muse,
And malt does more than Milton can
To justify God's ways to man.
Ale, man, ale's the stuff to drink
For fellows whom it hurts to think:
Look into the pewter pot
To see the world as the world's not.

From *A Shropshire Lad* by A. E. Housman. Reprinted by permission of Henry Holt and Company, Inc., U.S.A., and by permission of the Society of Authors as literary representative of the Trustees of the Estate of the late A. E. Housman, and Messrs. Jonathan Cape Ltd., publishers of A. E. Housman's *Collected Poems*.

And faith, 'tis pleasant till 'tis past:
The mischief is that 'twill not last.
Oh I have been to Ludlow fair
And left my necktie God knows where,
And carried half-way home, or near,
Pints and quarts of Ludlow beer:
Then the world seemed none so bad,
And I myself a sterling lad;
And down in lovely muck I've lain,
Happy till I woke again.
Then I saw the morning sky:
Heigho, the tale was all a lie;
The world, it was the old world yet,
I was I, my things were wet,
And nothing now remained to do
But begin the game anew.

Therefore, since the world has still
Much good, but much less good than ill,
And while the sun and moon endure
Luck's a chance, but trouble's sure,
I'd face it as a wise man would,
And train for ill and not for good.
'Tis true, the stuff I bring for sale
Is not so brisk a brew as ale:
Out of a stem that scored the hand
I wrung it in a weary land.
But take it: if the smack is sour,
The better for the embittered hour;
It should do good to heart and head
When your soul is in my soul's stead;
And I will friend you, if I may,
In the dark and cloudy day.

There was a king reigned in the East:
There, when kings will sit to feast,
They get their fill before they think
With poisoned meat and poisoned drink.
He gathered all that springs to birth
From the many-venomed earth;
First a little, thence to more,
He sampled all her killing store;
And easy, smiling, seasoned sound,
Sate the king when healths went round.

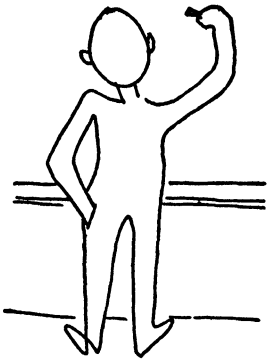
They put arsenic in his meat
And stared aghast to watch him eat;
They poured strychnine in his cup
And shook to see him drink it up:
They shook, they stared as white's their shirt:
Them it was their poison hurt.
— I tell the tale that I heard told.
Mithridates, he died old.

Sonnet 55

William Shakespeare • *1564–1616*

Several of the sonnets in Shakespeare's famous sequence addressed to his young friend and to his "Dark Lady" promise to give lasting fame to the one celebrated. This of course has been one of the major aims of writing, "to embalm and treasure up," as Milton said, "to a life beyond life" those things which the writer cherishes.

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.



"Perhaps I can make it clearer with a couple of examples."

Some Precepts and Examples

1. BEGINNING WITH TALK

On the Differences Between Writing and Speaking

William Hazlitt • *1778–1830*

Logically, speaking and writing go together, since both involve expressing, or putting forth, our thoughts in words. So, offhand, one would suppose that a person who can speak well can also write well, and vice versa; that if, in Leacock's words, one "has something to say and knows how to say it," it makes no difference whether he is speaking or writing. In important ways the supposition is correct, but in other important ways, which Hazlitt explores in this essay, it is not. Some experiments even seem to show that there may be more correlation between ability in writing and mathematics than between writing and speaking! After testing the differences Hazlitt points out against your own experience, you might try to think out the similarities.

> "Some minds are proportioned to that which may be dispatched at once, or within a short return of time; others to that which begins afar off and is to be won with length of pursuit." — BACON

IT IS A COMMON OBSERVATION that few persons can be found who speak and write equally well. Not only is it obvious that the two faculties do not always go together in the same proportions, but they are not unusually in direct opposition to each other. We find that the greatest authors often

make the worst company in the world, and again some of the liveliest fellows imaginable in conversation or extempore speaking seem to lose all this vivacity and spirit the moment they set pen to paper. For this a greater degree of quickness or slowness of parts, education, habit, temper, turn of mind and a variety of collateral and predisposing causes are necessary to account. The subject is at least curious and worthy of an attempt to explain it. I shall endeavor to illustrate the difference by familiar examples rather than by analytical reasonings. The philosopher of old was not unwise who defined motion by getting up and walking.

The great leading distinction between writing and speaking is, that more time is allowed for the one than the other, and hence different faculties are required for, and different objects attained by each. He is properly the best speaker who can collect together the greatest number of apposite ideas at a moment's warning; he is properly the best writer who can give utterance to the greatest quantity of valuable knowledge in the course of his whole life. The chief requisite for the one, then, appears to be quickness and facility of perception — for the other, patience of soul and a power increasing with the difficulties it has to master. He cannot be denied to be an expert speaker, a lively companion, who is never at a loss for something to say on every occasion or subject that offers. He, by the same rule, will make a respectable writer who, by dint of study, can find out anything good to say upon any one point that has not been touched upon before, or who by asking for time, can give the most complete and comprehensive view of any question. The one must be done off-hand, at a single blow; the other can only be done by a repetition of blows, by having time to think and do better.

In speaking, less is required of you, if you only do it at once with grace and spirit; in writing, you stipulate for all that you are capable of, but you have the choice of your own time and subject.

We see persons of that standard or texture of mind that they can do nothing but on the spur of the occasion; if they have time to deliberate they are lost. There are others who have no resource, who cannot advance a step by any efforts or assistance beyond a successful arrangement of commonplaces; but these they have always at command, at everybody's service. Set the same person to write a common paragraph and he cannot get through it for very weariness; ask him a question, ever so little out of the common road and he stares you in the face. What does all this bustle, animation, plausibility and command of words amount to? A lively flow of animal spirits, a good deal of confidence, a communicative turn, and a tolerably tenacious memory with respect to floating opinions and current phrases. Beyond the routine of the daily newspapers and coffee-house criticism, such persons do not venture to think at all; or if they did it would be so much the worse for them, for they would only be perplexed in the attempt and would perform their part in the mechanism of society with so much the less alacrity and easy volubility.

The most dashing orator I ever heard is the flattest writer I ever read. In speaking, he was like a volcano vomiting out *lava;* in writing, he is like a volcano burnt out. Nothing but the dry cinders, the hard shell remains. The tongues of flame with which in haranguing a mixed assembly he used to illuminate his subject and almost scorched up the panting air, do not appear painted on the margin of his works. He was the model of a flashy, powerful demagogue — a madman blest with a fit audience.

It is not merely that the same individual cannot sit down quietly in his closet and produce the same or a correspondent effect but sit down yourself and read one of these very popular and electrical effusions (for they have been published), and you would not believe it to be the same! The thunder-and-lightning mixture of the orator turns out a mere drab-colored suit in the person of the prose writer. We wonder at the change and think there must be some mistake, some legerdemain trick played off upon us, by which what before appeared so fine now appears to be so worthless. The deception took place *before;* now it is removed. The orator's vehemence of gesture, the loudness of the voice, the speaking eye, the conscious attitude, the inexplicable dumb show and noise, — all "those brave sublunary things that made his raptures clear," — are no longer there and without these he is nothing — his "fire and ire" turn to puddle and ditch-water, and the god of eloquence and of our idolatry sinks into a common mortal, or an image of lead, with a few labels, nicknames, and party watchwords stuck in his mouth. The truth is that these always made up the stock of his intellectual wealth, but a certain exaggeration and extravagance of *manner* covered the nakedness and swelled out the emptiness of the *matter.*

An orator can hardly get beyond *commonplaces;* if he does he gets beyond his hearers. The most successful speakers, even in the House of Commons, have not been the best scholars or the finest writers. Those speeches that in general told the best at the time are not now readable. What were the materials of which they were chiefly composed? An imposing detail of passing events, a formal display of official documents, an appeal to established maxims, an echo of popular clamor, some worn-out metaphor newly vamped up, — some hackneyed argument used for the hundredth, nay thousandth time, to fall in with the interests, the passions, or prejudices of listening and devoted admirers — some truth or falsehood repeated as the Shibboleth of party time out of mind, which gathers strength from sympathy as it spreads, because it is understood or assented to by the million, and finds in the increased action of the minds of numbers the weight and force of an instinct. A *commonplace* does not leave the mind "sceptical, puzzled, and undecided in the moment of action"; "it gives a body to opinion and a permanence to fugitive belief." It operates mechanically and opens an instantaneous and infallible communication between the hearer and speaker. A set of cant phrases, arranged in sounding sentences, and pronounced "with good emphasis and discretion," keep the gross and irritable humors of an audience in constant fermentation, and

levy no tax on the understanding. To give a reason for anything is to breed a doubt of it, which doubt you may not remove in the sequel, either because your reason may not be a good one or because the person to whom it is addressed may not be able to comprehend it or because *others* may not be able to comprehend it. He who offers to go into the grounds of an acknowledged axiom risks the unanimity of the company "by most admired disorder," as he who digs to the foundation of a building to show its solidity, risks its falling. But a commonplace is enshrined in its own unquestioned evidence, and constitutes its own immortal basis.

The writer must be original or he is nothing. He is not to take up with ready-made goods, for he has time allowed him to create his own materials, and to make novel combinations of thought and fancy, to contend with unforeseen difficulties of style and execution, while we look on and admire the growing work in secret and at leisure. There is a degree of finishing as well as of solid strength in writing which is not to be got at every day, and we can wait for perfection. The author owes a debt to truth and nature which he cannot satisfy at sight, but he has pawned his head on redeeming it. It is not a string of clap-traps to answer a temporary or party purpose — violent, vulgar, and illiberal — but general and lasting truth that we require at his hands. We go to him as pupils, not as partisans. We have a right to expect from him profounder views of things, finer observations, more ingenious illustrations, happier and bolder expressions. He is to give the choice and picked results of a whole life of study, what he has struck out in his most felicitous moods, has treasured up with most pride, has labored to bring to light with most anxiety and confidence of success. He can wait. He is not satisfied with a reason he has offered for something; let him wait till he finds a better reason. There is some word, some phrase, some idiom that expresses a particular idea better than any other, but he cannot for the life of him recollect it; let him wait till he does. Is it strange that among twenty thousand words in the English language the one of all others that he most needs should have escaped him? There are more things in nature than there are words in the English language, and he must not expect to lay rash hands on them all at once. You will allow a writer a year to think of a subject; he should not put you off with a truism at last. You allow him a year more to find out words for his thoughts; he should not give us an echo of all the fine things that have been said a hundred times. A person in habits of composition often hesitates in conversation for a particular word; it is because he is in search of the best word and *that* he cannot hit upon. In writing he would stop till it came. It is not true, however, that the scholar could avail himself of a more ordinary word if he chose, or readily acquire a command of ordinary language; for his associations are habitually intense, not vague and shallow, and words occur to him only as *tallies* to certain modifications of feeling. They are links in the chain of thought. His imagination is fastidious, and rejects all those that are "of no mark or likelihood."

To conclude this account with what perhaps I ought to have set out with — a definition of the character of an author. There are persons who in society, in public intercourse, feel no excitement,

> Dull as the lake that slumbers in the storm,

but who, when left alone, can lash themselves into a foam. They are never less alone than when alone. Mount them on a dinner table, and they have nothing to say; shut them up in a room to themselves, and they are inspired. They are "made fierce with dark keeping." In revenge for being tongue-tied, a torrent of words flows from their pens, and the storm which was so long collecting comes down apace. It never rains but it pours. Is not this strange, unaccountable? Not at all so. They have a real interest, a real knowledge of the subject, and they cannot summon up all that interest, or bring all that knowledge to bear while they have anything else to attend to. Till they can do justice to the feeling they have, they can do nothing. For this they look into their own minds, not in the faces of a gaping multitude. What they would say (if they could) does not lie at the orifices of the mouth ready for delivery, but is wrapped in the folds of the heart and registered in the chambers of the brain. In the sacred cause of truth that stirs them they would put their whole strength, their whole being into requisition; and as it implies a greater effort to drag their words and ideas from their lurking places, so there is no end when they are once set in motion. The whole of a man's thoughts and feelings cannot lie on the surface, made up for use; but the whole must be a greater quantity, a mightier power, if they could be got at, layer upon layer, and brought into play by the levers of imagination and reflection. Such a person then sees farther and feels deeper than most others. He plucks up an argument by the roots, he tears out the very heart of his subject. He has more pride in conquering the difficulties of a question, than vanity in courting the favor of an audience. He wishes to satisfy himself before he pretends to enlighten the public.

Everybody's Listening!

Bess Sondel • 1894–

Just as speaking and writing are logically paired, so are listening and reading. Curiously, however, we have usually assumed that listening is a passive process, that we can't help listening, and that somehow all the difficulties we have in reading disappear when we take in words by ear rather than by eye. Recently students of communication have begun to realize the importance of listening — after all, most of us listen more than we read, speak, or write. In this popular article, Bess Sondel lists five basic abilities of an active good listener. Consider the comparison between listening and reading, as you did between speaking and writing in Hazlitt's essay. Wherein are the techniques of listening and reading similar? Wherein different?

SOME PEOPLE think a good listener is a person who pretends to be interested while the other fellow mows him down. This is certainly a whopper if there ever was one. Listening is *active*. Listening is participating in at least five important ways. You are a good listener *if* —

1. You can "see" an idea when you hear it.
2. You can distinguish between essential points and details.
3. You can distinguish between facts and opinions.
4. You can distinguish between information and persuasion.
5. *And* if you can then make up your own mind about what has been said.

SEEING AN IDEA

Most people use a lot of words to express their ideas. They talk at us by the hour to explain just one thought. They lecture from platforms, from pulpits, from soapboxes, from armchairs. They toss around the same idea on the radio, in town hall, at a conference table, at a club meeting. One good idea may certainly be worth all those words, but when they come our way too fast — sometimes twisted, emotion-packed, ill-assorted — they are meaningful to us only if we can *see* the idea bare as bones. No matter how many words are used, a listener should be able to sum up the idea in one sentence or less. If he can do that, he understands what is being talked about. If he can't, he is hazy about the controlling idea that all those words refer to.

You can see an idea because it has form. An idea is not simple; it is complex, made up of parts. To know what the parts are and how they

Reprinted by permission from the *National Parent-Teacher*, January, 1951.

hang together is to discover the structure of the idea. Now these parts may be related to one another in various ways. Notice how the idea itself establishes the relationship between the parts: "World government will be the means of attaining the end, peace." "These operations in the laboratory will cause this effect." "This problem will permit of this solution." Parts of an idea may thus be related as *means* to *end, cause* to *effect, problem* to *solution,* and in many other ways. Parts may be related in time — as when we describe any operation. Parts may be related in space, as when we describe a trip. Parts may be related as sections that make up a whole idea: "Arguments *for* and arguments *against* world government as a means to peace." Here we have two parts — two sections (*for* and *against)* — that together cover the whole subject.

A good listener will see the idea, then, as something that has structure (pattern), as something with definite parts which together make up the whole. When the controlling idea is discovered, all the words, however many and in however disorderly a manner they come, find their rightful place and their special significance in relation to that controlling idea. There is order, and where there is order there is understanding.

Which Parts Are Essential?

This second point really explains itself if you understand and accept the first. After you boil down a torrent of words to a controlling idea and after you see that idea as having structure (pattern), you will automatically be able to distinguish the essential points from the details.

The essential points are summed up in the controlling idea. All amplification of these parts — every description and every explanation of a part, every example used to illustrate a part, every fact or opinion that is called on to bear witness for or against a part — is a detail. These are details because the speaker chooses them from several possibilities, each of which would do perhaps equally well. In talking to you, for instance, he would choose an example that fits into your experience and your interests.

The ability to distinguish between essentials and details is a great advantage to a listener. Indeed it is indispensable to understanding, and it is the first requisite for judging, since judgment without understanding is worthless.

As a listener, and as a participator too, the person who can distinguish between essentials and details will know at once whether a point is relevant or not relevant to a discussion. If it doesn't fit into the structural pattern, it is obviously irrelevant. A good listener notices when a speaker stresses details to the neglect of essentials and is soon bored by this untidy and inefficient procedure.

Perhaps the greatest advantage in being able to make this distinction is that you hear words, so to speak, in *perspective.* The essentials stand out in bold outlines against a background of details. There is no confusion. All things fall into place and assume their proper degree of importance.

It is the essentials that make the structural plan. Everything else is a detail that must fall into place in that plan. Details are fillers. A detail *is* a detail because we can introduce as many relevant ones as we wish without disturbing the structural pattern of the controlling idea.

Fact and Opinion

A fact is a statement that can be checked. There are historical facts, observable facts, and experimental facts. Historical facts come to us by indirect evidence. Observable facts can be directly perceived by qualified witnesses. Experimental facts are subject to control. All facts are objective — that is, impersonal.

An opinion cannot be checked; it is personal. An opinion is a guess, a hunch, a projection into the unknown. It is an opinion because all the facts are not in.

Opinions, however, should not be depreciated. In some ways they actually go beyond facts. There is a vastly important area in our lives in which opinions play the dominant role. Every time we look into the future in an effort to shape our lives, we depend on opinions, for nobody can predict with certainty about human beings. Every time we attempt to judge facts, every time we call facts better, worse, right, wrong, beautiful, ugly, moral, unethical, and so on, we depend on opinion. Every judgment is an opinion. And every time we attempt to advance into the realm of the not-yet-factually-known, we depend on opinion.

So let us not depreciate opinions. As listeners we must try instead to find a method for evaluating the worth of an opinion. The first step, of course, is to be able to distinguish between a fact and an opinion. In our efforts to do this, these questions are relevant: "Is the statement personal or not personal?" "Can it be checked?" "Can it be verified?" If the statement is impersonal and subject to verification, it is a fact. Even so, it may be worthless to you as a listener.

Unless a fact is hitched to an idea, it floats. Don't try to listen for isolated facts. Don't try to remember them. Ask yourself, rather, "What idea holds these facts together?" When you see that, you will automatically grasp the significance of the fact to the idea which it supports.

Now as to opinions. When some of the facts are not available and all the facts are not in, when a statement has its personal side and therefore cannot be checked, you will of course call this an opinion. A good opinion rests on the facts that are in: "He's a liar!" "How do you know?" "I saw him take the box, and he said he didn't."

A sharp listener will soon discover that many opinions rest on other opinions, without ever getting down to facts, thus: "He's a liar!" "How do you know?" "He never was any good. When he was a kid he was always in trouble. All the kids in that neighborhood were wild. Nobody trusts him." All opinion — and not good opinion at that. There is not one fact to substantiate these judgments!

Notice the words *never* and *always.* These are traps for falsification, to say nothing of prejudice. These words make no allowance for change. Yet in human behavior the one indisputable scientific fact is that of constant, inescapable, and largely unpredictable change. All life is a process of change, and it never repeats itself exactly.

Then notice the words *all* and *nobody.* When applied to human behavior these words deny the scientific fact that every living being is absolutely unique. They assume an absolute exactness — in some respect — of everyone. This is a tall order and one that cannot be filled. Such words are signals to the listener for extra alertness. Falsehood and prejudice lurk in their seeming authority.

A good opinion makes no pretense to be anything else. We listen with respect when a speaker says, "This is my opinion now. Maybe I'll revise it tomorrow when we have more information. But today, with the facts we have, I look at it this way." We listen with skepticism to the dogmatic speaker who forgets that opinions are subject to revision in the light of further knowledge. We listen with downright distrust to the speaker who tries to palm off his opinions as facts.

One of the slickest ways of doing this — palming off a poor opinion as a fact — is to use the scientific device of classification. When scientists classify, they are interested in the similarities of the things they are classifying, not in the differences left out. But to classify people, without regard to their individual differences, to throw them into sacks and label them is a risky business that leads to false and prejudicial opinions. A good listener will remember the *differences left out* when human beings are classified according to race, color, political affiliations, religion, occupation — anything! Distinguish between facts and opinions, but take the further step of distinguishing between good opinions and ungrounded opinions.

What's the Intention?

Every time a person speaks, he speaks with a purpose. Maybe he isn't aware of his purpose, but it's there. Otherwise why would he speak to you? Maybe he wants to amuse you. Maybe he wants to inform you. Maybe he wants you to like him or trust him or sympathize with him. Maybe he wants you to take a stand for him and with him. Maybe he wants you to do something.

Words are used for an infinite variety of purposes, but we can boil these down to three: (1) Speakers want their listeners to *understand* them. (2) They want their listeners to take an attitude, to *feel* something. (3) They want their listeners to *do* something.

When a speaker asks only for understanding, his words are informative. When he asks for a feeling response or an action response, or both, his words are persuasive. The distinction is a fine one, for sometimes information in itself is persuasive.

Information is presented in words that have a factual basis. If the speaker asks only for understanding (as far as you can determine from his tone, his manner, and his words), then you will call his words *informative* terms. When you hear words that *appraise* things — that call things better, worse, useful, not useful, right, wrong, beautiful, ugly — you will be a good listener if you recognize these statements as opinions, as judgments. And you will know that they have their personal side. The personal side involves *you,* the listener, for those words are intended to arouse an attitude response in you. Before you are persuaded to go hot or cold, dig out the informative statements that support the judgments, the facts that can be checked.

When you hear words that are frankly incitive, the speaker is trying to persuade you to respond by a specific action. "Do this. Don't do that," he will say. Look for statements of fact and statements of approved opinions before you respond.

Sometimes it is beneficial to the listener to respond in the way intended by the speaker; sometimes it is not. A good listener responds warmly and actively, but intelligently. He does not move forward blindly.

And remember, to know what a speaker is up to helps you to know why he chose these facts as against other facts, and this highlights the sixty-four dollar question "What facts are left out?"

How's Your Listening Skill?

And finally, can you make up your own mind? You will be bombarded with words, words that are aimed at you with a purpose. Can you distinguish between facts and opinions, between a good opinion and a phony one? Do you know when you are being persuaded? Do you get bogged down in details so that you lose all sense of direction? Can you see an idea sharp and clear against a background of details? Can you recognize the pattern, the structure that gives order to the stream of words that assails you?

Dr. Johnson Converses on Composition

James Boswell • *1740–1795*

One of the world's great biographies is Boswell's Life of Johnson *(1791). From the time of their first meeting in 1763, to Johnson's death in 1784, Boswell carefully kept notes of their conversations, and it is these as much as anything which bring that great personality so vividly to life in the biography. Far from practising the tact recommended below by Franklin, Dr. Johnson was overbearing and dogmatic, often dis-*

coursing rather than conversing. On one occasion Boswell writes, "When I called on Dr. Johnson the next morning, I found him highly satisfied with his colloquial prowess the preceding evening. 'Well, (said he), we had good talk.' Boswell. 'Yes, Sir; you tossed and gored several persons.'" But Johnson's superior wit and wisdom earned him the acknowledged right to lord it over even the distinguished company he frequented.

[APRIL 30, 1773] . . . Goldsmith being mentioned; JOHNSON. "It is amazing how little Goldsmith knows. He seldom comes where he is not more ignorant than any one else." SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. "Yet there is no man whose company is more liked." JOHNSON. "To be sure, Sir. When people find a man of the most distinguished abilities as a writer, their inferiour while he is with them, it must be highly gratifying to them. What Goldsmith comically says of himself is very true, — he always gets the better when he argues alone; meaning, that he is master of a subject in his study, and can write well upon it; but when he comes into company, grows confused, and unable to talk. Take him as a poet, his 'Traveller' is a very fine performance; ay, and so is his 'Deserted Village,' were it not sometimes too much the echo of his 'Traveller.' Whether, indeed, we take him as a poet, — as a comick writer, — or as an historian, he stands in the first class." BOSWELL. "An historian! My dear Sir, you surely will not rank his compilation of the Roman History with the works of other historians of this age?" JOHNSON. "Why, who are before him?" BOSWELL. "Hume, — Robertson, — Lord Lyttelton." JOHNSON. (His antipathy to the Scotch beginning to rise.) "I have not read Hume; but, doubtless, Goldsmith's History is better than the *verbiage* of Robertson, or the foppery of Dalrymple." BOSWELL. "Will you not admit the superiority of Robertson, in whose history we find such penetration — such painting?" JOHNSON. "Sir, you must consider how that penetration and that painting are employed. It is not history, it is imagination. He who describes what he never saw, draws from fancy. Robertson paints minds as Sir Joshua paints faces in a history-piece: he imagines an heroick Countenance. You must look upon Robertson's work as romance and try it by that standard. History it is not. Besides, Sir, it is the great excellence of a writer to put into his book as much as his book will hold. Goldsmith has done this in his History. Now Robertson might have put twice as much into his book. Robertson is like a man who has packed gold in wool: the wool takes up more room than the gold. No, Sir; I always thought Robertson would be crushed by his own weight, — would be buried under his own ornaments. Goldsmith tells you shortly all you want to know: Robertson detains you a great deal too long. No man will read Robertson's cumbrous detail a second time; but Goldsmith's plain narrative will please again and again. I would say to Robertson what an old tutor of a college said to one of his pupils: 'Read over your compositions, and wherever you meet with a passage which you think is

particularly fine, strike it out.' Goldsmith's abridgement is better than that of Lucius Florus or Eutropius; and I will venture to say, that if you compare him with Vertot, in the same places of the Roman History, you will find that he excels Vertot. Sir, he has the art of compiling, and of saying everything he has to say in a pleasing manner. He is now writing a Natural History, and will make it as entertaining as a Persian tale."

On Disputing

Benjamin Franklin • *1706–1790*

Franklin's famous Autobiography, *from which this passage is taken, was begun as a long letter to his son, and had as one of its chief purposes to explain some of the means by which he had risen in the world. He was famous for his ability to "win friends and influence people," and these paragraphs show how conscious he was of the importance of tact in conversation.*

WHILE I WAS intent on improving my language, I met with an English grammar (I think it was Greenwood's), at the end of which there were two little sketches of the arts of rhetoric and logic, the latter finishing with a specimen of a dispute in the Socratic method; and soon after I procur'd Xenophon's *Memorable Things of Socrates,* wherein there are many instances of the same method. I was charm'd with it, adopted it, dropt my abrupt contradiction and positive argumentation, and put on the humble inquirer and doubter. And being then, from reading Shaftesbury and Collins, become a real doubter in many points of our religious doctrine, I found this method safest for myself and very embarrassing to those against whom I used it; therefore I took a delight in it, practis'd it continually, and grew very artful and expert in drawing people, even of superior knowledge, into concessions, the consequences of which they did not foresee, entangling them in difficulties out of which they could not extricate themselves, and so obtaining victories that neither myself nor my cause always deserved. I continu'd this method some few years, but gradually left it, retaining only the habit of expressing myself in terms of modest diffidence; never using, when I advanced anything that may possibly be disputed, the words *certainly, undoubtedly,* or any others that give the air of positiveness to an opinion; but rather say, I conceive or apprehend a thing to be so and so; it appears to me, or *I should think it so or so,* for such and such reasons; or *I imagine it to be so;* or *it is so, if I am not mistaken.* This habit, I believe, has been of great advantage to me when I have had occasion to in-

culcate my opinions, and persuade men into measures that I have been from time to time engag'd in promoting; and, as the chief ends of conversation are to *inform* or to be *informed,* to *please* or to *persuade,* I wish well-meaning, sensible men would not lessen their power of doing good by a positive, assuming manner, that seldom fails to disgust, tends to create opposition, and to defeat every one of those purposes for which speech was given to us, to wit, giving or receiving information or pleasure. For, if you would inform, a positive and dogmatical manner in advancing your sentiments may provoke contradiction and prevent a candid attention. If you wish information and improvement from the knowledge of others, and yet at the same time express yourself as firmly fix'd in your present opinions, modest, sensible men, who do not love disputation, will probably leave you undisturbed in the possession of your error. And by such a manner, you can seldom hope to recommend yourself in *pleasing* your hearers, or to persuade those whose concurrence you desire. Pope says, judiciously:

> "Men should be taught as if you taught them not,
> And things unknown propos'd as things forgot;"

farther recommending to us

> "To speak, tho' sure, with seeming diffidence."

On Conversation

Ring Lardner • *1885—1933*

Ring Lardner had an uncanny ear for the way Americans talk and an almost Swiftian gift of satire in exposing our banalities. Perhaps the following "conversation" bears enough resemblance to the way most of us converse to make us see why Dr. Johnson's friends valued his talk in spite of his overbearing manners.

THE OTHER night I happened to be comeing back from Wilmington, Del. to wherever I was going and was setting in the smokeing compartment or whatever they now call the wash room and overheard a conversation between two fellows who we will call Mr. Butler and Mr. Hawkes. Both of them seemed to be from the same town and I only wished I could repeat

Reprinted from *First and Last* by Ring Lardner. Copyright, 1934, by Ellis A. Lardner. Used by permission of the publisher, Charles Scribner's Sons.

the conversation verbatim but the best I can do is report it from memory. The fellows evidently had not met for some three to fifteen years as the judges say.

"Well," said Mr. Hawkes, "if this isn't Dick Butler!"

"Well," said Mr. Butler, "if it isn't Dale Hawkes."

"Well, Dick," said Hawkes, "I never expected to meet you on this train."

"No," replied Butler. "I genally always take Number 28. I just took this train this evening because I had to be in Wilmington today."

"Where are you headed for?" asked Hawkes.

"Well, I am going to the big town," said Butler.

"So am I, and I am certainly glad we happened to be in the same car."

"I am glad too, but it is funny we happened to be in the same car."

It seemed funny to both of them but they successfully concealed it so far as facial expression was concerned. After a pause Hawkes spoke again:

"How long since you been back in Lansing?"

"Me?" replied Butler. "I ain't been back there for twelve years."

"I ain't been back there either myself for ten years. How long since you been back there?"

"I ain't been back there for twelve years."

"I ain't been back there myself for ten years. Where are you headed for?"

"New York," replied Butler. "I have got to get there about once a year. Where are you going?"

"Me?" asked Hawkes. "I am going to New York too. I have got to go down there every little wile for the firm."

"Do you have to go there very often?"

"Me? Every little wile. How often do you have to go there?"

"About once a year. How often do you get back to Lansing?"

"Last time I was there was ten years ago. How long since you was back?"

"About twelve years ago. Lot of changes there since we left there."

"That's the way I figured it. It makes a man seem kind of old to go back there and not see nobody you know."

"You said something. I go along the streets there now and don't see nobody I know."

"How long since you was there?"

"Me?" said Hawkes. "I only get back there about once every ten years. By the way what become of old man Kelsey?"

"Who do you mean, Kelsey?"

"Yes, what become of him?"

"Old Kelsey? Why he has been dead for ten years."

"Oh, I didn't know that. And what become of his daughter? I mean Eleanor."

"Why Eleanor married a man named Forster or Jennings or something like that from Flint."

"Yes, but I mean the other daughter, Louise."

"Oh, she's married."

"Where are you going now?"

"I am headed for New York on business for the firm."

"I have to go there about once a year myself — for the firm."

"Do you get back to Lansing very often?"

"About once in ten or twelve years. I hardly know anybody there now. It seems funny to go down the street and not know nobody."

"That's the way I always feel. It seems like it was not my old home town at all. I go up and down the street and don't know anybody and nobody speaks to you. I guess I know more people in New York now than I do in Lansing."

"Do you get to New York often?"

"Only about once a year. I have to go there for the firm."

"New York isn't the same town it used to be neither."

"No, it is changeing all the time. Just like Lansing. I guess they all change."

"I don't know much about Lansing any more. I only get there about once in ten or twelve years."

"What are you reading there?"

"Oh, it is just a little article in *Asia.* They's a good many interesting articles in *Asia.*"

"I only seen a couple copies of it. This thing I am reading is a little article on 'Application' in the *American.*"

"Well, go ahead and read and don't let me disturb you."

"Well I just wanted to finish it up. Go ahead and finish what you're reading yourself."

"All right. We will talk things over later. It is funny we happened to get on the same car."

2. WRITING LETTERS

Sam Weller's Valentine

Charles Dickens • 1812—1870

How many of your own good or bad habits, traits, or impulses in letter-writing can you see in this humorous sketch from Pickwick Papers *(1837), and what useful hints do you find scattered along the way?*

As HE was sauntering away his spare time, and stopped to look at almost every object that met his gaze, it is by no means surprising that Mr. Weller should have paused before a small stationer's and print-seller's window;

but without further explanation it does appear surprising that his eyes should have no sooner rested on certain pictures which were exposed for sale therein, than he gave a sudden start, smote his right leg with great vehemence, and exclaimed with energy, "If it hadn't been for this, I should ha' forgot all about it, till it was too late!"

The particular picture on which Sam Weller's eyes were fixed, as he said this, was a highly coloured representation of a couple of human hearts skewered together with an arrow, cooking before a cheerful fire, while a male and female cannibal in modern attire, the gentleman being clad in a blue coat and white trousers, and the lady in a deep red pelisse with a parasol of the same, were approaching the meal with hungry eyes, up a serpentine gravel path leading thereunto. A decidedly indelicate young gentleman, in a pair of wings and nothing else, was depicted as superintending the cooking; a representation of the spire of the church in Langham Place appeared in the distance; and the whole formed a "valentine," of which, as a written inscription in the window testified, there was a large assortment within, which the shopkeeper pledged himself to dispose of to his countrymen generally, at the reduced rate of one and sixpence each.

"I should ha' forgot it; I should certainly ha' forgot it!" said Sam; and so saying, he at once stepped into the stationer's shop, and requested to be served with a sheet of the best gilt-edged letter-paper, and a hard-nibbed pen which could be warranted not to splutter. These articles having been promptly supplied, he walked on direct towards Leadenhall Market at a good round pace, very different from his recent lingering one. Looking round him, he there beheld a signboard on which the painter's art had delineated something remotely resembling a cerulean elephant with an aquiline nose in lieu of trunk. Rightly conjecturing that this was the Blue Boar himself, he stepped into the house, and inquired concerning his parent.

"He won't be here this three quarters of an hour or more," said the young lady who superintended the domestic arrangements of the Blue Boar.

"Wery good, my dear," replied Sam. "Let me have nine penn'orth o' brandy and water luke, and the inkstand, will you, miss?"

The brandy and water luke and the inkstand having been carried into the little parlour, and the young lady having carefully flattened down the coals to prevent their blazing, and carried away the poker to preclude the possibility of the fire being stirred, without the full privity and concurrence of the Blue Boar being first had and obtained, Sam Weller sat himself down in a box near the stove, and pulled out the sheet of gilt-edged letter-paper, and the hard-nibbed pen. Then looking carefully at the pen to see that there were no hairs in it, and dusting down the table, so that there might be no crumbs of bread under the paper, Sam tucked up the cuffs of his coat, squared his elbows, and composed himself to write.

To ladies and gentlemen who are not in the habit of devoting them-

selves practically to the science of penmanship, writing a letter is no very easy task, it being always considered necessary in such cases for the writer to recline his head on his left arm so as to place his eyes as nearly as possible on a level with the paper, and while glancing sideways at the letters he is constructing, to form with his tongue imaginary characters to correspond. These motions, although unquestionably of the greatest assistance to original composition, retard in some degree the progress of the writer, and Sam had unconsciously been a full hour and a half writing words in small text, smearing out wrong letters with his little finger, and putting in new ones which required going over very often to render them visible through the old blots, when he was roused by the opening of the door and the entrance of his parent.

"Vell, Sammy," said the father.

"Vell, my Prooshan Blue," responded the son, laying down his pen. "What's the last bulletin about mother-in-law?"

"Mrs. Veller passed a wery good night, but is uncommon perwerse, and unpleasant this mornin' — signed upon oath — S. Veller, Esquire, Senior. That's the last vun as was issued, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller, untying his shawl.

"No better yet?" inquired Sam.

"All the symptoms aggerawated," replied Mr. Weller, shaking his head. "But wot's that, you're a doin' of — pursuit of knowledge under difficulties — eh, Sammy?"

"I've done now," said Sam with slight embarrassment; "I've been a writin'."

"So I see," replied Mr. Weller. "Not to any young 'ooman, I hope, Sammy."

"Why, it's no use a sayin' it ain't," replied Sam. "It's a walentine."

"A what!" exclaimed Mr. Weller, apparently horror-stricken by the word.

"A walentine," replied Sam.

"Samivel, Samivel," said Mr. Weller, in reproachful accents, "I didn't think you'd ha' done it. Arter the warnin' you've had o' your father's wicious perpensities; arter all I've said to you upon this here wery subject; arter actiwally seein' and bein' in the company o' your own mother-in-law, vich I should ha' thought wos a moral lesson as no man could ever ha' forgotten to his dyin' day! I didn't think you'd ha' done it, Sammy, I didn't think you'd ha' done it." These reflections were too much for the good old man. He raised Sam's tumbler to his lips and drank off its contents.

"Wot's the matter now!" said Sam.

"Nev'r mind, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller, "it'll be a wery agonizin' trial to me at my time of life, but I'm pretty tough, that's vun consolation, as the wery old turkey remarked ven the farmer said he wos afeerd he should be obliged to kill him, for the London market."

"Wot'll be a trial?" inquired Sam.

"To see you married, Sammy — to see you a dilluded wictim, and thinkin' in your innocence that it's all wery capital," replied Mr. Weller. "It's a dreadful trial to a father's feelin's, that 'ere, Sammy."

"Nonsense," said Sam. "I ain't a goin' to get married, don't you fret yourself about that; I know you're a judge o' these things. Order in your pipe, and I'll read you the letter — there."

We cannot distinctly say whether it was the prospect of the pipe, or the consolatory reflection that a fatal disposition to get married ran in the family and couldn't be helped, which calmed Mr. Weller's feelings, and caused his grief to subside. We should be rather disposed to say that the result was attained by combining the two sources of consolation, for he repeated the second in a low tone, very frequently; ringing the bell meanwhile, to order in the first. He then divested himself of his upper coat; and lighting the pipe and placing himself in front of the fire with his back towards it, so that he could feel its full heat, and recline against the mantelpiece at the same time, turned towards Sam, and, with a countenance greatly mollified by the softening influence of tobacco, requested him to "fire away."

Sam dipped his pen into the ink to be ready for any corrections, and began with a very theatrical air —

" 'Lovely ——— ' "

"Stop," said Mr. Weller, ringing the bell. "A double glass o' the inwariable, my dear."

"Very well, Sir," replied the girl; who with great quickness appeared, vanished, returned, and disappeared.

"They seem to know your ways here," observed Sam.

"Yes," replied his father, "I've been here before, in my time. Go on, Sammy."

" 'Lovely creetur,' " repeated Sam.

" 'Tain't in poetry, is it?" interposed the father.

"No, no," replied Sam.

"Werry glad to hear it," said Mr. Weller. "Poetry's unnat'ral; no man ever talked in poetry 'cept a beadle on boxin' day, or Warren's blackin' or Rowland's oil, or some o' them low fellows; never you let yourself down to talk poetry, my boy. Begin again, Sammy."

Mr. Weller resumed his pipe with critical solemnity, and Sam once more commenced, and read as follows.

" 'Lovely creetur i feel myself a dammed' ——."

"That ain't proper," said Mr. Weller, taking his pipe from his mouth.

"No; it ain't 'dammed,' " observed Sam, holding the letter up to the light, "it's 'shamed,' there's a blot there — 'I feel myself ashamed.' "

"Wery good," said Mr. Weller. "Go on."

" 'Feel myself ashamed, and completely cir ——' I forget wot this here word is," said Sam, scratching his head with the pen, in vain attempts to remember.

"Why don't you look at it, then?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"So I *am* a lookin' at it," replied Sam, "but there's another blot: here's a 'c,' and a 'i,' and a 'd.'"

"Circumwented, p'r'aps," suggested Mr. Weller.

"No, it ain't that," said Sam, "circumscribed, that's it."

"That ain't as good a word as circumwented, Sammy," said Mr. Weller gravely.

"Think not?" said Sam.

"Nothin' like it," replied his father.

"But don't you think it means more?" inquired Sam.

"Vell, p'r'aps it is a more tenderer word," said Mr. Weller, after a few moments' reflection. "Go on, Sammy."

"'Feel myself ashamed and completely circumscribed in a dressin' of you, for you *are* a nice gal and nothin' but it.'"

"That's a wery pretty sentiment," said the elder Mr. Weller, removing his pipe to make way for the remark.

"Yes, I think it is rayther good," observed Sam, highly flattered.

"Wot I like in that 'ere style of writin'," said the elder Mr. Weller, "is, that there ain't no callin' names in it, — no Wenuses, nor nothin' o' that kind; wot's the good o' callin' a young 'ooman a Wenus or a angel, Sammy?"

"Ah! what, indeed?" replied Sam.

"You might jist as vell call her a griffin, or a unicorn, or a king's arms at once, which is wery vell known to be a col-lection o' fabulous animals," added Mr. Weller.

"Just as well," replied Sam.

"Drive on, Sammy," said Mr. Weller.

Sam complied with the request, and proceeded as follows, his father continuing to smoke, with a mixed expression of wisdom and complacency, which was particularly edifying.

"'Afore I see you I thought all women was alike.'"

"So they are," observed the elder Mr. Weller, parenthetically.

"'But now,' continued Sam, 'now I find what a reg'lar soft-headed, ink-red'lous turnip I must ha' been for there ain't nobody like you though *I* like you better than nothin' at all.' I thought it best to make that rayther strong," said Sam, looking up.

Mr. Weller nodded approvingly, and Sam resumed.

"'So I take the privilidge of the day, Mary, my dear — as the gen'lem'n in difficulties did, ven he valked out of a Sunday, — to tell you that the first and only time I see you your likeness was took on my hart in much quicker time and brighter colours than ever a likeness was took by the profeel macheen (wich p'r'aps you may have heerd on Mary my dear) altho it *does* finish a portrait and put the frame and glass on complete with a hook at the end to hang it up by and all in two minutes and a quarter.'"

"I am afeerd that werges on the poetical, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, dubiously.

"No, it don't," replied Sam, reading on very quickly, to avoid contesting the point.

" 'Except of me Mary my dear as your walentine and think over what I've said. — My dear Mary I will now conclude.' That's all," said Sam.

"That's rayther a sudden pull up, ain't it, Sammy?" inquired Mr. Weller.

"Not a bit on it," said Sam; "she'll vish there wos more, and that's the great art o' letter writin'."

"Well," said Mr. Weller, "there's somethin' in that; and I wish your mother-in-law 'ud only conduct her conwersation on the same gen-teel principle. Ain't you a goin' to sign it?"

"That's the difficulty," said Sam; "I don't know what *to* sign it."

"Sign it — 'Veller,' " said the oldest surviving proprietor of that name.

"Won't do," said Sam. "Never sign a walentine with your own name."

"Sign it 'Pickvick,' then," said Mr. Weller; "it's a wery good name, and a easy one to spell."

"The wery thing," said Sam. "I *could* end with a werse; what do you think?"

"I don't like it, Sam," rejoined Mr. Weller. "I never know'd a respectable coachman as wrote poetry, 'cept one, as made an affectin' copy o' werses the night afore he wos hung for a highway robbery; and *he* wos only a Cambervell man, so even that's no rule."

But Sam was not to be dissuaded from the poetical idea that had occurred to him, so he signed the letter —

Your love-sick
Pickwick.

And having folded it, in a very intricate manner, squeezed a downhill direction in one corner: "To Mary, Housemaid, at Mr. Nupkins's Mayor's, Ipswich, Suffolk"; and put it into his pocket, wafered, and ready for the General Post.

Two Letters ✒ *Herman Melville • 1819–1891*

✒ *One of America's most distinguished writers, the author of* Moby-Dick *(1851), Herman Melville wrote delightful personal letters. The first of the two which follow was written to his friend Evert Duyckinck, editor of a New York literary journal. Melville was in the midst of* Moby-Dick *at the time. The second letter was written to his eleven-year-old son Malcolm from a clipper-ship on which Melville was sailing round the Horn to San Francisco.*

[To Evert Duyckinck]

Tuesday Evening [December 12, 1850]
Pittsfield [Mass.]

My dear Duyckinck,

If you overhaul your old diaries you will see that a long period ago you were acquainted with one Herman Melville; that he then resided in New York; but removing after a time into a remote region called Berkshire, and failing to answer what letters you sent him, you but reasonably supposed him dead; at any rate did not hear anything of him again, & so by degrees you thought no more about him.

I now write to inform you that this man has turned up — in short, my Dear Fellow in spite of my incivility I am alive & well, & would fain be remembered.

Before I go further let me say here that I am writing this by candle light — an uncommon thing with me — & therefore my writing wont be very legible, because I am keeping one eye shut & wink at the paper with the other.

If you expect a letter from a man who lives in the country you must make up your mind to receive an egotistical one — for he has no gossip nor news of any kind, unless his neighbor's cow has calved or the hen has laid a silver egg. — By the way, this reminds me that one of my neighbors has has [*sic*] really met with a bad accident in the loss of a fine young colt. That neighbor is our friend Mrs Morewood. Mr Doolittle — my cousin — was crossing the R.R. track yesterday (where it runs thro the wooded part of the farm.) in his slay — *sleigh* I mean — and was followed by all three of Mrs Morewood's horses (they running at large for the sake of the air & exercise). Well: just as Doolittle got on the track with his vehicle, along comes the Locomotive — whereupon Doolittle whips up like mad & steers clear; but the frightened horses following him, they scamper off full before the engine, which hitting them right & left, tumbles one into a ditch, pitches another into a snowbank, & chases the luckless third so hard as to come into direct contact with him, & break his leg clean into two pieces. — With his leg "in splints" that is done up by the surgeon, the poor colt now lies in his straw, & the prayers of all good Christians are earnestly solicited in his behalf. Certainly, considering the bounding spirit and full-blooded life in that colt — how it might for many a summer have sported in pastures of red clover & gone cantering merrily along the "Gulf Road" with a sprightly Mrs Morewood on his back, patting his neck & lovingly talking to him — considering all this, I say, I really think that a broken leg for him is not one jot less bad than it would be for me — tho' I grant you, even as it is with him, he has one more leg than I have now.

I have a sort of sea-feeling here in the country, now that the ground is all covered with snow. I look out of my window in the morning when I rise as I would out of a port-hole of a ship in the Atlantic. My room seems

a ship's cabin; & at nights when I wake up & hear the wind shrieking, I almost fancy there is too much sail on the house, & I had better go on the roof & rig in the chimney.

Do you want to know how I pass my time? — I rise at eight — thereabouts — & go to my barn — say good-morning to the horse, & give him his breakfast. (It goes to my heart to give him a cold one, but it can't be helped) Then, pay a visit to my cow — cut up a pumpkin or two for her, & stand by to see her eat it — for its a pleasant sight to see a cow move her jaws — she does it so mildly & with such a sanctity. — My own breakfast over, I go to my work-room & light my fire — then spread my M.S.S. on the table — take one business squint at it, & fall to with a will. At 2½ P.M. I hear a preconcerted knock at my door, which (by request) continues till I rise & go to the door, which serves to wean me effectively from my writing, however interested I may be. My friends the horse & cow now demand their dinner — & I go & give it them. My own dinner over, I rig my sleigh & with my mother or sisters start off for the village — & if it be a Literary World day, great is the satisfaction thereof. — My evenings I spend in a sort of mesmeric state in my room — not being able to read — only now & then skimming over some large-printed book. — Can you send me about fifty fast-writing youths, with an easy style & not averse to polishing their labors? If you can, I wish you would, because since I have been here I have planned about that number of future works & cant find enough time to think about them separately. — But I dont know but a book in a man's brain is better off than a book bound in calf — at any rate it is safer from criticism. And taking a book off the brain, is akin to the ticklish & dangerous business of taking an old painting off a panel — you have to scrape off the whole brain in order to get at it with due safety — & even then, the painting may not be worth the trouble. — I meant to have left more room for something else besides my own concerns. But I cant help it. — I see Adler is at work — or has already achieved a German translation. I am glad to hear it. Remember me to him. — In the country here, I begin to appreciate the Literary World. I read it as a sort of private letter from you to me.

Remember me to your brother. My respects to Mrs Duyckinck & all your family. The "sad" young lady sends her regards.

H MELVILLE.

Mrs Melville with Malcolm is in Boston — or that lady would send her particular regards.

[To Malcolm Melville]
Pacific Ocean (Off the coast of South America
On the Tropic of Capricorn)
Saturday September 1st 1860

My dear Malcolm:

It is now three months exactly since the ship "Meteor" sailed from Boston — a quarter of a year. During this long period, she has been continually moving, and has only seen land on two days. I suppose you have followed out on the map (or my *globe* were better — so you get Mama to clean it off for you) the route from Boston to San Francisco. The distance, by the straight track, is about 16000 miles; but the ship will have sailed before she gets there nearer 18 or 20000 miles. So you see it is further than from the apple-tree to the big rock. When we crossed the Line in the Atlantic Ocean it was very warm; & we had warm weather for some weeks; but as we kept getting to the Southward it began to grow less warm, and then coolish, and cold and colder, till at last it was winter. I wore two flannel shirts, and big mittens & overcoat, and a great Russia cap, a very thick leather cap, so called by sailors. At last we came in sight of land all covered with snow — uninhabited land, where no one ever lived, and no one ever will live — it is so barren, cold and desolate. This was Staten Land — an island. Near it, is the big island of Terra del Fuego. We passed through between these islands, and had a good view of both. There are some "wild people" living on Terra del Fuego; but it being the depth of winter there, I suppose they kept in their caves. At any rate we saw none of them. The next day we were off Cape Horn, the Southernmost point of all America. Now it was very bad weather, and was dark at about three o'clock in the afternoon. The wind blew terribly. We had hail-storms, and snow and sleet, and often the spray froze as it touched the deck. The ship rolled, and sometimes took in so much water on the deck as to wash people off their legs. Several sailors were washed along the deck this way, and came near getting washed overboard. And this reminds me of a very sad thing that happened the very morning we were off the Cape — I mean the very *pitch* of the Cape. — It was just about day-light; it was blowing a gale of wind; and Uncle Tom ordered the topsails (big sails) to be furled. Whilst the sailors were aloft on one of the yards, the ship rolled and plunged terribly; and it blew with sleet and hail, and was very cold & biting. Well, all at once, Uncle Tom saw something falling through the air, and then heard a thump, and then, — looking before him, saw a poor sailor lying dead on the deck. He had fallen from the yard, and was killed instantly. — His shipmates picked him up, and carried him under cover. By and by, when time could be spared, the sailmakers sewed up the body in a piece of sail-cloth, putting some iron balls — cannon balls — at the foot of it. And, when all was ready, the body was put on a plank, and carried to the ship's side in the presence of all hands. Then Uncle Tom, as Captain, read a prayer out of the prayer-book, and

at a given word, the sailors who held the plank tipped it up, and immediately the body slipped into the stormy ocean, and we saw it no more. — Such is the way a poor sailor is buried at sea. This sailor's name was Ray. He had a friend among the crew; and they were both going to California, and thought of living there; but you see what happened.

We were in this stormy weather about forty or fifty days, dating from the beginning. But now at last we are in fine weather again, and the sun shines warm. (See page 5th)

Pacific Ocean, on the Line, Sep. 16th 1860

My Dear Malcolm:

Since coming to the end of the fourth page, we have been sailing in fine weather, and it has continued quite warm. — The other day we saw a whale-ship; and I got into a boat and sailed over the ocean in it to the whale-ship, and stayed there about an hour. They had eight or ten of the "wild people" aboard. The Captain of the whale-ship had hired them at one of the islands called Rarotonga. He wanted them to help pull in the whale-boat when they hunt the whale. — Uncle Tom's crew are now very busy making the ship look smart for San Francisco. They are tarring the rigging, and are going to paint the ship, & the masts and yards. She looks very rusty now, oweing [*sic*] to so much bad weather that we have been in. — When we get to San-Francisco, I shall put this letter in the post office there, and you will get it in about 25 days afterwards. It will go in a steamer to a place called Panama, on the Isthmus of Darien (get out your map, & find it) then it will cross the Isthmus by railroad to Aspinwall or Chagres on the Gulf of Mexico; then, another steamer will take it, which steamer, after touching at Havanna in Cuba for coals, will go direct to New York; and there, it will go to the Post Office, and so, get to Pittsfield.

I hope that, when it arrives, it will find you well, and all the family. And I hope that you have called to mind what I said to you about your behaviour previous to my going away. I hope that you have been obedient to your mother, and helped her all you could, & saved her trouble. Now is the time to show what you are — whether you are a good, honorable boy, or a good-for-nothing one. Any boy, of your age, who disobeys his mother, or worries her, or is disrespectful to her — such a boy is a poor shabby fellow; and if you know any such boys, you ought to cut their acquaintance.

Now my Dear Malcolm, I must finish my letter to you. I think of you, and Stanwix & Bessie and Fanny very often; and often long to be with you. But it can not be, at present. The picture which I have of you & the rest, I look at sometimes, till the faces almost seem real. — Now, my Dear Boy, good bye, & God bless you

Your affectionate father
H Melville

I enclose a little baby flying-fish's wing for Fanny

Miss Emily's Maggie

Jay Leyda • 1910–

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) is now recognized as one of America's greatest poets and one of the great woman poets of all literature. She published few poems and had no chance for recognition during her lifetime, which was spent quietly in her father's house in the town of Amherst, Massachusetts, with few journeys beyond her native region. Legends have grown up around her outwardly quiet life, portraying her as a complete recluse and dramatizing the supposed unhappy love which her poems seem to spring from. Mr. Leyda is engaged on a documentary biography of Emily Dickinson which will do much to dispel such romantic legends by revealing the wealth of human associations she enjoyed both near at hand and through her wide correspondence. In this article he opens one window into the Dickinson household, which we see through the eyes of their Irish maid, Maggie, in simple and direct letters that at the same time recreate Maggie herself for us.

To WATCH Emily Dickinson sitting in Amherst amid the shades of fading Puritanism has been, too often, the narrow critical frame for examining the contents of her surprising poems and equally surprising life. The other evasion — to pretend that she was totally isolated from *all* surroundings and to examine nothing in her life but its abundant creativity — leaves one just as far from a comprehension of the breathing artist. All these fractional truths and cramping legends tend to hold the fullness of her work and her life out of our reach. It is my belief that the total reality of Emily Dickinson's circumstances and relationships (as far as these can be reconstructed) is the best of all levers to pry off accumulated speculation and romancing in order that we may see what sort of woman it was who wrote those poems. If the result seems contradictory and unsatisfactory and impossibly complex, so much the truer.

To manipulate the larger scale of reference, the tinier scale of the immediate, the intimate, even the trivial offers itself as lubrication. Minutiae can give movement to every sensible generalization about her life, and no analyst of the poems can ignore that life, whether or not he writes of it. To the biographer too sure of what is "unimportant," to the scorner of the momentary, the transiently trivial, Dickinson offers her own formulation — "Forever is composed of Nows."

Reprinted from *New World Writing: Third Mentor Selection* (New York: The New American Library, 1953) by permission of the author and the publisher. Copyright, 1953, by Jay Leyda.

One of the several harmfully false aspects of the "Emily legend" is that she lived and worked alone. The more one looks into the reality of the matter, the larger grows her circle of friends, acquaintances, correspondents — the more continuous her exchange with other minds and other temperaments. She was ingenious enough to reduce the number of outside pressures to suit the work she was determined to do, but there was a point beyond which she could not and would not go in her social housecleaning. Amherst society bounced off the tight little body of Dickinsons, but there was one Dickinson bent on absorbing every ray of light beamed from any direction — even from within the two Dickinson houses. Everyone who established any degree of contact with the poet writing there requires investigation. The people who worked for the family, for example — should they do no more than slide along the backdrop of this drama, carrying their dish and pitchfork?

There was no real fall from the close cluster of the Dickinson family until Austin's marriage. The family had known sickness, and death outside and on the edges, but Emily Dickinson was 25 before anyone's departure actually changed the family structure. When Austin married Susan Gilbert, the new family thus installed in the newly built house next door made both division and increase in the Dickinson colony on Main Street, now poised above both the center of Amherst to the west and the Irish settlement to the east, down over the new railroad tracks. It had taken Edward Dickinson's sharp dealing and blustering to buy back the Main Street brick house sold fifteen years before, in 1840, to settle the debts of his father's estate. But Edward managed; and the easier life of those past fifteen years in the frame house on Pleasant Street was changed to something more rigid and formal. He had officially retired from the pursuit of political office, and now occupied the position of Amherst's elder statesman. The growing influence of Amherst College added to its Treasurer's social responsibilities; when Massachusetts' governors attended Amherst commencements, they stayed at the Dickinsons, and Wednesday tea at Hon. Edward Dickinson's during Commencement Week became a rite that would alter only with Edward's death.

This all meant more work — the house was larger and Mrs. Dickinson was older. When she had last lived in this house she had had three young children, and employed all the Delias and Catherines and Jameses who made housekeeping possible. But when the Dickinsons had moved to Pleasant Street, the children spent much of the daytime at school, and Mrs. Dickinson got along with less "help" — the girls gradually assuming some of the chores. Both sisters disliked these chores, though Emily's introduction to bread-making at the age of 14 does not seem so dreadful:

> Mother thinks me not able to confine myself to school this term. She had rather I would exercise, & I can assure you I get plenty of that article by stay-

> ing at home. I am going to learn to make bread to-morrow. So you may imagine me with my sleeves rolled up, mixing flour, milk, saleratus, etc., with a deal of grace . . . I think I could keep house very comfortably if I knew how to cook.

By 1850 she did know how to cook, but the girls were learning resistance, or their mother was weakening, for Edward inserted in the newspaper a somewhat agonized

> WANTED
> To hire a girl or woman who is capable of
> doing the entire work of a small family.

There were no satisfactory applicants — perhaps the Irish girls who sought "constant employment" had not yet arrived in Amherst. With Lavinia away at school and her mother ill, Emily's view of housework grows dim indeed, while washing the noon dishes in the "sink-room," or preparing three meals a day. There is plenty of reasonable self-pity in her letter to Abiah Root even though it is guarded with humor:

> I am yet the Queen of the court, if regalia be dust, and dirt — have three loyal subjects, whom I'd rather relieve from service — Mother is still an invalid, tho' a partially restored one — Father and Austin still clamor for food, and I, like a martyr am feeding them. Wouldn't you love to see me in these bonds of great despair, looking around my kitchen, and praying for kind deliverance, and declaring by "Omai's beard" I never was in such a plight? *My* kitchen I think I called it, God forbid that it was, or ever shall be my own — God keep me from what they call *households,* except that bright one of "faith"!

Her talent for baking, at least, was carried to the brick house in 1855, and she played the roles of prize-winner (75c) and judge in successive Cattle Shows — Division of Rye and Indian Bread. Perhaps because her father demanded that she be the sole author of all his bread, these talents were not displayed so publicly thereafter. Never a "waited-upon" girl, Emily must have been the most relieved member of the household when they acquired their first steady maid.

Irish-born Margaret O'Brien may have joined the Dickinsons on Pleasant Street, but she was a fixture of the brick house — just Emily's age when they moved there — and recognized her own power inside those walls. In early October Margaret would object "to furnace heat on account of bone decrepitudes, so I dwell in my bonnet and suffer comfortably," Emily once reported. When away from home, Emily sent back soothing messages to Margaret, but showed no especial affection for her, and when Margaret married and left in 1865, Emily wrote to her friend, Mrs. Holland:

Besides wiping dishes for Margaret, I wash them now, while she becomes Mrs. Lawler, vicarious papa to four previous babes. Must she not be an adequate bride?

I winced at her loss, because I was in the habit of her, and even a new rolling-pin has an embarrassing element, but to all except anguish the mind soon adjusts.

It was some time before Margaret was permanently replaced; meanwhile a succession of trial maids passed through the house — the Dickinsons were not comfortable employers. And there were other jobs to be done for the Main Street house: Horace Church, in control of orchard and meadow, was pure Yankee to judge by the recording of his ripe speech ("Squire, ef the Frost is the Lord's Will, I don't popose to stan in the way of it") that Emily sent to Mrs. Holland at the time of his death. There was also a procession of seamstresses — professionally quiet and always changing, because, as one of them said, "The Dickinsons didn't like strangers . . . Outsiders weren't welcome there."

One entire family was semi-attached to the house. Richard and Ann Mathews were immigrants from England who lived behind the Pleasant Street house, and whose sons and daughters fell victim to the diseases of poverty nearly as fast as they came. Our poet's interest in birth and death could have been trained in the Mathews shack — during her lifetime sixteen Mathews children were born, and nine died. The Mathews boys who survived headed the large and fluid corps of Miss Emily's messengers, which included Johnnie Beston, the Kelley boys, and many others. But Pat Mathews (baptized Francis Joseph) had a knack for trouble that must have especially endeared him to Miss Emily:

Accident. — A horse became unmanageable in the street on Tuesday evening about 10 o'clock, near Dea. Mack's, in consequence of the music of the band employed by the serenaders, and plunged in among a parcel of boys, throwing down the son [Pat] of Mr. Richard Matthews, — a boy about 8 years of age, and cutting a gash in the back of his head five or six inches in length. The wound was dressed by Dr. Smith . . . The same boy came very near being killed at the depot only a few days since.

From this date Emily's letters to her brother, then at Harvard Law School, and to his fiancée, visiting her family in Geneva, New York, report regularly on Pat's condition. The death of another Mathews child, Harriet, brought a bleak November letter to the Hollands:

I cant stay any longer in a world of death. Austin is ill of fever. I buried my garden last week — our man, Dick, lost a little girl through the scarlet fever. I thought perhaps that *you* were dead . . . Ah! dainty — dainty Death! Ah! democratic Death! Grasping the proudest zinnia from my purple garden, — then deep to his bosom calling the serf's child!
Say, is he everywhere? Where shall I hide my things? Who is alive?

When her uncle, Loring Norcross, died, she sent his daughters sympathy from everyone she saw, including Dick and Ann:

> Even Dick's wife, simple dame, with a kitchen full, and the grave besides, if little ragged ones, wants to know "more about" you, and follows Mother to the door, who has called with bundle.
>
> Dick says, in his wise way, he "shall always be interested in them young ladies." One little young lady of his own, you know, is in Paradise. That makes him tenderer-minded.

Nineteenth-century journalists thought that Ireland would be emptied, deserted, so steady was the stream of Irish to America. What awaited them here bore so little resemblance to paradise that it is hard to realize that famine and rent laws could have produced a hell by comparison with the alien terrors of American cities and villages. In a city the new arrivals had a fighting chance, but those who left the crowded coastal cities for the inland towns of New England in the 1850s found the same poverty of opportunity that there confronted the Jew, the Negro, and those Chinese imported by a North Adams shoe manufacturer who had heard hopefully that Chinese eat very little. As a group the immigrant Irish had even fewer freedoms than American women.

Every fence was employed to isolate the Irishman from the community; his religion, of course, made an excellent barrier in the tightly buttoned Congregationalist villages of western Massachusetts; the only political parties that offered him any pride were the enemies of the dominant Whigs; if he had a taste for irony, he would have appreciated that the whole English repertoire of Celtiphobiac humor and contempt had been imported for development in the American press — with such an advanced newspaper as the *Springfield Daily Republican* being jocular about any local Irish tragedy, or with such a civilized magazine as *Scribner's Monthly,* even as late as the '70s, supporting its shabby Irish anecdotes with threatening editorials.

A symptom of the social level to which the Irish community was confined in Amherst is the cavalier treatment of the "alien" Irish names in its press and town records. One family was variously reported and recorded as Scanlan, Scanlin, Scanel, Scanelly, etc., though it seems to have been always clear that their name was Scannell. It was Dennis Scannell who came to work in the barns and gardens of both Dickinson houses at some time in the mid-1870s. The death from typhoid of his wife Mary in 1876 produced a not unreasonable crisis in his affairs that the Dickinsons helped him to weather. That something was going wrong appeared more than a year after that death when Emily Dickinson sent a half-warning, half-laughing message to her nephew:

> Dennis was happy yesterday, and it made him graceful — I saw him waltzing with the Cow, and suspected his status, but he afterward started for your House in a frame that was unmistakable —

> You told me he hadn't tasted Liquor since his Wife's decease — then she must have been living at six o'clock last Evening —
> I fear for the rectitude of the Barn —

A Christmas later the Scannell difficulties worsened, this time rating local newspaper attention:

> Jerry Scanlan, a lad of 14 summers, who has suddenly disappeared from home once or twice and then returned several days after, wandered away a few days ago and his father, Dennis, was summoned to Springfield, yesterday . . . This morning's *Republican* states that Mr. Burt refused to give the boy up to his father after investigating the case . . .

Miss Dickinson's comment on this, in a letter to Mrs. Holland:

> A Little Boy ran away from Amherst a few Days ago, and when asked where he was going, replied, "Vermont or Asia." . . . My pathetic Crusoe —

But things were somehow worked out — perhaps "arranged" by the passionate, influential Austin — for Dennis stayed to die in the service of "the other house" — with unusual death-bed attentions from Austin, and an obituary-testimonial written by Susan for the town's paper.

Another Irish family watched by Emily was to lose a daughter — and Emily wrote to her Norcross cousins of the death of Margaret Kelley, in 1872:

> Little Irish Maggie went to sleep this morning at six o'clock, just the time Grandpa rises, and will rest in the grass at Northampton to-morrow. She has had a hard sickness, but her awkward little life is saved and gallant now. Our Maggie is helping her mother put her in the cradle.

By this time "our Maggie" knew that she was in the Dickinson house to stay. It was almost four years before the gap in the household, left by Margaret O'Brien's marriage, was filled, and the young woman who came in March 1869 was to be the pillar of the home and a blessing to Miss Emily and Miss Vinnie. Margaret Maher was more than cook and maid to the Dickinson sisters; for both she was a protective bulwark — keeping intrusion from the poet, and pain from the poet's sister. Emily Dickinson's letters show a more active function for Maggie, too — a fount of stubbornness and decision and invincible belief. Her healthy presence made her as vital to the skeptic poet as any member of "the peculiar race" of Dickinsons. Yet Maggie Maher first entered the house for a brief time, while waiting for a better job, and was most reluctant to stay.

Past 20, she was well equipped for independence: with her sister and brothers she had made the journey from Parish Kilusty in Tipperary. The boys may have come to Amherst to help build the railroad that was begun with so much jubilation and mouth-watering commercial prospects

in 1852. When settled, Maggie, perhaps alone, returned to Ireland to bring their father and mother to the new Amherst home. The older daughter Mary soon married an earlier Irish arrival, Thomas Kelley, and when her parents died and her brothers departed, home meant the Kelley house to Maggie. But the Maher family was intact when the youngster Maggie took her first job, working for the Boltwoods.

Against the considerable odds of time and chance Maggie's letters to Mrs. Clarinda Boltwood have been preserved, and in them we can hear her actual intonation, not only because their Irish accent is recorded phonetically, but the very flow of her straight, dignified speech, is directly attached to her warm heart — "youre letter this wet evening was a grate treete to me for I watched for it very eagrly" and " I eather dreaming or thinking of you I dont know what the reason" and "youre letter of Monday came to me last night I was glad to see youre hand Writting on the out side and to read what it cantain on insoid . . ."

When the younger Boltwoods left Amherst for Hartford, Maggie Maher took other work, though always with the hope of rejoining her beloved family:

> You spoke of I going to work to youre mother with anny when I get true with my one work But I dont care where a weeks wages go I shant charge it you you nede not fere . . . I dont wish to go to Work untill I here whether you go or not then I will try to get a plase

She did get to Hartford, but a few months later — in June 1868 — a double tragedy brought her back to Amherst and kept her there:

> *(June 4)*
> My letter will give you a grate surpris But it is hard for me My dear Father is so bad that We dont expect he to live only a few days so that you see that My Joy is turned to griefe Father only New me I am glad that his reasons to Now me and that I am here [to] take care of him as poor sister is Worn out from Care It is Write that I should care My parants as there is now other thing that I can do for them

Her father died and within the week:

> *(June 16)*
> This is a World of trouble our trouble was Never so much as it is at preasant. My dear Brother Thomas [Kelley] was almost killed last saterday at 4 o clock he still lives But we dont know how long he may My dear sister what will she do the father of seven children the lord may comfort her . . .
> he fell 30 feet from a building . . . I dont know whether it is day or night sence I left hartford
> *(June 25)*
> Brother is a little more comfortabler than he have been sence he was hurt docter Dole tends him 2 a day his arm was not set yet but it will on sunday next with gods help we cant tell how it is going to be yet all say that it got to

be cut of[f] . . . the dath of dear father lies in a cloud of sadness on me and I can't get over it he died in my armes and I never can forget it I must hope he is better of[f] . . . But how nice it would be to have all friends lay down and die so that we would not have to suffer the loss of those that gone

Maggie stayed in Amherst, near her broken family; among her several employers was Edward Dickinson. The senior Boltwoods, still living in Amherst, were irritated to find their Maggie committed, even temporarily, to the Dickinsons — there was a scene, reported by Maggie to the junior Boltwoods in Hartford:

(1869, March 2)

. . . I waited all this time to tell you when I would go to california No, that if nothing dont happen to me I will go the first of May . . . I will lave my plase the first of April to get ready My oldest Brother will meet me in Panama . . . I was not in to father Boltwood sence I went to see you only once and then no one spoke to me father went true the kitchen But he did not spak to me . . . the reason a I was told the[y] have to me is when I left Mrs. tolcott they came down after me to go to work there But I could not go for I was ingaged to Mr. Dickenson 2 weeks before . . . I dont want to disapoint any person or Brake my word if i be Poor and working for my living I will always try to do rite . . .

She has no eagerness to stay with the Dickinsons:

. . . I like it very well But it is not my home my home is with you I am as strange here as if I came here to work yester

Vinnie's cats, with whom Emily was always at war, were getting on Maggie's nerves, too. But she was finding it harder to leave the Dickinsons than she had guessed. The California plan had to be forgotten — and Mr. Dickinson had to have his way.

(March 24)

We have so many cats to take care of that I would like to have some help But for I ntend to lave very sone I would be very cross to them But I will keep my temper for a nother while I am always very patient . . . Brother tommy wrote to me last week and told me not come out there for there is to much sickness there he have the eagy very bad

(April 6)

. . . I have tried every way to go to hartford to live this summer but I must stay here for the sumer I tried to get a girl for them But the[y] would not take any one that I would get it is what Mr Dicksom said he would Pay me as much more wages soner then let me go so that I have desided to stay for the Preasent I went to Pa[l]mer the day that Mr. Boltwood was up here to get the girl that worket for them before me and she would come But the[y] would not take her . . . But there [is] one thing sure I will do as I like when

> I will get a chance without giving much notice all that is in the house is very fond of me and dose every thing for my comfort in fact the[y] are to kind to there help the only reason that I dislike is that I am lonsom in Amherst . . . last night that I settled with Mr. D if I would lave Now and go to you it would caus them to be very angry with us all so we will wait for a nother time the[y] get very excited when you write to me for fere that [I] will go to you there is one grate trouble that I have not half enough of work so that I must play with the cats to Plase Miss Vinny you know how I love cats

For Mr. Dickinson to threaten "to be very angry with us all" affected more than Maggie's income. Her niece Margaret was serving in "the other house," and, too, no vulnerable person in Amherst wished to excite Mr. D's anger. The Boltwoods were already receding into a pink past:

> *(November 2)*
> I think you for youre kind offer and also hope you will plas excuse me for not writting to you before it was not the reason that I did not love you for I always love you and Mr B and the Boys and you alwas was a kind mother to me so kind that I fere that I Never could Pay you for youre care and interest in me . . . youre offer to me is what I wold like to do But I cant lave Sister Mary this winter for she needs me for comfort . . .

But Maggie had found her place in life and history; Clarinda Boltwood had lost a good maid — Emily Dickinson had found a priceless ally. A letter written this same month to Cousin Louise Norcross shows us that she was beginning to guess the value of Margaret Maher (Tim is the new coachman, and Dick the horse):

> Tim is washing Dick's feet, and talking to him now and then in an intimate way. Poor fellow, how he warmed when I gave him your message! The red reached clear to his beard, he was so gratified; and Maggie stood as still for hers as a puss for patting. The hearts of these poor people lie so unconcealed you bare them with a smile.

There is a family photograph of this time that tells us more about Maggie. In the center sits her handsome, one-armed brother-in-law, Tom Kelley; on his left is his daughter Margaret, then working for Austin and Susan; and on his right stands the pleasantly sturdy figure of Maggie — wide mouth, inquiring eyes; both Margarets are wearing identically styled dresses, perhaps giving the occasion for the group photograph.

The outwardly placid life of the Dickinson family was about to explode in a series of crises from which it would never fully recover — unless the transmutation of tragedy into poetry can be called "recovery." Edward Dickinson's brief return to legislative life, for the railroad's sake, was unwise: the heat of argument and of Boston brought apoplexy and sudden death. His wife's dependent life was shattered, and on the first anniversary of his death she was paralyzed with a stroke. The lives of the two daughters and Maggie now revolved around a half-lifeless center

that demanded their time and attention. In the confusion something was allowed to happen to one of the family's dependents that Edward's children may never have forgiven themselves: Dick Mathews was admitted to the Alms House, where he died ten days later.

The community of Amherst was aware that the brick house on Main Street housed the most dangerous type of alien — a poet. And Emily Dickinson must have sensed the taboos placed around her, so sensitive was she to the atmospheres and dramas of the village. Though we would call her an "insider," to the town she was an "outsider"; and they were willing to believe any gossip or "revelations" about the Dickinson sisters: madness was one of the gentler accusations. How often Emily must have looked at Maggie as a fellow exile — for community snobbery was directed as much against the "lower class" Irish as against the "upper class" Dickinsons, especially that queer writing woman! There is a wistful poem written in that house about Paradise, ending:

> Maybe Eden aint so lonesome
> As New England used to be!

In 1880 there was a scene that Emily Dickinson had to report to the son of her recently dead friend, Samuel Bowles:

> Our friend your Father was so beautifully and intimately recalled Today that it seemed impossible he had experienced the secret of Death —
>
> A servant who had been with us a long time and had often opened the Door for him, asked me how to spell "Genius," yesterday — I told her and she said no more —
>
> Today, she asked me what "Genius" meant? I told her none had known —
>
> She said she read in a Catholic Paper that Mr. Bowles was "the Genius of Hampshire," and thought it might be that past Gentleman . . .
>
> I congratulate you upon his immortality, which is a constant stimulus to my Household . . .

As a personality seal for the letter, she asked the "servant" — Maggie — to address the envelope, a typically half-hidden Dickinsonian gesture. When, later in the year, Maggie was ill with typhoid fever at the Kelley house, "Her Grieved Mistress" sent another typical gesture — few dared to be playful with the very ill.

> The missing Maggie is much mourned, and I am going out for "black" to the nearest store.
>
> All are very naughty, and I am naughtiest of all.
>
> The pussies dine on sherry now, and humming-bird cutlets.
>
> The invalid hen took dinner with me, but a hen like Dr. T[aylor]'s horse soon drove her away. I am very busy picking up stems and stamens as the hollyhocks leave their clothes around.
>
> What shall I send my weary Maggie? Pillows or fresh brooks?

She knew when not to be playful, too. In the following year she wrote to her Norcross cousins:

> Maggie's brother is killed in the mines, and Maggie wants to die, but Death goes far around to those that want to see him. If the little cousins would give her a note — she does not know I ask it — I think it would help her begin, that bleeding beginning that every mourner knows.

Emily Dickinson seemed never to tire of defining Maggie's virtues and qualities, for herself as well as for her friends. To Mrs. Holland she wrote, "Maggie, good and noisy, the North Wind of the Family, but Sweets without a Salt would at last cloy — " and she sympathizes with the Norcross sisters in their new Cambridge quarters: "I am glad the housekeeping is kinder; it is a prickly art. Maggie is with us still, warm and wild and mighty . . ."

"With us still" — Maggie seemed *always* there — to give emergency treatment when it was inconvenient to summon Dr. Fish — to feed Austin an early breakfast when his own household couldn't be bothered — to help out "at the other house" in a crisis — to ease Vinnie away from the door when an arousing enemy called — to slip clandestine letters under the door of Emily's bedroom (Emily aimed to make all her correspondence so private that it all became slightly clandestine) — to take Emily's excuses, in the forms of clover, rose or jasmine, to the door when an uninvited visitor knocked. The friends of the house knew Maggie as well as did the house's antagonists: when Christmas packages were sent to the Dickinson sisters, something for Maggie was packed, too.

The instructions left by Emily Dickinson for her funeral sound like the directions for a pageant of her allegiances. Following her father she was also to avoid the hearse, with its mock solemnity; he had been borne to the graveyard by the professors and successes of Amherst; she asked to be carried by the six Irishmen she had known. Led by Thomas Kelley of the single strong arm, Dennis Scannell, Stephen Sullivan, Patrick Ward, Daniel Moynihan and Dennis Cashman carried Emily Dickinson to the place she still occupies. When Edward Dickinson was buried, the town had closed in his honor, but his daughter's plan was quieter: she asked to be carried out the back door, around through the garden, through the opened barn from front to back, and then through the grassy fields to the family plot, always in sight of the house.

When Emily Dickinson's poems found an audience, and a photograph of her was needed, Maggie offered a daguerreotype that the family (including the sitter) had disliked and discarded. Without her love we would not have the only photographic image of a great poet.

There is a letter that Margaret Maher wrote in 1891, five years after the poet's death:

Vinnia has not being very well this last few weeks. . . to tell the truth of it she is not strong, and cant get a long with things that she have no write to be troubled with it will always be so as far as I see all are well around here But a few are happy . . .

We have 5 cats 2 in the house and 3 in the Barren all well and good apetited so far . . .

YOUR SERVENT

Miss, Emely's and Vinnia's
Maggie

The Letter

John Holmes • 1904–

☞ *The first line of this poem is an allusion to one of the snatches of song in the mad scenes of Shakespeare's* King Lear: *"Childe Roland to the dark tower came. . . ." This haunting fragment has stirred the imagination of later poets, among them Robert Browning and Louis MacNeice, to invent dramatic situations to explain it. Childe Harold is the romantic wandering hero of Byron's famous narrative poem,* Childe Harold's Pilgrimage. *Mr. Holmes has fused the two allusions, to suggest the feeling that going to the postoffice for a letter may be as stirring an adventure as the sort those heroes were engaged upon. "Childe": a youth of noble birth.*

CHILDE HAROLD to the dark tower, L–two
Four turns, R–three, and the notches
Lined up. I guess through beveled glass
Miracles by mail, air-mail, all mine,
Checks and love, if dial to dial matches.

Silent as a safe-cracker, I twirl and try,
Intent as the other burglars, and ah! it
Opens. They too break in on their lives.
They clutch stuffing from the mailbags.
Rip and read, then and there, no matter what.

Reprinted from *New Poems by American Poets*, edited by Rolfe Humphries. Copyright, 1953, by Ballantine Books, Inc.

They stand around like the spaced columns
That hold up public buildings, stunned
By something not in, or in, the envelope.
They go away, and more move up, robbers
Rubbing the dials for a break long planned.

I never read letters in the post office.
I carry them to the cottage. There, alone,
I divide the loot with myself, not fifty-fifty.
Counterfeit. Dead-end. Non-negotiable.
But one is currency. One is mine. One.

3. SHAPING IDEAS

The Shape of Ideas

Rudolf Flesch • 1911–

Suppose you have all the materials for a piece of writing assembled in your head or in your notes. If it isn't a simple chronological narrative, how do you arrange the materials for presentation? Most handbooks of composition go into the mysteries and technicalities of formal outlining at this point, and certainly the piece must be put into some logical shape. But why one rather than another? The books have little to say about the agonized mental churning that usually has to go on before the ideas take shape out of their chaos. Flesch suggests a few principles of shaping that may help diminish the agony.

> Success in solving the problem depends on choosing the right aspect, on attacking the fortress from its accessible side.
>
> GEORGE POLYA

WHEN the *Saturday Evening Post,* in its article series on American cities, got around to St. Louis, it assigned Associate Editor Jack Alexander to the job. Alexander went to St. Louis, spent ten days collecting material, and returned to his desk in Philadelphia. But he wasn't yet ready to write. He wasn't even ready to draw up an outline. According to the *Saturday Evening Post,* this is what he did: "His first job was to organize all his in-

Rudolf Flesch, *The Art of Readable Writing* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949). Copyright, 1949, by Rudolf Flesch.

formation and ideas. It was partly a mental and partly a mechanical process. He spread out his typewritten notes on a big table. Gradually he sorted his notes — and, more important, the facts and ideas in his head — into classifications. This process ~~is hard for Jack to explain; he doesn't~~ know just what happened. Somehow, after a day of work, he got to the point where he could think through the whole mess. He was ready to start planning the actual writing job."

Think of what this means. *After* he had collected his raw material, and *before* he felt ready to make an outline, Mr. Alexander put in a full day's work getting his ideas in shape. This seasoned professional writer assigned a full work day to what amounts to just sitting and thinking.

This may seem strange to you. Yet actually it isn't strange at all. Every professional writer knows that this period of just-sitting-and-thinking between legwork and outline is the most important part of the whole writing process. It's what makes a piece of writing what it is.

You won't find anything about this in the textbooks. Students are not supposed to just sit and think. Open any English composition textbook and you'll find that note-taking is followed by outlining without even a five-minute break for a smoke.

If you want to find out about this mysterious business of just-sitting-and thinking, you have to go to the psychologists. They know quite a bit about it; but the trouble is that they don't write English but their own special language. They talk about *recentering, restructuring,* and *configurations,* and the whole school of psychology that deals with these matters goes by the formidable name of *Gestalt Psychology.*

Let me do a little translating for you. In the original German, the word *Gestalt* means nothing particularly exciting; it simply means *shape.* And that's what this whole business is about: when you do this kind of just-sitting-and-thinking, you are trying to grasp the *shape* of your ideas. The *configurations,* the *recentering,* the *restructuring* — all these words mean that your mind is operating just like your eye — or your camera — when it is looking at an object. To see the object clearly, you have to find the right focus, the right perspective, the right angle of vision. Only when all these things are taken care of do you really see what the object is like.

The same way, in your writing you must first go over your material in your mind, trying to find the focus, the perspective, the angle of vision that will make you see clearly the shape of whatever it is you are writing about. There has to be one point that is sharply in focus, and a clear grouping of everything else around it. Once you see this clearly, your reader will see it too. And that, the shape of your ideas, is usually all he is going to carry away from his reading.

I know of course that all this still sounds vague. But don't worry. From this point on we are getting down to brass tacks.

The most widely used device for getting ideas in shape is to buttonhole some unsuspecting victim — the kind of person who is apt to read later

what you have written — and to rehearse your ideas aloud. This has two advantages: first, it forces you to funnel your ideas into a limited number of words; and second, the other person will tell you what your ideas look like from where he sits. Allan Nevins, the historian, puts it this way: "Catch a friend who is interested in the subject and talk out what you have learned, at length. In this way you discover facts of interpretation that you might have missed, points of argument that had been unrealized, and the form most suitable for the story you have to tell."

This is fine, except that Mr. Nevins says "at length." Actually, the rule here is, the shorter the better. If you can manage to spring your ideas on your friend in one sentence, then you have found the sharpest focus of them all. Everything else will arrange itself around this one sentence or phrase almost automatically. This is what newspapermen call writing "from the headline" or "from the lead." It's a useful trick.

Let me give you a few examples of this. The most famous editorial on the atomic bomb was written by the editor of the *Saturday Review of Literature,* Mr. Norman Cousins. It was firmly built upon an inspired title: "Modern Man is Obsolete." The best-known advertisement of the same year was run by the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway. It proceeded straight from an unbeatable headline: "A Hog Can Cross the Country Without Changing Trains — But YOU Can't!"

Or think of the remarkable sentence-building career of Mr. Elmer Wheeler, the author of *Tested Sentences that Sell.* This man spends his life thinking up sentences that will bring salestalk into sharp focus. In his book he proudly tells of the millions of square clothespins that were sold with the words: "They won't roll!"

But to come back: A good way of using someone else for focus and perspective is to put such a person right into your piece of writing. You present your facts and ideas as seen by an observer with a detached point of view. This will make things clearer to yourself and will help your reader in catching on. Take, for instance, the following "Duet on a Bus" by Douglas Moore:

> I overheard a bus conversation the other day. It was a long one, lasting from Grant's Tomb to Forty-second Street. A young Frenchman, recently arrived, was apparently being shown the city by a lady of middle age who took her culture as a heavy responsibility . . . It went something like this:
>
> "I shall be happy to attend the opening of the opera."
>
> "Yes, it couldn't be nicer. 'Faust,' you know."
>
> "It will be amusing to hear 'Faust' in English."
>
> "Oh, this won't be in English. All our operas are done in the original language."
>
> "Why? Do American audiences understand French?"
>
> "No, but it is much more artistic that way and the singers' French is usually so poor even French audiences wouldn't be able to understand them."
>
> "The singers aren't French then?"
>
> "Only one or two. Albanese will be Marguerite and Pinza Mephistopheles. They are both Italian."

"What happens in the Italian operas? Are they sung by Italians?"

"Well, now let's see. In 'Rigoletto' there's Tibbett, Kullman as the Duke, Antoine as Gilda, and Kaskas as Maddalena."

"They're all Americans, aren't they?"

"So they are. Well, they sing Italian anyway. Isn't it wonderful so many of our best singers are American now."

"It is an amusing idea, operas in the original language. Is 'Boris Godounov' sung in Russian?"

"No, that would be too hard except for Kipnis. He's Russian. The rest of them sing Italian."

"You mean at the same time?"

"Yes, most of them are not Italians but it seems a good language to use."

"Why?"

"Well, you see in the old days there were really two companies at the Metropolitan, the German and the Italian. I suppose when this opera came into the repertory the Italian wing sang it."

"Why don't they sing it in English? That is closer to the Russian in sound and the audience might understand it better."

"Well, we have tried some operas in English but I don't believe the public likes it."

"Why not? Are they afraid they might catch a few words?"

And so on. (Sorry I can't print the whole thing here.) You see how useful the stooge with another viewpoint is to a writer.

But of course you can't do this sort of thing all the time. What else can you do to gain focus and perspective?

It depends on the material you are working on. Often the answer will suggest itself. Whenever you are writing about a group or an organization, for instance, the natural thing to do is to focus on a typical member of the group. Start by describing him (or her) and go on from there.

This sounds simple, but there is a pitfall in it. It's hard to look away from the eye-catching, outstanding — and therefore *not* typical — members of the group. I once talked to a writer who was working on an employee pension-plan booklet. He had all details worked out for a "given case" — but his "given case" was a $10,000-a-year man! This meant that he got nice round figures when it came to working out percentages; but it also meant that the example didn't mean a thing to the average $3,000-a-year employee.

So keep your eyes on the ground when you use the typical-person device. See what Bernard DeVoto did when he had to cover an American Medical Association meeting:

> Back home — which might have been Iowa or West Virginia or Oklahoma — they probably called him Doc, and most likely Old Doc; for he would be close to seventy, his untidy Van Dyke was white, his shoulders were stooped and there was a slight tremor in his fingers. Seersucker will not hold a crease and God knows how old his straw hat was. He liked to stand in a corner at one of the pharmaceutical exhibits in the Technical Exposition. Behind him were large charts showing the molecular structure of the firm's newest product,

photographs three feet by four showing how it was synthesized, and equally large graphs with red and green lines curling round the black to show its results in the treatment of anything you please — rheumatic fever, hypertension, duodenal ulcer.

Doc stood there and talked with the young man from the drug house who had all the statistics by heart and because he had been trained in public relations never gave a sign of boredom but went on smiling and nodding. Doc described his cases back home and told how he handled rheumatic fever or hypertension, and said he had always got good results from potassium iodide, and ended by taking out a pad and writing down his favorite prescriptions for the young man's consideration.

It must have been a different Doc from hour to hour and from exhibit to exhibit but he always seemed the same. One observer remembers him as clearly as anything else at the Centennial Celebration (and ninety-seventh annual meeting) of the American Medical Association, at Atlantic City in the second week of June.

Everybody else was there too . . .

Sometimes this device is strikingly effective in a situation where you wouldn't think it possible to arrive at any average. Look at this (from John Gunther's *Inside U.S.A.*):

Composite Portrait of a New England Legislator

He is tall, gaunt, wrinkled, and there are great reserves of character in the face and raspy voice. He earns a living in a garage, and also owns a bit of real estate. His salary as legislator (which in New Hampshire would be two hundred dollars a year plus traveling expenses; in Vermont four hundred) is an important addition to his income. His wife is a farmer's daughter from the next county; they have been married twenty-four years and have three children. The eldest son was a carpenter's mate first class, another son is in his third year in the public high school, and is crazy about gliders; the daughter wants to go to Vassar. Our legislator has two brothers: one is a lobster fisherman in Stony Creek, Connecticut, and the other left Massachusetts many years ago, and is believed now to own a small farm in Iowa. Several generations back there were some complex marriages in the family; one distant relative is Greek born, and another married a Finn; but also our legislator is related to no less a personage than a former governor of the state. He believes in paying his bills on the dot, in the inherent right of his children to a good education, and in common sense. He gives ten dollars a year to the Red Cross, believes that "Washington ought to let us alone," knows that very few Americans are peasants, and feels that the country has enough inner strength to ride out any kind of crisis. In several respects he is somewhat arid; but no one has ever fooled him twice. He is a person of great power. Because, out of the community itself, power rises into him. What he represents is the tremendous vitality of ordinary American life, and the basic good instincts of the common people.

So much for groups and types. How about describing a series of events? The principle is the same: Focus on one point that is so significant that you can hang your story onto it. Invariably there *is* such a point — the turn-

ing point, the key event that explains everything before and after. The only problem is to find it; and it is important, with events just as with people, not to overlook the simple because of the more glamorous or spectacular. Turning points have a way of happening long before the big fireworks start.

Early in 1945, for example, when everybody was talking about Beardsley Ruml and his pay-as-you-go tax plan, *The New Yorker* ran a profile on Ruml by Alva Johnston. But the profile was not written around the pay-as-you-go tax. Instead, after a few introductory paragraphs, the writer focused on an earlier turning point in Ruml's life:

> Ruml was projected into commercial life by a quirk in the mind of the late Percy Straus, head man of Macy's. Unlike most business men, Straus spent much of his time mixing with the intelligentsia. He knew that Ruml was regarded as a two-hundred-and-forty-pound imp and *enfant terrible* because of his habit of challenging established ideas and cross-examining everything. "I want to get Ruml in as treasurer," Straus said to Delos Walker, then general manager of the store. "We need somebody to challenge our thinking. We're in danger of becoming too self-satisfied. It's good to be shaken up."
>
> Ruml was thirty-nine at the time and had a distinguished academic berth — Professor of Education and Dean of the Social Sciences at the University of Chicago. He had no training to fit him for a job like that of treasurer of a department store. "You'll have no duties whatever," said Straus, "except to annoy me." This was an irresistible offer, particularly since Ruml felt that his accomplishment in three years as dean had been disappointing. One of his colleagues at Chicago said that Ruml was suffering from the occupational disease of university executives which was described by President Gates of Pennsylvania as "being pecked to death by ducks." Mrs. Hutchins, wife of the president of the University of Chicago, was the author of Ruml's academic epitaph. "He left ideas for notions," she said.

Or take this passage from a *Reader's Digest* article on Federal Mediator Ching. The writer goes even further back to find his focal turning point:

> One day in 1904 a husky young trouble shooter was trying to fix a loose shoe fuse on a stalled Boston subway train. As he leaned over he slipped, and a terrible voltage flashed through his body. It enveloped him in blue flame, blew the powerhouse and stopped the entire subway system.
>
> Six days later the young man regained consciousness. The doctors thought he had a chance to live but would be permanently blinded. Actually, within four months he was well recovered and his sight restored.
>
> This obscure happening more than 40 years ago has had a pervasive influence on labor relations in America. The young man, Cyrus Stuart Ching, survived for a long and useful career as an industrial peacemaker and sage. And he remembered something. During the long weeks of his convalescence, nobody from the company management came to see him. There was no workmen's compensation in those days, but when he returned to his job the company magnanimously gave him a new suit of work clothes. This treatment set his ruminative mind to work on the queer chasm between the boss and the worker. He has been thinking about it ever since.

> And now Mr. Ching — 71 years old, but still carrying his six-foot-seven-inch frame with jaunty vigor — has taken over the touchy post of director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, as set up by the Taft-Hartley Act.

Proper focusing becomes difficult when you have neither a group of people nor a series of events. Then what? There is a way, but it's rather hard to put in simple words. Let me try.

What you are after, as you are turning your material over in your mind, is something like the one-sentence headline, the typical group member, the turning point in the chain of events — some one thing that will point up the significance of the subject as a whole. Even if your material looks at first like a shapeless mass of totally different items, there must be one point at which they all converge — otherwise you wouldn't, or shouldn't, treat them all together in one piece of writing. The trouble is that this common denominator is usually so simple and obvious that it's practically invisible. It's the thing you take so much for granted that you never bother to give it a second thought. And that's exactly the trick: find the underlying feature that you have taken for granted and try to give it a second thought.

To come back, for instance, to Jack Alexander's *Saturday Evening Post* article on St. Louis. Alexander's problem was this: He had returned from St. Louis with a heap of notes but didn't know how to pull them together into an understandable whole. After having spent a day in thinking, he hit upon the solution. The obvious way to describe a city is to stress the things in which it is outstanding; but somehow, in the case of St. Louis, these things were hard to find. Alexander gave that a second thought and decided to write his piece around the theme that St. Louis made a virtue of *not being outstanding in anything.* He wrote:

> The spell which the city exerts is paradoxical . . . St. Louis pursues the commercial strategy of limited objectives. It has no vast industries . . . (Its) citizenry is simultaneously hospitable and suspicious of the East, gay and stubborn, serious about living and yet fun-loving . . . A booster crude enough to preach the common American gospel of giantism achieves no more than a dry rattle in his throat . . . St. Louis has never fallen for skyscrapers . . . St. Louis might have grown up to be another Chicago or Detroit — a fate which now seems to St. Louisans to be worse than death . . .

In this fashion, Alexander wrote a memorable article by turning the underlying theme upside down.

Of course, there are all sorts of ways of doing this, and I cannot possibly show you exactly how the principle applies in every case. But I can give you a few more examples:

Shortly after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there appeared an unforgettable article on the atomic bomb. It was written by Bob Trout in the form of an imaginary news broadcast of the day atomic bombs hit *the United States.*

In 1947, *Harper's Magazine* printed a highly illuminating article about

the British crisis by the economist Barbara Ward. It too started "upside down" — by explaining that there was not one British crisis but four: "the country has been struck by *four different crises simultaneously.*"

Another frequent topic of magazine articles in 1947 was the community property law which gave married couples in certain states the advantage of splitting their income tax. Before Congress incorporated this feature in the federal income tax law, the subject was a natural for popular presentation — provided the writer could really make it interesting. One writer (Bernard B. Smith in *Harper's Magazine*) was highly successful; his piece was widely read and quoted. Let's compare it with an example of the garden-variety approach (by John L. McClellan in the *American* magazine):

Divorce Is Cheaper Than Marriage
by Bernard B. Smith

Only one marriage in three these days winds up in the divorce courts, which must mean that two-thirds of America's husbands think it is worth paying the Collector of Internal Revenue a substantial premium for the privilege of maintaining the institution of the family. For that is precisely what they are doing. The amendments to the Internal Revenue Code enacted by the 78th Congress in 1942 made it cheaper for a man to get a divorce and pay alimony than to stay married, and this is economically practical for anybody whose net taxable income is more than $2,000 a year . . .

. . . . .

It's high time for Congress to set this absurdity straight, and make the institution of marriage as attractive financially as the institution of divorce.

Where You Pay Less Income Tax
by John L. McClellan

Although there has been much debate about it in Congress, few persons realize how the community-property law in a few lucky states has perpetrated a system of special privilege that has reduced the federal income taxes of a favored minority at the expense of a majority.

Most husbands and wives assume that if they live in New York, Illinois, or Wisconsin, for instance, they pay the same federal income tax that is paid by couples with the same income in California, Texas, or Oklahoma. They are wrong. They pay more. Frequently a great deal more.

. . . . .

It is the duty of the Federal Government to provide an equitable system of income taxes, and it is the responsibility of the Congress to amend present law, so as to remove this injustice and provide equality under the law to all citizens alike, irrespective of their state domicile.

There can hardly be any question that Smith's upside-down treatment of the subject is more effective than McClellan's conventional approach. Mind you, I am not saying that the McClellan article is bad: it's a good, craftsmanlike popular-magazine piece. But the divorce-is-cheaper-than-marriage idea is the kind of thing that sticks in the mind; it's that extra something by which we remember what we have read.

Notes for a Portrait of Dummy Flagg

Student Paper

Here are several pages of preliminary notes made by a student getting ready to write a sketch of an old deaf and dumb man he remembered from childhood. The author is thinking on paper, jotting down items as they occur to him, in no particular order at first, then searching for some principle of organization. Notice the different kinds of items and the ways in which the author shifts and combines them. The last page is the beginning of his first draft.

First page

Frank Flagg — Dummy always called
his smell
cats
fish bones in his bed
his trunk
his yah-yah-yah
his runny, red eye
sagging mouth corner
shooting medals, frequent trips
shot over his shoulder, looking in mirror
slit around finger, looking at Ruth
made me a beautiful jack o' lantern, cow jumping over moon —
I hated it, wanted a face like the others had — mother scolded
didn't stay to get moved with the others to the new poorhouse
would go out to greet people on Sunday
saw him downtown once
greasy strings
his writing on the wall — "he has gone down to the schoolhouse with his mother"
writing in odd spots
holding hand at different heights to mean different people
own chair and table
pimples on Henry's pasty face — pie crust
molasses candy made me sick — tobacco in it
we threw apples at him by the old car — shook his stick — yah-yah
feared but I used to go over there

Second page

Physical appearance:
smell — harness, tobacco, leather smell
runny red eyes
sagging mouth
greasy clothes — wouldn't wrinkle, so greasy
his yah-yah-yah

Habits:
shoemaker's wooden bench with wooden vise
Sunday front yard
his cats, sleek
trips away
writing — schoolhouse
designating heights
own chair and table
medals
trunk
dirty adhesive on finger

Episodes:
slit around finger at Ruth
pelted with apples P
Jack o' lantern P
cats in trunk PR?
fish from shed chamber & bones in bed R
dolls shoes for me P
get out when poor moved P
showed up one day, me alone, sword, old Pew R
molasses candy — sick P

P — pity
R — repulsion

pull down mouth & eyes & mock
effect of looking at his eyes
drooling
unhealthy

Third page

OBJECT: to produce a picture
to set up emotional reaction
Disgust — repulsion
pity — understanding — sickness
should I move him to one *place* to focus on him as impression to leave?
set a rhythm before begin

avoid subjective statements
One picture desired to leave strongly
sharp sense of him
repeat "greasy" — clothes, fish in bed, when he returns last time,
greasy pencil stub that he would lap before writing
his wax
ooze, oil, was, always
I don't know why he tried to talk; perhaps he didn't know he was making a noise.
Narrative not purposive of Dummy would give effect of how cruel I was —
Pretending to ignore Dummy — have him merely incidental?

Fourth page

I Explain — introductory
II Narration with interspersed habits
(against his background his habits)

slit finger at Ruth	didn't get along
jabber	own table, chair
repulsive laugh	cats, fish in bed

apples, molasses candy, jack o' lantern, finger & circle, me alone
III Some time after, I heard he was dead. They all died —

Fifth page

His lips were always moist and sagged at one corner.
His mouth sagged at one corner and was always loose and moist.
gazed, stared, watched, looked
One day in the barn Dummy
I had a tent down in the woods where my sister and I and the others used to play.
In the big downstairs room he had his own chair and his own table where he always ate by himself. Over in the corner by the cupboard. There was always a big pile of whittlings (shavings) in the corner behind his chair.

Sixth page

When my father kept the city poor-farm there were always five or ten old men living in the poorhouse behind us. Dummy Flagg was one of them. He was deaf and dumb and greasy. His mouth sagged at one corner and was loose and always moist, and his eyes watered. When he tried to talk he made a noise in his throat, like a dog trying to talk. He smelled like an old harness chest and tobacco and stale grease. A lot of people felt afraid of him, and so did I, but not so much as the other children who came to play with me.

One day when he had first come, my sister and another little girl named Ruth, and I, were in the milk-room while he was trying to tell one of the hired men something, with his hands and fingers twisting into all sorts of strange shapes. Sometimes he would write on the wall with a little green pencil stub that he would lick before he began to write. This time he only used his hands. He pointed across his shoulder down at the woods and then up the road, and held out his palm low — that meant the little girl who lived up the road, Ruth. We watched, not understanding. He held up a finger, carefully drew his jackknife blade around the end of it, looked toward us there, and laughed his noise like a dog trying to laugh. He brushed the water from his eyes and wiped his hands on the front of his coat. The hired man laughed too, and looked at us.

"What does he mean by that?" I asked the hired man.

He laughed again. "He says he's going to cut Ruth's head off down in the pine woods!" The hired man's face had a lot of pimples and was the color of the top of a pie. His name was Henry, and I hated them both, suddenly.

Ruth ran home crying. Henry said Dummy was only joking, but Ruth did not come again to play with us for a long time. . . .

Revising a Theme

Richard C. Blakeslee • 1921–

Perhaps the least welcome lesson for a beginning writer to learn is the value and the necessity of rewriting. When we read the finished pieces of professional writers, we are likely to suppose they wrote them right off, just as they stand; but this is not so. Most good writing is the result of careful rewriting; the first draft is only the beginning of a finished job, and some professional writers carry revising on and on, changing and improving a piece each time they republish it. The following article may be more useful to you than an example of a professional writer's revisions. It was written not for students but for the instructors in a freshman composition course, to give them some advice about dealing with freshman papers.

THE INSTRUCTOR'S comments on a paper are designed to help the student improve his writing, not to show the instructor's firm grasp of correction symbols. It is admittedly difficult not to lash out at each mistake, but a

Reprinted by permission of Richard C. Blakeslee, Northwestern University.

paper with every error marked is usually more terrifying than helpful. After thumbing dutifully through his handbook for five or six assorted errors in the first paragraph, the student is very likely to lose all perspective as to what is wrong with the paper as a whole — and consequently have no idea how to improve it.

One solution is for the instructor to read each paper through completely before making any comments or marks. Then he can decide what are the errors (or types of errors) that are causing the damage, that need stressing. These can then be dealt with quite fully, with positive suggestions for improvement. This technique is particularly effective in marking papers which are to be revised. Instead of scattering his thinking in all directions, the student is led by the instructor's comments to concentrate on one or two particular weaknesses in his writing.

Here is a student paper written in class early in the first quarter on the admittedly vague assignment, "Describe an incident from your personal experience which you consider to be of general interest and which is limited enough to cover in two or three hundred words."

Late in October last year I spent an eventful day at Hawk Mountain that I will always remember. Hawk Mountain is a recent bird sanctuary which was formerly a place for gunners to develop their skill in shooting. Each Fall thousands of hawks as well as other birds pass by this mountain in Pennsylvania creating an unforgettable spectacle.

I had heard about Hawk Mountain from a friend who was impressed by a book he had read about it. We got together last Fall and made plans to visit this sanctuary.

We arrived at the sanctuary a little before noon on October twenty-third. It was a bitter cold day and although the sun was out and the sky was clear, the wind was raw. We sat hunched up against a twisted tree all that afternoon and until early in the evening we were slightly disappointed for we had not seen even one bird of prey that afternoon. Then about five-thirty a group of redtailed Hawks passed so close to our ridge that I felt I could reach out and touch some of the birds. We made a try in estimating

the number but they were at all altitudes which made an even fairly accurate estimate impossible. We won't forget that spectacle for some time.

Comment to Student

You have selected an incident which might be very interesting, but you don't leave yourself any room really to describe it and get it across to the audience. Despite the fact that the core of the paper is the flight of the hawks, you have only two sentences on that flight. In fact, you don't even arrive at the sanctuary until the third paragraph.

Your sentence about "estimating the number" is too statistical to be vivid; try to make the reader visualize or "feel" the hawks. The sentence about touching them is a little standard, but it is still more effective than talking about an "accurate estimate." Speaking of being standard (trite), how about "bitter cold," "wind was raw." Three "never forgets" are too many for such a short theme.

Comment to Teachers

The comment on this paper would be the same if the paper were far worse mechanically than it is. The big problem here is the lack of stress on the main point, which means that much of the revision will consist of new material. Correcting minor errors will distract the student from his main job of getting across the flight of the hawks, and correcting sentences which will then have to be scrapped may well seem to him a rather pointless business.

The errors in the punctuation of sentences seem related and fairly serious. His corrections should be followed up by watching for this sort of trouble in the revision. The other comments are based on the theory that the most valuable kind of correction is forward looking, forcing the student to think constructively about a new piece of writing rather than merely to dissect last week's theme.

This was an actual paper. The revision got the boys onto the mountain in two sentences and did, in the main, a good job of focusing on the hawks themselves. Here is the hawk section:

> We spent all the afternoon hunched up against a twisted tree without seeing even one bird of prey. Then about five-thirty a trio of soaring redtailed hawks passed over us at a high altitude. Then even before the trio had passed from sight the show had begun. A single hawk flashed by so suddenly and low that it sent the photographers scrambling to get in a shot. But their opportunity was just beginning. A group of hawks passed so close to our ridge that I

felt I could reach out and touch some of them. Our view was limited by the jagged peaks at each end of the ridge so it seemed as if an endless stream of birds passed before us before the main body of the migrating hawks had passed. Even by dusk a few hawks were still sailing by.

One point of interest, in addition to the great improvement in detail, is the fact that the error "redtailed Hawks," which appeared in the first version but was not marked, was corrected by the student on his own. This is a frequent result when the student is warned that no attempt has been made to mark every mistake and that he himself must take an active part in the improvement of his writing.

At this point, with the theme beginning to assume some shape, the instructor should point out how the student can improve his effect by the revision of certain sentences, etc. For example, the details in the next to last sentence are really fine. The student should be told this and then shown how several awkward repetitions mar the effect of his good thinking.

Thoughts on Composition

Henry David Thoreau • *1817–1862*

One of the most useful strategies writers have discovered is to keep a notebook or journal of their ideas, observations, and experiences, as a quarry for future writings. The notebooks of many writers have been published, as books in their own right. Among these are Thoreau's Journals *from which he quarried the materials for* Walden *(1854), the classic account of his experiment in simplified living and high thinking. There are many passages on writing, among which the following selections offer usable suggestions.*

[THE VALUE OF KEEPING A JOURNAL]: To set down such choice experiences that my own writings may inspire me and at last I may make wholes of parts. Certainly it is a distinct profession to rescue from oblivion and to fix the sentiments and thoughts which visit all men more or less generally, that the contemplation of the unfinished picture may suggest its harmonious completion. Associate reverently and as much as you can with your loftiest thoughts. Each thought that is welcomed and recorded is a nest egg, by the side of which more will be laid. Thoughts accidentally thrown

together become a frame in which more may be developed and exhibited. Perhaps this is the main value of a habit of writing, or keeping a journal, — that so we remember our best hours and stimulate ourselves. My thoughts are my company. They have a certain individuality and separate existence, aye, personality. Having by chance recorded a few disconnected thoughts and then brought them into juxtaposition, they suggest a whole new field in which it was possible to labor and to think. Thought begat thought.

— *Journal,* 22 January 1852

. . . The one great rule of composition — and if I were a professor of rhetoric I should insist on this — is to *speak the truth.* This first, this second, this third. This demands earnestness and manhood chiefly.

— *Journal,* 6 December 1859

. . . The forcible writer stands bodily behind his words with his experience. He does not make books out of books, but he has been *there* in person.

— *Journal,* 3 February 1852

. . . Whatever wit has been produced on the spur of the moment will bear to be reconsidered and reformed with phlegm.[1] The arrow had best not be loosely shot. The most transient and passing remark must be reconsidered by the writer, made sure and warranted, as if the earth had rested on its axle to back it, and all the natural forces lay behind it. The writer must direct his sentences as carefully and leisurely as the marksman his rifle, who shoots sitting and with a rest with patent sights and conical balls beside. He must not merely seem to speak the truth. He must really speak it. If you foresee that a part of your essay will topple down after the lapse of time, throw it down now yourself.

— *Journal,* 26 January 1852

. . . I wish that I could buy at the shops some kind of india-rubber that would rub out at once all that in my writing which it now costs me so many perusals, so many months if not years, and so much reluctance, to erase.

— *Journal,* 27 December 1853

. . . In correcting my manuscripts, which I do with sufficient phlegm, I find that I invariably turn out much that is good along with the bad, which it is then impossible for me to distinguish — so much for keeping bad company; but after the lapse of time, having purified the main body and thus created a distinct standard for comparison, I can review the rejected sentences and easily detect those which deserve to be readmitted.

— *Journal,* 1 March 1854

[1] Phlegm: calmness.

. . . If you are describing any occurrence, or a man, make two or more distinct reports at different times. Though you may think you have said all, you will to-morrow remember a whole new class of facts which perhaps interested most of all at the time, but did not present themselves to be reported. If we have recently met and talked with a man, and would report our experience, we commonly make a very partial report at first, failing to seize the most significant, picturesque, and dramatic points; we describe only what we have had time to digest and dispose of in our minds, without being conscious that there were other things really more novel and interesting to us, which will not fail to recur to us and impress us suitably at last. How little that occurs to us in any way are we prepared at once to appreciate! We discriminate at first only a few features, and we need to reconsider our experience from many points of view and in various moods, to preserve the whole fruit of it.

—*Journal,* 24 March 1857

. . . I would fain make two reports in my Journal, first the incidents and observations of to-day; and by to-morrow I review the same and record what was omitted before, which will often be the most significant and poetic part. I do not know at first what it is that charms me. The men and things of to-day are wont to lie fairer and truer in to-morrow's memory.

—*Journal,* 27 March 1857

Talk

John Holmes • *1904–*

About the origin of this poem and the way its unifying idea came to him, Mr. Holmes wrote:

"The long piece, 'Talk,' is a memory of E. W. Ottie, who did make beautiful ship-models, and was deaf because he had two cauliflower ears from wrestling. He had enough small tools and power-machinery to have launched a navy, and I used to hang around his shop, in what had been a Universalist church, because my father's cousin had some sort of part interest there; maybe he paid some of the rent. Mr. Ottie has long since disappeared from view, and my father's cousin is dead; most of the other facts are in the poem. But at first I wrote an outpouring memory of a time and place I had not thought of for years; when I

Reprinted from *Map of My Country* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1943). Copyright by John Holmes.

had written myself out, it meant nothing, it was a sort of self-indulgence. But there was something. I have always liked plans, building, tools, the accuracy and rightness of machine-shop work, and carpentry, and models of anything. Suddenly, by rearranging the order of my merely reminiscent lines, I knew that I had learned in his shop the inviolable rules and the unspeakable mystery of good craftsmanship. I didn't know it then. But I used the strange paradox of his deafness and our unthinking communication; and I had a picture in my mind of the East Indiaman. I did some research in a friend's library, and at a naval museum, to be sure; the East Indiaman was big and heavy, for certain historical and economic reasons, and was soon superseded by smaller, faster, and more profitable ships. But that was merely the checking of a fact. The boy's impression remained true, and it was good talk."

SOME of the best talk I ever had
Was with a deaf old near-sighted wrestler who had been to sea,
And made ship-models for a living, and didn't say much.
I was a small boy, I stared. I hung around his shop after school.

He was very deaf, and it made a good silence for me to think in.
He spoke once or twice in an hour. He whittled out whaleboats, peering.
"Good," he would say, with a sharp knife and the wood near his nose.
When he held it to the window, I could see light through the boat's bows.
"Damn," he'd say, if he dropped his knife, no tone, a deaf "Damn."

I'd be learning the shapes of ships from big slippery magazines,
Or I'd be turning crinkly blueprints and deck-plans, unrolling the rolls,
Using his tack-hammers and wood-scraps to make them lie flat.

Oh, and there once I saw
Alone with him one dim afternoon
The strict thin purposeful lines
On the flat plan, soar, live, sail,
Deck above deck, mast over deck, flag
Topping mast, and knew what he knew while he whittled.

What he said, he said with his hundreds of tools, sharp, meaningful,
Red-handled, a blade for every cut, a drill-size for everything.
He talked, I mean I knew what he was saying,
When he pushed the white pine planks into the power-saw
To cut out the rough curved layers he built up into hulls,
Then planed, whittled, sand-papered, rubbed with stub fingers into ships
Then he painted them green under the waterline, or bronze;
Then he rigged them, he sewed sails for them finer than a handkerchief.

He could paint pictures, too,
Another way of talking; ships of the line, water-colors in red and blue,
Tacked on the shop walls above rubbish and bright tools and lumber.
He cast his own anchors, cannon, blocks; I fingered the moulds;
I breathed smells he made of hot metal, of oil, glue, sawdust, turpentine,
I smelled the color of the paint, I heard the shavings curl, a way of listening.
My pulse was the beat of the idle belts on the shafting, a way of talking.
I made believe I walked the decks, hung in the main-tops, rode
The piling swell of the green seas in the bowsprit chains.
I stared up from the afterdeck at the huge flowing balance, the color,
The riding cloud above me of sails, flags, rigging, masts, and sky.
"What are you doing now?" he would say, and I did not answer.

I've seen his ships sailing in glass cases in the great museums.
I still make believe. I still stare. I'm there
On the small perfect decks perfectly empty; up out of the crew's hatch-
way
I climb to take my turn at the night-watch in the bow.
He's there, too. That's why he built them, I think now.
It's a special thing, building them, collecting them, making believe.
But I understand why it's good. He told me.
I wouldn't have known that you throw work away
When you spoil it half-done. I guessed that he guessed
Like a cook with a cookbook sometimes, one look at the blueprints
And three at the wood. I wouldn't have known that.
I wouldn't have known that however you build it,
The ship must sail; you can't explain to the ocean.
But the pure grain of the wood achieving shape under tools,
The masts long like flower-stems, the spars tapered,
The blunt round of the bows of the finger-length whale-boats,
Smooth-dusty from sandpapering, no paint yet, the wood —
That was the best talk.
I remember the words of the wood, and his grimed quick fingers
Telling truth with a knife, reaching for the other tools,
Knowing his need, and the grain of the wood knowing.
Have you seen the most beautiful of all ships?
Not the clipper, the whaler, the yacht, the gray battle-cruiser,
It isn't the galley with banked oars, or the shouldering galleon.
It's the East Indiaman, four decks, and flaring with flags,
All the rails mahogany, the figurehead carven and colored, plunging,
The captain's gallery all windows at the great stern,
And the mountains of sail, the enormous lift of the long decks.
A castle, a country sailing, so proud, so golden and slow and proud.

He was an old man when I knew him, deaf and bad eyes.
He wore a gray sweater, and a very old cap, always.

"What have you been doing, John?" he would say, every day.
And I would say nothing. He couldn't hear.
"Do you know what this is I am making?"
I knew what he was making, even before it seemed to be.
I could hear. I could make believe. I could see.
He always had half a dozen ships on the bench, thinking them into shape.
He hummed, whittled, peered, swore, studied blueprints.

It was some of the best talk I ever had.

4. GIVING THE FACTS

The Language of Reports

S. I. Hayakawa • 1906–

The distinctions Hayakawa draws in this essay between facts, inferences, and judgments can be very useful. They will help you interpret what others say or write and will make you more aware of the actual nature of your own statements. The best way to find out whether you grasp the distinctions would be to try to carry out his suggested exercise of writing a purely factual report. Can you manage to exclude all inferences and judgments?

FOR THE PURPOSES of the interchange of information, the basic symbolic act is the *report* of what we have seen, heard, or felt: "There is a ditch on each side of the road." "You can get those at Smith's hardware store for $2.75." "There aren't any fish on that side of the lake, but there are on this side." Then there are reports of reports: "The longest waterfall in the world is Victoria Falls in Rhodesia." "The Battle of Hastings took place in 1066." "The papers say that there was a big smash-up on Highway 41 near Evansville." Reports adhere to the following rules: first, they are *capable of verification;* second, they *exclude,* as far as possible, *inferences* and *judgments.* (These terms will be defined later.)

VERIFIABILITY

Reports are verifiable. We may not always be able to verify them ourselves, since we cannot track down the evidence for every piece of history

From *Language in Thought and Action,* by S. I. Hayakawa. Copyright, 1941, 1949, by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., pp. 38–44.

we know, nor can we all go to Evansville to see the remains of the smash-up before they are cleared away. But if we are roughly agreed on the names of things, on what constitutes a "foot," "yard," "bushel," and so on, and on how to measure time, there is relatively little danger of our misunderstanding each other. Even in a world such as we have today, in which everybody seems to be quarreling with everybody else, *we still to a surprising degree trust each other's reports.* We ask directions of total strangers when we are traveling. We follow directions on road signs without being suspicious of the people who put them up. We read books of information about science, mathematics, automotive engineering, travel, geography, the history of costume, and other such factual matters, and we usually assume that the author is doing his best to tell us as truly as he can what he knows. And we are safe in so assuming most of the time. With the emphasis that is being given today to the discussion of biased newspapers, propagandists, and the general untrustworthiness of many of the communications we receive, we are likely to forget that we still have an enormous amount of reliable information available and that deliberate misinformation, except in warfare, still is more the exception than the rule. The desire for self-preservation that compelled men to evolve means for the exchange of information also compels them to regard the giving of false information as profoundly reprehensible.

At its highest development, the language of reports is the language of science. By "highest development" we mean greatest general usefulness. Presbyterian and Catholic, workingman and capitalist, German and Englishman, *agree* on the meanings of such symbols as $2 \times 2 = 4$, 100°C., HNO_3, 3:35 A.M., 1940 A.D., 5000 *r.p.m.*, 1000 *kilowatts*, *pulex irritans*, and so on. But how, it may be asked, can there be agreement about even this much among people who are at each other's throats about practically everything else: political philosophies, ethical ideals, religious beliefs, and the survival of my business *versus* the survival of yours? The answer is that circumstances *compel men to agree*, whether they wish to or not. If, for example, there were a dozen different religious sects in the United States, each insisting on its own way of naming the time of the day and the days of the year, the mere necessity of having a dozen different calendars, a dozen different kinds of watches, and a dozen sets of schedules for business hours, trains, and radio programs, to say nothing of the effort that would be required for translating terms from one nomenclature to another, would make life as we know it impossible.

The language of reports, then, including the more accurate reports of science, is "map" language, and because it gives us reasonably accurate representations of the "territory," it enables us to get work done. Such language may often be what is commonly termed "dull" or "uninteresting" reading: one does not usually read logarithmic tables or telephone directories for entertainment. But we could not get along without it. There are numberless occasions in the talking and writing we do in everyday

life that *require that we state things in such a way that everybody will agree with our formulation.*

Inferences

The reader will find that practice in writing reports is a quick means of increasing his linguistic awareness. It is an exercise which will constantly provide him with his own examples of the principles of language and interpretation under discussion. The reports should be about first-hand experience — scenes the reader has witnessed himself, meetings and social events he has taken part in, people he knows well. They should be of such a nature that they can be verified and agreed upon. For the purpose of this exercise, inferences will be excluded.

Not that inferences are not important — we rely in everyday life and in science as much on *inferences* as on reports — in some areas of thought, for example, geology, paleontology, and nuclear physics, reports are the foundations, but inferences (and inferences upon inferences) are the main body of the science. An inference, as we shall use the term, is *a statement about the unknown made on the basis of the known.* We may *infer* from the handsomeness of a woman's clothes her wealth or social position; we may *infer* from the character of the ruins the origin of the fire that destroyed the building; we may *infer* from a man's calloused hands the nature of his occupation; we may *infer* from a senator's vote on an armaments bill his attitude toward Russia; we may *infer* from the structure of the land the path of a prehistoric glacier; we may *infer* from a halo on an unexposed photographic plate that it has been in the vicinity of radioactive materials; we may *infer* from the noise an engine makes the condition of its connecting rods. Inferences may be carelessly or carefully made. They may be made on the basis of a great background of previous experience with the subject-matter, or no experience at all. For example, the inferences a good mechanic can make about the internal condition of a motor by listening to it are often startlingly accurate, while the inferences made by an amateur (if he tries to make any) may be entirely wrong. But the common characteristic of inferences is that they are statements about matters which are not directly known, made on the basis of what has been observed.

The avoidance of inferences in our suggested practice in report-writing requires that we make no guesses as to what is going on in other people's minds. When we say, "He was angry," we are not reporting; we are making an inference from such observable facts as the following: "He pounded his fist on the table; he swore; he threw the telephone directory at his stenographer." In this particular example, the inference appears to be fairly safe; nevertheless, it is important to remember, especially for the purposes of training oneself, that it is an inference. Such expressions as "He thought a lot of himself," "He was scared of girls," "He has an inferiority complex," made on the basis of casual social observation, and

"What Russia really wants to do is to establish a world communist dictatorship," made on the basis of casual newspaper reading, are highly inferential. One should keep in mind their inferential character and, in our suggested exercises, should substitute for them such statements as "He rarely spoke to subordinates in the plant," "I saw him at a party, and he never danced except when one of the girls asked him to," "He wouldn't apply for the scholarship although I believe he could have won it easily," and "The Russian delegation to the United Nations has asked for A, B, and C. Last year they voted against M and N, and voted for X and Y. On the basis of facts such as these, the newspaper I read makes the inference that what Russia really wants is to establish a world communist dictatorship. I tend to agree."

Judgments

In our suggested writing exercise, judgments are also to be excluded. By judgments, we shall mean *all expressions of the writer's approval or disapproval of the occurrences, persons, or objects he is describing.* For example, a report cannot say, "It was a wonderful car," but must say something like this: "It has been driven 50,000 miles and has never required any repairs." Again statements like "Jack lied to us" must be suppressed in favor of the more verifiable statement, "Jack told us he didn't have the keys to his car with him. However, when he pulled a handkerchief out of his pocket a few minutes later, a bunch of car keys fell out." Also a report may not say, "The senator was stubborn, defiant, and uncooperative," or "The senator courageously stood by his principles"; it must say instead, "The senator's vote was the only one against the bill."

Many people regard statements like the following as statements of "fact": "Jack *lied* to us," "Jerry is a *thief*," "Tommy is *clever*." As ordinarily employed, however, the word *"lied"* involves first an inference (that Jack knew otherwise and deliberately misstated the facts) and secondly a judgment (that the speaker disapproves of what he has inferred that Jack did). In the other two instances, we may substitute such expressions as, "Jerry was convicted of theft and served two years at Waupun," and "Tommy plays the violin, leads his class in school, and is captain of the debating team." After all, to say of a man that he is a "thief" is to say in effect, "He has stolen *and will steal again*" — which is more of a prediction than a report. Even to say, "He has stolen," is to make an inference (and simultaneously to pass a judgment) on an act about which there may be difference of opinion among those who have examined the evidence upon which the conviction was obtained. But to say that he was "convicted of theft" is to make a statement capable of being agreed upon through verification in court and prison records.

Scientific verifiability rests upon the external observation of facts, not upon the heaping up of judgments. If one person says, "Peter is a deadbeat," and another says, "I think so too," the statement has not been veri-

fied. In court cases, considerable trouble is sometimes caused by witnesses who cannot distinguish their judgments from the facts upon which those judgments are based. Cross-examinations under these circumstances go something like this:

WITNESS: That dirty double-crosser Jacobs ratted on me.
DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Your honor, I object.
JUDGE: Objection sustained. (Witness's remark is stricken from the record.) Now, try to tell the court exactly what happened.
WITNESS: He double-crossed me, the dirty, lying rat!
DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Your honor, I object!
JUDGE: Objection sustained. (Witness's remark is again stricken from the record.) Will the witness try to stick to the facts.
WITNESS: But I'm telling you the facts, your honor. He did double-cross me.

This can continue indefinitely unless the cross-examiner exercises some ingenuity in order to get at the facts behind the judgment. To the witness it is a "fact" that he was "double-crossed." Often hours of patient questioning are required before the factual bases of the judgment are revealed.

Many words, of course, simultaneously convey a report and a judgment on the fact reported, as will be discussed more fully in a later chapter. For the purposes of a report as here defined, these should be avoided. Instead of "sneaked in," one might say "entered quietly"; instead of "politicians," "congressmen," or "aldermen," or "candidates for office"; instead of "bureaucrat," "public official"; instead of "tramp," "homeless unemployed"; instead of "dictatorial set-up," "centralized authority"; instead of "crackpots," "holders of uncommon views." A newspaper reporter, for example, is not permitted to write, "A crowd of suckers came to listen to Senator Smith last evening in that rickety firetrap and ex-dive that disfigures the south edge of town." Instead he says, "Between seventy-five and a hundred people heard an address last evening by Senator Smith at the Evergreen Gardens near the South Side city limits."

How Propaganda Finds Its Way Into the Press

Chicago Daily News

"It says right here in the paper. . . ." Are there any college students who still don't know you can't believe all you read in the papers? But even if you do know this sad fact, are you actively aware of the particu-

Reprinted by permission of the *Chicago Daily News*. The article appeared in the issue of October 15, 1938.

lar bias of the paper you habitually read? Do you apply Hayakawa's distinctions between facts, inferences, and judgments to your daily paper? What really opens one's eyes to the way newspaper "reports" can garble and slant facts is to read reports of an event in which one was personally involved. Why not write an analysis of such a report from your own experience? Or compare reports of a single event by two or three different papers?

WITH RIVAL SECTIONS of the class press, engaged in bitter recrimination over the publication of propaganda as unbiased news, you are invited this week to sit in and see just how the truth can be poisoned and converted into propaganda that meets the views of the publisher.

A reporter working against deadlines gathers the facts as he sees them and telephones those facts to his city desk. The man on the desk turns the reporter over to a rewriter, and in this article a fictitious labor story will be traced from its inception.

HERE ARE HYPOTHETICAL FACTS

The facts of this hypothetical story follow: The owners of the Blank Foundry at Dash street and Ogburn avenue refused to bargain collectively with their employes.

Three weeks ago a strike was called by the union which was an affiliate of the C.I.O.

Twelve men were picketing the plant.

No disorders of any kind had occurred up to today.

About 3 P.M. a police squad from the Cloud Street Station under the direction of Lt. Thomas Raider arrived at the plant and ordered the pickets to disperse because "you are blocking traffic."

The pickets refused.

The police went after them with swinging clubs. Four of the pickets were injured, two seriously, and taken to the County Hospital. Five other pickets were jailed for disorderly conduct.

Howard Bystander, a salesman, witness of the clash, said the police assaulted the pickets without ordering them to disperse. He also told how a policeman had beaten a picket unmercifully.

The striker in charge of the picket line also insisted the police had not ordered them to disperse.

The police refused to reveal the source of the complaint upon which they said they had acted.

Simple little story, isn't it? Below you'll see how these simple little facts can be twisted to demoniac proportions.

CLASS PRESS

An armed mob of C.I.O. strikers, carrying banners hailing communism, attacked a police squad at the strike-closed plant of the Blank Foundry, Dash

street and Ogburn avenue, today and before order was restored four strikers vere injured. Five others were jailed.

Police said they had been summoned to the plant on a telephone complaint hat the enraged mob were strikers who were blocking traffic and threatening o seize physical control of the foundry.

As they approached, police spokesman said, they were met by a fusillade of rocks; then some of the strikers drew guns.

"I called to the strikers to drop their weapons," said Police Lt. Thomas Raider, who was in charge of the squad. "My call brought more rocks. I again pleaded with the men and when they again replied with rocks, I told the boys to disperse them.

"I'm very sorry we had to hurt four of them, but I think the police did their duty," added Lt. Raider. "After all, the police have no interest in these labor fights other than to see that the laws are enforced."

(SINCE YOU READERS ARE PRIVILEGED TO WITNESS THIS BIT OF FACT POISONING YOU MIGHT TOUCH THE REWRITER ON THE SHOULDER AND ASK HIM WHERE HE GOT ALL THIS STUFF, THAT THE REPORTER DIDN'T TELL HIM ANYTHING LIKE THAT AT ALL.)

Before the police went to the strike scene reports had come to the Cloud Street Station that C.I.O. agitators were fomenting trouble, that the strikers were being trained in army formations and instructed in the use of firearms.

As the rewriter finishes his lead it goes to the city desk. There it's read and passed along to the news editor with the suggestion that it would make a good story to put a line on.

The news editor agrees and marks the copy, "8-col. 96-pt. Gothic with one col. 30-pt. Gothic cap readout." The man in the slot (he's the head of the copy desk) next receives the story. He tosses it to a copyreader who does the editing and writes the heads.

This copyreader goes over the story, then begins playing with words for the eight-column line. He looks up suddenly and gazes contemplatively at the man in the slot, his immediate superior, then a smile flickers as he writes:

C.I.O. MOB ATTACKS POLICE

The count is right. Now for the readout:

RED AGITATORS
STAND ACCUSED
OF INCITING MEN

The copyreader hands the story and heads to the slot man. Maybe a sardonic grin flashes as he sees the approval of his boss, but in about twenty minutes the paper's on the street and another crime against the reputable press of the nation has been committed.

UNBIASED

Four striking foundry workers were injured today in a clash at the gates of the Blank Foundry Company, Dash street and Ogburn avenue, when police used their clubs to disperse 12 pickets who were walking on the sidewalks near the foundry gate.

The injured men, all suffering from head contusions, were taken to the County Hospital, where physicians said two of them, William Jones of 23 West Thorn street, and James Howard of 69 West Dash street, may have suffered fractured skulls. The other two in the hospital were Thomas Joyce of 2236 Blank street and David Oval of 6453 Blank avenue.

Arrested and jailed in the Cloud Street Police Station, charged with disorderly conduct, were these four pickets: Carroll Judge and William Guest of 2654 Blank avenue; William James and Thomas Johnson of 6932 Blank street.

An eyewitness of the disorder, Howard Bystander, a salesman employed by the Oil Refining Company of 33 West Jason boulevard, said he protested to a policeman who was clubbing Jones while he lay on the sidewalk, and the policeman later identified as Patrolman Walter Tory, said, "Get the hell out of here or you'll get it, too."

Patrolman Tory termed Mr. Bystander's recital a "lie." In charge of the police squad was Lt. Thomas Raider. His version of the clash ran this way: "We received complaints that these picket guys were obstructing traffic, so we came down here and told them to go home. They wouldn't listen to reason, so we had to touch them up a bit. The police are here to enforce the laws and we're going to do just that, strike or no strike."

Tom Blank, secretary-treasurer of the Foundry Workers Union, a C.I.O. affiliate, who was in charge of the picketing, said after the fight:

"We had 12 pickets walking back and forth. They carried no banners of any kind and none was armed. We called this strike three weeks ago when our demands for collective bargaining were ignored despite the Wagner act.

"For the last week we had been getting warnings to quit picketing or the police would come over here and slug us. We naturally did nothing about the warnings because we were breaking no laws.

"This afternoon the squad car came up and ordered the men away from the plant. They refused and the police began to swing their clubs.

"I'm going to have our lawyers get writs to free the men held in jail and we'll likely file suit for damages against the city, but where politics and crime are bedfellows I fear we haven't much chance of collecting a penny."

This story also goes to the city desk. But on this paper the city desk has been instructed to be fair at all times, so the city editor passes it along to the news editor. He also knows that this publisher demands fairness and decency in the news, so he orders a one-column 30 point chelt. head and places the story on page 15. The head reads:

4 STRIKERS HURT
WHEN COPS SLUG
PLANT PICKETS

CLASS PRESS

Armed with riot guns and strike clubs, an enraged squad of police thugs, acting on orders from their capitalistic overlords, today interrupted the peaceful picketing of the Blank Foundry at Dash street and Ogburn avenue by beating four of the strikers so badly that they were taken to the County Hospital, where physicians indicated two of them would likely die.

If two more lives are sacrificed on the altars of capitalistic greed the workers of Jonesville said they would petition President Roosevelt to send in federal troops to patrol the strike zone.

The absurdity of the police assertion that they had been summoned to the scene because the pickets were obstructing traffic was shown when it was established that but 12 men were in the line at any time since the strike was called three weeks ago after the company had repeatedly refused to recognize the existence of the Wagner act which compels collective bargaining.

When questioned as to the identity of the persons who had filed the complaint, the police were evasive, saying no record had been kept of the calls.

From sources close to the Cloud Street Police Station, whose officers did the work of their capitalistic employers, came the information that the foundry barons paid the police $5,000 to disperse the pickets.

This could not be confirmed for obvious reasons, but the source from which it came has hitherto been most reliable.

Workers throughout the Jonesville district were incensed over the outrage and preparations were made for a march on the City Hall, where redress will be demanded of Mayor Sketch.

One of the wounded pickets, William Jones, was beaten unmercifully by the uniformed city-paid gunmen. He was knocked to the street and kicked. As he pleaded with the policemen they laughed at him and continued to kick him.

When an onlooker went to his assistance he, too, was slugged; then the assassins returned to their gory task of pounding Jones as he begged for his life.

"Please, please, please," he begged, "don't kill me. I have a wife and children. . . . Please."

As the last word came he was kicked in the mouth. Blood spurted to the sidewalk. The police laughed. What did they care? Were not the united forces of capitalism at their beck and call?

After the injured were taken to the hospital and the police had arrested several pickets, the wives of the injured men appeared at the gates of the foundry. They were weeping. Clutching their skirts were their children.

It was a pathetic picture.

The head that appeared over this story was this eight-column line:

POLICE THUGS SLUG PICKETS

The readout went like this:

COPS EMPLOYED
BY BOSSES TO
KILL WORKERS

There you have the story of how the truth can be twisted to fit the pattern of the publication in which it appears. First you have the violently anti-labor newspaper; then you have the honest newspaper and third comes the ardent pro-labor publication.

World's Best Directions Writer

Ken Macrorie • 1918–

"How do I get to Elmwood Avenue?" "What's the right way to wash a car?" "How do you play cribbage?" "How do I get this cake to come out right?" We all ask and are asked such questions every day. And we've all had the maddening experience of ending up ten miles from Elmwood Avenue, with a soap-streaked car, with a handful of incomprehensible cards, or with a flat cake — or of condemning our inquirer to the same frustration. To give clear, accurate, and concise directions is a real challenge to one's mastery of language and information. In this amusing interview "the world's best directions writer" talks about some of the problems a professional encounters and some of his principles for dealing with them.

As we turned to the elevator on the third floor of the Business Associates Building at 1115–20 Horace Street, we saw the scratched black letters on the frosted glass: "Edward Zybowski — Best Directions Writer in the World." We let the elevator go down without us.

Mr. Zybowski was willing to talk to us, he said, because at the moment he was stuck. "I've got 45 words for a label and I've got to get it down to 25."

As he spoke, he lifted the rod that held his paper against the typewriter roller and squinted at the words. He was ordinary-looking, about forty, the black hair at the back and sides of his head emphasizing the whiteness of the balding front part. Except for his face: it was kindly but looked mashed in.

"Not kicking about copy they gave me," he said. "Never do. More copy, more challenge to cut it till you wouldn't believe it was possible. That's what keeps customers comin' to me."

"We don't want to keep you from your work. . . ."

"That's O.K. I'm stuck. No use worryin' and worryin' over a label. Don't

Reprinted by permission of the author from *College English*, February, 1952, pp. 275–279.

think consciously about it for a few hours when you're stuck. Then suddenly your unconscious comes through for you — wham! There it is. Needs only final touches. No ulcers for the writer that way."

"Inspiration?" we ventured.

"Inspiration! That's a literary myth. Purely a matter of the unconscious memories and tips your mind has stored up. Then they spill over.

"This job's more than just writing," he said. "Deciding position and size of type very important." He picked up a brightly colored jar lid. "Ad on top for radio program, see? Where's the direction? On side of lid where you put your fingers to open it. Why there? Most logical place in the world."

We read the instructions printed in blue along the fluted edge:

AFTER OPENING, KEEP IN REFRIGERATOR
DO NOT FREEZE

"You're opening the jar," he said, "and you see the word OPENING. Stops you, doesn't it? Same thing appears on other side of lid. Don't ordinarily believe in presenting any direction twice, but got to here. So important — food'll spoil if you don't follow these directions."

"We're just curious, Mr. Zybowski. What is difficult about writing a direction like that? Seems the only way one could say this idea."

Mr. Z. looked affronted for a second, then smiled. "Yeah, no one can see it at first. And that's really a compliment to me. Shows I did it the simplest and most natural way it could be done. Now take this jar-lid direction — copy came to me like this:

" 'When stored at normal refrigerator temperature this food will retain its taste, lightness, color, and value as a food product; but when exposed to air or kept at freezing temperature will suffer a chemical change which may render it unfit for human consumption. It is therefore recommended that it be kept at refrigerated temperature when not being used. However, it may be stored at room temperature safely if the lid has never been removed.'

"I get that essay on the subject, figure I got a space a half an inch high around the lid, and a damned important direction. So I write:

AFTER OPENING, KEEP IN REFRIGERATOR
DO NOT FREEZE

Our respect for Mr. Z. was growing. "You must be quite an expert on the English language," we said.

"I hate to put it this way," he said, "but I think I know more about English usage than 90 per cent of the college teachers in the country. And also how to use English — that's a different thing, you know. Under the how-to-use part, for example, there's this business of adjectives. The college experts who think they're up on the latest, say don't use adjectives. They got it from Hemingway, they claim. I read all the books and maga-

zines on English, too. Almost never learn anything from them. When you got a space half an inch square facing you and an important idea to get across, you learn something about language. What was I going to say?"

"You were speaking of not using adjectives."

"Yeah. They say don't use 'em. In a way they're right. Adjectives are usually weak as hell." Without looking, he pointed to the wall behind him where hung a half-letter-size sheet of blue paper framed in black. "That one up there," he said, "has no adjectives. Shouldn't have any. It's true you should use 'em sparingly. But take this tea-bag carton." He pulled a box from a desk drawer. "After I told 'em how to make hot tea on the left panel here, then I say: 'For *perfect* iced tea, make hot tea and steep for 6 minutes.' The word *perfect* is a selling word there — plug. I don't like to write any plug angles into directions. Leave that slush to ad-writers, damn their lyin' souls. This business of mine you can be honest in. Givin' directions is really helpin' people, educatin' them."

We could see Mr. Z. was in the first glow of a long speech, but we wanted to find out how he wrote directions. So we interrupted. "We can see that it is an honorable occupation in a dirty business world. Would you mind telling us more about this tea-bag label? You said you used no adjectives except for *perfect,* but in the hot-tea instructions we see the words *warmed* teapot, *fresh, bubbling,* boiling water."

"Glad you mentioned it. Easy to misunderstand. You see, *warmed* teapot is what you've got to use, one of the important tricks of tea-making. So *warmed* isn't an idle little descriptive word thrown in. It's the kind of teapot you've got to use or else you don't get first-rate tea. And the same way with *fresh.* I hate a word like that usually because it sounds like those damned ad-writers' slush. You know how you always see the word on the package when you buy five-day-old stale cupcakes in a grocery store. But when used with water, the word *fresh* means something. When water stands around, it loses a lot — loses, to be exact. . . ." He reached for a chemical dictionary.

"Oh, don't bother," we said. "We know you're right there."

"And *bubbling,*" he said, pushing the book back in the case behind him. "I'm sure you know there are many different stages of boiling, and 'bubbling' identifies the stage we want."

"Yes, so in that sense of basic meaning, you don't consider these words adjectives," we said.

"Right," he said, beaming with satisfaction as he leaned back in his chair. "One point those modern English teachers are straight on: use active verbs whenever possible. I use 'push,' 'lift,' 'scoop,' 'unscrew.' Never say anything like, 'The turn of the cap is accomplished by a twist.'" He smiled. "I would say, 'Twist cap to left.'"

"We'll have to go soon," we said. Mr. Z. looked crestfallen. "Could you show us the direction that you consider your masterpiece?"

"Well," he said, "there can be only one masterpiece done by any one

artist. I couldn't pick which is best. I try not to let any of 'em get out of this office till they're at least pared to the minimum. They may not always be brilliant, but they gotta be the minimum or they don't go out."

"How about that one in the frame? Any special significance in putting it on blue paper?"

He stood up and unhooked it from the wall. "Blue paper, use it for all final O.K.'d directions, so as not to make a mistake and let one of the earlier versions — call them scratches — get out when there's a better one been done." He held the frame out to us. "This one, I'll admit, is pretty good."

We read:

IF TOO HARD – WARM · IF TOO SOFT – COOL
PEANUT BUTTER SOMETIMES CONTRACTS
CAUSING AIR SPACE ON SIDE OF JAR
THIS MAY RESULT IN A WHITE APPEARANCE
WHICH IN NO WAY AFFECTS QUALITY OR TASTE.

"I like this one," he said, "'cause no adjectives and no plug. First line there got the concentration of a line from Milton's *Samson,* my favorite poem."

We noticed the adjective *white* before *appearance,* but knew now that it wasn't an adjective to Mr. Z. and, for that matter, to us any more. "Why so little punctuation?" we asked. "One period at the end and then only two hyphens in the first line."

"Glad you asked," he said, wiping his forehead with a handkerchief. "Damnedest thing, punctuation! Spent years mastering American English punctuation when I started this business. Had to know it first but all along thought I wouldn't use it much." He picked up the framed direction from the desk. "Didn't either.

"Now first of all, you see these words," said Mr. Z.

"BUTTER SOMETIMES CONTRACTS
CAUSING AIR SPACE

Ordinary punctuation usage says comma before 'causing,' but I take care of that by ending one line and starting another. Never need punctuation when eye has to stop and move over and down to a new line. In first line I use hyphen instead of dash because public doesn't know hyphen from a dash anyway. Hyphen saves space, and, when you don't use both in same copy, you don't need to differentiate between them. Remember, my context for a direction is not a chapter or a book or even a page, just the round top of a jar lid or one side of a package. Sometimes no other words except the direction. No chance for confusing with antecedents or references several pages before. And thank God! No footnotes! I won't allow any asterisks. Every explanation's gotta be complete in itself."

"How about that middle dot in the first line?" we said.

"Oh, that? I'm proud of that middle dot. Easier to see than period. A better stop really. We ought to use 'em in all writing, but you know the power of convention in usage. And this particular middle dot is in center of eight words, four on each side, with equal meaning and importance. A really logical and rational mark here, don't you think?"

We had to agree. "Anybody can see it's a very intelligent job of direction writing," we said. "There is only one thing that seems inconsistent with what you have said today."

"What's that?"

"After 'CAUSING AIR SPACE ON SIDE OF JAR,' you say 'THIS MAY RESULT.' It seems that the 'THIS' is a waste of words. Couldn't you say 'CAUSING AIR SPACE ON SIDE OF JAR AND RESULTING IN A WHITE . . .'?"

"Good point," said Mr. Z. "A really fine point of the trade. I'm glad, though, you didn't object to 'THIS' and say it is a vague reference. Anybody can see the reference is perfectly clear. But I'll tell you why I used the 'THIS.' Gettin' to be a pretty long sentence, that one. And if you say 'RESULTING,' you have to look back to be sure what the relationship is between 'RESULTING' and 'CAUSING.' In a sense it would be no vaguer than 'THIS' in its reference, but in reality it would be harder to follow because that kind of parallelism is not in common everyday speech use. But the 'THIS' construction is. Remember my audience is everybody. A lot of those everybodys really don't read, so you gotta talk, not write, to 'em."

"What would you say is the secret of this job, if there is one, Mr. Zybowski?"

"Funny thing," he said, "but I've thought that over a lot and come to an awfully egotistic conclusion. The secret is the same as for writing a great book or doing anything else that really gives something to people. That is to learn to put yourself in the other guy's place."

We knew nothing to say to such a statement. "It's been a pleasure," we said, getting up.

"Come in again. Sure enjoyed talkin' to you," he said.

As we got to the door, he looked up from the typewriter. "I forgot to tell you one other thing about this peanut-butter direction. Notice last phrase: 'IN NO WAY AFFECTS QUALITY OR TASTE.' That's the time I beat the ad-writers at their own game and still didn't misrepresent anything or slush the customer. The way I put it, it's a statement of fact, yet a subtle idea creeps into customer's mind that the quality and taste of this butter is exceptionally good. This time language did even more than it was expected to do."

"Goodbye," we said, shaking our head in wonder as we closed the frosted-glass door. We believed the words on it now.

The One-Egg Cake

Grace Brown • *1859–1929*

These are supposed to be foolproof directions for making a foolproof cake. Could you write similarly foolproof directions for performing some simple operation — tying a bow tie, hanging a dress, making an omelet — that often goes wrong? The problem is to reduce the operation to its essential steps and to foresee where the performer is likely to go wrong.

THE ONE-EGG CAKE is not one of those haughty, high-bred confections that must have the refinement of thrice-bolted flour and dry-whipped whites of eggs, that cannot allow a rude foot to cross the kitchen floor while they grandly bake, lest their sensitive, poised delicacy swoon from shock. The one-egg cake is sturdy, stocky, humble. It asks for only the simplest of materials, and shrinks not from hastiness in the handling. It evolved, like the hoof of the horse or the wing of the bird, in answer to a natural need; or in answer to two natural needs: that of the impecunious, for dessert; and that of the busy housewife, for time. It is indigenous anywhere. It would undoubtedly be edible to the last crumb if, flour lacking, it were made of hominy grits or bran and shorts. But in spite of its modesty, it may easily attain to the distinction of the cake in Katherine Mansfield's story: "And God said: 'Let there be cake.' And there was cake. And God saw that it was good."

Its implements are such as any igloo might keep on the kitchen shelf: *one* mixing bowl, *one* cup, *one* tablespoon, *one* teaspoon, *one* sheet of waxed paper, *one* baking pan. Its *one* regret is that it must occasionally deviate in material from the absolute unity which is its ideal. But its method of procedure wastes not one movement. Anyone who wishes to attempt this adventure toward perfect unity should proceed as follows.

Into the one mixing bowl sift an indeterminate quantity of flour — any kind of flour. From this measure two cupsful on to the waxed paper and return the remainder to wherever it came from. Measure one cup (the same cup) of sugar into the bowl. Add to it six tablespoons of soft shortening. If you have a good eye for quantity, guess at it and put in *one* six-tablespoon lump. Cream them together with one clean right hand — after first oiling the baking pan with it, and thus saving one washing. Next break the one egg — the egg of the title role — into the bowl and beat it briskly with the tablespoon into the creamed sugar and shortening.

Reprinted from *Expository Writing* by Mervin James Curl (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931), pp. 158–159.

Into the cup (the same cup) measure two thirds of a cup of milk. Pour one third into the bowl and shake in half the measured flour. Beat the mixture briskly. Into the remaining flour measure three teaspoons of baking powder. Shake the flour and baking powder into the sifter held over the bowl and sift them in. Pour in the rest of the milk. Beat again in a lively manner. Flavor with one teaspoon (the same teaspoon) of vanilla or one teaspoon of cinnamon or one square of melted chocolate. Pour it into the oiled pan and bake it in one oven. If no oven is handy, use one pressure cooker. If it is served to *one* husband, *one* daughter, and *one* son, it will disappear in *one* meal.

Winter Salad

Sydney Smith • *1771–1845*

Can you separate the factual part of these directions from the judgment part? What is gained or lost by such a separation?

TWO LARGE POTATOES, passed through kitchen sieve,
Unwonted softness to the salad give;
Of mordant mustard add a single spoon —
Distrust the condiment which bites too soon;
But deem it not, though made of herbs, a fault
To add a double quantity of salt;
Three times the spoon with oil of Lucca crown,
And once with vinegar procured from town.
True flavor needs it, and your poet begs
The pounded yellow of two well-boiled eggs.
Let onion atoms lurk within the bowl,
And, half-suspected, animate the whole;
And lastly, on the favored compound toss
A magic tea-spoon of anchovy sauce.
Then, though green turtle fail, though venison's tough,
Though ham and turkey are not boiled enough,
Serenely full, the epicure shall say,
"Fate can not harm me — I have dined today."

The Literary Use of Language

David Daiches • 1913–

Hayakawa's distinctions between facts, inferences, and judgments are useful, but we have the right to ask: "Are there really any pure facts, untainted by inference or judgment, and unwarped by the act of perceiving them?" This is a question to puzzle even professional philosophers, but a simpler one is relevant to our reading and writing: "How often do we want statements to be entirely objective, even supposing they can be so? Are we not sometimes more interested in what events mean than in their mere existence?" Certainly in literature, as Daiches points out, the writer's effort is to give his subject a human significance.

LIFE IS A JUNGLE of events whose meanings are at once too casual (and to that extent insignificant) and too full of possible implication (without offering us any guidance as to which implication or set of implications we should choose). The skilled storyteller makes those meanings at once more significant and less confused. He chooses or invents a tractable piece of life and proceeds both to define its meaning more precisely than the meaning of any event in real life can be known (Can we even talk of the "meaning" of events in real life, unless we mean simply their causes and effects?) and to enrich its meaning in a wholly unique manner. Is it possible simultaneously to define a meaning more precisely and to enrich it? We can see that this is possible if we consider what the skillful writer of fiction (and, indeed, of any kind of creative literature) actually does.

Let us take a very simple example. Consider that a journalist has been asked to stand for a while in a city street and then write up an account of the street and what took place there. As soon as he begins to write he will have to make his own definition of his subject. What in fact is meant by "the street and what took place there"? To define even the street requires a choice: is it simply the thoroughfare leading from one place to another, or are we to include the buildings which flank it, and if we include the buildings what aspects of them are we to include? A street, in fact, can be considered in an indefinite number of ways. As for defining "what took place there," we strike here immediately the problem of selection. Clearly, it would be physically impossible as well as wholly pointless

David Daiches, *A Study of Literature* (Ithaca, New York: The Cornell University Press, 1948), pp. 29–34.

for the writer to give an account of every single event which in fact occurred while he was there, or even of every single event which he observed. Our journalist would have to select from among the plethora of events — the actions and gestures of people, the movement of traffic, all the innumerable activities of city life — what he considered of importance or of interest on some standard or other. He would have to define "street" and "what took place there" before writing or in the process of writing. And he would have to make up his mind about his perspective. Should he try to get closer to some things than to others; should he vary the distance at which he stood from people and things, or maintain a simple gradation from foreground to background? These and other questions he will have to answer, consciously or unconsciously, in presenting us with a verbal picture of that street at that time. Having done so, he will have presented to us aspects of a situation which we can recognize as one which we either have known or might have known. If he can use the language with any ability at all, even if he can put together a number of sentences which say, however badly or crudely, what he saw (or rather, what he thought he saw) that he considered worth mentioning, we shall be able to recognize his account as corresponding to something of which we have had experience — assuming, of course, that we are products of the same civilization and are familiar with that kind of city street. That is to say, we should *recognize* the description as, in a general sort of way at least, true. The writer, without using any other skill than is required of a reasonably competent journalist, would have defined his subject intelligibly and recognizably. Out of the moving chaos of reality he will have isolated a static picture, which a certain class of readers would consent to, as reflecting in some sense an actual state of affairs.

Our journalist might do more than that. He might manage to convey to readers who have not had experience of that kind of city street at all a sense of the authenticity of his picture. He can do this by "style," by the selection and organization of his imagery, by using words in such a way that the reader is persuaded into recognizing not what he has seen but what he might have seen. The first stage is where we recognize what we know, the second is where we recognize what we might have known, and there is a third — where, while we recognize what we have known or might have known, we at the same time see, and know to be authentic, what we should never have seen for ourselves. The interesting fact is that where a writer succeeds in making authentic a picture of a kind that his readers might not have seen, he will very probably be doing more — he will be giving them at the same time a new insight which coexists with the feeling of recognition. This is because "style," that way of writing which makes convincing in its own right what would otherwise be merely recognizable, can rarely do this without going further. For such a style is the result of the ability to choose and order words in such a way that what is described becomes not merely something existing, something which hap-

pens to be in a particular place at a particular time, but something that is linked with man's wider fate, that suggests, and keeps on suggesting the more we read, ever wider categories of experiences until there is included something with which we can make contact, which touches what we, too, find recognizable. And then it becomes irrelevant whether what is described exists in fact in the real world or not. The mere journalist drops his words one by one, and there they lie, in the order in which he dropped them, specific but still, corresponding accurately enough to what the author intends to say, but having no further life of their own. But the true creative writer drops his words into our mind like stones in a pool, and the ever-widening circles of meaning eventually ring round and encompass the store of our own experience. And — to continue the metaphor — in doing so they provide a new context for familiar things, and what has been lying half dead in our mind and imagination takes on new life in virtue of its new context, so that we not only recognize what we feel we knew but see the familiar take on rich and exciting new meanings.

If, therefore, the journalist who described what went on in a particular city street during a given period of time had the literary skill (and the initial combination of feeling for life and feeling for language which alone can make such a skill *realizable*) to present his observations in such a way that when he wrote of businessmen entering and leaving the bank, children coming home from school, housewives out shopping, loiterers, barking dogs, lumbering busses, or whatever else he cared to note, he was able to convey to the reader something of the tragedy or the comedy of human affairs, wringing some human insight out of these multifarious incidents so that the reader not only sees what he already knew or even admits as authentic what he did not know, but sees simultaneously what he knew and what he never saw before, recognizes the picture in the light of his deepest, half-intuitive knowledge of what man's experience is and can be and at the same time see it as a new illumination — if he can do this, then he has moved from journalism into art. He has shown that he can make the means of expression comment on what is expressed so as simultaneously to define and expand his subject matter: define it by using words that block off the wrong meanings, which show with complete compulsion that what is meant is *this* rather than *that*, and expand it by choosing and arranging words and larger units of expression so that they set going the appropriate overtones and suggestions which help to elevate a description of people's behavior to an account of man's fate.

Melville Writes of the Whale-Line

Howard P. Vincent • 1904–

In his best novel, Moby-Dick (1851), Herman Melville made much use of factual material on whales and whaling from the books of scientists and travellers. However, everything Melville "took" he transformed, i.e., he added significance to it. The following account shows Melville's skill in transforming and heightening ordinary "facts."

MELVILLE'S ACCOUNT of "The Line" turns out, as we now might expect, to be both a clear description of the whale line and a metaphor. The whale line is a physical fact and a "linked analogy." The chapter is short, describing (*a*) the English whale line, (*b*) the American, (*c*) the whale line's use, and (*d*) the metaphorical extension of the physical object. Also, here is the first of another doublet, for as the author says in the opening paragraph, he mentions the whale line because of "the whaling scene shortly to be described, as well as for the better understanding of all similar scenes elsewhere presented." When we read the next chapter, we notice the emphasis given to the whale line, just as promised. We also recall "The Line" as we read the closing episode of Ahab's life, just as we will remember the Line's "hempen intricacies" when we see the corpse of Fedallah entwined by the rope around Moby Dick's back. There is almost no expository fact in *Moby-Dick* which does not have some narrative or thematic function besides.

The books by Beale and Bennett furnished Melville with information for his chapter. Although the description of the American manila rope, which had superseded the English hemp, was perhaps from Melville's memory — there is no description of one in the whaling books he used — nevertheless, for his description of the hemp rope Melville adapted the following passage from Bennett:

> The whale-line, provided for British South-Seamen, combines so completely the best qualities of cordage, that it may be regarded as the height of perfection in our rope manufacture. It is constructed of the best hemp, slightly but uniformly imbued by the vapour of tar; is two inches in circumference; and composed of three strands; each strand containing seventeen yarns, each of which is calculated to sustain the weight of one hundred and twelve pounds. Of this line, 220 fathoms is the ordinary complement of each boat. It is coiled, continuously, in two tubs, and in neat and compact horizontal layers, or "sheaves," each extremity of the line being kept exposed, the

Howard P. Vincent, *The Trying-out of Moby Dick* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.), pp. 227–231. Copyright, 1949, by Howard P. Vincent.

one for attachment to the harpoons, the other (which is provided with a loop, or "splice,") for connecting it to the line of a second boat, should any probability arise that its entire length would be taken out by the whale.

When ready for running, the commencement of the line is passed over the logger-head at the stern, and thence forward, over the oars, to be fastened to the harpoons in the bow: about fifteen fathoms, termed "box-line," being kept coiled in the head, or box, of the boat, to accompany the harpoon when it is first darted. At the spot where the box-line commences, a mark, commonly a piece of red cloth, is attached, to enable the whaler to judge at what distance the boat may be from the harpoon, and consequently from the whale, when the sea is turbid with blood.

Melville's enrichment and vivification of Bennett's description is an illustration of expository writing at its best. Memory as well as imagination have been added to the "source" passage:

The line originally used in the fishery was of the best hemp, slightly vapored with tar, not impregnated with it, as in the case of ordinary ropes; for while tar, as ordinarily used, makes the hemp more pliable to the rope-maker, and also renders the rope itself more convenient to the sailor for common ship use; yet, not only would the ordinary quantity too much stiffen the whale-line for the close coiling to which it must be subjected; but as most seamen are beginning to learn, tar in general by no means adds to the rope's durability or strength, however much it may give it compactness and gloss.

Of late years the Manilla rope has in the American fishery almost entirely superseded hemp as a material for whale-lines; for, though not so durable as hemp, it is stronger, and far more soft and elastic; and I will add (since there is an aesthetics in all things), is much more handsome and becoming to the boat, than hemp. Hemp is a dusky, dark fellow, a sort of Indian; but Manilla is as a golden-haired Circassian to behold.

The whale-line is only two thirds of an inch in thickness. At first sight, you would not think it so strong as it really is. By experiment its one and fifty yarns will suspend a weight of one hundred and twenty pounds; so that the whole rope will bear a strain nearly equal to three tons. In length, the common sperm whale-line measures something over two hundred fathoms. Towards the stern of the boat it is spirally coiled away in the tub, not like the worm-pipe of a still though, but so as to form one round, cheese-shaped mass of densely bedded "sheaves," or layers of concentric spiralizations, without any hollow but the "heart" or minute vertical tube formed at the axis of the cheese. As the least tangle or kink in the coiling would, in running out, infallibly take somebody's arm, leg, or entire body off, the utmost precaution is used in stowing the line in its tub. Some harpooneers will consume almost an entire morning in this business, carrying the line high aloft, and then reeving it downwards through a block towards the tub, so as in the act of coiling to free it from all possible wrinkles and twists.

In the English boats two tubs are used instead of one; the same line being continuously coiled in both tubs. There is some advantage in this; because these twin-tubs being so small they fit more readily into the boat, and do not strain it so much; whereas, the American tub, nearly three feet in diameter

and of proportionate depth, makes a rather bulky freight for a craft whose planks are but one-half inch in thickness; for the bottom of the whale-boat is like critical ice, which will bear up a considerable distributed weight, but not very much of a concentrated one. When the painted canvas cover is clapped on the American tub-line, the boat looks as if it were pulling off with a prodigious great wedding-cake to present to the whales.

Both ends of the line are exposed; the lower end terminating in an eye-splice or loop coming up from the bottom against the side of the tub, and hanging over its edge completely disengaged from everything. This arrangement of the lower end is necessary on two accounts. First: In order to facilitate the fastening to it of an additional line from a neighboring boat, in case the stricken whale should sound so deep as to threaten to carry off the entire line originally attached to the harpoon. In these instances, the whale of course is shifted like a mug of ale, as it were, from the one boat to the other; though the first boat always hovers at hand to assist its consort. Second: This arrangement is indispensable for common safety's sake; for were the lower end of the line in any way attached to the boat, and were the whale then to run the line out to the end almost in a single, smoking minute as he sometimes does, he would not stop there, for the doomed boat would infallibly be dragged down after him into the profundity of the sea; and in that case no town-crier would ever find her again.

Before lowering the boat for the chase, the upper end of the line is taken aft from the tub, and passing round the loggerhead there, is again carried forward the entire length of the boat, resting crosswise upon the loom or handle of every man's oar, so that it jogs against his wrist in rowing; and also passing between the men, as they alternately sit at the opposite gunwales, to the leaded chocks or grooves in the extreme pointed prow of the boat, where a wooden pin or skewer the size of a common quill prevents it from slipping out. From the chocks it hangs in a slight festoon over the bows, and is then passed inside the boat again; and some ten or twenty fathoms (called box-line) being coiled upon the box in the bows, it continues its way to the gunwale still a little further aft, and is then attached to the short-warp — the rope which is immediately connected with the harpoon; but previous to that connexion the short-warp goes through sundry mystifications too tedious to detail.

But what gives the chapter importance is Melville's metaphor of the whale line as one of the dangers threatening all men, death being ready to seize suddenly any one of us even as the loop of the whale line seizes the whaleman — even, as we are to find, Ahab. Melville comes out into the open with his point, with an ironic and unexpected twist in the last sentence:

> All men live enveloped in whale-lines. All are born with halters round their necks; but it is only when caught in the swift, sudden turn of death, that mortals realize the silent, subtle, ever-present perils of life. And if you be a philosopher, though seated in the whale-boat, you would not at heart feel one whit more of terror, than though seated before your evening fire with a poker, and not a harpoon, by your side.

A Sum in Addition

William March • 1894–

"Facts" by themselves may very well be like the random ink-blots of the psychologists' Rorschach test in which the person being tested reveals something about his own personality by saying what shapes he thinks he sees in the blots. In this story several different characters reveal fundamentally different attitudes toward life by the different ways they interpret the same set of facts.

COLLINS said: "Sure there's a corkscrew in there. You'll find it chained to the wall. . . . All hotels have 'em." And Menefee answered from the bathroom: "Well, there's not one in *here*. Look for yourselves if you boys don't believe me."

"That's a fine way to treat drummers," said Red Smith. "I'll write and complain to the management." He got up and stretched himself. "I'll look in the closet," he said. "Maybe I'll find something to open it with in there."

Menefee came back into the room and put the unopened bottle on the dresser, his head drawn backward and turned at an angle, his eyes squinting up. He ground out the cigarette that had been burning between his relaxed lips. "You boys keep your pants on," he said; "I'll go down and borrow a corkscrew off a bellhop." He put on his coat and went into the hall, closing the door behind him.

Collins sat back and rested his legs on the vacant chair, looking lazily over his shoulder at Red Smith. Red was pulling out drawers noisily, or standing tiptoe to peer at shelves just above his head. Then he stopped, picked up something and came into the room with it. It was a sheet of hotel stationery covered with writing, and it had been crumpled into a ball and thrown into the closet.

Red opened the sheet and smoothed it flat, and when he had read it, he passed it to Collins, a peculiar look on his face. "Read this, Wade," he said.

Collins read slowly, the paper held close to his eyes. At the right of the sheet, and commencing it, was the following entry: *Cash on hand $17.45.* Then, to the left, were the following entries:

Expenses babyies funerel (about)	$148.00
Wifes hospital bill (about)	65.00
Owe to grocery store	28.17
Back Rent (2 mo.—make it 3)	127.25
Incidentals	25.00
	$394.42

From *Trial Balance.* Copyright, 1945, by William March. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., pp. 31–34.

A little farther down the paper were the following words: *Will borrow four hundred dollars from Mr. Sellwood.* This sentence was repeated, like an exercise in penmanship, over and over, until the paper was filled with it. At first the words were written boldly, heavily, and there were places where the pen had broken through the paper behind the determination of the writer; but as the writing progressed, the man seemed less sure of himself, as if his courage and his certainty were fading away. The sentences were more perfect here, with an occasional mended letter; they were written more slowly, as if each letter were pondered. The last sentence was not finished at all. It dwindled thinly into wavering illegibility.

Collins had read the thing through and sat with it in his hands. He said sympathetically: "Tough! Tough!" then added: "He knew he couldn't work it out. He knew he was fooling himself; so he crumpled up the paper and threw it in the closet."

Red Smith sat down, resting his elbows on his knees, his bright, coppery hair shining in the light. Suddenly he had a picture of a shabby little man sitting in this same, cheap hotel room, going over his problem, over and over, and finding no answer to it. Finally he said: "Don't you suppose Mr. Sellwood let him have the four hundred bucks after all? Why not?"

Collins sighed, the Masonic emblem resting on his fat stomach rising with his breath. He spoke mockingly: "Of course not, Little Sunshine. . . . Of course not! Maybe our friend went to *see* Mr. Sellwood all right, but Mr. Sellwood said that times were hard right then and he had a lot of expenses of his own. . . . I guess that's about the way it worked out."

Red lifted his alert face. "I think you're wrong, Wade, I think everything worked out all right."

But Collins shook his head. "Not a chance, young fellow!" he said. "Not a chance!"

Red replied: "Just the same, I think Mr. Sellwood let him have the four hundred bucks. He was an old friend of the family, you see. . . . Then he got a good job for this fellow that paid more money, and this fellow came back home almost running. He came up the steps three at the time to tell his wife. Everything worked out fine for them after that."

"Maybe he met Santa Claus on the way home," said Wade heavily, "and old Santa slipped the money in his stocking." Then he said more seriously: "The fellow who wrote that is sitting in some other cheap hotel tonight still figuring, and still trying to find an answer, but he won't, because there isn't any answer for him to find."

The door opened then, and Menefee stood before them, a corkscrew in his hand. "Everything's okay," he said. "Everything's all set."

"We'll leave it to Menefee," said Red Smith. "Give him the writing, Wade, and let's see what he thinks."

Collins passed over the paper, and Menefee examined it carefully, as if he did not understand it, before he looked at the two men, puzzled a little.

"What's it all about? This doesn't make sense to me."

Collins shook his head. "Good old Menefee! Trust him!"

Red laughed a little and said earnestly: "Don't you see the point, Menefee?"

Menefee read the thing through again, turned the paper over and examined the writing once more. "I'm damned if I do," he said helplessly. Then a moment later he added triumphantly: "Oh, sure, sure, I see the point now! Sure I do. It's added up wrong."

Red Smith looked at Collins, and they both laughed. "It *is* added up wrong!" said Menefee, indignant and a little hurt. "Eight and five are thirteen and eight are twenty-one . . . seven makes twenty-eight and five, thirty-three — not thirty-four like it is here."

But Collins and Red Smith continued to laugh and to shake their heads.

"All right," said Menefee. "I'm dumb; I admit it." He pulled in his lips and spoke in a high, quavering voice: "Come on, boys: let your poor old grandmother in on the joke!" He picked up the bottle and poured three drinks into three tumblers, grumbling a little to himself: "I never saw such superior bastards in all my life as you two are," he said.

On a Photo of Sgt. Ciardi a Year Later

John Ciardi • *1916–*

"The camera never lies. . . ." Or does it? This poem takes up again our problem of "fact" and interpretation.

THE SGT. stands so fluently in leather,
So poster-holstered and so newsreel-jawed
As death's costumed and fashionable brother,
My civil memory is overawed.

Behind him see the circuses of doom
Dance a finale chorus on the sun.
He leans on gun sights, doesn't give a damn
For dice or stripes, and waits to see the fun.

The cameraman whose ornate public eye
Invented that fine bravura look of calm
At murderous clocks hung ticking in the sky
Palmed the deception off without a qualm.

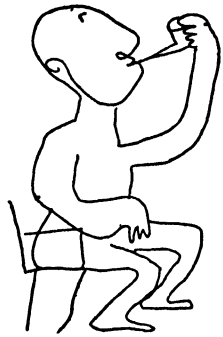
"On a Photo of Sgt. Ciardi a Year Later," from *Other Skies* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., and the Atlantic Monthly Press, 1947), reprinted by permission of the author. Originally published in *The New Yorker.*

Even the camera, focused and exact
To a two dimensional conclusion,
Uttered its formula of physical fact
Only to lend data to illusion.

The camera always lies. By a law of perception
The obvious surface is always an optical ruse.
The leather was living tissue in its own dimension,
The holsters held benzedrine tablets, the guns were no use.

The careful slouch and dangling cigarette
Were always superstitious as Amen.
The shadow under the shadow is never caught:
The camera photographs the camerman.

Part Three



"I used to feel that way myself."

THE ARCH OF EXPERIENCE

Most of the selections in Part Three deal with events universal to mankind: birth, family relations, growing up, love, the passage of time, death. Other selections in this part of the book have grown out of special experiences or skills which are the product of specialized knowledge. All these pieces relate experiences to which none of us can be indifferent. You will find that reading them will heighten your interest in and your awareness of similar experiences you have already known or heard about. Noticing this, you may well come to the conclusion that here is one of the greatest values of reading and writing — that it heightens and deepens, widens and concentrates, whatever you have done and are doing now. Seeing into other people's lives increases your understanding of your own.

You will also find here some answers to one of your immediate and pressing questions: "What shall I write about?" The principal answer is, "Write about what you know." If you say that this is obvious, you have not denied its truth. If you say that you know nothing, then the selections which follow should show you that, on the contrary, you have a great deal to write about. Perhaps you have merely undervalued your own experi-

ences, and their capacity to interest others. Perhaps you have never really examined them face to face, never put their real significance into words, never analyzed and phrased the things that have happened to you and what these things have meant to you.

For the secret is not in answering the question, "What shall I write about?" It is in answering, well and searchingly, the deeper question, "What shall I say about my subject?" Here is the significance, the meaning, of what you can say; here, as you will see when you read the following pages, is the real thing these writers have to offer you. And what it comes down to is the thinking they have done about their subjects, not the subjects themselves.

Everything lies before you for your writing: your family, and your feelings about them; your school experiences, in class and out; playmates and classmates; the teachers who terrorize, inspire, or bore you. You can write about your roommate, your last night's date, the heavy snow that fell this morning, the tedium of a laboratory on a spring day, or the excitement of a laboratory when you finally identify the unknown. And all this — yourself — is only a starting point. Beyond that lies the world of ideas, of skills and special knowledge, hobbies, interests, and subjects you have started to explore. Tennyson said,

> All experience is an arch wherethro gleams that untravelled world whose margin fades
> For ever and for ever when I move.

You cannot fail to find that your experiences, by the very act of writing about them, have been sharpened, made more enjoyable — or more bearable — than before you faced them in the fret of the class assignment.



"My sister Hazel was the pretty one."

In and Beyond the Family

The Family Constellation

Alfred Adler • 1870–1937

Here is a provocative example of how the theories of psychologists can give us insights into the forces that shaped our own personalities. This essay will give you food for lively thought as you read the other pieces in this section — particularly Anderson's "Brother Death" — and as you consider possible subjects for writing in your own family experiences or those of your friends. Of course you need not accept Adler's generalizations; such attempts to find consistent patterns in human behavior usually have a recognizable amount of truth in them, but equally valuable may be the truths you discover in arguing against them. Adler's particular contribution to psychology was the "inferiority complex," the idea that it is our feeling of inadequacy rather than of superiority which drives us to keep proving to ourselves and others that we amount to something. You will see how he applies this theory to the special problem of "the family constellation."

WE HAVE often drawn attention to the fact that before we can judge a human being we must know the situation in which he grew up. An im-

Alfred Adler, *Understanding Human Nature* (New York: Greenberg, 1946), pp. 149–159.

portant moment is the position which a child occupied in his family constellation. Frequently we can catalogue human beings according to this view point after we have gained sufficient expertness, and can recognize whether an individual is a first-born, an only child, the youngest child, or the like.

People seem to have known for a long time that the youngest child is usually a peculiar type. This is evidenced by the countless fairy tales, legends, Biblical stories, in which the youngest always appears in the same light. As a matter of fact he does grow up in a situation quite different from that of all other people, for to parents he represents a particular child, and as the youngest he experiences an especially solicitous treatment. Not only is he the youngest, but also usually the smallest, and by consequence, the most in need of help. His other brothers and sisters have already acquired some degree of independence and growth during the time of his weakness, and for this reason he usually grows up in an atmosphere warmer than that which the others have experienced.

Hence there arise a number of characteristics which influence his attitude toward life in a remarkable way, and cause him to be a remarkable personality. One circumstance which seemingly is a contradiction for our theory must be noted. No child likes to be the smallest, the one whom one does not trust, the one in whom one has no confidence, all the time. Such knowledge stimulates a child to prove that he can do everything. His striving for power becomes markedly accentuated and we find the youngest very usually a man who has developed a desire to overcome all others, satisfied only with the very best.

This type is not uncommon. One group of these youngest children excels every other member of the family, and becomes the family's most capable member. But there is another more unfortunate group of these same youngest children; they also have a desire to excel, but lack the necessary activity and self-confidence, as a result of their relationships to their older brothers and sisters. If the older children are not to be excelled, the youngest frequently shies from his tasks, becomes cowardly, a chronic plaintiff forever seeking an excuse to evade his duties. He does not become less ambitious, but he assumes that type of ambition which forces him to wriggle out of situations, and satisfy his ambition in activity outside of the necessary problems of life, to the end that he may avoid the danger of an actual test of ability, so far as possible.

It will undoubtedly have occurred to many readers that the youngest child acts as though he were neglected and carried a feeling of inferiority within him. In our investigations we have always been able to find this feeling of inferiority and have been able also to deduce the quality and fashion of his psychic development from the presence of this torturing sentiment. In this sense a youngest child is like a child who has come into the world with weak organs. What the child *feels* need not actually be the case. It does not matter what really has happened, whether an individ-

ual is really inferior or not. What is important is his *interpretation* of his situation. We know very well that mistakes are easily made in childhood. At that time a child is faced with a great number of questions, of possibilities, and consequences.

What shall an educator do? Shall he impose additional stimuli by spurring on the vanity of this child? Should he constantly push him into the limelight so that he is always the first? This would be a feeble response to the challenge of life. Experience teaches us that it makes very little difference whether one is first or not. It would be better to exaggerate in the other direction, and maintain that being first, or the best, is unimportant. We are really tired of having nothing but the first and best people. History as well as experience demonstrates that happiness does not consist in being the first or best. To teach a child such a principle makes him one-sided; above all it robs him of his chance of being a good fellow-man.

The first consequence of such doctrines is that a child thinks only of himself and occupies himself in wondering whether someone will overtake him. Envy and hate of his fellows and anxiety for his own position, develop in his soul. His very place in life makes a speeder trying to beat out all others, of the youngest. The racer, the marathon runner in his soul, is betrayed by his whole behavior, especially in little gestures which are not obvious to those who have not learned to judge his psychic life in all his relationships. These are the children, for instance, who always march at the head of the procession and cannot bear to have anyone in front of them. Some such race-course attitude is characteristic of a large number of children.

This type of the youngest child is occasionally to be found as a clear cut type example although variations are common. Among the youngest we find active and capable individuals who have gone so far that they have become the saviors of their whole family. Consider the Biblical story of Joseph! Here is a wonderful exposition of the situation of the youngest son. It is as though the past had told us about it with a purpose and a clarity arising in the full possession of the evidence which we acquire so laboriously today. In the course of the centuries much valuable material has been lost which we must attempt to find again.

Another type, which grows secondarily from the first, is often found. Consider our marathon runner who suddenly comes to an obstacle which he does not trust himself to hurdle. He attempts to avoid the difficulty by going around it. When a youngest child of this type loses his courage he becomes the most arrant coward that we can well imagine. We find him far from the front, every labor seems too much for him, and he becomes a veritable "alibi artist" who attempts nothing useful, but spends his whole energy wasting time. In any actual conflict he always fails. Usually he is to be found carefully seeking a field of activity in which every chance of competition has been excluded. He will always find excuses for his failures. He may contend that he was too weak or petted, or

that his brothers and sisters did not allow him to develop. His fate becomes more bitter if he actually has a physical defect, in which case he is certain to make capital out of his weakness to justify him in his desertion.

Both these types are hardly ever good fellow human beings. The first type fares better in a world where competition is valued for itself. A man of this type will maintain his spiritual equilibrium only at the cost of others, whereas individuals of the second remain under the oppressive feeling of their inferiority and suffer from their lack of reconciliation with life as long as they live.

The oldest child also has well defined characteristics. For one thing he has the advantage of an excellent position for the development of his psychic life. History recognizes that the oldest son has had a particularly favorable position. Among many peoples, in many classes, this advantageous status has become traditional. There is no question for instance that among the European farmers the first born knows his position from his early childhood and realizes that some day he will take over the farm, and therefore he finds himself in a much better position than the other children who know that they must leave their father's farm at some time; in other strata of society it is frequently held that the oldest son will some day be the head of the house. Even where this tradition has not actually become crystallized, as in simple bourgeois or proletarian families, the oldest child is usually the one whom one accredits with enough power and common sense to be the helper or foreman of his parents. One can imagine how valuable it is to a child to be constantly entrusted with responsibilities by his environment. We can imagine that his thought processes are somewhat like this: "You are the larger, the stronger, the older, and therefore you must also be cleverer than the others."

If his development in this direction goes on without disturbance then we shall find him with the traits of a guardian of law and order. Such persons have an especially high evaluation of power. This extends not only to their own personal power, but affects their evaluation of the concepts of power in general. Power is something which is quite self-understood for the oldest child, something which has weight and must be honored. It is not surprising that such individuals are markedly conservative.

The striving for power in the case of a second born child also has its especial nuance. Second born children are constantly under steam, striving for superiority under pressure: the race course attitude which determines their activity in life is very evident in their actions. The fact that there is someone ahead of him who has already gained power is a strong stimulus for the second born. If he is enabled to develop his powers and takes up the battle with the first born he will usually move forward with a great deal of élan, the while the first born, possessing power, feels himself relatively secure until the second threatens to surpass him.

This situation has also been described in a very lively fashion in the

Biblical legend of Esau and Jacob. In this story the battle goes on relentlessly, not so much for actual power, but for the semblance of power; in cases like this it continues with a certain compulsion until the goal is reached and the first born is overcome, or the battle is lost, and the retreat, which often evinces itself in nervous diseases, begins. The attitude of the second born is similar to the envy of the poor classes. There is a dominant note of being slighted, neglected, in it. The second born may place his goal so high that he suffers from it his whole life, annihilates his inner harmony in following, not the veritable facts of life, but an evanescent fiction and the valueless semblance of things.

The only child of course finds himself in a very particular situation. He is at the utter mercy of the educational methods of his environment. His parents, so to speak, have no choice in the matter. They place their whole educational zeal upon their only child. He becomes dependent to a high degree, waits constantly for someone to show him the way, and searches for support at all times. Pampered throughout his life, he is accustomed to no difficulties, because one has always removed difficulties from his way. Being constantly the center of attention he very easily acquires the feeling that he really counts for something of great value. His position is so difficult that mistaken attitudes are almost inevitable in his case. If the parents understand the dangers of his situation, to be sure, there is a possibility of preventing many of them, but at best it remains a difficult problem.

Parents of "only" children are frequently exceptionally cautious, people who have themselves experienced life as a great danger, and therefore approach their child with an inordinate solicitude. The child in turn interprets their attentions and admonitions as a source of additional pressure. Constant attention to health and well being finally stimulate him to conceive of the world as a very hostile place. An eternal fear of difficulties arises in him and he approaches them in an unpractised and clumsy manner because he has tested only the pleasant things in life. Such children have difficulties with every independent activity and sooner or later they become useless for life. Shipwrecks in their life's activity are to be expected. Their life approaches that of a parasite who does nothing, but enjoys life while the rest of the world cares for his wants.

Various combinations are possible in which several brothers and sisters of the same or opposite sexes compete with each other. The evaluation of any one case therefore becomes exceedingly difficult. The situation of an only boy among several girls is a case in point. A feminine influence dominates such a household and the boy is pushed into the background, particularly if he is the youngest, and sees himself opposed by a closed phalanx of women. His striving for recognition encounters great difficulties. Threatened on all sides, he never senses with certainty the privilege which in our retarded masculine civilization is given to every male. A lasting insecurity, an inability to evaluate himself as a human being, is his most

characteristic trait. He may become so intimidated by his womenfolk that he feels that to be a man is equivalent to occupying a position of lesser honor. On the one hand his courage and self-confidence may easily be eclipsed, or on the other the stimulus may be so drastic that the young boy forces himself to great achievements. Both cases arise from the same situation. What becomes of such boys in the end is determined by other concomitant and closely related phenomena.

We see therefore that the very position of the child in the family may lend shape and color to all the instincts, tropisms, faculties and the like, which he brings with him into the world. This affirmation robs of all value the theories of the inheritance of especial traits or talents, which are so harmful to all educational effort. There are doubtless occasions and cases in which the effect of hereditary influences can be shown, as for instance, in a child who grows up removed entirely from his parents, yet develops certain similar "familial" traits. This becomes much more comprehensible if one remembers how closely certain types of mistaken development in a child are related to inherited defects of the body. Take a given child who comes into the world with a weak body which results, in turn, in his greater tension toward the demands of life and his environment. If his father came into the world with similarly defective organs and approached the world with a similar tension, it is not to be wondered at that similar mistakes and character traits should result. Viewed from this standpoint it would seem to us that the theory of inheritance of acquired characteristics is based upon very weak evidence.

From our previous descriptions we may assume that whatever the errors to which a child is exposed in his development, the most serious consequences arise from his desire to elevate himself over all his fellows, to seek more personal power which will give him advantages over his fellow man. In our culture he is practically compelled to develop according to a fixed pattern. If we wish to prevent such a pernicious development we must know the difficulties he has to meet and understand them. There is one single and essential point of view which helps us to overcome all these difficulties; it is the view-point of the development of the social feeling. If this development succeeds, obstacles are insignificant, but since the opportunities for this development are relatively rare in our culture, the difficulties which a child encounters play an important rôle. Once this is recognized we shall not be surprised to find many people who spend their whole life fighting for their lives and others to whom life is a vale of sorrows. We must understand that they are the victims of a mistaken development whose unfortunate consequence is that their attitude toward life also is mistaken.

Let us be very modest then, in our judgment of our fellows, and above all, let us never allow ourselves to make any *moral* judgments, judgments concerning the moral worth of a human being! On the contrary we must make our knowledge of these facts socially valuable. We must approach

such a mistaken and misled human being sympathetically, because we are in a postion to have a much better idea of what is going on within him than he is himself. This gives rise to important new points of view in the matter of education. The very recognition of the source of error puts a great many influential instruments for betterment into our hands. By analysing the psychic structure and development of any human being we understand not only his past, but may deduce further what his future probably will be. Thus our science gives us some conception of what a human being really is. He becomes a living being for us, not merely a flat silhouette. And as a consequence we can have a richer and more meaningful sense of his value as a fellow human than is usual in our day.

At Grandmother's

Edgar Lee Masters • *1869—1950*

Rich memories of childhood are brought back by Edgar Lee Masters, author of Spoon River Anthology *(1915), in the first chapter of his autobiography. He remembers a place of wonder, an old family homestead, whose rooms and furniture, sights and sounds, books, animals, food, and old people enchanted him. All of us have similar memories of places, where we made magical discoveries in bureau drawers, trunks, attics, or tool shops, and where grandparents, aunts, or uncles told stories of legendary moments in family history. We remember other places, too, and people and things associated with them, which filled us with opposite emotions.*

WE WENT FREQUENTLY to the old homestead, often for Sunday dinner. So gradually the house emerged to my eyes, and became a place of enchanting charm. My own home very early, really from the first, seemed a poor and barren place compared with the house of my grandparents. There were a thousand reasons for this, chief of which might be mentioned the many objects of wonder, the books and curios that my grandparents had gathered and cherished; the grindstone in the yard which could be driven by a pedal; the tools in the carpenter's shop; my grandmother's canaries and redbird; the fascinating pictures on the walls; the wonderful parlor with its piano, and much else. But there was such order, such comfort at that old house. The meals were always on time — and the table was filled with delicious things. My grandmother was always laughing; my grandfather always sing-

From *Across Spoon River* by Edgar Lee Masters. Copyright, 1936, by Edgar Lee Masters, and reprinted by permission of Rinehart & Company, Inc., Publishers.

ing, or saying quaint things; and both of them were so full of affection for me, and so indulgent toward me. Soon this old house became a very heaven to my imagination; while in point of fact it was not much of a house, and not to be compared with some of the other farmhouses around it, a number of which were of brick and much larger.

It was only a story and a half high, and had but nine rooms. But it was built of walnut and hickory timbers set upon a brick foundation. Its weather boarding was of walnut, for in 1850 when the house was built, the woods abounded in walnut trees, which the farmers ruthlessly cut down to make rails for fences, or logs for hogpens, or what not. There was a board fence painted white in front of the house; and a brick walk leading from the gate to the front door. My grandmother had planted red and yellow roses under the windows of the living room; and she had flower beds of tulips and phlox; and she had lilac bushes. The ubiquitous pine trees adorned either side of the walk; and to one side were fine maples under which we used to sit on hot days. Entering the front door one came into a hallway from which ascended a stairway with a walnut banister. To the left of this was the parlor, a room where my aunt's Mathushek piano was. At the windows were lace curtains held back by cords fastened around large glass knobs. The couch was upholstered in horsehair, as were some of the chairs. There were two mahogany tables, one lyre shaped. There was a large ornate lamp with a glazed-glass shade on one of these tables. There were two paintings on the wall, of country scenes, paintings of the sort which are done by copyists and can be bought anywhere for a small price. There was a wood stove of Russian iron, always in a high state of polish; and back of it a wood box papered with wallpaper. Back of the parlor was the spare bedroom, always smelling musty and rarely really aired. In it was a walnut bedstead heavily built up with quilts of my grandmother's making. At one side was a stand holding a bowl and pitcher.

At the end of the hallway was a door leading to the dining room. To the right was the living room where my grandfather and grandmother spent nearly all of their time, and where they slept. There was a lounge in the room where my aunt Mary lay for those long years of illness; and a mahogany bureau. In one corner was an old mahogany chest which Rebecca Wasson had brought from North Carolina to Illinois, and which she had given my grandmother. On this chest was a walnut case for books. The chest had two drawers, one used by my grandfather for his awl, needles, flax and wax for harness mending. The other drawer was my grandmother's where she kept her daguerreotypes, and the watch of a beloved son who was drowned in the Platte River in 1862; besides sticks of cinnamon and trinkets of various sorts. In the east wall of the room was a huge fireplace, in which cordwood could be burned; and the mantel over it had a clock with weights, and a bell which rang loudly when the clock struck. In one corner was my grandmother's trunk; and in a closet near by she kept her shoes and dresses, her hats and apparel.

The dining room was a long room running east and west the full width of the house except for a small dark room at the west end which was used as a spare bedroom. Between the dining room and the separate building containing the kitchen and the hired man's room there was a long porch, with a shelf against the kitchen wall where were hung old gloves, turkey wings, or what not; and on one end of which was a water tank supplied with ice in summer. For my grandfather was one of the few farmers about who had an icehouse. Outside this porch was the workhouse, so called, where saws and augers and other tools were kept on a workbench, or hung over it. This was one of my delights from the time that I could saw a board or bore a hole, when I made windmills for myself.

The upper rooms were sleeping chambers, one of them being occupied by my uncle who was nine years my senior. Back of the chambers was a place under the roof, called the Dark Ages, where old trunks were stored, containing, as it turned out, many books which became my delight as the years passed.

But my favorite room was the living room, where as a child and long after I sat with my grandparents before the fireplace: the big burning logs cast a light about the room and on the ceiling. The heat made sizzling sounds in the frozen apples which had been brought from the cellar and placed there to thaw out. Meanwhile the wind whistled from over the prairies and the snow beat at the windows. Here I listened to my grandmother tell about the buffalo grass that overgrew all the country about when she first saw Menard County, and about the days that they lived in the log house on the lower lot when my father was a baby, and until the *new* house was built, that being this house just described. . . .

Now the other room of my delight in this house was the kitchen, where for many months of the year — in autumn after the heat of summer, in the cold winter, and in the raw spring — the long table was kept set, spread with a red tablecloth and full of delectable food when we sat down to eat. I loved the fragrance and the taste of the sassafras tea which my grandmother made. The kitchen stove kept the room warm; and it was a great delight to run from my cold room to this kitchen, and there find my grandmother laughing and frying cakes, or baking corn bread. Back of this kitchen was the hired man's room; and this functionary was always sitting by the stove when the meal was about to be served, or if he was in his room I could run in there to see his treasures, like his harmonica and nickel cigars perfumed with cinnamon.

This was the house and these the rooms that emerged into my imagination and my comprehension of my world. It was full of magic. And when on Sundays we set off from the Atterberry farm to have dinner with my grandparents my heart leaped up, my happiness knew no bounds. All their long lives, Uncle Beth Vincent and Aunt Minerva showered presents on me and my sister; as they had given my uncle Will a great many books wonderfully illustrated, such as *The Babes in the Wood,* Grimm's *Fairy Tales,* besides

wonderful tops and toys, field glasses, cabinets of tools, and much else that delights a boy. There were these things for me to see; besides my grandmother's trinkets, her illustrated books, and the like. And then there was the dinner.

That long table was filled with wonderful food: fried chicken and boiled ham, and mashed potatoes and turnips, and watermelon pickles and peach pickles, stuck with cloves; and in season fresh strawberries and cream or blackberries, and sponge or jelly cake. All this was enough to fascinate any boy, particularly if his own home was not run on a scale of such plenty and variety, such order and punctuality.

Father Tries to Make Mother Like Figures

Clarence Day • 1874–1935

Of recent years we have had a spate of family reminiscences, turning upon no great revelations about famous people but upon everyday household happenings which reveal the traits of Father and Mother, Brother and Sister — the family constellation illustrated. One of the best of such books is Clarence Day's Life With Father, *from which the following is a representative episode. A portrait of your own father, mother, sister, brother, cousin, uncle, aunt could be equally amusing.*

FATHER WAS always trying to make Mother keep track of the household expenses. He was systematic by nature and he had had a sound business training. He had a full set of account books at home in addition to those in his office — a personal cashbook, journal, and ledger — in which he carefully made double entries. His home ledger showed at a glance exactly how much a month or a year his clothes or his clubs or his cigar bills amounted to. Every item was listed. He knew just how every one of his expenses compared with those of former years, and when he allowed the figures to mount up in one place, he could bring them down in another.

Before he got married, these books had apparently given him great satisfaction, but he said they were never the same after that. They had suddenly stopped telling him anything. He still knew what his personal expenses were, but they were microscopic compared to his household expenses, and of those he knew nothing, no details, only the horrible total. His money was flowing away in all directions and he had no record of it.

Reprinted from *Life With Father* by Clarence Day, by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright, 1934, 1935, by Clarence Day.

Every once in so often he tried to explain his system to Mother. But his stout, leather-bound ledgers, and his methodical ruling of lines in red ink, and the whole business of putting down every little expense every day, were too much for her. She didn't feel that women should have anything to do with accounts, any more than men should have to see that the parlor was dusted. She had been only a débutante when she married, not long out of school, and though she had been head of her class, and wrote well and spelled well, and spoke beautiful French, she had never laid eyes on a ledger. Every time Father showed her his, she was unsympathetic.

Figures were so absorbing to Father that for a long time he couldn't believe Mother really disliked them. He hoped for years that her lack of interest was due only to her youth and that she would outgrow it. He said confidently that she would soon learn to keep books. It was simple. Meanwhile, if she would just make a memorandum for him of whatever she spent, he would enter it himself in the accounts until he could trust her to do it.

That day never arrived.

Father knew where some of the money went, for part of the expenses were charged. But this was a poor consolation. Although the household bills gave him plenty of data which he could sit and stare at, in horror, he said that many of the details were not clear to him, and most of the rest were incredible.

He tried to go over the bills regularly with Mother, as well as he could, demanding information about items which he did not understand. But every now and then there were items which she didn't understand, either. She said she wasn't sure they were mistakes, but she couldn't remember about them. Her mind was a blank. She behaved as though the bill were a total stranger to her.

This was one of the features that annoyed Father most.

Mother didn't like these sessions a bit. She told us she hated bills, anyhow. When they were larger than she expected, she felt guilty and hardly dared to let Father see them. When some of them seemed small to her, she felt happy, but not for long, because they never seemed small to Father. And when she spotted an error — when she found, for instance, that Tyson, the butcher, had charged too much for a broiler — she had to fly around to the shop to have it corrected, and argue it out, and go through a disagreeable experience, and then when she told Father how hard she had worked he took it as a matter of course, and she indignantly found that she never got any credit for it.

Sometimes I had to do this kind of thing, too. There was a man named Flannagan over on Sixth Avenue who supplied us with newspapers, and I used to be sent to rebuke him when he overcharged. Father said Flannagan had no head for figures. After checking up the addition and recomputing the individual items, he would generally discover that the

bill was anywhere from three to fourteen cents out. He then sent for me, handed me the correct amount of change and the bill, and told me to go over to see Flannagan the next day, after school, and warn him that we wouldn't stand it.

I got used to this after a while, but the first time I went I was frightened. Flannagan was a large man who looked like a barkeeper and whose face was tough and belligerent. When I marched into his dark little shop and shakily attempted to warn him that we wouldn't stand it, he leaned over the counter, stared down at me, and said loudly, "Har?"

"Excuse me, Mr. Flannagan," I repeated, "here is your bill but it's wrong."

"*Har?*"

"It seems to be just a little wrong, sir. Eight cents too much for the *Sun.*"

Flannagan snatched the bill from me and the money, and went to his desk. After working over it with a thick pencil, and smudging the bill all up, front and back, he snarled to himself, and receipted it the way Father wished. Then he chucked it disdainfully on the counter. I picked it up and got out.

"Confound it all," Father said when he got it, "don't muss my bills up so."

"It was Mr. Flannagan, Father."

"Well, tell him he must learn to be tidy."

"Yes, sir," I said, hopelessly.

I liked figures myself, just as Father did, and I thought it was queer Mother didn't. She was as quick at them as anybody, yet she didn't get any fun out of writing them down and adding them up. I liked the problems in my school arithmetic, and I deeply admired Father's account books. I didn't dare tell him this, somehow. He never offered to let me examine those big, handsome books. He kept them locked up in a desk he had, down in the front basement.

If I showed Father one of my arithmetic lessons, he was interested — he got up from his chair and put down his newspaper and sat at the dining-room table with a pencil and paper, to see how well I had done. But Mother didn't want to go into such matters.

Every month when the bills came in, there was trouble. Mother seemed to have no great extravagances. But she loved pretty things. She had a passion for china, for instance. She saw hundreds of beautiful cups and saucers that it was hard to walk away from and leave. She knew she couldn't buy them, and mustn't, but every so often she did. No one purchase seemed large by itself, but they kept mounting up, and Father declared that she bought more china than the Windsor Hotel.

Father couldn't see why charge accounts should be a temptation to Mother. They were no temptation to him. He knew that the bill would arrive on the first of the month and that in a few days he would pay it. He said he had supposed that Mother would have the same feelings that he had about this.

But Mother was one of those persons for whom charge accounts were

invented. When she bought something and charged it, the first of the next month seemed far away, and she hoped that perhaps Father wouldn't mind — he might be nice about it for once. Her desire for the thing was strong at that moment, the penalty was remote, and she fell.

She was a different woman entirely when she had to pay cash. It was hard to get cash out of Father, she never got much at one time, and as she looked in her pocketbook she could see her precious little hoard dwindling. She fingered a purchase and thought twice about it before she could bear to part with the money. But shopping on a charge account was fun. She tried not to let herself be tempted, but of course she was, all the time, and after she had conscientiously resisted nine lovely temptations, it didn't seem really wicked to yield to the tenth.

Father did his level best to take all the fun out of it for her. Once every month regularly he held court and sat as a judge, and required her to explain her crimes and misdemeanors. When she cried, or showed that she was hurt, it appeared that Father, too, felt hurt and worried. He said again and again at the top of his voice that he wished to be reasonable but that he couldn't afford to spend money that way, and that they would have to do better.

Once in a while when Father got low in his mind and said that he was discouraged, Mother felt so sorry that she tried hard to keep count of the cash for him. She put down all sorts of little expenses, on backs of envelopes or on half-sheets of letter paper of different sizes, and she gave these to Father with many interlineations and much scratching out of other memoranda, and with mystifying omissions. He would pore over them, calling out to her to tell him what this was, or that, in a vain attempt to bring order out of this feminine chaos.

Mother could sometimes, though not very often, be managed by praise, but criticism made her rebellious, and after a dose of it she wouldn't put down any figures at all for a while. She had to do the mending and marketing and take care of the children, and she told Father she had no time to learn to be a bookkeeper too. What was the use of keeping track of anything that was over and done with? She said that wasn't her way of doing things.

"Well," Father said patiently, "let's get at the bottom of this, now, and work out some solution. What *is* your way of doing things? Tell me."

Mother said firmly that her way was to do the very best she could to keep down expenses, and that all her friends thought she did wonderfully, and the Wards spent twice as much.

Father said, "Damn the Wards! They don't have to work for it. I don't wish to be told what they spend, or how they throw money around."

Mother said, "Oh, Clare, how can you! They don't. They just like to have things go nicely, and live in a comfortable way, and I thought you were so fond of Cousin Mary. You know very well she is lovely, and she gave the baby a cup."

Father declared that he might be fond of Cousin Mary without wanting

to hear so damned much about her. He said she cropped up every minute.

"You talk of your own family enough," Mother answered.

Father felt this was very unjust. When he talked of his own family he criticized them, and as severely as he knew how. He held tightly onto himself in an effort to keep to the subject. He said that the point he was trying to make was that Cousin Mary's ways were not his ways, and that consequently there was no use whatever discussing them with him.

Mother said, "Goodness knows *I* don't want to discuss things, it's always you who are doing it, and if I can't even *speak* of Cousin Mary — "

"You can, you can speak of her all you want to," Father hotly protested. "But I won't have Cousin Mary or anyone else dictating to me how to run things."

"I didn't say a word about her dictating, Clare. She isn't that kind."

"I don't know what you said, now," Father replied. "You never stick to the point. But you implied in some way that Cousin Mary — "

"Oh, Clare, please! I didn't! And I can't bear to have you talk so harshly of her when she admires you so."

Something like this happened to every financial conversation they had. Father did his best to confine the discussion to the question at issue, but somehow, no matter how calmly he started, he soon got exasperated and went galloping fiercely off in any direction Mother's mind happened to take; and in the middle of it one of the babies would cry and Mother would have to go off to see what was wrong, or she would have to run down to leave word for Mrs. Tobin, the washerwoman, to do Father's shirts differently, and when Father complained Mother reminded him reproachfully that she had to keep house.

Father was baffled by these tactics. But every time he went back down to the basement and ruled neat lines in his ledgers, he made up his mind all over again that he wouldn't give up.

Good-bye, Little Sister

Crary Moore • 1927–

This story takes as its materials the old freshman-theme favorite, "My First Date," but it makes something more than an amusing or embarrassing episode of that universal experience. For the older sister who tells the story sees it as both an end and a beginning for her Little Sister.

Reprinted by permission of the author. Copyright, 1952, by the Atlantic Monthly Company, Boston, Mass.

1

THE BIGGEST and best coming-out parties in New York are in Christmas Vacation. There's just nothing like it, I think: down Park Avenue in a taxi at seven o'clock, with the lights flashing green, red, green, and the white path of Christmas trees down the middle, dazzling in the dark. Your stockings make a sleek little hiss as you cross your knees under all that tulle; you can smell your own perfume; and the Sophomore beside you seems wonderfully dark and dangerous. At home, the closets bloom with pink and white crinolines (Don't *touch* it, Betsy! It's *got* to be fresh for the Junior Assembly!); flowers arrive; and the phone rings all the time. Sometimes a photographer's velvet voice inquires if you'd like a nice cabinet-size portrait, real Hollywood type; or a distraught hostess wants to speak to your mother about an extra boy or the table will be ruined: "Can't you ask Betsy? She knows so *many* boys!"

I was coming out, and adoring it, when my little sister Emily went to her first big dance. The subdeb parties are terribly important if you want to have a good time in your big year. We had put off the dreadful day until she was fifteen. Emily was skinny and romantic, and in the summer she didn't sail much or play tennis; she goated, so we were awfully worried about her social career. She had a huge brown billy goat she called Master of Ballantrae, and Daddy called Auld Reekie. When he was stubborn, which was always, she towed him around by his grubby beard, so she was usually pretty gamy herself. She saved up to buy him a wife (the family couldn't say no); but he abominated the creature, whose name was Flora Macdonald, and Emily couldn't seem to comfort her.

It's only reasonable to be afraid of your first dance. Even the naturals, the little pussycat blondes, are scared to death, and I told Emily so. But, like poor old Flora, she bleated and skittered around; she said her dress showed *all* her bones. It didn't; Mother chose it to hide them. Then she got fractious, and said only idiots wore pink.

On the day before the party she threw up twice and got a rash where it showed. Two weeks earlier, she had told me, as a dark secret, that she was terrified of meeting Amory Standish, who was the idol of the Tenth Class. He'd almost been fired from Exeter for smoking, and Emily was sure he was a rip in every respect. I thought it was immensely sweet of her to tell Mother that there was no one she'd rather go to the party with. You're supposed to ask the boys to go with you, rather than the other way round; they look after you, and see that their friends cut in on you; so presentable, well-behaved ones are in tremendous demand. Unless you're lucky enough to have a real *beau*, your unfortunate mother has to go to one of those Witches' Sabbaths they call Patronesses' Meetings, and see if any of her old schoolmates has an appropriate son. Usually, the son doesn't prove too fascinating: if no spots, then no chin.

Ma had come back swollen with pride about having collared Amory,

who was well and favorably known to the mother-cabal. Emily thanked her with real grace, ran back to our room, gave me a tragic glare, and wept bitterly. I told her that most fatal charmers absolutely lived on flattery, and that all she need do would be to lard Amory with compliments. But Emily, who'd never said an artificial thing in her life, looked at me with glazed red eyes as though I'd recommended speaking Swahili, and I almost gave her up, then and there.

The Awful Evening finally came for her, and with it Amory. I found him delightful: no spots, plenty of chin, tall without that celery look, and a merry black eye. Even dimples. Emily was having a frenzied time with her stockings, so Daddy asked Amory, in a man-to-man voice, if he wouldn't have a little sherry in the library. My father has responded splendidly to training; but I saw that Ma was about to get wayward and panicky, perhaps to ask Amory if he played on any teams, so I dragged her upstairs to Emily. "Look, Em," I said, "he's brought you a terrific corsage. No forget-me-nots."

Emily stared listlessly at her two camellias. "Is he cute?" she said in a graveyard voice.

"Awfully."

"Oh God."

"Not like that, Em. In a sweet way. He's awfully nice too."

"Then he'll be *sorry* for me," and she nearly wept. I saw the time had come for shock treatment, so I said Amory had better things to be sorry for, and not to make her eyes repulsive. I bustled her into her pink dress, stuffed her silver-mesh bag into one hand, her white gloves into the other, and dabbed her with my perfume. I told her it was sure-fire.

Mother gave her an apprehensive kiss and said, "If you don't like it by eleven o'clock, darling, I'll be up in the Patronesses' Gallery."

Emily said in a quavering voice that she knew she'd have a good time in such a nice dress. I wanted to kiss her too, for that, but thought it might set her off.

"Now, Em," I said, "one last thing. Ma and I'll go out; and you stand by the mirror and take a darn good look and *think* how pretty you are. Because you *are*, and all you have to do is to believe it."

We started downstairs, both frozen with nerves. Mother stopped me on the landing and said she was positively queasy. "It was different with you, Bets, you were just automatic. . . . Damn those spoiled little boys," she said, "I feel as though I were throwing her to the lions."

"If she'd only *realize* how cunning she looked." I heard Daddy and Amory laughing in the library, which sounded auspicious. "You were wonderful to get Amory, Ma," I said. "He's so cheerful, he'll end up by making her think it's fun."

"Do you suppose he has a *hip* flask?"

I reminded her, gently, that Prohibition was over before Amory was born; and we went on downstairs. Emily finally appeared; I hoped she'd

taken a good long look. You can hypnotize yourself into feeling a belle; then you often are one. She seemed stiff and blushful, but she really did look very pretty. I thought her dark oval face had infinitely more distinction than the little pink-china dolls', whose necks I would gladly have wrung.

They said how-do-you-do, and Amory put on her white rabbit cape with a practiced air. She was paralyzed with shyness; even her voice was hoarse. Amory did a charming thing: looked straight at Mother, sparing Emily, and said, "We're going to a terrific party, Mrs. Crane. All the men from my dorm'll be there. I just hope I get to dance with Emily even once." From the way he shook hands with Daddy, I gathered that he'd just been given the usual five dollars, for after the party. There was manly understanding in that handshake, and a good deal of reassurance. I thought of Two Strong Men meeting Face to Face. Emily gave us a last nervous glance, and preceded him out the door.

Mrs. Standish had sent along her elegant town car, so they didn't have to hunt taxis in the snow. I hoped arriving in such style would reinforce Em's confidence at least a little, and that Amory's good manners would help.

2

I knew everything was all right, as soon as I woke up, early next morning. The shades were drawn, but enough chilly snow-light came in so that I could see the pink dress, thrown down inside-out, and a fine abandoned tangle of silver slippers, underwear, and stockings on the floor. If she'd been a wallflower, she would have hung everything up with a sad tidiness and made dogged, don't-care noises going to bed. I had slept right through her return. Then I saw her camellias, brown and messy, placed tenderly by her pillow, and that really surprised me. All I could see of Em was her tangle of long brown hair. She made such a small ridge under the blue quilt.

I dozed off again — it had been my first full night's sleep that week — and when I woke up, there was a sunny square on the carpet. I could hear a faint slithering and chinking from the distant traffic on Park, and Emily seemed to be stirring. I mumbled, as though still asleep, and turned over to watch her through my eyelashes.

I nearly died of shock. Her skinny, childish arms embraced the pillow, and her cheek was laid on it delicately, instead of being rammed in. The upper half of her face was like a musing angel's: eyebrows exquisitely raised, black lashes sweeping her cheeks. But her mouth was curved into a tiny, knowing smile. And, as I watched, she fluttered her eyelids and whispered, "Oh, thank you, no; I rarely smoke." Then she let go the pillow, turned luxuriously onto her back, raised her hands with a swanlike gesture, and contemplated her pale pink nails.

Enchanted and amazed, I watched, and didn't say a word. After about

five minutes with her fingernails, she rose gracefully from her bed and stood, in flannel pajamas, looking down at the faded camellias. She picked them up, gave them a farewell glance, and dropped them nonchalantly in the wastebasket by the dressing table. Then she took the stopper from my "sure-fire" perfume. It was a sacred bottle, given me by my then best beau, who couldn't bear to wait until Christmas. She waved it dreamily in the air, and walked a step or two forward. For a moment, I was mystified by that maneuver, until I realized that some precocious Grottie might have said something suave about a cloud of fragrance. Showy boys, I thought, a little annoyed because she didn't put the stopper back in tight.

Emily walked, barefoot and on tiptoe, into the square of sun, stretched this way and that, and closed the window. She raised the shades, flooding the room with sunlight, and gazed benignly down into our yard. It took her several minutes to account for one bare ailanthus tree (shimmering prettily with ice), an awning frame, and a couple of overturned flower pots. Then she spun slowly toward the long mirror (in the brilliant reflected light, I could see through the blue flannel to her shadowy little bones) and posed, hip-shot, like a model. She ran a tender, wondering finger along her jawline (which was sharp as a terrier's in those days), and I thought, One night that shook the world. The whole thing came to a fine climax as she turned away from the mirror. Glancing lightly back over her shoulder, she said, in crystal accents, "Oh, Amo. You utter *child.*"

I decided, almost embarrassed, that it was about time to wake up. My groans and yawns must have been convincing, because, quite without self-consciousness, the Terrestrial Venus disappeared. She even became pigeon-toed again. I said the expected things: "Hi, Em. Was it okay? Did you make out all right?"

Emily asked, in a social voice, very deliberately, if she'd wakened me last night when she came in. I said no, also in a social voice.

It was then, and only then, that she told me about her lovely time. The music, the compliments, the balloons on the ceiling. Good-bye, goats, I thought, a trifle sadly; good-bye, little sister. After she'd gone through her impressive list of partners, gloating just a bit; after she'd said exactly what there was for supper (Rome wasn't built overnight), I said, "I bet Amory calls up today."

Emily dropped her eyelashes. "I bet so too," she said, and we both burst out laughing.

Brother Death

Sherwood Anderson • 1876–1941

The imaginative writer often arrives by sympathetic observation and "intuition" at understandings of experience that coincide with the logical or experimental formulations of the social scientist. This story by Sherwood Anderson follows very closely the theory of the family constellation set forth by Adler, but its terms are quite different.

THERE WERE the two oak stumps, knee high to a not-too-tall man and cut quite squarely across. They became to the two children objects of wonder. They had seen the two trees cut but had run away just as the trees fell. They hadn't thought of the two stumps, to be left standing there; hadn't even looked at them. Afterwards Ted said to his sister Mary, speaking of the stumps: "I wonder if they bled, like legs, when a surgeon cuts a man's leg off." He had been hearing war stories. A man came to the farm one day to visit one of the farm-hands, a man who had been in the World War and lost an arm. He stood in one of the barns talking. When Ted said that Mary spoke up at once. She hadn't been lucky enough to be at the barn when the one-armed man was there talking, and was jealous. "Why not a woman or a girl's leg?" she said, but Ted said the idea was silly. "Women and girls don't get their legs and arms cut off," he declared. "Why not? I'd just like to know why not?" Mary kept saying.

It would have been something if they had stayed, that day the trees were cut. "We might have gone and touched the places," Ted said. He meant the stumps. Would they have been warm? Would they have bled? They did go and touch the places afterwards, but it was a cold day and the stumps were cold. Ted stuck to his point that only men's arms and legs were cut off, but Mary thought of automobile accidents. "You can't think just of wars. There might be an automobile accident," she declared, but Ted wouldn't be convinced.

They were both children, but something had made them both in an odd way old. Mary was fourteen and Ted eleven, but Ted wasn't strong and that rather evened things up. They were the children of a well-to-do Virginia farmer named John Grey in the Blue Ridge country in Southwestern Virginia. There was a wide valley called the "Rich Valley" with a railroad and a small river running through it and high mountains in sight, to the north and south. Ted had some kind of a heart disease, a lesion, something of the sort, the result of a severe attack of diphtheria when he

Sherwood Anderson, *Death in the Woods*. Copyright, 1926, by Eleanor Anderson. Reprinted by permission of Harold Ober Associates.

was a child of eight. He was thin and not strong but curiously alive. The doctor said he might die at any moment, might just drop down dead. The fact had drawn him peculiarly close to his sister Mary. It had awakened a strong and determined maternalism in her.

The whole family, the neighbors on neighboring farms in the valley, and even the other children at the schoolhouse where they went to school recognized something as existing between the two children. "Look at them going along there," people said. "They do seem to have good times together, but they are so serious. For such young children they are too serious. Still, I suppose, under the circumstances, it's natural." Of course, everyone knew about Ted. It had done something to Mary. At fourteen she was both a child and a grown woman. The woman side of her kept popping out at unexpected moments.

She had sensed something concerning her brother Ted. It was because he was as he was, having that kind of a heart, a heart likely at any moment to stop beating, leaving him dead, cut down like a young tree. The others in the Grey family, that is to say, the older ones, the mother and father and an older brother, Don, who was eighteen now, recognized something as belonging to the two children, being, as it were, between them, but the recognition wasn't very definite. People in your own family are likely at any moment to do strange, sometimes hurtful things to you. You have to watch them, Ted and Mary had both found that out.

The brother Don was like the father, already at eighteen almost a grown man. He was that sort, the kind people speak of, saying: "He's a good man. He'll make a good solid dependable man." The father, when he was a young man, never drank, never went chasing the girls, was never wild. There had been enough wild young ones in the Rich Valley when he was a lad. Some of them had inherited big farms and had lost them, gambling, drinking, fooling with fast horses and chasing after the women. It had been almost a Virginia tradition, but John Grey was a land man. All the Greys were. There were other large cattle farms owned by Greys up and down the valley.

John Grey, everyone said, was a natural cattle man. He knew beef cattle, of the big so-called export type, how to pick and feed them to make beef. He knew how and where to get the right kind of young stock to turn into his fields. It was the blue-grass country. Big beef cattle went directly off the pastures to market. The Grey farm contained over twelve hundred acres, most of it in blue-grass.

The father was a land man, land hungry. He had begun, as a cattle farmer, with a small place, inherited from his father, some two hundred acres, lying next to what was then the big Aspinwahl place and, after he began, he never stopped getting more land. He kept cutting in on the Aspinwahls who were a rather horsey, fast lot. They thought of themselves as Virginia aristocrats, having, as they weren't so modest about pointing out, a family going back and back, family tradition, guests always being entertained, fast horses kept, money being bet on fast horses. John

Grey getting their land, now twenty acres, then thirty, then fifty, until at last he got the old Aspinwahl house, with one of the Aspinwahl girls, not a young one, not one of the best-looking ones, as wife. The Aspinwahl place was down, by that time, to less than a hundred acres, but he went on, year after year, always being careful and shrewd, making every penny count, never wasting a cent, adding and adding to what was now the Grey place. The former Aspinwahl house was a large old brick house with fireplaces in all the rooms and was very comfortable.

People wondered why Louise Aspinwahl had married John Grey, but when they were wondering they smiled. The Aspinwahl girls were all well educated, had all been away to college, but Louise wasn't so pretty. She got nicer after marriage, suddenly almost beautiful. The Aspinwahls were, as everyone knew, naturally sensitive, really first class but the men couldn't hang onto land and the Greys could. In all that section of Virginia, people gave John Grey credit for being what he was. They respected him. "He's on the level," they said, "as honest as a horse. He has cattle sense, that's it." He could run his big hand down over the flank of a steer and say, almost to the pound, what he would weigh on the scales or he could look at a calf or a yearling and say, "He'll do," and he would do. A steer is a steer. He isn't supposed to do anything but make beef.

There was Don, the oldest son of the Grey family. He was so evidently destined to be a Grey, to be another like his father. He had long been a star in the 4H Club of the Virginia county and, even as a lad of nine and ten, had won prizes at steer judging. At twelve he had produced, no one helping him, doing all the work himself, more bushels of corn on an acre of land than any other boy in the State.

It was all a little amazing, even a bit queer to Mary Grey, being as she was a girl peculiarly conscious, so old and young, so aware. There was Don, the older brother, big and strong of body, like the father, and there was the young brother Ted. Ordinarily, in the ordinary course of life, she being what she was — female — it would have been quite natural and right for her to have given her young girl's admiration to Don but she didn't. For some reason, Don barely existed for her. He was outside, not in it, while for her Ted, the seemingly weak one of the family, was everything.

Still there Don was, so big of body, so quiet, so apparently sure of himself. The father had begun, as a young cattle man, with the two hundred acres, and now he had the twelve hundred. What would Don Grey do when he started? Already he knew, although he didn't say anything, that he wanted to start. He wanted to run things, be his own boss. His father had offered to send him away to college, to an agricultural college, but he wouldn't go. "No. I can learn more here," he said.

Already there was a contest, always kept under the surface, between the father and son. It concerned ways of doing things, decisions to be made. As yet the son always surrendered.

It is like that in a family, little isolated groups formed within the larger group, jealousies, concealed hatreds, silent battles secretly going on — among the Greys, Mary and Ted, Don and his father, the mother and the two younger children, Gladys, a girl child of six now, who adored her brother Don, and Harry, a boy child of two.

As for Mary and Ted, they lived within their own world, but their own world had not been established without a struggle. The point was that Ted, having the heart that might at any moment stop beating, was always being treated tenderly by the others. Only Mary understood that — how it infuriated and hurt him.

"No, Ted, I wouldn't do that."

"Now, Ted, do be careful."

Sometimes Ted went white and trembling with anger, Don, the father, the mother, all keeping at him like that. It didn't matter what he wanted to do, learn to drive one of the two family cars, climb a tree to find a bird's nest, run a race with Mary. Naturally, being on a farm, he wanted to try his hand at breaking a colt, beginning with him, getting a saddle on, having it out with him. "No, Ted. You can't." He had learned to swear, picking it up from the farm-hands and from the boys at the country school. "Hell! Goddam!" he said to Mary. Only Mary understood how he felt, and she had not put the matter very definitely into words, not even to herself. It was one of the things that made her old when she was so young. It made her stand aside from the others of the family, aroused in her a curious determination. "They shall not." She caught herself saying the words to herself. "They shall not."

"If he is to have but a few years of life, they shall not spoil what he is to have. Why should they make him die, over and over, day after day?" The thoughts in her mind did not become so definite. She had resentment against the others. She was like a soldier, standing guard over Ted.

The two children drew more and more away, into their own world and only once did what Mary felt come to the surface. That was with the mother.

It was on an early Summer day and Ted and Mary were playing in the rain. They were on a side porch of the house, where the water came pouring down from the eaves. At a corner of the porch there was a great stream, and first Ted and then Mary dashed through it, returning to the porch with clothes soaked and water running in streams from soaked hair. There was something joyous, the feel of the cold water on the body, under clothes, and they were shrieking with laughter when the mother came to the door. She looked at Ted. There was fear and anxiety in her voice. "Oh, Ted, you know you mustn't, you mustn't." Just that. All the rest implied. Nothing said to Mary. There it was. "Oh, Ted, you mustn't. You mustn't run hard, climb trees, ride horses. The least shock to you may do it." It was the old story again, and, of course, Ted understood. He went white and trembled. Why couldn't the rest understand that was a hun-

dred times worse for him? On that day, without answering his mother, he ran off the porch and through the rain toward the barns. He wanted to go hide himself from everyone. Mary knew how he felt.

She got suddenly very old and very angry. The mother and daughter stood looking at each other, the woman nearing fifty and the child of fourteen. It was getting everything in the family reversed. Mary felt that but felt she had to do something. "You should have more sense, Mother," she said seriously. She also had gone white. Her lips trembled. "You mustn't do it any more. Don't you ever do it again."

"What, child?" There was astonishment and half anger in the mother's voice.

"Always making him think of it," Mary said. She wanted to cry but didn't.

The mother understood. There was a queer tense moment before Mary also walked off, toward the barns, in the rain. It wasn't all so clear. The mother wanted to fly at the child, perhaps shake her for daring to be so impudent. A child like that to decide things — to dare to reprove her mother. There was so much implied — even that Ted be allowed to die, quickly, suddenly, rather than that death, danger of sudden death, be brought again and again to his attention. There were values in life, implied by a child's words: "Life, what is it worth? Is death the most terrible thing?" The mother turned and went silently into the house while Mary, going to the barns, presently found Ted. He was in an empty horse stall, standing with his back to the wall, staring. There were no explanations. "Well," Ted said presently, and, "Come on, Ted," Mary replied. It was necessary to do something even perhaps more risky than playing in the rain. The rain was already passing. "Let's take off our shoes," Mary said. Going barefoot was one of the things forbidden Ted. They took their shoes off and, leaving them in the barn, went into an orchard. There was a small creek below the orchard, a creek that went down to the river and now it would be in flood. They went into it and once Mary got swept off her feet so that Ted had to pull her out. She spoke then. "I told Mother," she said, looking serious.

"What?" Ted said. "Gee, I guess maybe I saved you from drowning," he added.

"Sure you did," said Mary. "I told her to let you alone." She grew suddenly fierce. "They've all got to — they've got to let you alone," she said.

There was a bond. Ted did his share. He was imaginative and could think of plenty of risky things to do. Perhaps the mother spoke to the father and to Don, the older brother. There was a new inclination in the family to keep hands off the pair, and the fact seemed to give the two children new room in life. Something seemed to open out. There was a little inner world created, always, every day, being recreated, and in it there was a kind of new security. It seemed to the two children — they

could not have put their feelings into words — that, being in their own created world, feeling a security there, they could suddenly look out at the outside world and see, in a new way, what was going on out there in the world that belonged also to others.

It was a world to be thought about, looked at, a world of drama too, the drama of human relations, outside their own world, in a family, on a farm, in a farmhouse. . . . On a farm, calves and yearling steers arriving to be fattened, great heavy steers going off to market, colts being broken to work or to saddle, lambs born in the late Winter. The human side of life was more difficult, to a child often incomprehensible, but after the speech to the mother, on the porch of the house that day when it rained, it seemed to Mary almost as though she and Ted had set up a new family. Everything about the farm, the house and the barns got nicer. There was a new freedom. The two children walked along a country road, returning to the farm from school in the late afternoon. There were other children in the road but they managed to fall behind or they got ahead. There were plans made. "I'm going to be a nurse when I grow up," Mary said. She may have remembered dimly the woman nurse, from the county-seat town, who had come to stay in the house when Ted was so ill. Ted said that as soon as he could — it would be when he was younger yet than Don was now — he intended to leave and go out West . . . far out, he said. He wanted to be a cowboy or a bronco-buster or something, and, that failing, he thought he would be a railroad engineer. The railroad that went down through the Rich Valley crossed a corner of the Grey farm, and, from the road in the afternoon, they could sometimes see trains, quite far away, the smoke rolling up. There was a faint rumbling noise, and, on clear days they could see the flying piston rods of the engines.

As for the two stumps in the field near the house, they were what was left of two oak trees. The children had known the trees. They were cut one day in the early Fall.

There was a back porch to the Grey house — the house that had once been the seat of the Aspinwahl family — and from the porch steps a path led down to a stone spring house. A spring came out of the ground just there, and there was a tiny stream that went along the edge of a field, past two large barns and out across a meadow to a creek — called a "branch" in Virginia, and the two trees stood close together beyond the spring house and the fence.

They were lusty trees, their roots down in the rich, always damp soil, and one of them had a great limb that came down near the ground, so that Ted and Mary could climb into it and out another limb into its brother tree, and in the Fall, when other trees, at the front and side of the house, had shed their leaves, blood-red leaves still clung to the two oaks. They were like dry blood on gray days, but on other days, when the sun came out, the trees flamed against the distant hills. The leaves clung, whisper-

ing and talking when the wind blew, so that the trees themselves seemed carrying on a conversation.

John Grey had decided he would have the trees cut. At first it was not a very definite decision. "I think I'll have them cut," he announced.

"But why?" his wife asked. The trees meant a good deal to her. They had been planted, just in that spot, by her grandfather, she said, having in mind just a certain effect. "You see how, in the Fall, when you stand on the back porch, they are so nice against the hills." She spoke of the trees, already quite large, having been brought from a distant woods. Her mother had often spoken of it. The man, her grandfather, had a special feeling for trees. "An Aspinwahl would do that," John Grey said. "There is enough yard, here about the house, and enough trees. They do not shade the house or the yard. An Aspinwahl would go to all that trouble for trees and then plant them where grass might be growing." He had suddenly determined, a half-formed determination in him suddenly hardening. He had perhaps heard too much of the Aspinwahls and their ways. The conversation regarding the trees took place at the table, at the noon hour, and Mary and Ted heard it all.

It began at the table and was carried on afterwards out of doors, in the yard back of the house. The wife had followed her husband out. He always left the table suddenly and silently, getting quickly up and going out heavily, shutting doors with a bang as he went. "Don't, John," the wife said, standing on the porch and calling to her husband. It was a cold day but the sun was out and the trees were like great bonfires against gray distant fields and hills. The older son of the family, young Don, the one so physically like the father and apparently so like him in every other way, had come out of the house with the mother, followed by the two children, Ted and Mary, and at first Don said nothing, but, when the father did not answer the mother's protest but started toward the barn, he also spoke. What he said was obviously the determining thing, hardening the father.

To the two other children — they had walked a little aside and stood together watching and listening — there was something. There was their own child's world. "Let us alone and we'll let you alone." It wasn't as definite as that. Most of the definite thoughts about what happened in the yard that afternoon came to Mary Grey long afterwards, when she was a grown woman. At the moment there was merely a sudden sharpening of the feeling of isolation, a wall between herself and Ted and the others. The father, even then perhaps, seen in a new light, Don and the mother seen in a new light.

There was something, a driving destructive thing in life, in all relationships between people. All of this felt dimly that day — she always believed both by herself and Ted — but only thought out long afterwards, after Ted was dead. There was the farm her father had won from the Aspinwahls — greater persistence, greater shrewdness. In a family, little

remarks dropped from time to time, an impression slowly built up. The father, John Grey, was a successful man. He had acquired. He owned. He was the commander, the one having power to do his will. And the power had run out and covered, not only other human lives, impulses in others, wishes, hungers in others . . . he himself might not have, might not even understand . . . but it went far out beyond that. It was, curiously, the power also of life and death. Did Mary Grey think such thoughts at that moment? . . . She couldn't have. . . . Still there was her own peculiar situation, her relationship with her brother Ted, who was to die.

Ownership that gave curious rights, dominances — fathers over children, men and women over lands, houses, factories in cities, fields. "I will have the trees in that orchard cut. They produce apples but not of the right sort. There is no money in apples of that sort any more."

"But, Sir . . . you see . . . look . . . the trees there against that hill, against the sky."

"Nonsense. Sentimentality."

Confusion.

It would have been such nonsense to think of the father of Mary Grey as a man without feeling. He had struggled hard all his life, perhaps, as a young man, gone without things wanted, deeply hungered for. Someone has to manage things in this life. Possessions mean power, the right to say "Do this" or "Do that." If you struggle long and hard for a thing it becomes infinitely sweet to you.

Was there a kind of hatred between the father and the older son of the Grey family? "You are one also who has this thing — the impulse to power, so like my own. Now you are young and I am growing old." Admiration mixed with fear. If you would retain power it will not do to admit fear.

The young Don was so curiously like the father. There were the same lines about the jaws, the same eyes. They were both heavy men. Already the young man walked like the father, slammed doors as did the father. There was the same curious lack of delicacy of thought and touch — the heaviness that plows through, gets things done. When John Grey had married Louise Aspinwahl he was already a mature man, on his way to success. Such men do not marry young and recklessly. Now he was nearing sixty and there was the son — so like himself, having the same kind of strength.

Both land lovers, possession lovers. "It is my farm, my house, my horses, cattle, sheep." Soon now, another ten years, fifteen at the most, and the father would be ready for death. "See, already my hand slips a little. All of this to go out of my grasp." He, John Grey, had not got all of these possessions so easily. It had taken much patience, much persistence. No one but himself would ever quite know. Five, ten, fifteen years of work and saving, getting the Aspinwahl farm piece by piece. "The fools!" They

had liked to think of themselves as aristocrats, throwing the land away, now twenty acres, now thirty, now fifty.

Raising horses that could never plow an acre of land.

And they had robbed the land too, had never put anything back, doing nothing to enrich it, build it up. Such a one thinking: "I'm an Aspinwahl, a gentleman. I do not soil my hands at the plow."

"Fools who do not know the meaning of land owned, possessions, money — responsibility. It is they who are second-rate men."

He had got an Aspinwahl for a wife and, as it had turned out, she was the best, the smartest and, in the end, the best-looking one of the lot.

And now there was his son, standing at the moment near the mother. They had both come down off the porch. It would be natural and right for this one — he being what he already was, what he would become — for him, in his turn, to come into possession, to take command.

There would be, of course, the rights of the other children. If you have the stuff in you (John Grey felt that his son Don had) there is a way to manage. You buy the others out, make arrangements. There was Ted — he wouldn't be alive — and Mary and the two younger children. "The better for you if you have to struggle."

All of this, the implication of the moment of sudden struggle between a father and son, coming slowly afterwards to the man's daughter, as yet little more than a child. Does the drama take place when the seed is put into the ground or afterwards when the plant has pushed out of the ground and the bud breaks open, or still later, when the fruit ripens? There were the Greys with their ability — slow, saving, able, determined, patient. Why had they superseded the Aspinwahls in the Rich Valley? Aspinwahl blood also in the two children, Mary and Ted.

There was an Aspinwahl man — called "Uncle Fred," a brother to Louise Grey — who came sometimes to the farm. He was a rather striking-looking, tall old man with a gray Vandyke beard and a mustache, somewhat shabbily dressed but always with an indefinable air of class. He came from the county-seat town, where he lived now with a daughter who had married a merchant, a polite courtly old man who always froze into a queer silence in the presence of the sister's husband.

The son Don was standing near the mother on the day in the Fall, and the two children, Mary and Ted, stood apart.

"Don't, John," Louise Grey said again. The father, who had started toward the barns, stopped.

"Well, I guess I will."

"No, you won't," said young Don, speaking suddenly. There was a queer fixed look in his eyes. It had flashed into life — something that was between the two men: "I possess" . . . "I will possess." The father wheeled and looked sharply at the son and then ignored him.

For a moment the mother continued pleading.

"But why, why?"

"They make too much shade. The grass does not grow."

"But there is so much grass, so many acres of grass."

John Grey was answering his wife, but now again he looked at his son. There were unspoken words flying back and forth.

"I possess. I am in command here. What do you mean by telling me that I won't?"

"Ha! So! You possess now but soon I will possess."

"I'll see you in hell first."

"You fool! Not yet! Not yet!"

None of the words, set down above, was spoken at the moment, and afterwards the daughter Mary never did remember the exact words that had passed between the two men. There was a sudden quick flash of determination in Don — even perhaps sudden determination to stand by the mother — even perhaps something else — a feeling in the young Don out of the Aspinwahl blood in him — for the moment tree love superseding grass love — grass that would fatten steers. . . .

Winner of 4H club prizes, champion young corn-raiser, judge of steers, land lover, possession lover.

"You won't," Don said again.

"Won't what?"

"Won't cut those trees."

The father said nothing more at the moment but walked away from the little group toward the barns. The sun was still shining brightly. There was a sharp cold little wind. The two trees were like bonfires lighted against distant hills.

It was the noon hour and there were two men, both young, employees on the farm, who lived in a small tenant house beyond the barns. One of them, a man with a harelip, was married and the other, a rather handsome silent young man, boarded with him. They had just come from the midday meal and were going toward one of the barns. It was the beginning of the Fall corn-cutting time and they would be going together to a distant field to cut corn.

The father went to the barn and returned with the two men. They brought axes and a long cross-cut saw. "I want you to cut those two trees." There was something, a blind, even stupid determination in the man, John Grey. And at that moment his wife, the mother of his children . . . There was no way any of the children could ever know how many moments of the sort she had been through. She had married John Grey. He was her man.

"If you do, Father . . ." Don Grey said coldly.

"Do as I tell you! Cut those two trees!" This addressed to the two workmen. The one who had a harelip laughed. His laughter was like the bray of a donkey.

"Don't," said Louise Grey, but she was not addressing her husband this time. She stepped to her son and put a hand on his arm.

"Don't.

"Don't cross him. Don't cross my man." Could a child like Mary Grey comprehend? It takes time to understand things that happen in life. Life unfolds slowly to the mind. Mary was standing with Ted, whose young face was white and tense. Death at his elbow. At any moment. At any moment.

"I have been through this a hundred times. That is the way this man I married has succeeded. Nothing stops him. I married him; I have had my children by him.

"We women choose to submit.

"This is my affair, more than yours, Don, my son."

A woman hanging onto her things — the family, created about her.

The son not seeing things with her eyes. He shook off his mother's hand, lying on his arm. Louise Grey was younger than her husband, but, if he was now nearing sixty, she was drawing near fifty. At the moment she looked very delicate and fragile. There was something, at the moment, in her bearing . . . Was there, after all, something in blood, the Aspinwahl blood?

In a dim way perhaps, at the moment the child Mary did comprehend. Women and their men. For her then, at that time, there was but one male, the child Ted. Afterwards she remembered how he looked at that moment, the curiously serious old look on his young face. There was even, she thought later, a kind of contempt for both the father and brother, as though he might have been saying to himself — he couldn't really have been saying it — he was too young: "Well, we'll see. This is something. These foolish ones — my father and my brother. I myself haven't long to live. I'll see what I can, while I do live."

The brother Don stepped over near to where his father stood.

"If you do, Father . . ." he said again.

"Well?"

"I'll walk off this farm and I'll never come back."

"All right. Go then."

The father began directing the two men who had begun cutting the trees, each man taking a tree. The young man with the harelip kept laughing, the laughter like the bray of a donkey. "Stop that," the father said sharply, and the sound ceased abruptly. The son Don walked away, going rather aimlessly toward the barn. He approached one of the barns and then stopped. The mother, white now, half ran into the house.

The son returned toward the house, passing the two younger children without looking at them, but did not enter. The father did not look at him. He went hesitatingly along a path at the front of the house and through a gate and into a road. The road ran for several miles down through the valley and then, turning, went over a mountain to the county-seat town.

As it happened, only Mary saw the son Don when he returned to

the farm. There were three or four tense days. Perhaps, all the time, the mother and son had been secretly in touch. There was a telephone in the house. The father stayed all day in the fields, and when he was in the house was silent.

Mary was in one of the barns on the day when Don came back and when the father and son met. It was an odd meeting.

The son came, Mary always afterwards thought, rather sheepishly. The father came out of a horse's stall. He had been throwing corn to work horses. Neither the father nor the son saw Mary. There was a car parked in the barn and she had crawled into the driver's seat, her hands on the steering wheel, pretending she was driving.

"Well," the father said. If he felt triumphant, he did not show his feeling.

"Well," said the son, "I have come back."

"Yes, I see," the father said. "They are cutting corn." He walked toward the barn door and then stopped. "It will be yours soon now," he said. "You can be boss then."

He said no more and both men went away, the father toward the distant fields and the son toward the house. Mary was afterwards quite sure that nothing more was ever said.

What had the father meant?

"When it is yours you can be the boss." It was too much for the child. Knowledge comes slowly. It meant:

"You will be in command, and for you, in your turn, it will be necessary to assert.

"Such men as we are cannot fool with delicate stuff. Some men are meant to command and others must obey. You can make them obey in your turn.

"There is a kind of death.

"Something in you must die before you can possess and command."

There was, so obviously, more than one kind of death. For Don Grey one kind and for the younger brother Ted, soon now perhaps, another.

Mary ran out of the barn that day, wanting eagerly to get out into the light, and afterwards, for a long time, she did not try to think her way through what had happened. She and her brother Ted did, however, afterwards, before he died, discuss quite often the two trees. They went on a cold day and put their fingers on the stumps, but the stumps were cold. Ted kept asserting that only men get their legs and arms cut off, and she protested. They continued doing things that had been forbidden Ted to do, but no one protested, and, a year or two later, when he died, he died during the night in his bed.

But while he lived, there was always, Mary afterwards thought, a curious sense of freedom, something that belonged to him that made it good, a great happiness, to be with him. It was, she finally thought, because having to die his kind of death, he never had to make the surrender his brother

had made — to be sure of possessions, success, his time to command — would never have to face the more subtle and terrible death that had come to his older brother.

There Was a Child Went Forth

Walt Whitman • 1819–1892

Walt Whitman was almost spongelike in his absorption of the sights and sounds that were necessary for the later creation of the poems which went into Leaves of Grass *(1855). This poem shows Whitman's awareness of the formative effect of experience. You, too, have "known" just as much as did Walt Whitman at your age. Could you "know" those experiences as well as he knew his in later years, through introspection and reflection? What, for instance, do you think were the important events of your childhood that have made you the person you are?*

THERE WAS A CHILD went forth every day,
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass and white and red morning-glories and white and red clover, and the song of the phoebe-bird,
And the Third-month lambs and the sow's pink-faint litter, and the mare's foal and the cow's calf,
And the noisy brood of the barnyard or by the mire of the pond-side,
And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below there, and the beautiful curious liquid,
And the water-plants with their graceful flat heads, all became part of him.

The field-sprouts of Fourth-month and Fifth-month became part of him,
Winter-grain sprouts and those of the light-yellow corn, and the esculent roots of the garden,
And the apple-trees cover'd with blossoms and the fruit afterward, and woodberries, and the commonest weeds by the road,
And the old drunkard staggering home from the outhouse of the tavern whence he had lately risen,
And the schoolmistress that pass'd, and the quarrelsome boys,
And the tidy and fresh-cheek'd girls, and the barefoot negro boy and girl,
And all the changes of city and country wherever he went.

His own parents, he that had father'd him, and she that had conceiv'd him in her womb, and birth'd him,
They gave this child more of themselves than that,
They gave him afterward every day, they became part of him.
The mother at home quietly placing the dishes on the supper-table,
The mother with mild words, clean her cap and gown, a wholesome odor falling off her person and clothes as she walks by,
The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean, anger'd, unjust,
The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty lure.
The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture, the yearning and swelling heart,
Affection that will not be gainsay'd, the sense of what is real, the thought if after all it should prove unreal,
The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time, the curious whether and how,
Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all flashes and specks?
Men and women crowding fast in the streets, if they are not flashes and specks, what are they?
The streets themselves and the façades of houses, and goods in the windows,
Vehicles, teams, the heavy-plank'd wharves, the huge crossing at the ferries,
The village on the highland seen from afar at sunset, the river between,
Shadows, aureola and mist, the light falling on roofs and gables of white or brown two miles off,
The schooner near by sleepily dropping down the tide, the little boat slack-tow'd astern,
The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-broken crests, slapping,
The strata of color'd clouds, the long bar of maroon-tint away solitary by itself, the spread of purity it lies motionless in,
The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance of salt marsh and shore mud,
These became part of that child who then went forth every day, and who now goes, and will always go forth every day.

Here are four poems touching on various aspects of the young self and the wider, adult world beyond the home. From them you may perhaps discern that there are certain kinds of experiences, or feelings about experience, which may be better caught by poetry than by prose statement.

Peter at Fourteen

Constance Carrier • 1908–

WHAT do you care for Caesar, who yourself
are in three parts divided, and must find,
past daydream and rebellion and bravado,
the final shape and substance of your mind?

What are the Belgae, the Helvetii
to you? I doubt that you will read in them
metaphor of your stand against dominion,
or see as yours their desperate stratagem.

They found their tribal rank, their feuds, their freedom,
obliterated, lost beyond return.
It took them years to see that law and order
could teach them things that they might care to learn.

As fiercely individual, as violent
as they, you clutch your values and your views,
fearful that self may not survive absorption.
(Who said *to learn* at first is like *to lose*?)

Not courage, no, but nature will betray you.
You will stop fighting, finally, and your pride,
that fed so long upon your independence,
flourish on what convention can provide,

till you may grow more Roman than the Romans,
contemptuous of pagan broils and brawls,
and even, mastering your mentors' knowledge,
go on to build cathedrals, like the Gauls.

Reprinted from *New Poems by American Poets*, edited by Rolfe Humphries. Copyright, 1953, by Ballantine Books, Inc.

The Secret Heart

Robert P. Tristram Coffin • 1892–

Across the years he could recall
His father one way best of all.

In the stillest hour of night
The boy awakened to a light.

Half in dreams he saw his sire
With his great hands full of fire.

The man had struck a match to see
If his son slept peacefully.

He held his palms each side the spark
His love had kindled in the dark.

His two hands were curved apart
In the semblance of a heart.

He wore, it seemed to his small son,
A bare heart on his hidden one,

A heart that gave out such a glow
No son awake could bear to know.

It showed a look upon a face
Too tender for the day to trace.

One instant, it lit all about,
And then the secret heart went out.

But it shone long enough for one
To know that hands held up the sun.

Reprinted from Robert P. Tristram Coffin, *Collected Poems.* Copyright, 1939, by The Macmillan Company, and used with the publisher's permission.

Returning

Emily Dickinson • 1830–1886

I YEARS had been from home,
And now, before the door,
I dared not open, lest a face
I never saw before

Stare vacant into mine
And ask my business there.
My business, — just a life I left,
Was such still dwelling there?

I fumbled at my nerve,
I scanned the windows near;
The silence like an ocean rolled,
And broke against my ear.

I laughed a wooden laugh
That I could fear a door,
Who danger and the dead had faced,
But never quaked before.

I fitted to the latch
My hand, with trembling care,
Lest back the awful door should spring,
And leave me standing there.

I moved my fingers off
As cautiously as glass,
And held my ears, and like a thief
Fled gasping from the house.

Spring and Fall

TO A YOUNG CHILD

Gerard Manley Hopkins • 1844–1889

MARGARET, are you grieving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?
Leaves, like the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Ah! as the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you will weep and know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sorrow's springs are the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.



"Fundamentally, we're all very much alike."

Self and Others

On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings

William James • 1842–1910

To understand other people we must have sympathy — the ability to feel with them — the ability to see them as they see themselves. If we cannot do this we suffer the "blindness" discussed by James in the essay from which these opening paragraphs are taken, and our interpretation of other people will be an egocentric one.

OUR JUDGMENTS concerning the worth of things, big or little, depend on the *feelings* the things arouse in us. Where we judge a thing to be precious in consequence of the *idea* we frame of it, this is only because the idea is itself associated already with a feeling. If we were radically feelingless, and if ideas were the only things our mind could entertain, we should lose all our likes and dislikes at a stroke, and be unable to point to any one situation or experience in life more valuable or significant than any other.

Now the blindness in human beings, of which this discourse will treat, is the blindness with which we all are afflicted in regard to the feelings of creatures and people different from ourselves.

From *Talks to Teachers* by William James (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1909), pp. 229–234. Reprinted by permission of Henry Holt and Company, Inc.

We are practical beings, each of us with limited functions and duties to perform. Each is bound to feel intensely the importance of his own duties and the significance of the situations that call these forth. But this feeling is in each of us a vital secret, for sympathy with which we vainly look to others. The others are too much absorbed in their own vital secrets to take an interest in ours. Hence the stupidity and injustice of our opinions, so far as they deal with the significance of alien lives. Hence the falsity of our judgments, so far as they presume to decide in an absolute way on the value of other persons' conditions or ideals.

Take our dogs and ourselves, connected as we are by a tie more intimate than most ties in this world; and yet, outside of that tie of friendly fondness, how insensible, each of us, to all that makes life significant for the other! — we to the rapture of bones under hedges, or smells of trees and lamp-posts, they to the delights of literature and art. As you sit reading the most moving romance you ever fell upon, what sort of a judge is your fox-terrier of your behavior? With all his good will toward you, the nature of your conduct is absolutely excluded from his comprehension. To sit there like a senseless statue, when you might be taking him to walk and throwing sticks for him to catch! What queer disease is this that comes over you every day, of holding things and staring at them like that for hours together, paralyzed of motion and vacant of all conscious life? The African savages came nearer the truth; but they, too, missed it, when they gathered wonderingly round one of our American travellers who, in the interior, had just come into possession of a stray copy of the New York *Commercial Advertiser,* and was devouring it column by column. When he got through, they offered him a high price for the mysterious object; and, being asked for what they wanted it, they said: "For an eye medicine," — that being the only reason they could conceive of for the protracted bath which he had given his eyes upon its surface.

The spectator's judgment is sure to miss the root of the matter, and to possess no truth. The subject judged knows a part of the world of reality which the judging spectator fails to see, knows more while the spectator knows less; and, wherever there is conflict of opinion and difference of vision, we are bound to believe that the truer side is the side that feels the more, and not the side that feels the less.

Let me take a personal example of the kind that befalls each one of us daily: —

Some years ago, while journeying in the mountains of North Carolina, I passed by a large number of "coves," as they call them there, or heads of small valleys between the hills, which had been newly cleared and planted. The impression on my mind was one of unmitigated squalor. The settler had in every case cut down the more manageable trees, and left their charred stumps standing. The larger trees he had girdled and killed, in order that their foliage should not cast a shade. He had then built a log cabin, plastering its chinks with clay, and had set up a tall zigzag rail

fence around the scene of his havoc, to keep the pigs and cattle out. Finally, he had irregularly planted the intervals between the stumps and trees with Indian corn, which grew among the chips; and there he dwelt with his wife and babes — an axe, a gun, a few utensils, and some pigs and chickens feeding in the woods, being the sum total of his possessions.

The forest had been destroyed; and what had "improved" it out of existence was hideous, a sort of ulcer, without a single element of artificial grace to make up for the loss of Nature's beauty. Ugly, indeed, seemed the life of the squatter, scudding, as the sailors say, under bare poles, beginning again away back where our first ancestors started, and by hardly a single item the better off for all the achievements of the intervening generations.

Talk about going back to nature! I said to myself, oppressed by the dreariness, as I drove by. Talk of a country life for one's old age and for one's children! Never thus, with nothing but the bare ground and one's bare hands to fight the battle! Never, without the best spoils of culture woven in! The beauties and commodities gained by the centuries are sacred. They are our heritage and birthright. No modern person ought to be willing to live a day in such a state of rudimentariness and denudation.

Then I said to the mountaineer who was driving me, "What sort of people are they who have to make these new clearings?" "All of us," he replied. "Why, we ain't happy here, unless we are getting one of these coves under cultivation." I instantly felt that I had been losing the whole inward significance of the situation. Because to me the clearings spoke of naught but denudation, I thought that to those whose sturdy arms and obedient axes had made them they could tell no other story. But, when *they* looked on the hideous stumps, what they thought of was personal victory. The chips, the girdled trees, and the vile split rails spoke of honest sweat, persistent toil, and final reward. The cabin was a warrant of safety for self and wife and babes. In short, the clearing, which to me was a mere ugly picture on the retina, was to them a symbol redolent with moral memories and sang a very paean of duty, struggle, and success.

I had been as blind to the peculiar ideality of their conditions as they certainly would also have been to the ideality of mine, had they had a peep at my strange indoor academic ways of life at Cambridge.

Wherever a process of life communicates an eagerness to him who lives it, there the life becomes genuinely significant. Sometimes the eagerness is more knit up with the motor activities, sometimes with the perceptions, sometimes with the imagination, sometimes with reflective thought. But, wherever it is found, there is the zest, the tingle, the excitement of reality; and there *is* "importance" in the only real and positive sense in which importance ever anywhere can be. . . .

John and Thomas

Oliver Wendell Holmes • 1809–1894

How many separate sketches of yourself could you give, each as you are seen by a certain other person — your mother, your father, your younger brother, or by yourself in different moods or situations? Which is the "real" you? William James discusses the question at length in a famous chapter of his classic Principles of Psychology. *In a few words Oliver Wendell Holmes points out the complicated problem of Self and Others.*

WHEN John and Thomas . . . are talking together, it is natural enough that among the six there should be more or less confusion and misapprehension. . . .

I think, I said, I can make it plain to Benjamin Franklin here that there are at least six personalities distinctly to be recognized as taking part in that dialogue between John and Thomas.

Three Johns	1. The real John; known only to his Maker. 2. John's ideal John; never the real one, and often very unlike him. 3. Thomas's ideal John; never the real John, nor John's John, but often very unlike either.
Three Thomases	1. The real Thomas. 2. Thomas's ideal Thomas. 3. John's ideal Thomas.

Only one of the three Johns is taxed; only one can be weighed on a platform balance; but the other two are just as important in the conversation. Let us suppose the real John to be old, dull, and ill-looking. But as the Higher Powers have not conferred on men the gift of seeing themselves in the true light, John very possibly conceives himself to be youthful, witty, and fascinating, and talks from the point of view of this ideal. Thomas, again, believes him to be an artful rogue, we will say; therefore he is, so far as Thomas's attitude in the conversation is concerned, an artful rogue, though really simple and stupid. The same conditions apply to the three Thomases. It follows, that until a man can be found who knows himself as others see him, there must be at least six persons engaged in every dialogue between two. Of these, the least important, philosophically speaking, is the one that we have called the real person. No wonder two disputants often get angry, when there are six of them talking and listening all at the same time.

The Secret Evangel of Otto McFeely

Lloyd Lewis • 1891–1949

"People are more interesting than anybody," a student wrote. Any person is interesting if you understand him in the way James asks us to, with sympathy. A person need not be a "character" to be interesting; but then we all know unusual persons — "characters." Lloyd Lewis presents such a man, one whose especially interesting trait was his interest in other people, and his dedicated mission of bringing excitement into humdrum lives.

ALTHOUGH the village of Oak Park, Illinois, has never recognized the fact, and may not even now when confronted with the evidence, it contains a remarkable missionary — one who has toiled without expectation of gain, here or hereafter — a most unusual missionary sitting on the front porch at 200 Forest Avenue.

He is Otto McFeely, who, having retired from the editorship of the local weekly, *Oak Leaves,* takes his slippered ease these days and thinks back on the time when he coursed midwestern roads, spreading his particular benefaction.

I stumbled upon his true mission one summer afternoon twenty years ago. Up to then I had shared the general belief that he was merely a busy editor who took motor drives for recreation. I knew, of course, that he had brought into being the Mosquito Abatement District, but there was self in that crusade, for he had been angered at the welts the insects had raised upon his infant daughter. And his success in fathering the Mothers' Pension Law had been prompted in part by his desire to promote something impressive for his bosom friend, Judge Neal, to head up and orate about. What I didn't know about was McFeely's secret evangel.

You would never suspect it to watch him in his office. There, all week, he was polite to the Puritans who brought him their wholesome items of news for publication, clergymen, deacons, presidents of ladies' clubs, Kiwanians, all bringing announcements and reports of their manifold charities and public betterments. But of a Saturday or Sunday he'd go off in his Ford alone. Sometimes he'd take me along, and the first time he did I learned why he went.

He stopped the car on this hot July Saturday, and stepping out, shouted loudly at a farmer plowing corn. The man stopped his team and turned his ear to listen. McFeely cleared his throat and, enunciating with care-

From *It Takes All Kinds,* copyright, 1947, by Lloyd Lewis. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., pp. 31–34.

ful clarity, informed the stranger that he was many kinds of a beast, fiend, robber, decadent, and that his ancestry was shameful and his future life one of eternal damnation.

The farmer stepped off his plow, cupped a work-hardened hand behind a sunburnt ear and called, "What did you say?"

Patiently McFeely went through it all again, adding some new and more loathsome epithets for good measure.

Even at this distance I could see the farmer's face flush, as he stiffened, clenched his fists, and tried to form choking retorts. Before he could make any suitable rejoinder, however, his insulter had popped back into the Ford and was driving away.

After a short silence, I asked McFeely, "Was that called for?"

He sighed and wearily said, "You are too obtuse for me to fool with. However, I'll explain what I'd think anybody could see:

"That man is vegetating, making those endless rounds of the monotonous corn rows, behind two horses day after day. Life is dull to him, and dull for his wife in that house over there because he has nothing to say when he comes in for dinner and supper. He's in a rut and so is she. But I can bring him, and her, temporary relief if not a cure.

"At noon today he'll hurry in from the barn to tell her about the gross insult he received. She'll be mad, too. It does people's souls good to get mad. They'll stay mad for weeks, hashing over the cruelty done him, wondering who it could have been and if the scoundrel will be back. They'll be live, thinking, feeling persons for a time. Life will become vivid for them.

"You see, this thing would be no good unless it were a purely gratuitous insult. It must be simon-pure outrage. Its merit lies in the completeness of its injustice."

A handsome fellow with a Ronald Colman mustache and a dashing air, McFeely used, and probably still uses, his romantic aura to help him in his mission. For example, I have ridden slowly with him through sleepy Illinois towns on a Sunday afternoon and seen him suddenly tip his hat gallantly to a woman of fifty who sat on her front porch dully looking out at nothing. McFeely's dark eyes would gleam with grave tenderness upon her as we rolled past.

Then, just before we went from view, he'd look back with restrained yearning as she, leaning forward on her frozen rocking chair, would be peering after him.

Did he know her? Had he ever seen her before? Certainly not, and would, moreover, never come this way again, either.

"But," said he, "she'll wonder for weeks who that was. Could it have been that visiting tenor — after choir practice — thirty years ago — ?

"She'll be tender to her husband for probably sixty days all on account of this, and full of tolerance for sinners whenever her shrewish neighbor women start gossiping."

Upon rare occasions McFeely has been able to cast the sweet cloak of his evangel over quarreling husbands and wives.

"Driving along, I keep looking for them," he told me once, "Sunday drivers, dressed up and suddenly sore because he asked her if she had turned out the fire under the water heater before they left. What I do then is pull alongside, scrape fenders, holler for a halt, and then lean out and call, 'Turn around and go home. It's hell for you Sunday drivers on these arterial highways. You'll smash that beautiful car and,' here I look past him at his wife, 'you'll kill that lovely wife of yours.'

"Then I step on the gas quick and get away, leaving them to forget their differences in the mingled emotions my solicitude and insolence have forced upon them."

A Dill Pickle

Katherine Mansfield • *1888–1923*

The emotional states, the feelings that lie behind our overt actions and our casual meetings, the impulses that never become actualities — Katherine Mansfield better than any other short-story writer is able to catch these. Two people meet, former sweethearts, and some of the old feelings begin to revive; but the barrier that separated them before is still there; a disparity of feeling and personality remains.

AND THEN, after six years, she saw him again. He was seated at one of those little bamboo tables decorated with a Japanese vase of paper daffodils. There was a tall plate of fruit in front of him, and very carefully, in a way she recognized immediately as his "special" way, he was peeling an orange.

He must have felt that shock of recognition in her for he looked up and met her eyes. Incredible! He didn't know her! She smiled; he frowned. She came towards him. He closed his eyes an instant, but opening them his face lit up as though he had struck a match in a dark room. He laid down the orange and pushed back his chair, and she took her little warm hand out of her muff and gave it to him.

"Vera!" he exclaimed. "How strange. Really, for a moment I didn't know you. Won't you sit down? You've had lunch? Won't you have some coffee?"

She hesitated, but of course she meant to.

Reprinted from *The Short Stories of Katherine Mansfield* by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., and John Middleton Murry, Proprietor, Katherine Mansfield Estate. Copyright, 1920, 1937, by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

"Yes, I'd like some coffee." And she sat down opposite him.

"You've changed. You've changed very much," he said, staring at her with that eager, lighted look. "You look so well. I've never seen you look so well before."

"Really?" She raised her veil and unbuttoned her high fur collar. "I don't feel very well. I can't bear this weather, you know."

"Ah, no. You hate the cold. . . ."

"Loathe it." She shuddered. "And the worst of it is that the older one grows . . ."

He interrupted her. "Excuse me," and tapped on the table for the waitress. "Please bring some coffee and cream." To her: "You are sure you won't eat anything? Some fruit, perhaps. The fruit here is very good."

"No, thanks. Nothing."

"Then that's settled." And smiling just a hint too broadly he took up the orange again. "You were saying — the older one grows — "

"The colder," she laughed. But she was thinking how well she remembered that trick of his — the trick of interrupting her — and of how it used to exasperate her six years ago. She used to feel then as though he, quite suddenly, in the middle of what she was saying, put his hand over her lips, turned from her, attended to something different, and then took his hand away, and with just the same slightly too broad smile, gave her his attention again. . . . Now we are ready. That is settled.

"The colder!" He echoed her words, laughing too. "Ah, ah. You still say the same things. And there is another thing about you that is not changed at all — your beautiful voice — your beautiful way of speaking." Now he was very grave; he leaned towards her, and she smelled the warm, stinging scent of the orange peel. "You have only to say one word and I would know your voice among all other voices. I don't know what it is — I've often wondered — that makes your voice such a — haunting memory. . . . Do you remember that first afternoon we spent together at Kew Gardens? You were so surprised because I did not know the names of any flowers. I am still just as ignorant for all your telling me. But whenever it is very fine and warm, and I see some bright colors — it's awfully strange — I hear your voice saying: 'Geranium, marigold and verbena.' And I feel those three words are all I recall of some forgotten, heavenly language. . . . You remember that afternoon?"

"Oh, yes, very well." She drew a long, soft breath, as though the paper daffodils between them were almost too sweet to bear. Yet what had remained in her mind of that particular afternoon was an absurd scene over the tea table. A great many people taking tea in a Chinese pagoda, and he behaving like a maniac about the wasps — waving them away, flapping at them with his straw hat, serious and infuriated out of all proportion to the occasion. How delighted the sniggering tea drinkers had been. And how she had suffered.

But now, as he spoke, that memory faded. His was the truer. Yes, it

had been a wonderful afternoon, full of geranium and marigold and verbena, and — warm sunshine. Her thoughts lingered over the last two words as though she sang them.

In the warmth, as it were, another memory unfolded. She saw herself sitting on a lawn. He lay beside her, and suddenly, after a long silence, he rolled over and put his head in her lap.

"I wish," he said, in a low, troubled voice, "I wish that I had taken poison and were about to die — here now!"

At that moment a little girl in a white dress, holding a long, dripping water lily, dodged from behind a bush, stared at them, and dodged back again. But he did not see. She leaned over him.

"Ah, why do you say that? I could not say that."

But he gave a kind of soft moan, and taking her hand he held it to his cheek.

"Because I know I am going to love you too much — far too much. And I shall suffer so terribly, Vera, because you never, never will love me."

He was certainly far better looking now than he had been then. He had lost all that dreamy vagueness and indecision. Now he had the air of a man who has found his place in life, and fills it with a confidence and an assurance which was, to say the least, impressive. He must have made money, too. His clothes were admirable, and at that moment he pulled a Russian cigarette case out of his pocket.

"Won't you smoke?"

"Yes, I will." She hovered over them. "They look very good."

"I think they are. I get them made for me by a little man in St. James's Street. I don't smoke very much. I'm not like you — but when I do, they must be delicious, very fresh cigarettes. Smoking isn't a habit with me; it's a luxury — like perfume. Are you still so fond of perfumes? Ah, when I was in Russia . . ."

She broke in: "You've really been to Russia?"

"Oh, yes. I was there for over a year. Have you forgotten how we used to talk of going there?"

"No, I've not forgotten."

He gave a strange half laugh and leaned back in his chair. "Isn't it curious. I have really carried out all those journeys that we planned. Yes, I have been to all those places that we talked of, and stayed in them long enough to — as you used to say, 'air oneself' in them. In fact, I have spent the last three years of my life traveling all the time. Spain, Corsica, Siberia, Russia, Egypt. The only country left is China, and I mean to go there, too, when the war is over."

As he spoke, so lightly, tapping the end of his cigarette against the ash-tray, she felt the strange beast that had slumbered so long within her bosom stir, stretch itself, yawn, prick up its ears, and suddenly bound to its feet, and fix its longing, hungry stare upon those far away places. But all she said was, smiling gently: "How I envy you."

He accepted that. "It has been," he said, "very wonderful — especially Russia. Russia was all that we had imagined, and far, far more. I even spent some days on a river boat on the Volga. Do you remember that boatman's song that you used to play?"

"Yes." It began to play in her mind as she spoke.

"Do you ever play it now?"

"No, I've no piano."

He was amazed at that. "But what has become of your beautiful piano?"

She made a little grimace. "Sold. Ages ago."

"But you were so fond of music," he wondered.

"I've no time for it now," said she.

He let it go at that. "That river life," he went on, "is something quite special. After a day or two you cannot realize that you have ever known another. And it is not necessary to know the language — the life of the boat creates a bond between you and the people that's more than sufficient. You eat with them, pass the day with them, and in the evening there is that endless singing."

She shivered, hearing the boatman's song break out again loud and tragic, and seeing the boat floating on the darkening river with melancholy trees on either side. . . . "Yes, I should like that," said she, stroking her muff.

"You'd like almost everything about Russian life," he said warmly. "It's so informal, so impulsive, so free without question. And then the peasants are so splendid. They are such human beings — yes, that is it. Even the man who drives your carriage has — has some real part in what is happening. I remember the evening a party of us, two friends of mine and the wife of one of them, went for a picnic by the Black Sea. We took supper and champagne and ate and drank on the grass. And while we were eating the coachman came up. 'Have a dill pickle,' he said. He wanted to share with us. That seemed to me so right, so — you know what I mean?"

And she seemed at that moment to be sitting on the grass beside the mysteriously Black Sea, black as velvet, and rippling against the banks in silent, velvet waves. She saw the carriage drawn up to one side of the road, and the little group on the grass, their faces and hands white in the moonlight. She saw the pale dress of the woman outspread and her folded parasol, lying on the grass like a huge pearl crochet hook. Apart from them, with his supper in a cloth on his knees, sat the coachman. "Have a dill pickle," said he, and although she was not certain what a dill pickle was, she saw the greenish glass jar with a red chili like a parrot's beak glimmering through. She sucked in her cheeks; the dill pickle was terribly sour. . . .

"Yes, I know perfectly what you mean," she said.

In the pause that followed they looked at each other. In the past when they had looked at each other like that they had felt such a boundless

understanding between them that their souls had, as it were, put their arms round each other and dropped into the same sea, content to be drowned, like mournful lovers. But now, the surprising thing was that it was he who held back. He who said:

"What a marvelous listener you are. When you look at me with those wild eyes I feel that I could tell you things that I would never breathe to another human being."

Was there just a hint of mockery in his voice or was it her fancy? She could not be sure.

"Before I met you," he said, "I had never spoken of myself to anybody. How well I remember one night, the night that I brought you the little Christmas tree, telling you all about my childhood. And of how I was so miserable that I ran away and lived under a cart in our yard for two days without being discovered. And you listened, and your eyes shone, and I felt that you had even made the little Christmas tree listen too, as in a fairy story."

But of that evening she had remembered a little pot of caviare. It had cost seven and sixpence. He could not get over it. Think of it — a tiny jar like that costing seven and sixpence. While she ate it he watched her, delighted and shocked.

"No, really, that is eating money. You could not get seven shillings into a little pot that size. Only think of the profit they must make. . . ." And he had begun some immensely complicated calculations. . . . But now good-by to the caviare. The Christmas tree was on the table, and the little boy lay under the cart with his head pillowed on the yard dog.

"The dog was called Bosun," she cried delightedly.

But he did not follow. "Which dog? Had you a dog? I don't remember a dog at all."

"No, no. I mean the yard dog when you were a little boy." He laughed and snapped the cigarette case to.

"Was he? Do you know I had forgotten that. It seems such ages ago. I cannot believe that it is only six years. After I had recognized you today — I had to take such a leap — I had to take a leap over my whole life to get back to that time. I was such a kid then." He drummed on the table. "I've often thought how I must have bored you. And now I understand so perfectly why you wrote to me as you did — although at the time that letter nearly finished my life. I found it again the other day, and I couldn't help laughing as I read it. It was so clever — such a true picture of me." He glanced up. "You're not going?"

She had buttoned her collar again and drawn down her veil.

"Yes, I am afraid I must," she said, and managed a smile. Now she knew that he had been mocking.

"Ah, no, please," he pleaded. "Don't go just for a moment," and he caught up one of her gloves from the table and clutched at it as if that would hold her. "I see so few people to talk to nowadays, that I have

turned into a sort of barbarian," he said. "Have I said something to hurt you?"

"Not a bit," she lied. But as she watched him draw her glove through his fingers, gently, gently, her anger really did die down, and besides, at the moment he looked more like himself of six years ago. . . .

"What I really wanted then," he said softly, "was to be a sort of carpet — to make myself into a sort of carpet for you to walk on so that you need not be hurt by the sharp stones and the mud that you hated so. It was nothing more positive than that — nothing more selfish. Only I did desire, eventually, to turn into a magic carpet and carry you away to all those lands you longed to see."

As he spoke she lifted her head as though she drank something; the strange beast in her bosom began to purr. . . .

"I felt that you were more lonely than anybody else in the world," he went on, "and yet, perhaps, that you were the only person in the world who was really, truly alive. Born out of your time," he murmured, stroking the glove, "fated."

Ah, God! What had she done! How had she dared to throw away her happiness like this. This was the only man who had ever understood her. Was it too late? Could it be too late? *She* was that glove that he held in his fingers. . . .

"And then the fact that you had no friends and never had made friends with people. How I understood that, for neither had I. Is it just the same now?"

"Yes," she breathed. "Just the same. I am as alone as ever."

"So am I," he laughed gently, "just the same."

Suddenly with a quick gesture he handed her back the glove and scraped his chair on the floor. "But what seemed to me so mysterious then is perfectly plain to me now. And to you, too, of course. . . . It simply was that we were such egoists so self-engrossed, so wrapped up in ourselves that we hadn't a corner in our hearts for anybody else. Do you know," he cried, naive and hearty, and dreadfully like another side of that old self again, "I began studying a Mind System when I was in Russia, and I found that we were not peculiar at all. It's quite a well-known form of . . ."

She had gone. He sat there, thunder-struck, astounded beyond words. . . . And then he asked the waitress for his bill.

"But the cream has not been touched," he said. "Please do not charge me for it."

The general theme of the prose selections in this section is carried out in the following poems: each involves "a certain blindness" of some human beings in their view of others.

Richard Cory

Edwin Arlington Robinson • 1869–1935

WHENEVER Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good-morning," and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich — yes, richer than a king —
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

My Last Duchess

Robert Browning • 1812–1889

SCENE: FERRARA

THAT's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read

Edwin Arlington Robinson, *The Children of the Night* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937).

Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my Lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat"; such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart — how shall I say? — too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace — all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men, — good; but thanked
Somehow — I know not how — as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years'-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech — (which I have not) — to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark" — and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
— E'en then would be some stooping, and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;

Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir! Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

For Anne Gregory

William Butler Yeats • 1865–1939

"Never shall a young man,
Thrown into despair
By those great honey-colored
Ramparts at your ear,
Love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair."

"But I can get a hair-dye
And set such colour there,
Brown, or black, or carrot,
That young men in despair
May love me for myself alone
And not my yellow hair."

"I heard an old religious man
But yesternight declare
That he had found a text to prove
That only God, my dear,
Could love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair."

William Butler Yeats, *Collected Poems* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950). Copyright, 1940, by Bertha Georgie Yeats. Reprinted by permission of the publishers, of Mrs. William Butler Yeats, and of The Macmillan Company of Canada, Ltd.



"We must all try to get outside ourselves, Miss Tomkins."

A Number of Things

Midwestern Weather

Graham Hutton • 1904–

When you can't think of anything else to talk about, there's always the weather. "Everybody talks about it," said Mark Twain, "but nobody does anything about it." Here an Englishman who spent several years in Chicago, after living in various parts of the world, talks about midwestern weather — and makes it interesting.

FORCED BY A SAVAGE climate to manufacture his own defenses against it, and to surround himself with the greatest material aids and comforts yet devised by humanity, the midwesterner today scarcely gives a thought to the natural obstacles around him which had to be endured and overcome by the pioneers of his grandfather's day. Of these obstacles, none was worse than the climate and the weather of the region. It is no wonder that so many of the domestic mechanical contrivances and defenses against this climate were invented or manufactured in the Midwest.

Of all the regions of the United States, the Midwest has what seems both to Americans and to other visitors the most unkind climate and the

Graham Hutton, *Midwest at Noon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), pp. 7–14.

most inclement weather. That probably explains one of the general practices of the better-off, and one of the general aims of those hoping to get rich enough, which is to leave the Midwest at least twice every year on vacation. Many of them ultimately retire altogether from it. In every case the aspirants make for the sun in winter, for dryness at all times, and for a temperate zone in retirement. Lest I be thought grimly facetious, or just an Englishman preoccupied with that English weather which has been one of the stock American vaudeville jokes for three generations, let me develop this point.

There are colder American regions in winter, and regions which are hotter in summer, than the Midwest; and the Midwest apologist, with the Americans' consuming passion only for the *averages* in statistics (and in almost everything else), points to the average or mean winter and summer temperatures in the Midwest. But, as usual, averages signify little. What is significant is the variation of extremes about an average; and, as I said earlier, the Midwest lies in the latitude and longitude of American extremes and within parallels of paradox. Nowhere else in America do you have to suffer during the year such wild combinations, rapid changes, and wide extremes of weather varying around climatic averages. Thus in the South, Southwest, Rockies, or Great Plains, one season will be either hotter or colder than it is anywhere else in America; but in those regions Nature's compensation is the long mildness of the other seasons. This is even true of Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire in the Northeast. But not so in the Midwest. There, and even in the most extreme portions of the region, the mercury in winter seldom falls below an *average* of 10° below zero, and in summer seldom rises above a *mean* of 90°. That seems extreme enough to any European except perhaps someone from the heart of Russia; but it is as nothing compared to the extreme variations between these summer and winter averages.

The Midwest is, of course, vast and is bound to show within its ambit great variations. On its confines — in Missouri and in the south of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio — winter is always milder than at the core of the region. These were the territories settled by the first pioneers. The summer of these southern territories of the region is, however, correspondingly fiercer; temperatures often reach 105°. Yet both their summers and their winters are relatively drier. There is not so much humidity. So in the north and extreme west of the region, in Minnesota, upper Wisconsin, and North Michigan, the summers are milder but the winters fiercer; the mercury often falls to 35° below zero. Yet both summers and winters are drier. Humidity is not such a nuisance.

It is the core of the Midwest which has the worst weather: the area east of the Mississippi including the northern halves of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, the Michigan peninsula, and southern Wisconsin. This is the coastal area of the Great Lakes, which here exercise an attraction on the transcontinental lines of temperature and pressure and form a kind of

water pocket around which the great winds sweep snow, rain, and cold spells.

Dwellers in the belt that runs from Milwaukee to Chicago, the big cities along the Indiana-Michigan coastal rim, Detroit, Toledo, Cleveland, Erie, and Buffalo and a long way inland, during the ferocious winters are weighed down by a cold humidity and blasted by icy winds reaching gale dimensions. They are snowed-in frequently by blizzards that blacken noonday and paralyze all forms of traffic. They are exposed to the packing of snow into miniature but almost as deadly Himalayas of solid black ice on every path from the home driveway to the sidewalks of the metropolis. Blizzards snow-in the suburbanites to this day; and the normal snows are heavy enough to make shoveling and cleaning, overshoes and snow boots, an indispensable part of every midwesterner's winter. Rare, indeed, in any winter in this wide core of the Midwest is an ideal winter-sports day: clear, dry air, bright-blue skies, hard, strong sun, no wind, and zero or subzero temperature. When such a day dawns, everyone talks about it: commuters and housewives and storekeepers and school children.

In defense against the bitter winds and cold the Midwest has developed artificial heating in its houses, offices, and vehicles to a point at which its people are alternately baked and frozen a dozen times a day. It is not fantastic to suppose that this contributes to that extraordinarily widespread Midwest affliction known as "sinus trouble," and it certainly contributes to the pallor of the people in winter, just as the equally savage summer sun, the wind, and the extreme variations of natural and artificial temperatures contribute to the more numerous lines and wrinkles of Midwest faces.

In this core of the Midwest there is no spring — a significant natural phenomenon which may account for at least one big gap in the romantic literature and poetry of the Midwest. Winter lasts, solid and remorseless, from Thanksgiving to March. Then it often begins to relent for a tempting few days which fool plants and people alike. Next, the fierce solidity of winter gives way to chill, howling winds, torrents of rain which seem as if they should be falling at another season in the tropics, a long period of ground frosts, and day temperatures in the forties and fifties. At this time the thaw and the rains swell the big Midwest rivers into floods which devastate the countryside far down the rivers and outside the region and drown or render homeless hundreds and sometimes thousands of people.

This inclement spell generally lasts well into May or even the beginning of June — making both the fierce and the milder portions of winter into one season of six or seven months' duration. Then, the trees and plants and birds and animals having crept gradually and imperceptibly into a chill, bedraggled version of spring, suddenly the gales abate overnight. Meanwhile the sun has long been fooling everyone by clambering stoically up to the summit of the heavens for almost half the year, but with benefit of light alone. Equally suddenly he now explodes in heat ranging between 80° and 100°. . . . Frosts in May, 100° in June, are more regular than

irregular. Flowers, shrubs, birds, and mankind drink in the sun for an ecstatic week or two; the grass and the leaves are spring-green for only two or three weeks in the year; and then "summer has set in with its usual severity."

"Severity" is the word. When the summer heavens are not as brass, which they are for periods of a few days and often for weeks at a time, they pile up with majestic and terrifying cumulations of rain and thundercloud. The summer storms provide, with the star-spangled moonless nights of winter and fall, the most majestic display of the Midwest heavens in the entire year. Then the Midwest becomes tropical. Nowhere in the so-called temperate zone — from which I think the Midwest should be forever excluded — do you encounter such thunder and lightning, such torrential rains, such an opening of the fountains of the great deep. The temperature often does not fall. Instead a steamy, clammy heat pervades everything. The storms are over as quickly as they begin, but meanwhile much of the topsoil in garden and field alike has gone down to the rivers and oceans — unless the owner has level land, or has drained, terraced, or plowed by contour, or repaired the gullies on his land. Out comes the sun again and with methodical cynicism proceeds to bake the remaining topsoil to terra cotta. This then cracks into new fissures, eagerly expecting the next waterspout to widen them.

The dust, too, comes from the topsoil, whipped up in the remoter areas of the Midwest by the little embryonic "twisters" or whirlwinds which, drunkenly, waltz across the fields like pillars of cloud by day, or blown off by the sudden blasts which precede and follow the savage summer storms.

In the country the summer means dust: dust which permitted, and in many parts still permits, the poorer children to walk safely and comfortably barefoot into the pages of the Midwest's folklore, thus establishing an almost necessary qualification for the childhood of midwestern presidential candidates. The sidewalks of the towns in summer are as uncomfortable to rapidly tiring feet in all-too-light footgear as they are in winter to ankles, when the surface is knobbed and craggy with black ice.

In high summer come the insects: flies, mosquitoes, winged bugs of every shape and color — all of them "bigger and better" than in Europe — which necessitate the ubiquitous wire-screen doors and windows. This also necessitates the semi-annual chore of paterfamilias, who has to put the screens up and take them down — unless he is one of the five per cent who live in town apartments offering janitor service or are rich enough to employ gardeners or hired men. It is impossible to sit in a Midwest garden in summer because of the insects, except for two weeks in May or June.

Summer, too, conditions the household appliances: iceboxes; that figure of smoking-room folklore, and favorite of all children, the iceman; automatic refrigerators, which betray their origin by still being called ice-

boxes; and the new deep-freeze repository either at home or at a central store of private lockers. Suburban and country folk take to that most civilized institution of the Midwest summer, the sleeping porch, wire-screened on three sides. But even then the nights are treacherous for parent and child alike. Frequently the tropical storms break in the wee, sma' hours; the rain is blown in; the lightning and thunder wake the sleeper; and what begins as a welcome drop in temperature for man and beast quickly degenerates into a deathtrap by way of pleurisy or pneumonia. The temperature first yields, then falls, then drops, then plummets downward. Again paterfamilias or materfamilias plods around, this time closing windows and covering the awakened children. In the morning, heavy-lidded and loath to part from sleep, they find the sun beating down with refreshed zeal upon a porch well on the way to becoming a Black Hole of Calcutta.

When storms do not vary the monotony of heat and humidity, night succeeds night in a remorselessly growing tedium of rising temperature, and sleep comes ever more and more slowly to a humanity already exhausted, worn, and dehydrated by the rigors of successive brazen days. What winds or breezes then blow come from the Great Plains to the west, sweeping across half-parched prairies, more suggestive of a prairie fire than of the frolic wind that breathes the spring or summer's gentle zephyr.

Another trick of the Midwest summer and early fall is to bring out the grasses and weeds whose pollination causes thousands of sufferers from hay fever and other allergies to spend agonizing days and weeks. The newspapers print the day's pollen count on the front page — sure sign of its general importance! The worst sufferers can be seen wearing a kind of gas mask that makes them look like Martians. Those prone to the ubiquitous sinus trouble are also among the sufferers. Thus is the prairie revenged on the children of its destroyers!

Nor is there in the Midwest summer the purifying influence and refreshing ozone of the sea. No one born in England is more than sixty miles from sea water; so on this point I am, though trying not to be, a prejudiced witness. But the great and smaller lakes and rivers of the Midwest certainly do not perform what Keats called the "task of pure ablution" about their shores. Quite the contrary. The cities often empty their sewage, fully or not so fully treated, into these lakes and rivers, with results, down-current, that make the visitor wonder not so much at the widespread outbreaks of disease, which often become epidemics, as at the authorities' ability to keep them within any bounds at all. Nature is kind; the Midwest and its waterways are vast; man is puny; and all animals naturally become conditioned and self-inoculated in a given environment. Happily, the well-to-do all build swimming pools; there are innumerable clubs; and cities build and operate pools which only occasionally have to be closed because of one epidemic or another.

As with the natural water, so with the air of the region: coming into

the Midwest from the seaboard in summer, one has the impression that one is living under "that inverted bowl they call the sky" the air of which has all been breathed before. There is iodine and many another property in seaside air, and, at least if we are to go by the results of inquiries by European experts, the folk and their cities by the sea are on the whole healthier than those deep in continental interiors.

Yet the Midwest has one season which, though only of two months' duration, goes some of the way to redress the overweighted balance of wicked winters and savage summers. It is the fall. From mid-September to mid-November, with short interruptions of chilly, rainy days, the Midwest gets its only temperate period of the year. It is much finer, much more beautiful, than what is conventionally called "Indian summer." The days are warm and the nights cool, with occasional light frosts gradually becoming more intense. The foliage slowly takes on those remarkable shades and colors which make the fall in America and Canada unique in the whole world. "Great clouds along pacific skies" rarely explode into the wrathful and regular thunderstorms of summer. The last tiring insects become fewer and lazier. The skies become more brightly blue than at any other time of the year.

Paterfamilias takes down his screens, puts up storm windows, and rakes leaves. The air is mildly imbued with the thin and acrid smell of wood smoke. The winds are tamed; the dust dies out of the atmosphere; and the only real breezes of the year gently rustle the long, crackling, dried-out leaves of corn on the stalks. Berries of all kinds and colors deck the hedges and shrubberies. The very heart of the cities becomes finally comfortable. Over all, a different suffused light from the sloping sun strikes street and building, forest and field, in a strange way, throwing shadows into unexpected places and illuminating what for most of the year lay in shadow. The sunsets, always imposing in the Midwest, now reach their majestic climax. Homeward-bound commuters see the red sun making the west look like that "dark and bloody ground" whence the Midwest itself sprang. The fruit is picked, bottling goes on in kitchens or basements, and late root vegetables alone are left in the fields or gardens. And so imperceptibly, but with the logic of seasons and Nature and the pioneers' history, the Midwest draws toward that peculiarly American family festival of Thanksgiving, to the accompaniment of the first flurries of new snow.

Thus the Midwest ends its year mildly and with promise, as if Nature were relenting after so much savagery during the other ten months. Being a region of such violent natural extremes, it is small wonder that its people have come to reflect wide extremes in their individual and collective characteristics. They have had to adapt themselves to sudden and violent changes of weather. All they could do was to perfect mechanical defenses, to live as much indoors as possible during the most extreme three quarters of the year, and "worry through." There is a saying in Chicago: "If you don't like our weather, wait ten minutes; it'll change."

Riveters

Editors of Fortune

"Know-how" is something we all admire in a master workman, whatever his job may be. This explanation of the work of a riveting gang has been often reprinted, for it is one of the best available accounts of a skilled team on the job. Whether it be as simple an operation as polishing shoes or as complicated an art as fly-fishing, there is know-how involved in almost everything we do; and every one of us is an expert at some kind of performance: taking snapshots, building model railroads, quarterbacking a team, baking a soufflé, or yo-yo. Such knowledge is often the keystone of the arch of our experience.

THE MOST CURIOUS fact about a riveter's skill is that he is not one man but four: "heater," "catcher," "bucker-up," and "gun-man." The gang is the unit. Riveters are hired and fired as gangs, work in gangs, and learn in gangs. If one member of a gang is absent on a given morning the entire gang is replaced. A gang may continue to exist after its original members have all succumbed to slippery girders or to the temptations of life on earth. And the skill of the gang will continue with it. Men overlap each other in service and teach each other what they know. The difference between a gang which can drive 525 heavy rivets in a day and a gang which can drive 250 is a difference of coördination and smoothness. You learn how not to make mistakes and how not to waste time.

The actual process of riveting is simple enough — in description. Rivets are carried to the job by the rivet boy, a riveter's apprentice whose ambition it is to replace one of the members of the gang. The rivets are dumped beside a small coke furnace, which stands on a platform of loose boards roped to the steel girders and is tended by the heater. He wears heavy clothes to protect him from the flying sparks, and he holds a pair of tongs about a foot and a half long in his right hand. His skill appears in his knowledge of the exact time necessary to heat the rivets. If he overheats the steel, it will flake, and the flakes will permit the rivet to turn in its hole. That rivet will be condemned.

When the heater judges that his rivet is right, he turns to the catcher, who may be above or below him or 50 feet away on the same floor with the naked girders between. There is no means of handing the rivet over. It must be thrown. And it must be accurately thrown. The catcher is armed with a battered tin can with which to catch the red-hot steel.

The catcher's position is not exactly one which a sportsman catching rivets for pleasure would choose. He stands upon a narrow platform of loose planks near the connection upon which the gang is at work. If he moves more than a step or two, or loses his balance, he is gone. And if he

Reprinted from the October, 1930, issue of *Fortune* magazine by special permission of the editors. Copyright, 1930, Time Inc.

lets the rivet pass, it is capable of drilling a man's skull 500 feet below as neatly as a shank of shrapnel. Why more rivets do not fall is the great mystery of skyscraper construction. The only reasonable explanation offered to date is the reply of an erector's foreman who was asked what would happen if a catcher let a rivet go by while the streets below were crowded. "Well," said the foreman, "he's not supposed to."

There is practically no exchange of words among riveters. They seem averse to speech in any form. The catcher faces the heater. He holds his tin can up. The heater swings his tongs, releasing one handle. The red iron arcs through the air in one of those parabolas so much admired by the stenographers in the neighboring windows. And the tin can clanks.

The catcher picks the rivet out of his can with a pair of tongs and rams it into the rivet hole. Then the bucker-up braces himself with his dolly bar, a short heavy bar of steel, against the capped end of the rivet. On outside wall work he is sometimes obliged to hold on by one elbow with his weight out over the street and the jar of the riveting shaking his precarious balance. And the gun-man lifts his pneumatic hammer to the rivet's other end.

The gun-man's work is the hardest, physically. The hammers weigh about 35 pounds. They must be held against the rivet end with the gun-man's entire strength, for a period of 40 to 60 seconds. And the concussion to the ears and to the arms is very great. The whole platform shakes and the vibration can be felt down the column 30 stories below.

Riveters work ordinarily eight hours a day at a wage of $15.40 a day. They are not employed in bad or slippery weather, and they are not usually on the regular pay roll of the erectors, but go from job to job following foremen whom they like. There is no great future for a riveter.

The Feel

Paul Gallico • 1897–

Thirsty as you may be for experiences, you cannot taste all of them though you live a hundred years. On the other hand, you cannot properly know any experience without yourself having participated actively in events. A certain amount of participation, a generous addition of imagination, and one can understand, or "feel," experiences in fields in which one is a complete amateur. How this happens is Gallico's subject. Of what experiences can you write thus, from the inside?

A CHILD wandering through a department store with its mother, is admonished over and over again not to touch things. Mother is convinced

Reprinted from *Farewell to Sport* by Paul Gallico, by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright, 1938, by Paul Gallico. Pp. 287–298.

that the child only does it to annoy or because it is a child, and usually hasn't the vaguest inkling of the fact that Junior is "touching" because he is a little blotter soaking up information and knowledge, and "feel" is an important adjunct to seeing. Adults are exactly the same, in a measure, as you may ascertain when some new gadget or article is produced for inspection. The average person says: "Here, let me see that," and holds out his hand. He doesn't mean "see," because he is already seeing it. What he means is that he wants to get it into his hands and feel it so as to become better acquainted.

. . . I do not insist that a curiosity and capacity for feeling sports is necessary to be a successful writer, but it is fairly obvious that a man who has been tapped on the chin with five fingers wrapped up in a leather boxing glove and propelled by the arm of an expert knows more about that particular sensation than one who has not, always provided he has the gift of expressing himself. I once inquired of a heavyweight prizefighter by the name of King Levinsky, in a radio interview, what it felt like to be hit on the chin by Joe Louis, the King having just acquired that experience with rather disastrous results. Levinsky considered the matter for a moment and then reported: "It don't feel like nuttin'," but added that for a long while afterwards he felt as though he were "in a transom."

I was always a child who touched things and I have always had a tremendous curiosity with regard to sensation. If I knew what playing a game felt like, particularly against or in the company of experts, I was better equipped to write about the playing of it and the problems of the men and women who took part in it. And so, at one time or another, I have tried them all, football, baseball, boxing, riding, shooting, swimming, squash, handball, fencing, driving, flying, both land and sea planes, rowing, canoeing, skiing, riding a bicycle, ice-skating, roller-skating, tennis, golf, archery, basketball, running, both the hundred-yard dash and the mile, the high jump and shot put, badminton, angling, deep-sea, stream-, and surf-casting, billiards and bowling, motorboating and wrestling, besides riding as a passenger with the fastest men on land and water and in the air, to see what it felt like. Most of them I dabbled in as a youngster going through school and college, and others, like piloting a plane, squash, fencing, and skiing, I took up after I was old enough to know better, purely to get the feeling of what they were like.

None of these things can I do well, but I never cared about becoming an expert, and besides, there wasn't time. But there is only one way to find out accurately human sensations in a ship two or three thousand feet up when the motor quits, and that is actually to experience that gone feeling at the pit of the stomach and the sharp tingling of the skin from head to foot, followed by a sudden amazing sharpness of vision, clear-sightedness, and coolness that you never knew you possessed as you find the question of life or death completely in your own hands. It is not the "you" that you know, but somebody else, a stranger, who noses the ship down, circles, fastens

upon the one best spot to sit down, pushes or pulls buttons to try to get her started again, and finally drops her in, safe and sound. And it is only by such experience that you learn likewise of the sudden weakness that hits you right at the back of the knees after you have climbed out and started to walk around her and that comes close to knocking you flat as for the first time since the engine quit its soothing drone you think of destruction and sudden death.

Often my courage has failed me and I have funked completely, such as the time I went up to the top of the thirty-foot Olympic diving-tower at Jones Beach, Long Island, during the competitions, to see what it was like to dive from that height, and wound up crawling away from the edge on hands and knees, dizzy, scared, and a little sick, but with a wholesome respect for the boys and girls who hurled themselves through the air and down through the tough skin of the water from that awful height. At other times sheer ignorance of what I was getting into has led me into tight spots such as the time I came down the Olympic ski run from the top of the Kreuzeck, six thousand feet above Garmisch-Partenkirchen, after having been on skis but once before in snow and for the rest had no more than a dozen lessons on an indoor artificial slide in a New York department store. At one point my legs, untrained, got so tired that I couldn't stem (brake) any more, and I lost control and went full tilt and all out, down a three-foot twisting path cut out of the side of the mountain, with a two-thousand-foot abyss on the left and the mountain itself on the right. That was probably the most scared I have ever been, and I scare fast and often. I remember giving myself up for lost and wondering how long it would take them to retrieve my body and whether I should be still alive. In the meantime the speed of the descent was increasing. Somehow I was keeping my feet and negotiating turns, how I will never know, until suddenly the narrow patch opened out into a wide, steep stretch of slope with a rise at the other end, and *that* part of the journey was over.

By some miracle I got to the bottom of the run uninjured, having made most of the trip down the icy, perpendicular slopes on the flat of my back. It was the thrill and scare of a lifetime, and to date no one has been able to persuade me to try a jump. I know when to stop. After all, I am entitled to rely upon my imagination for something. But when it was all over and I found myself still whole, it was also distinctly worth while to have learned what is required of a ski runner in the breakneck *Abfahrt* or downhill race, or the difficult *slalom*. Five days later, when I climbed laboriously (still on skis) halfway up that Alp and watched the Olympic downhill racers hurtling down the perilous, ice-covered, and nearly perpendicular *Steilhang*, I knew that I was looking at a great group of athletes who, for one thing, did not know the meaning of the word "fear." The slope was studded with small pine trees and rocks, but half of the field gained precious seconds by hitting that slope all out, with complete contempt for disaster rushing up at them at a speed often better than sixty miles an hour. And

when an unfortunate Czech skidded off the course at the bottom of the slope and into a pile of rope and got himself snarled up as helpless as a fly in a spider's web, it was a story that I could write from the heart. I had spent ten minutes getting myself untangled after a fall, *without* any rope to add to the difficulties. It seems that I couldn't find where my left leg ended and one more ski than I had originally donned seemed to be involved somehow. Only a person who has been on those fiendish runners knows the sensation.

It all began back in 1922 when I was a cub sports-writer and consumed with more curiosity than was good for my health. I had seen my first professional prizefights and wondered at the curious behavior of men under the stress of blows, the sudden checking and the beginning of a little fall forward after a hard punch, the glazing of the eyes and the loss of locomotor control, the strange actions of men on the canvas after a knockdown as they struggled to regain their senses and arise on legs that seemed to have turned into rubber. I had never been in any bad fist fights as a youngster, though I had taken a little physical punishment in football, but it was not enough to complete the picture. Could one think under those conditions?

I had been assigned to my first training-camp coverage, Dempsey's at Saratoga Springs, where he was preparing for his famous fight with Luis Firpo. For days I watched him sag a spar boy with what seemed to be no more than a light cuff on the neck, or pat his face with what looked like no more than a caressing stroke of his arm, and the fellow would come all apart at the seams and collapse in a useless heap, grinning vacuously or twitching strangely. My burning curiosity got the better of prudence and a certain reluctance to expose myself to physical pain. I asked Dempsey to permit me to box a round with him. I had never boxed before, but I was in good physical shape, having just completed a four-year stretch as a galley slave in the Columbia eight-oared shell.

When it was over and I escaped through the ropes, shaking, bleeding a little from the mouth, with rosin dust on my pants and a vicious throbbing in my head, I knew all that there was to know about being hit in the prize-ring. It seems that I had gone to an expert for tuition. I knew the sensation of being stalked and pursued by a relentless, truculent professional destroyer whose trade and business it was to injure men. I saw the quick flash of the brown forearm that precedes the stunning shock as a bony, leather-bound fist lands on cheek or mouth. I learned more (partly from photographs of the lesson, viewed afterwards, one of which shows me ducked under a vicious left hook, an act of which I never had the slightest recollection) about instinctive ducking and blocking than I could have in ten years of looking at prizefights, and I learned, too, that as the soldier never hears the bullet that kills him, so does the fighter rarely, if ever, see the punch that tumbles blackness over him like a mantle, with a tearing rip as though the roof of his skull were exploding, and robs him of his senses.

There was just that — a ripping in my head and then sudden blackness, and the next thing I knew, I was sitting on the canvas covering of the ring floor with my legs collapsed under me, grinning idiotically. How often since have I seen that same silly, goofy look on the faces of dropped fighters — and understood it. I held onto the floor with both hands, because the ring and the audience outside were making a complete clockwise revolution, came to a stop, and then went back again counter-clockwise. When I struggled to my feet, Jack Kearns, Dempsey's manager, was counting over me, but I neither saw nor heard him and was only conscious that I was in a ridiculous position and that the thing to do was to get up and try to fight back. The floor swayed and rocked beneath me like a fishing dory in an off-shore swell, and it was a welcome respite when Dempsey rushed into a clinch, held me up, and whispered into my ear: "Wrestle around a bit, son, until your head clears." And then it was that I learned what those little love-taps to the back of the neck and the short digs to the ribs can mean to the groggy pugilist more than half knocked out. It is a murderous game, and the fighter who can escape after having been felled by a lethal blow has my admiration. And there, too, I learned that there can be no sweeter sound than the bell that calls a halt to hostilities.

From that afternoon on, also, dated my antipathy for the spectator at prizefights who yells: "Come on, you bum, get up and fight! Oh, you big quitter! Yah yellow, yah yellow!" Yellow, eh? It is all a man can do to get up after being stunned by a blow, much less fight back. But they do it. And how a man is able to muster any further interest in a combat after being floored with a blow to the pit of the stomach will always remain to me a miracle of what the human animal is capable of under stress.

Further experiments were less painful, but equally illuminating. A couple of sets of tennis with Vinnie Richards taught me more about what is required of a top-flight tournament tennis-player than I could have got out of a dozen books or years of reporting tennis matches. It is one thing to sit in a press box and write caustically that Brown played uninspired tennis, or Black's court covering was faulty and that his frequent errors cost him the set. It is quite another to stand across the net at the back of a service court and try to get your racket on a service that is so fast that the ear can hardly detect the interval between the sound of the server's bat hitting the ball and the ball striking the court. Tournament tennis is a different game from week-end tennis. For one thing, in average tennis, after the first hard service has gone into the net or out, you breathe a sigh of relief, move up closer and wait for the cripple to come floating over. In big-time tennis second service is practically as hard as the first, with an additional twist on the ball.

It is impossible to judge or know anything about the speed of a forehand drive hit by a champion until you have had one fired at you, or, rather, away from you, and you have made an attempt to return it. It is then that you first realize that tennis is played more with the head than with the

arms and the legs. The fastest player in the world cannot get to a drive to return it if he hasn't thought correctly, guessed its direction, and anticipated it by a fraction of a second.

There was golf with Bob Jones and Gene Sarazen and Tommy Armour, little Cruickshank and Johnny Farrell, and Diegel and other professionals; and experiments at trying to keep up in the water with Johnny Weissmuller, Helene Madison, and Eleanor Holm, attempts to catch football passes thrown by Benny Friedman. Nobody actually plays golf until he has acquired the technical perfection to be able to hit the ball accurately, high, low, hooked or faded and placed. And nobody knows what real golf is like until he has played around with a professional and seen him play, not the ball, but the course, the roll of the land, the hazards, the wind, and the texture of the greens and the fairways. It looks like showmanship when a top-flight golfer plucks a handful of grass and lets it flutter in the air, or abandons his drive to march two hundred yards down to the green and look over the situation. It isn't. It's golf. The average player never knows or cares whether he is putting with or across the grain of a green. The professional *always* knows. The same average player standing on the tee is concentrated on getting the ball somewhere on the fairway, two hundred yards out. The professional when preparing to drive is actually to all intents and purposes playing his *second* shot. He means to place his drive so as to open up the green for his approach. But you don't find that out until you have played around with them when they are relaxed and not competing, and listen to them talk and plan attacks on holes.

Major-league baseball is one of the most difficult and precise of all games, but you would never know it unless you went down on the field and got close to it and tried it yourself. For instance, the distance between pitcher and catcher is a matter of twenty paces, but it doesn't seem like enough when you don a catcher's mitt and try to hold a pitcher with the speed of Dizzy Dean or Dazzy Vance. Not even the sponge that catchers wear in the palm of the hand when working with fast-ball pitchers, and the bulky mitt are sufficient to rob the ball of shock and sting that lames your hand unless you know how to ride with the throw and kill some of its speed. The pitcher, standing on his little elevated mound, looms up enormously over you at that short distance, and when he ties himself into a coiled spring preparatory to letting fly, it requires all your self-control not to break and run for safety. And as for the things they can do with a baseball, those major-league pitchers . . . ! One way of finding out is to wander down on the field an hour or so before game-time when there is no pressure on them, pull on the catcher's glove, and try to hold them.

I still remember my complete surprise the first time I tried catching for a real curve-ball pitcher. He was a slim, spidery left-hander of the New York Yankees, many years ago, by the name of Herb Pennock. He called that he was going to throw a fast breaking curve and warned me to expect the ball at least two feet outside the plate. Then he wound up and

let it go, and that ball came whistling right down the groove for the center of the plate. A novice, I chose to believe what I saw and not what I heard, and prepared to catch it where it was headed for, a spot which of course it never reached, because just in front of the rubber, it swerved sharply to the right and passed nearly a yard from my glove. I never had a chance to catch it. That way, you learn about the mysterious drop, the ball that sails down the alley chest high but which you must be prepared to catch around your ankles because of the sudden dip it takes at the end of its passage as though someone were pulling it down with a string. Also you find out about the queer fade-away, the slow curve, the fast in- and out-shoots that seem to be timed almost as delicately as shrapnel, to burst, or rather break, just when they will do the most harm — namely, at the moment when the batter is swinging.

Facing a big-league pitcher with a bat on your shoulder and trying to hit his delivery is another vital experience in gaining an understanding of the game about which you are trying to write vividly. It is one thing to sit in the stands and scream at a batsman: "Oh, you bum!" for striking out in a pinch, and another to stand twenty yards from that big pitcher and try to make up your mind in a hundredth of a second whether to hit at the offering or not, where to swing and when, not to mention worrying about protecting yourself from the consequences of being struck by the ball that seems to be heading straight for your skull at an appalling rate of speed. Because, if you are a big-league player, you cannot very well afford to be gun-shy and duck away in panic from a ball that swerves in the last moment and breaks perfectly over the plate, while the umpire calls: "Strike!" and the fans jeer. Nor can you afford to take a crack on the temple from the ball. Men have died from that. It calls for undreamed-of niceties of nerve and judgment, but you don't find that out until you have stepped to the plate cold a few times during batting practice or in training quarters, with nothing at stake but the acquisition of experience, and see what a fine case of the jumping jitters you get. Later on, when you are writing your story, your imagination, backed by the experience, will be able to supply a picture of what the batter is going through as he stands at the plate in the closing innings of an important game, with two or three men on base, two out, and his team behind in the scoring, and fifty thousand people screaming at him.

The catching and holding of a forward pass for a winning touchdown on a cold, wet day always make a good yarn, but you might get an even better one out of it if you happen to know from experience about the elusive qualities of a hard, soggy, mud-slimed football rifled through the air, as well as something about the exquisite timing, speed, and courage it takes to catch it on a dead run, with two or three 190-pound men reaching for it at the same time or waiting to crash you as soon as your fingers touch it.

Any football coach during a light practice will let you go down the field

and try to catch punts, the long, fifty-yard spirals and the tricky, tumbling end-over-enders. Unless you have had some previous experience, you won't hang on to one out of ten, besides knocking your fingers out of joint. But if you have any imagination, thereafter you will know that it calls for more than negligible nerve to judge and hold that ball and even plan to run with it, when there are two husky ends bearing down at full speed, preparing for a head-on tackle.

In 1932 I covered my first set of National Air Races, in Cleveland, and immediately decided that I had to learn how to fly to find out what that felt like. Riding as a passenger isn't flying. Being up there all alone at the controls of a ship is. And at the same time began a series of investigations into the "feel" of the mechanized sports to see what they were all about and the qualities of mentality, nerve, and physique they called for from their participants. These included a ride with Gar Wood in his latest and fastest speedboat, *Miss America X,* in which for the first time he pulled the throttle wide open on the Detroit River straightaway; a trip with the Indianapolis Speedway driver Cliff Bergere, around the famous brick raceway; and a flip with Lieutenant Al Williams, one time U. S. Schneider Cup race pilot.

I was scared with Wood, who drove me at 127 miles an hour, jounced, shaken, vibrated, choked with fumes from the exhausts, behind which I sat hanging on desperately to the throttle bar, which after a while got too hot to hold. I was on a plank between Wood and his mechanic, Johnson, and thought that my last moment had come. I was still more scared when Cliff Bergere hit 126 on the Indianapolis straightaways in the tiny racing car in which I was hopelessly wedged, and after the first couple of rounds quite resigned to die and convinced that I should. But I think the most scared I have ever been while moving fast was during a ride I took in the cab of a locomotive on the straight, level stretch between Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Chicago, where for a time we hit 90 miles per hour, which of course is no speed at all. But nobody who rides in the comfortable Pullman coaches has any idea of the didoes cut up by a locomotive in a hurry, or the thrill of pelting through a small town, all out and wide open, including the crossing of some thirty or forty frogs and switches, all of which must be set right. But that wasn't sport. That was just plain excitement.

I have never regretted these researches. Now that they are over, there isn't enough money to make me do them again. But they paid me dividends, I figured. During the great Thompson Speed Trophy race for land planes at Cleveland in 1935, Captain Roscoe Turner was some eight or nine miles in the lead in his big golden, low-wing, speed monoplane. Suddenly, coming into the straightaway in front of the grandstands, buzzing along at 280 miles an hour like an angry hornet, a streamer of thick, black smoke burst from the engine cowling and trailed back behind the ship. Turner pulled up immediately, using his forward speed to gain all the altitude possible, turned and got back to the edge of the field, still

pouring out that evil black smoke. Then he cut his switch, dipped her nose down, landed with a bounce and a bump, and rolled up to the line in a perfect stop. The crowd gave him a great cheer as he climbed out of the oil-spattered machine, but it was a cheer of sympathy because he had lost the race after having been so far in the lead that had he continued he could not possibly have been overtaken.

There was that story, but there was a better one too. Only the pilots on the field, all of them white around the lips and wiping from their faces a sweat not due to the oppressive summer heat, knew that they were looking at a man who from that time on, to use their own expression, was living on borrowed time. It isn't often when a Thompson Trophy racer with a landing speed of around eighty to ninety miles an hour goes haywire in the air, that the pilot is able to climb out of the cockpit and walk away from his machine. From the time of that first burst of smoke until the wheels touched the ground and stayed there, he was a hundred-to-one shot to live. To the initiated, those dreadful moments were laden with suspense and horror. Inside that contraption was a human being who any moment might be burned to a horrible, twisted cinder, or smashed into the ground beyond all recognition, a human being who was cool, gallant, and fighting desperately. Every man and woman on the field who had ever been in trouble in the air was living those awful seconds with him in terror and suspense. I, too, was able to experience it. That is what makes getting the "feel" of things distinctly worth while.

Shooting an Elephant

George Orwell • *1903–1950*

No, shooting an elephant is not an experience you would normally have, but that is not the point of our including this selection. There are experiences which implicate within themselves an entire way of life, a class point of view, where one's individual will and desire must yield to the larger social pressure. "Shooting an Elephant" does not say so — it is not an essay — but it condemns an imperialistic policy just as surely as Jonathan Swift's ironic essay, "A Modest Proposal," condemned the brutality and injustice of the English crown.

IN MOULMEIN, in Lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people — the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to

From *Shooting an Elephant and Other Essays* by George Orwell, copyright, 1950, by Sonia Brownell Orwell. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., and of Martin Secker & Warburg, Ltd.

happen to me. I was sub-divisional police officer of the town, and in an aimless, petty kind of way anti-European feeling was very bitter. No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress. As a police officer I was an obvious target and was baited whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a nimble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves. The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans.

All this was perplexing and upsetting. For at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. Theoretically — and secretly, of course — I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos — all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. But I could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East. I did not even know that the British Empire is dying, still less did I know that it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it. All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tryanny, as something clamped down, in *saecula saeculorum*, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. Feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.

One day something happened which in a roundabout way was enlightening. It was a tiny incident in itself, but it gave me a better glimpse than I had had before of the real nature of imperialism — the real motives for which despotic governments act. Early one morning the sub-inspector at a police station the other end of the town rang me up on the 'phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and do something about it? I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see what was happening and I got on to a pony and started out. I took my rifle, an old .44 Winchester and much too small to kill an elephant,

but I thought the noise might be useful *in terrorem.* Various Burmans stopped me on the way and told me about the elephant's doings. It was not, of course, a wild elephant, but a tame one which had gone "must." It had been chained up, as tame elephants always are when their attack of "must" is due, but on the previous night it had broken its chain and escaped. Its mahout, the only person who could manage it when it was in that state, had set out in pursuit, but had taken the wrong direction and was now twelve hours' journey away, and in the morning the elephant had suddenly reappeared in the town. The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody's bamboo hut, killed a cow and raided some fruit-stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van and, when the driver jumped out and took to his heels, had turned the van over and inflicted violences upon it.

The Burmese sub-inspector and some Indian constables were waiting for me in the quarter where the elephant had been seen. It was a very poor quarter, a labyrinth of squalid bamboo huts, thatched with palm-leaf, winding all over a steep hillside. I remember that it was a cloudy, stuffy morning at the beginning of the rains. We began questioning the people as to where the elephant had gone and, as usual, failed to get any definite information. That is invariably the case in the East; a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes. Some of the people said that the elephant had gone in one direction, some said that he had gone in another, some professed not even to have heard of any elephant. I had almost made up my mind that the whole story was a pack of lies, when we heard yells a little distance away. There was a loud, scandalized cry of "Go away, child! Go away this instant!" and an old woman with a switch in her hand came round the corner of a hut, violently shooing away a crowd of naked children. Some more women followed, clicking their tongues and exclaiming; evidently there was something that the children ought not to have seen. I rounded the hut and saw a man's dead body sprawling in the mud. He was an Indian, a black Dravidian coolie, almost naked, and he could not have been dead many minutes. The people said that the elephant had come suddenly upon him round the corner of the hut, caught him with its trunk, put its foot on his back and ground him into the earth. This was the rainy season and the ground was soft, and his face had scored a trench a foot deep and a couple of yards long. He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unendurable agony. (Never tell me, by the way, that the dead look peaceful. Most of the corpses I have seen looked devilish.) The friction of the great beast's foot had stripped the skin from his back as neatly as one skins a rabbit. As soon as I saw the dead man I sent an orderly to a friend's house nearby to borrow an elephant rifle.

I had already sent back the pony, not wanting it to go mad with fright and throw me if it smelt the elephant.

The orderly came back in a few minutes with a rifle and five cartridges, and meanwhile some Burmans had arrived and told us that the elephant was in the paddy fields below, only a few hundred yards away. As I started forward practically the whole population of the quarter flocked out of the houses and followed me. They had seen the rifle and were all shouting excitedly that I was going to shoot the elephant. They had not shown much interest in the elephant when he was merely ravaging their homes, but it was different now that he was going to be shot. It was a bit of fun to them, as it would be to an English crowd; besides they wanted the meat. It made me vaguely uneasy. I had no intention of shooting the elephant — I had merely sent for the rifle to defend myself if necessary — and it is always unnerving to have a crowd following you. I marched down the hill, looking and feeling a fool, with the rifle over my shoulder and an ever-growing army of people jostling at my heels. At the bottom, when you got away from the huts, there was a metalled road and beyond that a miry waste of paddy fields a thousand yards across, not yet ploughed but soggy from the first rains and dotted with coarse grass. The elephant was standing eight yards from the road, his left side towards us. He took not the slightest notice of the crowd's approach. He was tearing up bunches of grass, beating them against his knees to clean them and stuffing them into his mouth.

I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant — it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery — and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided. And at that distance, peacefully eating, the elephant looked no more dangerous than a cow. I thought then and I think now that his attack of "must" was already passing off; in which case he would merely wander harmlessly about until the mahout came back and caught him. Moreover, I did not in the least want to shoot him. I decided that I would watch him for a little while to make sure that he did not turn savage again, and then go home.

But at that moment I glanced round at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. It blocked the road for a long distance on either side. I looked at the sea of yellow faces above the garish clothes — faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with

the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd — seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the "natives," and so in every crisis he has got to do what the "natives" expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant. I had committed myself to doing it when I sent for the rifle. A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing — no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's life in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him beating his bunch of grass against his knees, with that preoccupied grandmotherly air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a *large* animal.) Besides, there was the beast's owner to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks, five pounds, possibly. But I had got to act quickly. I turned to some experienced-looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing: he took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him.

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behavior. If he charged, I could shoot; if he took no notice of me, it would be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. But even then I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only of the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of "natives"; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a

grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do. There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim.

The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German thing with cross-hair sights. I did not then know that in shooting an elephant one would shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from ear-hole to ear-hole. I ought, therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to have aimed straight at his ear-hole; actually I aimed several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward.

When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick — one never does when a shot goes home — but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time — it might have been five seconds, I dare say — he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upward like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open — I could see far down into caverns of pale pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did not weaken. Finally I fired my two remaining shots into the spot where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the tortured breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt that I had got to put an end to that

dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I sent back for my small rifle and poured shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock.

In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away. I heard later that it took him half an hour to die. Burmans were bringing dahs and baskets even before I left, and I was told they had stripped his body almost to the bones by the afternoon.

Afterwards, of course, there were endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant. The owner was furious, but he was only an Indian and could do nothing. Besides, legally I had done the right thing, for a mad elephant has to be killed, like a mad dog, if its owner fails to control it. Among the Europeans opinion was divided. The older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie. And afterwards I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and it gave me a sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant. I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool.

Rick Discovers Jazz

Dorothy Baker • 1907–

This is a selection from the first chapter of Young Man With a Horn, *a novel inspired, the author says, "by the music, but not the life of a great musician, Leon (Bix) Beiderbecke, who died in the year 1931." "It is the story of a number of things — of the gap between the man's musical ability and his ability to fit it to his own life; of the difference between the demands of expression and the demands of life here below; and finally of the difference between good and bad in a native American art form — jazz music. Because there's good in this music and there's bad. There is music that is turned out sweet in hotel ballrooms and there is music that comes right out of the genuine urge and doesn't come for money." In this selection Rick Martin and his colored friend Smoke Jordan listen to the music of Jeff Williams and his Four Mutts at the Cotton Club; and Rick, who has an inborn feeling for music but no training beyond his own experiments with a Mission piano, gets a start on his career in jazz by meeting Jeff.*

Dorothy Baker, *Young Man with a Horn* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1938), pp. 38–68. Copyright, 1938, by Dorothy Baker.

ONE THING tends to lead to another, and this case is no exception. Within a month after the night when Rick Martin and Smoke Jordan had clasped hands in friendship over the shared, but not identical, experience of a first cigar, Rick became an habitué of the Cotton Club, a back-window customer, but none the less a customer. Once they got started he and Smoke went three or four nights a week to stand or sit under the back window of the Cotton Club and listen to the music of Jeff Williams and his Four Mutts. These five, none of them much older than twenty, were so many gold mines as far as the pure vein of natural music is concerned. They came equipped with their racial heritage despite the fact that they had been put down in Los Angeles, of all places, and not, as Nature must have intended, in New Orleans or Memphis.

Smoke and Rick stayed outside and let the music come to them, and they didn't strain their ears, either; anybody could have understood that band three blocks away. It wasn't that they were loud; it was that they were so firm about the way they played, no halfway measures, nothing fuzzy. They knew what they were getting at, singly and as a group.

It didn't take Rick long to know what they were getting at, right along with them. He had, himself come equipped with the same equipment as Jeff and his Mutts — the same basic need to make music, the same sharp ear to discover it. And he discovered a great deal, there under the window listening to the band — first time he'd ever really heard a band except for military ones in occasional parades; opportunities to hear music weren't presenting themselves on every hand in those days as they are now; those were the days of crystal sets for the few. If Rick had grown up in the present scene he'd probably have had his head perpetually inside a walnut radio cabinet listening to this one or that one playing a tea dance. But as it was he had no chance to be led astray; all he ever heard was the pure thing put out fresh by the Cotton Club ensemble.

He went through the stages; first he heard the tunes and they were the whole thing. Those he knew already he recognized with intense pleasure. "Beale Street Mamma," he'd say to Smoke at the end of the second bar, and Smoke would say sure enough, as if he'd just had something pointed out to him. He'd never have been caught dead saying how'd you guess or any of the bright things a white connoisseur might have said to a novice.

It took Rick only the minimum time to get out of this sort of thing, to take the tune for granted and forget it in favor of what was being done for it. They always did plenty for it at the Cotton Club. The variations were the real matter, not the theme. What happened was that Rick, the amateur's apprentice, sat beside the amateur himself and developed his ear to ten times normal capacity by the simple process of listening with it. They sat on a couple of upturned boxes, leaned their backs against the very Cotton Club, and listened. Smoke sometimes beat very softly with the flat of his hand against a garbage-can lid that had got out of place

somehow; he just held the thing on his lap and let his hands fall against it, and got, as he invariably did whenever he let his hands or feet fall against anything, some very effective effects. He didn't intrude his drumming. He just kept the lid on his lap, so that if he had to do something about it he could. No more than that; you couldn't expect less from so serious a drummer.

Los Angeles weather is all right. Autumn nights stay relatively on the balmy side, and it was no great test of physical courage for Messrs. Jordan and Martin to sit night after night behind the Cotton Club exposed to the Los Angeles elements. It was, as a matter of fact, really very pleasant out there. A beam of light slanted out of the window above them and made a sort of lean-to for them to sit behind. There they could see each other perfectly and smoke cigarettes, not cigars, without having the not-quite-convinced feeling you get from smoking in complete darkness. And yet everything was nicely toned down. For their purpose they were much better off outside than they would have been inside. Inside, the air was enough to befuddle you, and the dancing — the clientèle being mostly Negro with a light mixture of Mexicans and Filipinos — was distracting, a whole show in itself. Inseparable as music and dancing fundamentally must be, it is only the layman who prefers to dance to, rather than listen to, really good jazz. Good jazz has so much going on inside it that dancing to it, for anybody who likes the music, is a kind of dissipation. Bach's "Brandenburgs" would make good dance music, but nobody dances to them; they make too-good dance music. The improvisations of Jeff Williams and his band weren't anybody's Brandenburgs, but they had something in common with them, a kind of hard, finished brilliance. . . .

This playing style is worth some going into. Jeff's band didn't play from music, though they could all read music. They had two styles of playing, known to the present trade as Memphis style and New Orleans style. The difference between the two is something like the difference between the two styles of chow mein: in one you get the noodles and the sauce served separately, and in the other sauce and noodles are mixed before they are served. Likewise, Memphis style is sometimes called "take your turn," and New Orleans has everybody in at the same time. In Memphis the theme is established in the first chorus, and then each man takes a separate crack at a variation on it. This system has the advantage of encouraging competition in virtuosity. It was a point of honor in Jeff's band for each man to get more into his chorus than his predecessor had in his. It made for a terrific heightening of interest on the part of the players themselves, and it left Smoke and Rick, the impartial unseen judges, choking with the excitement of the chase.

But the way they did Memphis was just child's play compared to the way they did New Orleans. Here they were all in on it from start to finish. Each man went his separate and uncharted way, and first thing you know you had two and two equaling at least five. They achieved, you

never could say how, a highly involved counterpoint. No accidents, either, because they did it on tune after tune, and never the same way twice. Seek out the separate voices and you'd find each one doing nicely, thanks, and then let your ear out to take in the whole, and there it was. It sounds like black magic, three horns and a piano ad-libbing a fugue, and not only that but fugue after fugue, night after night, except Sunday.

The explanation is not simple; it's as hard as a nice explanation of what a "sixth sense" is. The only thing you could say is that in this case it was a matter of esprit de corps. Jeff and his band had played together so much and so long that they had developed psychic respones to each other. They were a team using signals that they followed perfectly without even knowing that they had any signals. They knew how things stood from moment to moment in the same way that a pianist's right hand knows what the left's doing. Proper co-ordination established, the thing just goes along.

Rick thought of himself as a pianist, though he hadn't seen a piano close up for three months; and three months before "Adeste Fideles," played adagio, had been the pièce de résistance of his entire repertory. When he sat outside with Smoke behind the beam of light, it scarcely ever occurred to him that he couldn't, if opportunity should stick out its forelock at him, go right in there and sit down at the piano and play exactly the way Jeff Williams played. Come to think about it, I believe Rick sort of thought he was Jeff Williams. . . .

. . . They went in. It was a big place with about forty tables and a fair-sized floor in the middle. The chairs were on top of the tables now, the way they always put chairs on tables, one right-side up supporting another upside down; and there was heavy dust in the air. The walls were befouled from top to bottom with murals that showed signs of having been picked up after somebody's local Beaux Arts Ball. It was hard to take them in at a glance, but you were left with the general impression that they had something to do with Hell. Devils, or cuckolds, with tridents figured prominently in Underworld scenes, classic upper-case Underworld, not the thing the newspapers talk about. At the rear of the room was the orchestra shell, very shell-like, fluted along the upper edge, and in it sat four Negro boys, one of whom yelled, "It's about time," when he saw Rick and Smoke and Davis come in. The three of them walked up together, and Davis unbuttoned his coat, drew forth from the inside of his belt the fifth, so-called, of gin, and set it at the feet of a fellow holding a horn.

The four in the shell were glad to see Smoke and made a lot of it. They accused him of this, that, and even of the other, trying to find out why he never came around any more; and Smoke put them off by a system of grinning at the right time. And all the time Rick stood there trying to look unobtrusive, but standing out, just by the force of his contrasting color, like a lighthouse.

There was need of more presentation, and this time Davis did it, very

pleasantly and easily: "Mr. Martin, I'd like you to meet Mr. Hazard . . Mr. Snowden . . . Mr. Ward . . . and Mr. Williams." Rick smiled at them self-consciously and made his mouth go, but not fast enough to say "I'm glad to meet you" four separate times. He made an impression on them, though; you could see that. I suppose part of it was that he always looked somehow like a rich kid, very clean and with expensive pants on. He was good-looking, too, on his own hook. He had blond, slightly curly hair and sharp brownish eyes. Brownish, not brown. In terms of color, Rick's eyes were scarcely describable; they had brightness and sharpness more than they had color. They burned like the eyes of the fevered or the fanatical, with a deep, purposeful smoldering that will get out of hand if you don't check it in time.

Rick looked at them one by one, but he let his glance slide right across Jeff Williams. There he was, and he marked him for later inspection. No need to stare at him like a housewife at a movie actor; not right now at least, full-face and in the presence of all. Lots of time.

Hazard, the trumpet player, picked up the bottle and said what are we waiting for, and handed it to Rick, who said I just had one, and handed it on to Ward, who stood on the other side of him. Nobody, out of deference, I suppose, to Rick, said anything about the three drinks being gone out of the bottle. They handed it around from one to another and each man drank a big one right out of the bottle straight, and then made his remark, usually an expression of mixed pleasure and pain: "God, that's lousy stuff; I wisht I had a barrel." When it had gone around except for Smoke and Davis and Rick, the bottle was better than half done and the talk was less constrained. The one that was Jeff Williams jumped down off the platform and stood in front of Smoke and Rick, and said to Smoke, "You might as well live someplace else, Dan, all I see of you any more."

"Yeah, I know it," said Smoke, whose right name appeared to be Dan. "I been down to Gandy's nights, mostly, and I don't like to take a chance on waking you up coming in in the daytime. A guy works as hard as you needs a little sleep."

"Forget it," Jeff said, and looked around uncertainly. He was, as Smoke had started to say on another occasion, a handsome fellow. He hadn't said the rest of it, either, that Jeff Williams was a rare type, an aquiline-featured negro. Three shades lighter, he could have passed for a Castilian almost anywhere.

He looked now at his men and said, "Let's be getting at it." Then he turned to Rick and said, "Where'd you like to sit?" and Smoke answered for him, "Put him up by you; he's a pianist."

Jeff jumped back up on the platform, shoved the piano bench down to the left, and motioned to Rick to sit at the end of it, down by the low notes. Rick jumped up after him, very lightly and with a certain show of athleticism, walked around the bench, and sat down. Jeff turned to him and said, "I'd just about as soon you weren't a piano player. The

way that slug of gin hit me I couldn't say right off which is middle C."

"Neither could I," Rick said, "and I'm not a piano player anyhow; Jordan just said that." Faced with an actual piano, all Rick's illusions, so carefully nurtured by constant wish-thinking, left him flat.

Jeff looked at him hard, as if to find out for himself whether Rick was or was not a pianist, and then he said to him, "What shall we play?" And without a second's thought Rick said, "Play 'Tin Roof Blues' the way you do it, you know, when you take the second chorus."

"It's good, all right," Jeff said. "Not everybody likes it, though." He clenched his fists tight a couple or three times before he touched the keys. Then he said "Tin Roof" and banged his heel twice on the floor: one, two, and they were off.

So they played "Tin Roof Blues," and there's no way of telling how they played it. You can't say these things; the way to know what happens in music is to hear it, to hear it from the inside out the way Rick heard it that night on the bench beside Jeff Williams.

When it was over, Jeff, still striking chords, said: "How'd you know how we do that? How'd you know I take the second chorus? I've never seen you in here, that I remember of."

And Rick said he'd never been inside before, but he always happened to be passing by and he'd got so he knew how they did things.

"You must remember pretty good to know who comes where. I don't hardly know myself."

"Oh, I don't remember exactly," Rick answered with that dead ring of sincerity. "I just get so I can sort of feel when it's coming; I get a feeling that there's going to be a place that needs some piano playing in it; I don't know."

He broke it off there and gave up trying to say how it was. Jeff turned from the waist and took another look at him. "You sure you don't play piano?" he said. "Something about the way you talk sounds like you do." He said it not suspiciously, but deferentially, as if he felt some kind of force in this mild, white kid, something to be taken seriously.

The bottle was going around again. Ward, the drummer, thrust it at Jeff, and Jeff said "Go ahead," and gave it to Rick. And Rick, who was as intuitive as a woman and spontaneously tactful as few women are, took the bottle and tilted it up briefly in sign that he was drinking with them.

"Thanks," he said to Jeff, and repeated that he really didn't play the piano, that he'd started to try to teach himself and that he was doing all right, but that he didn't have a piano any more. Dead stop, no way to go on.

"Tough," said Jeff. "Maybe we could fix you up somehow."

"Oh, I don't know much about it," Rick said again. "I only got started. I wasn't playing jazz, anyhow. It was some other kind of pieces."

"Classical?" said Jeff. "I can't see classical for dust. I hear them playing it every once in a while, but I don't know, I just can't see it. 'Wrassle of Spring.' 'Perfect Day.' No damn good. The trouble with classical,

nobody plays it can keep time. I tried to teach one of those classical fellows how to play jazz once, and I'm telling you he like to drove me crazy. No matter how much I'd tell him he couldn't hold a note and fill it in. No classical players can do it. You might as well not tell them. Hold it one beat, hold it four, they don't give a damn if they hold it at all."

He meant it. He sat there with the bottle in his hand, talking so seriously that he forgot to drink until Hazard, up front, noticed that the bottle was not progressing evenly and he said, "Hey, Jeff! What you got in your hand?" And then Jeff jerked up his head and the bottle, drank quickly, and shoved the bottle away from him for anybody to take. Then he remembered himself and turned back to Rick to say:

"Don't get the idea I'm saying you're like that. I didn't mean it that way; I just got to thinking."

"I wasn't playing classical," Rick said. "I was only playing around trying to learn the notes; just practicing by myself. Hell, I wouldn't play classical; I'd play jazz."

Somebody said, "Well, are we going to play?" and again Jeff turned to Rick and said "What'll it be?" and Rick pulled out his second choice: "Would you wanta play 'Dead Man Blues' all together the way you were doing it Saturday night?"

"Dead Man," said Jeff, and banged his heel down twice, one, two, action suited to word.

Jeff led them to it with four bars in the key, and then the three horns came in together, held lightly to a slim melody by three separate leashes. Then Jeff left the rhythm to the drums, and the piano became the fourth voice, and from then on harmony prevailed in strange coherence, each man improvising wildly on his own and the four of them managing to fit it together and tightly. Feeling ran high, and happy inspiration followed happy inspiration to produce counterpoint that you'd swear somebody had sat down and worked out note by note on nice clean manuscript paper. But nobody had; it came into the heads of four men and out again by way of three horns and one piano.

Rick, at the bass end of the piano, caught the eye of Smoke Jordan, who was squatting on his heels just barely out of the way of George Ward the drummer. Smoke nodded, a happy nod of confirmation, as one would say, yes, they're good all right; they always were. But Rick only shook his head slowly from side to side in a gesture of abject wonderment which meant to say, how can anybody be so good? What makes it? Then Smoke's face was lost to him, cut off by the cymbal that Ward had just knocked swinging, and he turned his eyes back to Jeff's hands on the black and white keyboard. He played with his wrists high and his fingers curved halfway around, and he pecked at those keys like a chicken going for corn. He flicked each note out clear and fast, and he couldn't have fallen into an empty cadenza if he'd tried. His hands were built to pick, not to ripple, and they inevitably shaped out a style that was torrid, not florid.

Rick watched the hands the way a kitten watches a jumpy reflection on

a carpet. And when "Dead Man" was played out, he pushed his hand across his forehead and said whew, or one of those happy, exhausted sounds. The three instrumentalists up front turned around for approbation from Rick, and got it, not from anything he said, but just from the look on his face. Smoke got up off his heels and then went down again without saying anything. Ward looked at him and said, "You want to take the drums awhile, Dan?"

Smoke got up fast and said: "Sure, I don't care. If you want me to, I'd just as soon take them for a while." And when Ward got up, Smoke was in his chair like a flash and had his foot on the pedal, and began tapping the snare lightly with his forefinger. He looked into the basket of sticks that hung beside Ward's chair, picked a couple, and measured them up automatically. Then he looked with raised eyebrows at Jeff and Jeff said, "I suppose you want it slow?" "Well," Smoke said, "If it's gonna be good, it must be slow." And Jeff answered back: "You hear some of them say it the other way: 'If it's gonna be good, it must be fast.' Why you like it slow is so you can go into double time any time you feel like it. That's not slow, that's fast." He turned to Rick and grinned and said: "That's a fact. He wants everybody else to play slow, so he can play fast. Crazy son of a gun, the only thing in this world he wants to do is tear into double time on a slow piece." He thought it over and said, "He holds it slow good too." Then he turned away from Rick and said to Smoke, "All right, you stamp it off, yourself, and we'll play 'Ida,' huh?" And Smoky very willingly beat it out, one, two, with the foot pedal; really slow: one . . . two . . .

The rest of them knew whose turn it was, and they settled down to a low, smooth tune and put their minds to breaking up chords in peculiar, unorthodox harmonies. At every whole note they broke off sharp and let Smoke have it to fill in any way he wanted it, the way vaudeville bands used to play it for tap dancers.

Smoke had the thing under control all the way through. He didn't pay much attention to the snare — he could play a snare any time he wanted to. He played the bass direct with padded sticks and kept it quiet but very clear, a deep washboard rhythm with constantly shifting emphasis. And to vary it further he played the basic beat with the pedal and went into double time on the cymbal, playing one-handed and holding the edge of the cymbal with the other hand to steady it and mute the tone. He was tearing it up so well — and everybody knew it — that the band simply quit for sixteen bars and let him work; and he stayed right there double-timing one-handed on the cymbal and never repeating himself, keeping it sharp and precise and making it break just right for him. He played a drum the way Bill Robinson dances, never at a loss for a new pattern, but always holding it down and keeping it clean.

When it was over, Jeff said, "Anyhow you didn't go soft while you've been away." Smoke didn't hear him; he was talking to George Ward, and so Jeff said to Rick, "If that horse would get off the dime and get him a decent set of traps there wouldn't be a better man in the business."

"I know," said Rick.

"But he can't ever seem to get organized," Jeff went on. "He's all the time sticking around home playing ball with the kids on the street, or else just hanging around home talking to his folks, or else just hanging around town. He never stays on a job more than a week."

He sat there hitting chords and scowling at the keyboard while he talked. "I sure do wish something would get him jarred loose. Every time I hear him play it gets me sort of sore he won't do anything about it. Seems like he won't grow up and get onto himself."

This was the first time it had ever been given to Rick to know the pleasure of confidential talk, and it had him glowing. He looked at Jeff and made answer; Smoke, he said, at least had music on his mind all the time; he knew that from working with him.

"Then he's working," Jeff said. "I didn't know that."

"Well, not exactly a regular job," Rick said. "He helps out at Gandy's where I work. The pool hall."

Jeff looked at him again and said: "That must be where I've seen you, I guess. All night I been trying to think where."

"It's not such a very good job," Rick said, "but I'm trying to make enough money to get a trumpet, now I haven't got a piano any more."

"I don't see why you couldn't use this piano, if you want to," Jeff said. "I've got a key to the hall and there's never anybody here in the day. I bet nobody's ever here before five."

Rick said he couldn't do that and put everybody to such a lot of trouble and everything. But after that he said a thing that he had no intention of saying. He said, "You don't ever give piano lessons, do you, like a piano teacher?"

The four in front were playing alone, trying things out, and letting Jeff and Rick talk. Ward stood over his drums, watching Smoke play them.

"No," Jeff said. "I couldn't teach piano. I taught my brother a thing or two, but he'd have learned it anyhow."

He stopped a minute, thinking about it and then he said, "But I guess I could show you some things about it, if you'd like me to."

"I'd pay whatever you charge," Rick said in the big way he had.

"I wouldn't want to do that," Jeff said. "I couldn't teach you anything, just show you how it goes, if you'd like me to."

"Well, I'd sure appreciate it," Rick said. It sounded pretty lame; all the social courtesy had got away from him.

Somebody looked around and Jeff said, "Play that thing you were just playing again; sounded good." And Smoke said a thing that was hard to say; he said, "Take your drums," and got up from Ward's chair. "Don't you want to play them any more?" Ward said, but he said it in a way that cut off all possibility of an affirmative reply. Then Jeff gave them the beat and they played again, and then again and again. Rick stayed right there on the piano bench beside Jeff, but he didn't limit his ears to Jeff's piano; he concentrated more and more on the way Hazard was doing the trumpet

work. It may have been the gin; something had him fixed up so that he was playing constantly right up to the place where genius and madness grapple before going their separate ways. It was Hazard's night. Even ten years later, when he knew what he was talking about, Rick said that he'd never afterward heard Hazard himself or anybody else play a horn the way Hazard played that night.

There wasn't much more talk. They played one tune after another. As soon as they'd pull one through to the end, somebody would call out another and they'd be off again. The bottle went around only once more, a very short one for everybody, and Rick only going through the motions. The gin didn't really affect them much; they were young and so healthy that no toxin could bite into them. But it gave them the feeling that they could push out farther than usual, and so they did.

They began to weaken a little when the hall started to turn gray with morning light. When Hazard saw it he said "My God," shook his trumpet, and put it in the case. The rest of them got up, one after another, stiff-legged and bewildered. Jeff, folding down the keyboard cover, said, "Looks like it sort of got late on us." Rick looked at him and said, "It's been," but he didn't say what it had been. He very evidently needed a word that he didn't have with him, and so he only shook his head in that wondering way he had, and it turned out to mean the thing he wanted to say.

Hazard and Davis gave the bunch a general good night and left together, the first out. Then Ward and Snowden came up to Rick and said good night, and not only that but come around again some time.

And then there were only the three of them, Smoke, Jeff, and Rick. They walked out together and stood by the back door while Jeff locked up. Rick, who was picking up a feeling for night life faster than you'd think, said: "Let's go someplace and have some breakfast before we go home. I don't have to go to work until one."

"Can't do it," Jeff said; "I got to get me some sleep."

"How about you?" Rick said to Smoke. And Smoke tightened his belt with a large, carefree gesture and said, "Don't care if I do."

So they parted company with Jeff Williams, but not before he and Rick had arranged to meet at the Cotton Club the next Sunday to talk over problems connected with playing the piano.

from Song of Myself

Walt Whitman • *1819–1892*

The "Self" is not some mysterious entity which arrives in the world with you as does your nose or your right thumb. It is something which is made out of the welter of your experiences. Even a catalogue of happy moments, sad moments, embarrassing moments, thrilling moments is useful to us in ordering our lives. Similarly useful is a journal or a diary. Here Walt Whitman has listed a large number of American experiences which struck his imagination. Any one of these could be the subject of a theme, a short story, a novel. Surely you can construct a similar catalogue, which might serve as a source book for themes during the year.

8

THE LITTLE ONE sleeps in its cradle,
I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush away flies with my hand.

The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy hill,
I peeringly view them from the top.

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,
I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where the pistol has fallen.

The blab of the pave, tires of carts, sluff of boot-soles, talk of the promenaders,
The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb, the clank of the shod horses on the granite floor,
The snow-sleighs, clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of snow-balls,
The hurrahs for popular favorites, the fury of rous'd mobs,
The flap of the curtain'd litter, a sick man inside borne to the hospital,
The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and fall,
The excited crowd, the policeman with his star quickly working his passage to the centre of the crowd,
The impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes,
What groans of over-fed or half-starv'd who fall sunstruck or in fits,
What exclamations of women taken suddenly who hurry home and give birth to babes,
What living and buried speech is always vibrating here, what howls restrain'd by decorum,
Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, acceptances, rejections with convex lips,
I mind them or the show or resonance of them — I come and I depart.

9

The doors of the country barn stand open and ready,
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the slow-drawn wagon,
The clear light plays on the brown gray and green intertinged,
The armfuls are pack'd to the sagging mow.

I am there, I help, I came stretch'd atop of the load,
I felt its soft jolts, one leg reclined on the other,
I jump from the cross-beams and seize the clover and timothy,
And roll head over heels and tangle my hair full of wisps.

10

Alone far in the wilds and mountains I hunt,
Wandering amazed at my own lightness and glee,
In the late afternoon choosing a safe spot to pass the night,
Kindling a fire and broiling the fresh-kill'd game,
Falling asleep on the gather'd leaves with my dog and gun by my side.

The Yankee clipper is under her sky-sails, she cuts the sparkle and scud,
My eyes settle the land, I bend at her prow or shout joyously from the deck.

The boatmen and clam-diggers arose early and stopt for me,
I tuck'd my trowser-ends in my boots and went and had a good time;
You should have been with us that day round the chowder-kettle.

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the far west, the bride was a red girl,
Her father and his friends sat near cross-legged and dumbly smoking, they had moccasins to their feet and large thick blankets hanging from their shoulders,
On a bank lounged the trapper, he was drest mostly in skins, his luxuriant beard and curls protected his neck, he held his bride by the hand,
She had long eyelashes, her head was bare, her coarse straight locks descended upon her voluptuous limbs and reach'd to her feet.

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside,
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak,
And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured him,
And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and bruis'd feet,
And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave him some coarse clean clothes,
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and ankles;

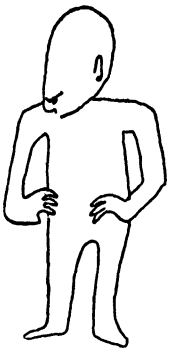
He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and pass'd north,
I had him sit next me at table, my fire-lock lean'd in the corner.

15

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,
The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his foreplane whistles its wild ascending lisp,
The married and unmarried children ride home to their Thanksgiving dinner,
The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with a strong arm,
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and harpoon are ready,
The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,
The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar,
The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the big wheel,
The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day loaf and looks at the oats and rye,
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd case,
(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his mother's bedroom;)
The jour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his case,
He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blur with the manuscript;
The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,
What is removed drops horribly in a pail;
The quadroon girl is sold at the auction-stand, the drunkard nods by the bar-room stove,
The machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels his beat, the gatekeeper marks who pass,
The young fellow drives the express-wagon, (I love him, though I do not know him;)
The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete in the race,
The western turkey-shooting draws old and young, some lean on their rifles, some sit on logs,
Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his position, levels his piece;
The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the wharf or levee,
As the woolly-pates hoe in the sugar-field, the overseer views them from his saddle,
The bugle calls in the ball-room, the gentlemen run for their partners, the dancers bow to each other,
The youth lies awake in the cedar-roof'd garret and harks to the musical rain,
The Wolverine sets traps on the creek that helps fill the Huron,
The squaw wrapt in her yellow-hemm'd cloth is offering moccasins and bead-bags for sale,
The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with half-shut eyes bent sideways,

As the deck-hands make fast the steamboat the plank is thrown for the shore-going passengers,
The young sister holds out the skein while the elder sister winds it off in a ball, and stops now and then for the knots,
The one-year wife is recovering and happy having a week ago borne her first child,
The clean-hair'd Yankee girl works with her sewing machine or in the factory or mill,
The paving-man leans on his two-handed rammer, the reporter's lead flies swiftly over the note-book, the sign-painter is lettering with blue and gold,
The canal boy trots on the tow-path, the book-keeper counts at his desk, the shoe-maker waxes his thread,
The conductor beats time for the band and all the performers follow him,
The child is baptized, the convert is making his first profession,
The regatta is spread on the bay, the race is begun, (how the white sails sparkle!)
The drover watching his drove sings out to them that would stray,
The peddler sweats with his pack on his back, (the purchaser higgling about the odd cent;)
The bride unrumples her white dress, the minute-hand of the clock moves slowly,
The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd lips,
The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and pimpled neck,
The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink to each other,
(Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you;)
The President holding a cabinet council is surrounded by the great Secretaries,
On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly with twined arms,
The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut in the hold,
Coon-seekers go through the regions of the Red river or through those drain'd by the Tennessee, or through those of the Arkansas,
Torches shine in the dark that hangs on the Chattahooche or Altamahaw,
Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and great grandsons around them,
In walls of adobie, in canvas tents, rest hunters and trappers after their day's sport,
The city sleeps and the country sleeps,
The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their time,
The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young husband sleeps by his wife;
And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,
And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,
And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.

Part Four



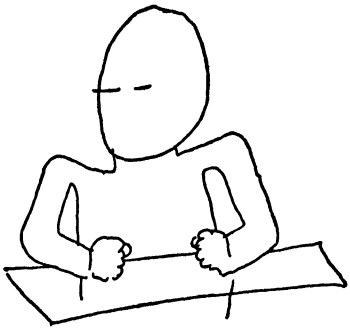
"What makes us different from the other creatures, Mr. Pottleby?"

THE WAYS OF THOUGHT

You saw through "The Arch of Experience" that any memory or event, any person or contact, any thought or feeling is a worthy subject for writing if it is filtered through a thoughtful and perceptive mind. At the beginning of Part Three, you will remember, we said that the important question is not so much what you write about, but what you say about your subject. You have now seen that it is possible to write interestingly and well about such things as a first date, the family bills, even the weather; and from such relatively unimportant matters as these up to such universal experiences as friendship, love, and death.

Why were these essays, stories, and poems interesting or moving in their various ways? Superficially, of course, because they were written by trained and practiced writers. More truly, because they were written by men and women who saw the significance in things and gave them meaning: because they thought. For thought is the basis of all writing and all reading, and the quality of both has a direct relationship to the thinking that goes into them.

Thinking is a process exceedingly difficult to define, partly because it is subjective (as if a camera were to define photography), partly because it is intangible, and partly because it is not one activity but many and occurs in a variety of media, from words, mathematical symbols, and images, to flashes of intuition and "inner certitude," the steps of which are impossible to trace. But even if thought cannot be very closely defined, it can be examined, described, and illustrated. And since thinking of one sort or another underlies not only all writing and all reading, but all of your life's activities, there is much to be learned from the selections in the following pages. The person who learns to recognize when he is rationalizing, when he is indulging in fantasy, when he is generalizing without sufficient evidence, or reasoning falsely from a preconception, is well on the way to greater mastery and control of himself and his world. He is also on the way to more effective and rewarding reading and writing. Likewise the person who is sensitive to the emotional implications of an experience, who can share another's feelings and express his own, has more to give as he writes, and receives more through his reading. D. H. Lawrence, the English novelist, wrote of "Man in his wholeness, wholly attending." Man in his wholeness learns all he can of his own inner workings.



"Just think, think, think!"

Language and the Training of Thought

John Dewey • 1859–1952

The most influential educator of the twentieth century, John Dewey was also one of its leading philosophers. The essay printed here is difficult, but granted the subject, how could it be much easier? And certainly the subject is central to the entire Freshman English course. Further, the subject is basic to intelligent living. Give this essay the closest study, sentence by sentence, section by section; master it, and the rest of the book, the rest of your courses, will be much more comprehensible.

I. LANGUAGE AS THE TOOL OF THINKING

LANGUAGE has such a peculiarly intimate connection with thought as to require special discussion. The very word logic, coming from logos (λσγος), means indifferently both word or speech and thought or reason. Yet "words, words, words" denote intellectual barrenness, a sham of thought. Schooling has language as its chief instrument (and often as its chief subject matter)

John Dewey, *How We Think* (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1933), pp. 230–246. Reprinted by permission of the Estate of John Dewey.

of study. Yet educational reformers have for centuries brought their severest indictments against the current use of language in the schools. The conviction that language is necessary to thinking (is even identical with it) is met by the contention that language perverts and conceals thought. There is a genuine problem here.

Views of the Relation of Thought and Language

Three typical views have been maintained regarding the relation of thought and language: first, that they are identical; second, that words are the garb, or clothing, of thought, necessary not for thought but only for conveying it; and third (the view we shall here maintain), that, while language is not thought, it is necessary for thinking as well as for communication. When it is said, however, that thinking is impossible without language, we must recall that language includes much more than oral and written speech. Gestures, pictures, monuments, visual images, finger movements — anything deliberately and artificially employed as a *sign* is, logically, language. To say that language is necessary for thinking is to say that signs are necessary. Thought deals not with bare things, but with their *meanings,* their suggestions; and meanings, in order to be apprehended, must be embodied in sensible and particular existences. Without meaning, things are nothing but blind stimuli, brute things, or chance sources of pleasure and pain; and since meanings are not themselves tangible things, they must be anchored by attachment to some physical existence. Existences that are especially set aside to fixate and convey meanings are *symbols.* If a man moves toward another to throw him out of the room, his movement is not a sign. If, however, the man points to the door with his hands, or utters the sound *go,* his act becomes a vehicle of meaning: it is a sign, not a complete thing in itself. In the case of signs we care nothing for what they are in themselves, but everything for what they signify and represent. *Canis, Hund, chien, dog* — it makes no difference what the outward thing is, so long as the meaning is presented.

Natural objects are signs of other things and events. Clouds stand for rain; a footprint represents game or an enemy; a projecting rock serves to indicate minerals below the surface. The limitations of *natural* signs are, however, great. First, physical or direct sense excitation tends to distract attention from what is meant or indicated. Almost every one will recall pointing out to a kitten or puppy an object of food, only to have the animal devote himself to the hand pointing, not to the thing pointed at. Second, where natural signs alone exist, we are mainly at the mercy of external happenings; we have to wait until the natural event presents itself in order to be warned or advised of the possibility of some other event. Third, natural signs, not being originally intended to be signs, are cumbrous, bulky, inconvenient, unmanageable. A symbol, on the contrary, is intended and invented, like any artificial tool and utensil, for the purpose of conveying meaning.

Aspects of Artificial Signs That Favor Their Use to Represent Meanings

It is therefore indispensable for any high development of thought that there exist intentional signs. Language supplies the requirement. Gestures, sounds, written or printed forms, are strictly physical existences, but their native value is intentionally subordinated to the value they acquire as representative of meanings. There are three aspects of artificial signs that favor their use as representatives of meanings:

First, the direct and sensible value of faint sounds and minute written or printed marks is very slight. Accordingly, attention is not distracted from their *representative* function.

Second, their production is under our direct control, so that they may be produced when needed. When we can make the word *rain,* we do not have to wait for some physical forerunner of rain to call our thoughts in that direction. We cannot make the cloud; we can make the sound, and as a token of meaning the sound serves the purpose as well as the cloud.

Third, arbitrary linguistic signs are convenient and easy to manage. They are compact, portable, and delicate. As long as we live we breathe, and modifications by the muscles of throat and mouth of the volume and quality of the air are simple, easy, and indefinitely controllable. Bodily postures and gestures of the hand and arm are also employed as signs, but they are coarse and unmanageable compared with modifications of breath to produce sounds. No wonder that oral speech has been selected as the main stuff of intentional intellectual signs. Sounds, while subtle, refined, and easily modifiable, are transitory. This defect is met by the system of written and printed words, appealing to the eye. *Litera scripta manet.*

Bearing in mind the intimate connection of meanings and signs (or language), we may note in more detail what language does (1) for specific meanings, and (2) for the organization of meanings.

Language Selects, Preserves, and Applies Specific Meanings

In the case of specific meanings a verbal sign (a) selects, detaches, a meaning from what is otherwise a vague flux and blur . . .; (b) retains, registers, stores that meaning; and (c) applies it, when needed, to the comprehension of other things. Combining these various functions in a mixture of metaphors, we may say that a linguistic sign is a fence, a label, and a vehicle — all in one.

a. The Word as a Fence. Every one has experienced how learning an appropriate name for what was dim and vague cleared up and crystallized the whole matter. Some meaning seems almost within reach, but is elusive; it refuses to condense into definite form; the attaching of a word somehow (just how, it is almost impossible to say) puts limits around the meaning, draws it out from the void, makes it stand out as an entity on its own account. When Emerson said that he would almost rather know the true

name, the poet's name, for a thing, than to know the thing itself, he presumably had this irradiating and illuminating function of language in mind. The delight that children take in demanding and learning the names of everything about them indicates that meanings are becoming concrete individuals to them, so that their commerce with things is passing from the physical to the intellectual plane. It is hardly surprising that savages attach a magical efficacy to words. To name anything is to give it a title, to dignify and honor it by raising it from a mere physical occurrence to a meaning that is distinct and permanent. To know the names of people and things and to be able to manipulate these names is, in savage lore, to be in possession of their dignity and worth, to master them.

b. The Word as a Label. Things come and go, or we come and go, and either way things escape our notice. Our direct sensible relation to things is very limited. The suggestion of meanings by natural signs is limited to occasions of direct contact or vision. But a meaning fixed by a linguistic sign is conserved for future use. Even if the thing is not there to represent the meaning, the word may be produced so as to evoke the meaning. Since intellectual life depends on possession of a store of meanings, the importance of language as a tool of preserving meanings cannot be overstated. To be sure, the method of storage is not wholly aseptic; words often corrupt and modify the meanings they are supposed to keep intact, but liability to infection is a price paid by every living thing for the privilege of living.

c. The Word as a Vehicle. When a meaning is detached and fixed by a sign, it is possible to use that meaning in a new context and situation. This transfer and reapplication is the key to all judgment and inference. It would little profit a man to recognize that a given particular cloud was the premonitor of a given particular rainstorm if his recognition ended there, for he would then have to learn over and over again, since the next cloud and the next rain are different events. No cumulative growth of intelligence would occur. Experience might form habits of physical adaptation but it would not *teach* anything, for we should not be able to use an old experience consciously to anticipate and regulate a new experience. To be able to use the past to judge and infer the new and unknown implies that, although the past thing has gone, its *meaning* abides in such a way as to be applicable in determining the character of the new. Speech forms are our great carriers, the easy-running vehicles by which meanings are transported from experiences that no longer concern us to those that are as yet dark and dubious.

Language Signs Are Instruments for Organizing Meanings

In emphasizing the importance of signs in relation to specific meanings, we have overlooked another aspect, equally valuable. Signs not only mark off specific or individual meanings, but they are also instruments of grouping meanings in relation to one another. Words are not only names or titles of single meanings; they also form *sentences* in which meanings are or-

ganized in relation to one another. When we say "That book is a dictionary," or "That blur of light in the heavens is Halley's comet," we express a *logical* connection — an act of classifying and defining that goes beyond the physical thing into the logical region of genera and species, things and attributes. Propositions, sentences, bear the same relation to judgments that distinct words, built up mainly by analyzing propositions in their various types, bear to meanings or conceptions; and just as words imply a sentence, so a sentence implies a larger whole of consecutive discourse into which it fits. As is often said, grammar expresses the unconscious logic of the popular mind. *The chief intellectual classifications that constitute the working capital of thought have been built up for us by our mother tongue.* Our very lack of explicit consciousness, when using language, that we are then employing the intellectual systematizations of the race shows how thoroughly accustomed we have become to its logical distinctions and groupings.

II. THE ABUSE OF LINGUISTIC METHODS IN EDUCATION

Teaching Things Alone, the Negation of Education

Taken literally, the maxim, "Teach things, not words," or "Teach things before words," would be the negation of education; it would reduce mental life to mere physical and sensible adjustments. Learning, in the proper sense, is not learning things, but the *meanings* of things, and this process involves the use of signs, or language in its generic sense. In like fashion, the warfare of some educational reformers against symbols, if pushed to extremes, involves the destruction of intellectual life, since this lives, moves, and has its being in those processes of definition, abstraction, generalization, and classification that are made possible by symbols alone. Nevertheless, these contentions of educational reformers have been needed. The liability of a thing to abuse is in proportion to the value of its right use.

The Limitations and Dangers of Symbols in Relation to Meanings

Symbols themselves, as already pointed out, are particular, physical, sensible existences, like any other things. They are symbols only by virtue of what they suggest and represent; *i.e.*, meanings.

In the first place, they stand for these meanings to any individual only when he has had *experience* of some situation to which these meanings are actually relevant. Words can detach and preserve a meaning only when the meaning has been first involved in our own direct intercourse with things. To attempt to give a meaning through a word alone without any dealings with a thing is to deprive the word of intelligible signification; against this attempt, a tendency only too prevalent in education, reformers have protested. Moreover, there is a tendency to assume that, whenever there is a definite word or form of speech, there is also a definite idea; while, as a matter of fact, adults and children alike are capable of using

even formulae that are verbally precise with only the vaguest and most confused sense of what they mean. Genuine ignorance is more profitable because it is likely to be accompanied by humility, curiosity, and open-mindedness; whereas ability to repeat catch-phrases, cant terms, familiar propositions, gives the conceit of learning and coats the mind with a varnish waterproof to new ideas.

In the second place, although new combinations of words without the intervention of physical things may supply new ideas, there are limits to this possibility. Lazy inertness causes individuals to accept ideas that have currency about them without personal inquiry and testing. A man uses thought, perhaps, to find out what others believe, and then stops. The ideas of others as embodied in language become substitutes for one's own ideas. The use of linguistic studies and methods to halt the human mind on the level of the attainments of the past, to prevent new inquiry and discovery, to put the authority of tradition in place of the authority of natural facts and laws, to reduce the individual to a parasite living on the secondhand experience of others — these things have been the source of the reformers' protest against the preëminence assigned to language in schools.

In the third place, words that originally stood for ideas come, with repeated use, to be mere counters; they become physical things to be manipulated according to certain rules or reacted to by certain operations without consciousness of their meaning. Mr. Stout (who has called such terms "substitute signs") remarks that "algebraical and arithmetical signs are to a great extent used as mere substitute signs. . . . It is possible to use signs of this kind whenever fixed and definite rules of operation can be derived from the nature of the things symbolized, so as to be applied in manipulating the signs, without further reference to their signification. A word is an instrument for thinking about the meaning which it expresses; a substitute sign is a means of *not* thinking about the meaning which it symbolizes." The principle applies, however, to ordinary words, as well as to algebraic signs; they also enable us to use meanings so as to get results without thinking. In many respects, signs that are means of not thinking are of great advantage; standing for the familiar, they release attention for meanings that, being novel, require conscious interpretation. Nevertheless, the premium put in the schoolroom upon attainment of technical facility, upon skill in producing external results, often changes this advantage into a positive detriment. In manipulating symbols so as to recite well, to get and give correct answers, to follow prescribed formulae of analysis, the pupil's attitude becomes mechanical, rather than thoughtful; verbal memorizing is substituted for inquiry into the meaning of things. This danger is perhaps the one uppermost in mind when verbal methods of education are attacked.

III. THE USE OF LANGUAGE IN ITS EDUCATIONAL BEARINGS

Language stands in a twofold relation to the work of education. On the one hand, it is continually used in all studies as well as in all the social discipline of the school; on the other, it is a distinct object of study. We shall consider only the ordinary use of language, since its effects upon habits of thought are much deeper than those of conscious linguistic study, for the latter only makes explicit what speech already contains.

The common statement that "language is the expression of thought" conveys only a half-truth, and a half-truth that is likely to result in positive error. Language does express thought, but not primarily, nor, at first, even consciously. The primary motive for language is to influence (through the expression of desire, emotion, and thought) the activity of others; its secondary use is to enter into more intimate social relations with them; its employment as a conscious vehicle of thought and knowledge is a tertiary, and relatively late, formation. The contrast is well brought out by the statement of John Locke that words have a double use, "civil" and "philosophical." "By their civil use, I mean such a communication of thoughts and ideas by words as may serve for the upholding of common conversation and commerce about the ordinary affairs and conveniences of civil life. . . . By the philosophical use of words, I mean such a use of them as may serve to convey the precise notions of things and to express in general propositions certain and undoubted truths."

Education Has to Transform Language into an Intellectual Tool

This distinction of the practical and social from the intellectual use of language throws much light on the problem of the school in respect to speech. That problem is *to direct pupils' oral and written speech, used primarily for practical and social ends, so that gradually it shall become a conscious tool of conveying knowledge and assisting thought.* How without checking the spontaneous, natural motives — motives to which language owes its vitality, force, vividness, and variety — are we to modify speech habits so as to render them accurate and flexible *intellectual* instruments? It is comparatively easy to encourage the original spontaneous flow and not make language over into a servant of reflective thought; it is comparatively easy to check and almost destroy (so far as the schoolroom is concerned) native aim and interest and to set up artificial and formal modes of expression in some isolated and technical matters. The difficulty lies in making over habits that have to do with "ordinary affairs and conveniences" into habits concerned with "precise notions." The successful accomplishing of the transformation requires (a) enlarging the pupil's vocabulary, (b) rendering its terms more precise and accurate, and (c) forming habits of consecutive discourse.

a. Enlarging the Vocabulary. This takes place, of course, by wider intelligent contact with things and persons, and also vicariously, by gathering

the meanings of words from the context in which they are heard or read. To grasp by either method a word in its meaning is to exercise intelligence, to perform an act of intelligent selection or analysis, and it is also to widen the fund of meanings or concepts readily available in further intellectual enterprises. It is usual to distinguish between one's active and one's passive vocabulary, the latter being composed of the words that are understood when they are heard or seen, the former of words that are used intelligently. The fact that the passive is very much larger than the active vocabulary indicates power not controlled or utilized by the individual. Failure to use meanings that are understood may reveal dependence upon external stimulus and lack of intellectual initiative. This condition is to some extent an artificial product of education. Small children usually attempt to put to use every new word they get hold of, but when they learn to read they are introduced to a large variety of terms that they have no opportunity to use. The result is a kind of mental suppression, if not smothering. Moreover, the meaning of words not actively used in building up and conveying ideas is never quite clear-cut or complete. Action is required to make them definite.

While a limited vocabulary may be due to a limited range of experience, to a sphere of contact with persons and things so narrow as not to suggest or require a full store of words, it is also due to carelessness and vagueness. A happy-go-lucky frame of mind makes the individual averse to clear discriminations, either in perception or in his own speech. Words are used loosely in an indeterminate kind of reference to things, and speech approaches a condition where practically everything is just a "thing-um-bob" or a "what-do-you-call-it," a condition that reacts to make thought hopelessly loose and vague. Paucity of vocabulary on the part of those with whom the child associates, triviality and meagerness in the child's reading matter (as frequently even in his school readers and textbooks), tend to shut down the area of mental vision. Even technical terms become clear when they are used to make either an idea or an object clearer in meaning. Every self-respecting mechanic will call the parts of an automobile by their right names because that is the way to distinguish them. Simplicity should mean intelligibility, but not an approach to baby-talk.

We must note also the great difference between flow of words and command of language. Volubility is not necessarily a sign of a large vocabulary; much talking or even ready speech is quite compatible with moving round and round in a circle of moderate radius. Most schoolrooms suffer from a lack of materials and appliances save perhaps books — and even these are "written down" to the supposed capacity, or incapacity, of children. Occasion and demand for an enriched vocabulary are accordingly restricted. The vocabulary of things studied in the schoolroom is very largely isolated; it does not link itself organically to the range of the ideas and words that are in vogue outside the school. Hence the enlargement that takes place is often nominal, adding to the inert, rather than to the active, fund of meanings and terms.

b. Rendering the Vocabulary More Precise. One way in which the fund of words and concepts is increased is by discovering and naming shades of meaning — that is to say, by making the vocabulary more precise. Increase in definiteness is as important relatively as is the enlargement of the capital stock absolutely.

The first meanings of terms, since they are due to superficial acquaintance with things, are "general" — in the sense of being vague. The little child calls all men "papa"; acquainted with a dog, he may call the first horse he sees "big dog." Differences of quantity and intensity are noted, but the fundamental meaning is so vague that it covers things that are far apart. To many persons trees are just trees, being discriminated only into deciduous trees and evergreens, with perhaps recognition of one or two kinds of each. Such vagueness tends to persist and to become a barrier to the advance of thinking. Terms that are miscellaneous in scope are clumsy tools at best; in addition they are frequently treacherous, for their ambiguous reference causes us to confuse things that should be distinguished.

The growth of precise terms out of original vagueness takes place normally in two directions: first, toward words that stand for relationships, and second, toward words that stand for highly individualized traits; the first is associated with abstract, the second with concrete, thinking. Some Australian tribes are said to have no words for *animal* or for *plant,* while they have specific names for every variety of plant and animal in their neighborhoods. This minuteness of vocabulary represents progress toward definiteness, but in a one-sided way.[1] On the other hand, students of philosophy and of the general aspects of natural and social science are apt to acquire a store of terms that signify relations, without balancing them up with terms that designate specific individuals and traits. The ordinary use of such terms as *causation, law, society, individual, capital,* illustrates this tendency.

In the history of language we find both aspects of the growth of vocabulary illustrated by changes in the sense of words: some words originally wide in their application are narrowed to denote shades of meaning; others originally specific are widened to express relationships. The term *vernacular,* now meaning mother speech, has been generalized from the word *verna,* meaning a slave born in the master's household. *Publication* has evolved its meaning of communication by means of print through restricting an earlier meaning of any kind of communication — although the wider meaning is retained in legal procedure, as publishing a libel. The sense of the word *average* has been generalized from a use connected with dividing loss by shipwreck proportionately among various sharers in an enterprise.

These historical changes assist the educator to appreciate the changes

[1] The term *general* is itself an ambiguous term, meaning (in its best logical sense) the related and also (in its natural usage) the indefinite, the vague. *General,* in the first sense, denotes the discrimination of a principle or generic relation; in the second sense, it denotes the absence of discrimination of specific or individual properties. [Author.]

that occur in individuals with advance in intellectual resources. In studying geometry, a pupil must learn both to narrow and to extend the meanings of such familiar words as *line, surface, angle, square, circle* — to narrow them to the precise meanings involved in demonstrations, to extend them to cover generic relations not expressed in ordinary usage. Qualities of color and size must be excluded; relations of direction, of variation in direction, of limit, must be definitely seized. Thus in generalized geometry the idea of *line* does not carry any connotation of *length.* To it, what is ordinarily called a line is only a *section* of a line. A like transformation occurs in every subject of study. Just at this point lies the danger, alluded to above, of simply overlaying common meanings with new and isolated meanings instead of effecting a genuine working-over of popular and practical meanings into logical concepts.

Terms used with intentional exactness so as to express a meaning, the whole meaning, and only the meaning, are called *technical.* For educational purposes, a technical term indicates something relative, not absolute; for a term is technical, not because of its verbal form or its unusualness, but because it is employed to fix a meaning precisely. Ordinary words get a technical quality when used intentionally for this end. Whenever thought becomes more accurate, a (relatively) technical vocabulary grows up. Teachers are apt to oscillate between extremes in regard to technical terms. On the one hand, these are multiplied in every direction, seemingly on the assumption that learning a new piece of terminology, accompanied by verbal description or definition, is equivalent to grasping a new idea. On the other hand, when it is seen how largely the net outcome is the accumulation of an isolated set of words, a jargon or scholastic cant, and to what extent the natural power of judgment is clogged by this accumulation, there is a reaction to the opposite extreme. Technical terms are banished; "name words" exist, but not nouns; "action words," but not verbs; pupils may "take away," but not subtract; they may tell what four fives are, but not what four times five are, and so on. A sound instinct underlies this reaction — aversion to words that give the pretense, but not the reality, of meaning. Yet the fundamental difficulty is not with the word, but with the idea. If the idea is not grasped, nothing is gained by using a more familiar word; if the idea is grasped, the use of the term that exactly names it may assist in fixing the idea. Terms denoting highly exact meanings should be introduced only sparingly; they should be led up to gradually, and great pains should be taken to secure the circumstances that render precision of meaning significant.

c. Forming Habits of Consecutive Discourse. As we saw, language connects and organizes meanings as well as selects and fixes them. As every meaning is set in the context of some situation, so every word in concrete use belongs to some sentence (it may itself represent a condensed sentence); and the sentence, in turn, belongs to some larger story, description, or reasoning process. It is unnecessary to repeat what has been said about

the importance of continuity and ordering of meanings. We may, however, note some ways in which school practices tend to interrupt consecutiveness of language and thereby interfere harmfully with systematic reflection.

First, teachers have a habit of monopolizing continued discourse. Many, if not most, instructors would be surprised if informed at the end of the day of the amount of time they have talked as compared with any pupil. Children's conversation is often confined to answering questions in brief phrases or in single disconnected sentences. Expatiation and explanation are reserved for the teacher, who often admits any hint at an answer on the part of the pupil, and then amplifies what he supposes the child must have meant. The habits of sporadic and fragmentary discourse thus promoted have inevitably a disintegrating intellectual influence.

Second, assignment of too short lessons, when accompanied (as it usually is in order to pass the time of the recitation period) by minute "analytic" questioning, has the same effect. This evil is usually at its height in such subjects as history and literature, where not infrequently the material is so minutely subdivided as to break up the unity of meaning belonging to a given portion of the matter, to destroy perspective, and in effect to reduce the whole topic to an accumulation of disconnected details all upon the same level. More often than the teacher is aware, *his* mind carries and supplies the background of unity of meaning against which pupils project isolated scraps.

Third, insistence upon avoiding error instead of attaining power tends also to interruption of continuous discourse and thought. Children who begin with something to say and with intellectual eagerness to say it are sometimes made so conscious of minor errors in substance and form that the energy that should go into constructive thinking is diverted into anxiety not to make mistakes, and even, in extreme cases, into passive quiescence as the best method of minimizing error. This tendency is especially marked in connection with the writing of compositions, essays, and themes. It has even been gravely recommended that little children should always write on trivial subjects and in short sentences because in that way they are less likely to make mistakes. The teaching of high-school and college students occasionally reduces itself to a technique for detecting and designating mistakes. Self-consciousness and constraint follow. Students lose zest for writing. Instead of being interested in what they have to say and in how it is said as a means of adequate formulation and expression of their own thought, interest is drained off. Having to say something is a very different matter from having something to say.

Four Kinds of Thinking

James Harvey Robinson • *1863–1936*

We constantly remind ourselves that it is reason which chiefly distinguishes us from the other animals, but once having made this smug statement we may fail to pursue the study of intelligence itself. There are more than four kinds of thinking, as James Harvey Robinson well knew, but he has conveniently grouped four of the main modes of thought, reminding us all "that we know shockingly little about these matters." We might begin now to think about thinking.

WE DO not think enough about thinking, and much of our confusion is the result of current illusions in regard to it. Let us forget for the moment any impressions we may have derived from the philosophers, and see what seems to happen in ourselves. The first thing that we notice is that our thought moves with such incredible rapidity that it is almost impossible to arrest any specimen of it long enough to have a look at it. When we are offered a penny for our thoughts we always find that we have recently had so many things in mind that we can easily make a selection which will not compromise us too nakedly. On inspection we shall find that even if we are not downright ashamed of a great part of our spontaneous thinking it is far too intimate, personal, ignoble or trivial to permit us to reveal more than a small part of it. I believe this must be true of everyone. We do not, of course, know what goes on in other people's heads. They tell us very little and we tell them very little. The spigot of speech, rarely fully opened, could never emit more than driblets of the ever renewed hogshead of thought — *noch grösser wie's Heidelberger Fass.* We find it hard to believe that other people's thoughts are as silly as our own, but they probably are.

We all appear to ourselves to be thinking all the time during our waking hours, and most of us are aware that we go on thinking while we are asleep, even more foolishly than when awake. When uninterrupted by some practical issue we are engaged in what is now known as a *reverie.* This is our spontaneous and favorite kind of thinking. We allow our ideas to take their own course and this course is determined by our hopes and fears, our spontaneous desires, their fulfillment or frustration; by our likes and dislikes, our loves and hates and resentments. There is nothing else anything like so interesting to ourselves as ourselves. All thought that is not

From *The Mind in the Making* by James Harvey Robinson, pp. 37–57. Copyright, 1921, by Harper & Brothers. Copyright, 1949, by Bankers Trust Company.

more or less laboriously controlled and directed will inevitably circle about the beloved Ego. It is amusing and pathetic to observe this tendency in ourselves and in others. We learn politely and generously to overlook this truth, but if we dare to think of it, it blazes forth like the noontide sun.

The reverie or "free association of ideas" has of late become the subject of scientific research. While investigators are not yet agreed on the results, or at least on the proper interpretation to be given to them, there can be no doubt that our reveries form the chief index to our fundamental character. They are a reflection of our nature as modified by often hidden and forgotten experiences. We need not go into the matter further here, for it is only necessary to observe that the reverie is at all times a potent and in many cases an omnipotent rival to every other kind of thinking. It doubtless influences all our speculations in its persistent tendency to self-magnification and self-justification, which are its chief preoccupations, but it is the last thing to make directly or indirectly for honest increase of knowledge. Philosophers usually talk as if such thinking did not exist or were in some way negligible. This is what makes their speculations so unreal and often worthless.

The reverie, as any of us can see for himself, is frequently broken and interrupted by the necessity of a second kind of thinking. We have to make practical decisions. Shall we write a letter or no? Shall we take the subway or a bus? Shall we have dinner at seven or half past? Shall we buy U. S. Rubber or a Liberty Bond? Decisions are easily distinguishable from the free flow of the reverie. Sometimes they demand a good deal of careful pondering and the recollection of pertinent facts; often, however, they are made impulsively. They are a more difficult and laborious thing than the reverie, and we resent having to "make up our mind" when we are tired, or absorbed in a congenial reverie. Weighing a decision, it should be noted, does not necessarily add anything to our knowledge, although we may, of course, seek further information before making it.

A third kind of thinking is stimulated when anyone questions our beliefs and opinions. We sometimes find ourselves changing our minds without any resistance or heavy emotion, but if we are told that we are wrong we resent the imputation and harden our hearts. We are incredibly heedless in the formation of our beliefs, but find ourselves filled with an illicit passion for them when anyone proposes to rob us of their companionship. It is obviously not the ideas themselves that are dear to us, but our self-esteem, which is threatened. We are by nature stubbornly pledged to defend our own from attack, whether it be our person, our family, our property, or our opinion. A United States Senator once remarked to a friend of mine that God Almighty could not make him change his mind on our Latin-American Policy. We may surrender, but rarely confess ourselves vanquished. In the intellectual world at least peace is without victory.

Few of us take the pains to study the origin of our cherished convictions; indeed, we have a natural repugnance to so doing. We like to continue to believe what we have been accustomed to accept as true, and the resentment aroused when doubt is cast upon any of our assumptions leads us to seek every manner of excuse for clinging to them. *The result is that most of our so-called reasoning consists in finding arguments for going on believing as we already do.*

I remember years ago attending a public dinner to which the Governor of the state was bidden. The chairman explained that His Excellency could not be present for certain "good" reasons; what the "real" reasons were the presiding officer said he would leave us to conjecture. This distinction between "good" and "real" reasons is one of the most clarifying and essential in the whole realm of thought. We can readily give what seem to us "good" reasons for being a Catholic or a Mason, a Republican or a Democrat, an adherent or opponent of the League of Nations. But the "real" reasons are usually on quite a different plane. Of course the importance of this distinction is popularly, if somewhat obscurely, recognized. The Baptist missionary is ready enough to see that the Buddhist is not such because his doctrines would bear careful inspection, but because he happened to be born in a Buddhist family in Tokio. But it would be treason to his faith to acknowledge that his own partiality for certain doctrines is due to the fact that his mother was a member of the First Baptist church of Oak Ridge. A savage can give all sorts of reasons for his belief that it is dangerous to step on a man's shadow, and a newspaper editor can advance plenty of arguments against the Bolsheviki. But neither of them may realize why he happens to be defending his particular opinion.

The "real" reasons for our beliefs are concealed from ourselves as well as from others. As we grow up we simply adopt the ideas presented to us in regard to such matters as religion, family relations, property, business, our country, and the state. We unconsciously absorb them from our environment. They are persistently whispered in our ear by the group in which we happen to live. Moreover, as Mr. Trotter has pointed out, these judgments, being the product of suggestion and not of reasoning, have the quality of perfect obviousness, so that to question them

> . . . is to the believer to carry skepticism to an insane degree, and will be met by contempt, disapproval, or condemnation, according to the nature of the belief in question. When, therefore, we find ourselves entertaining an opinion about the basis of which there is a quality of feeling which tells us that to inquire into it would be absurd, obviously unnecessary, unprofitable, undesirable, bad form, or wicked, we may know that that opinion is a nonrational one, and probably, therefore, founded upon inadequate evidence.

Opinions, on the other hand, which are the result of experience or of honest reasoning do not have this quality of "primary certitude." I remember when as a youth I heard a group of business men discussing the

question of the immortality of the soul, I was outraged by the sentiment of doubt expressed by one of the party. As I look back now I see that I had at the time no interest in the matter, and certainly no least argument to urge in favor of the belief in which I had been reared. But neither my personal indifference to the issue, nor the fact that I had previously given it no attention, served to prevent an angry resentment when I heard *my* ideas questioned.

This spontaneous and loyal support of our preconceptions — this process of finding "good" reasons to justify our routine beliefs — is known to modern psychologists as "rationalizing" — clearly only a new name for a very ancient thing. Our "good" reasons ordinarily have no value in promoting honest enlightenment, because, no matter how solemnly they may be marshaled, they are at bottom the result of personal preference or prejudice, and not of an honest desire to seek or accept new knowledge.

In our reveries we are frequently engaged in self-justification, for we cannot bear to think ourselves wrong, and yet have constant illustrations of our weaknesses and mistakes. So we spend much time finding fault with circumstances and the conduct of others, and shifting on to them with great ingenuity the onus of our own failures and disappointments. *Rationalizing is the self-exculpation which occurs when we feel ourselves, or our group, accused of misapprehension or error.*

The little word *my* is the most important one in all human affairs, and properly to reckon with it is the beginning of wisdom. It has the same force whether it is *my* dinner, *my* dog, and *my* house, or *my* faith, *my* country, and *my* God. We not only resent the imputation that our watch is wrong, or our car shabby, but that our conception of the canals of Mars, of the pronunciation of "Epictetus," of the medicinal value of salicine, or the date of Sargon I, are subject to revision.

Philosophers, scholars, and men of science exhibit a common sensitiveness in all decisions in which their *amour propre* is involved. Thousands of argumentative works have been written to vent a grudge. However stately their reasoning, it may be nothing but rationalizing, stimulated by the most commonplace of all motives. A history of philosophy and theology could be written in terms of grouches, wounded pride, and aversions, and it would be far more instructive than the usual treatments of these themes. Sometimes, under Providence, the lowly impulse of resentment leads to great achievements. Milton wrote his treatise on divorce as a result of his troubles with his seventeen-year-old wife, and when he was accused of being the leading spirit in a new sect, the Divorcers, he wrote his noble *Areopagitica* to prove his right to say what he thought fit, and incidentally to establish the advantage of a free press in the promotion of Truth.

All mankind, high and low, thinks in all the ways which have been described. The reverie goes on all the time not only in the mind of the mill hand and the Broadway flapper, but equally in weighty judges and godly

bishops. It has gone on in all the philosophers, scientists, poets, and theologians that have ever lived. Aristotle's most abstruse speculations were doubtless tempered by highly irrelevant reflections. He is reported to have had very thin legs and small eyes, for which he doubtless had to find excuses, and he was wont to indulge in very conspicuous dress and rings and was accustomed to arrange his hair carefully. Diogenes the Cynic exhibited the impudence of a touchy soul. His tub was his distinction. Tennyson in beginning his *Maud* could not forget his chagrin over losing his patrimony years before as the result of an unhappy investment in the Patent Decorative Carving Company. These facts are not recalled here as a gratuitous disparagement of the truly great, but to insure a full realization of the tremendous competition which all really exacting thought has to face, even in the minds of the most highly endowed mortals.

And now the astonishing and perturbing suspicion emerges that perhaps almost all that has passed for social science, political economy, politics, and ethics in the past may be brushed aside by future generations as mainly rationalizing. John Dewey has already reached this conclusion in regard to philosophy. Veblen and other writers have revealed the various unperceived presuppositions of the traditional political economy, and now comes an Italian sociologist, Vilfredo Pareto, who, in his huge treatise on general sociology, devotes hundreds of pages to substantiating a similar thesis affecting all the social sciences. This conclusion may be ranked by students of a hundred years hence as one of the several great discoveries of our age. It is by no means fully worked out, and it is so opposed to nature that it will be very slowly accepted by the great mass of those who consider themselves thoughtful. As a historical student I am personally fully reconciled to this newer view. Indeed, it seems to me inevitable that just as the various sciences of nature were, before the opening of the seventeenth century, largely masses of rationalizations to suit the religious sentiments of the period, so the social sciences have continued even to our own day to be rationalizations of uncritically accepted beliefs and customs.

It will become apparent as we proceed that the fact that an idea is ancient and that it has been widely received is no argument in its favor, but should immediately suggest the necessity of carefully testing it as a probable instance of rationalization.

This brings us to another kind of thought which can fairly easily be distinguished from the three kinds described above. It has not the usual qualities of the reverie, for it does not hover about our personal complacencies and humiliations. It is not made up of the homely decisions forced upon us by everyday needs, when we review our little stock of existing information, consult our conventional preferences and obligations, and make a choice of action. It is not the defense of our own cherished beliefs and prejudices just because they are our own — mere plausible excuses

for remaining of the same mind. On the contrary, it is that peculiar species of thought which leads us to *change* our mind.

It is this kind of thought that has raised man from his pristine, subsavage ignorance and squalor to the degree of knowledge and comfort which he now possesses. On his capacity to continue and greatly extend this kind of thinking depends his chance of groping his way out of the plight in which the most highly civilized peoples of the world now find themselves. In the past this type of thinking has been called Reason. But so many misapprehensions have grown up around the word that some of us have become very suspicious of it. I suggest, therefore, that we substitute a recent name and speak of "creative thought" rather than of Reason. *For this kind of meditation begets knowledge, and knowledge is really creative inasmuch as it makes things look different from what they seemed before and may indeed work for their reconstruction.*

In certain moods some of us realize that we are observing things or making reflections with a seeming disregard of our personal preoccupations. We are not preening or defending ourselves; we are not faced by the necessity of any practical decision, nor are we apologizing for believing this or that. We are just wondering and looking and mayhap seeing what we never perceived before.

Curiosity is as clear and definite as any of our urges. We wonder what is in a sealed telegram or in a letter in which some one else is absorbed, or what is being said in the telephone booth or in low conversation. This inquisitiveness is vastly stimulated by jealousy, suspicion, or any hint that we ourselves are directly or indirectly involved. But there appears to be a fair amount of personal interest in other people's affairs even when they do not concern us except as a mystery to be unraveled or a tale to be told. The reports of a divorce suit will have "news value" for many weeks. They constitute a story, like a novel or play or moving picture. This is not an example of pure curiosity, however, since we readily identify ourselves with others, and their joys and despairs then become our own.

We also take note of, or "observe," as Sherlock Holmes says, things which have nothing to do with our personal interests and make no personal appeal either direct or by way of sympathy. This is what Veblen so well calls "idle curiosity." And it is usually idle enough. Some of us when we face the line of people opposite us in a subway train impulsively consider them in detail and engage in rapid inferences and form theories in regard to them. On entering a room there are those who will perceive at a glance the degree of preciousness of the rugs, the character of the pictures, and the personality revealed by the books. But there are many, it would seem, who are so absorbed in their personal reverie or in some definite purpose that they have no bright-eyed energy for idle curiosity. The tendency to miscellaneous observation we come by honestly enough, for we note it in many of our animal relatives.

Veblen, however, uses the term "idle curiosity" somewhat ironically, as

is his wont. It is idle only to those who fail to realize that it may be a very rare and indispensable thing from which almost all distinguished human achievement proceeds, since it may lead to systematic examination and seeking for things hitherto undiscovered. For research is but diligent search which enjoys the high flavor of primitive hunting. Occasionally and fitfully idle curiosity thus leads to creative thought, which alters and broadens our own views and aspirations and may in turn, under highly favorable circumstances, affect the views and lives of others, even for generations to follow. An example or two will make this unique human process clear.

Galileo was a thoughtful youth and doubtless carried on a rich and varied reverie. He had artistic ability and might have turned out to be a musician or painter. When he had dwelt among the monks at Vallombrosa he had been tempted to lead the life of a religious. As a boy he busied himself with toy machines and he inherited a fondness for mathematics. All these facts are of record. We may safely assume also that, along with many other subjects of contemplation, the Pisan maidens found a vivid place in his thoughts.

One day when seventeen years old he wandered into the cathedral of his native town. In the midst of his reverie he looked up at the lamps hanging by long chains from the high ceiling of the church. Then something very difficult to explain occurred. He found himself no longer thinking of the building, worshipers, or the services; of his artistic or religious interests; of his reluctance to become a physician as his father wished. He forgot the question of a career and even the *graziosissime donne*. As he watched the swinging lamps he was suddenly wondering if mayhap their oscillations, whether long or short, did not occupy the same time. Then he tested this hypothesis by counting his pulse, for that was the only timepiece he had with him.

This observation, however remarkable in itself, was not enough to produce a really creative thought. Others may have noticed the same thing and yet nothing came of it. Most of our observations have no assignable results. Galileo may have seen that the warts on a peasant's face formed a perfect isosceles triangle, or he may have noticed with boyish glee that just as the officiating priest was uttering the solemn words, *ecce agnus Dei*, a fly lit on the end of his nose. To be really creative, ideas have to be worked up and then "put over," so that they become a part of man's social heritage. The highly accurate pendulum clock was one of the later results of Galileo's discovery. He himself was led to reconsider and successfully to refute the old notions of falling bodies. It remained for Newton to prove that the moon was falling, and presumably all the heavenly bodies. This quite upset all the consecrated views of the heavens as managed by angelic engineers. The universality of the laws of gravitation stimulated the attempt to seek other and equally important natural laws and cast grave doubts on the miracles in which mankind had hitherto believed. In short,

those who dared to include in their thoughts the discoveries of Galileo and his successors found themselves in a new earth surrounded by new heavens.

On the 28th of October, 1831, three hundred and fifty years after Galileo had noticed the isochronous vibrations of the lamps, creative thought and its currency had so far increased that Faraday was wondering what would happen if he mounted a disk of copper between the poles of a horseshoe magnet. As the disk revolved an electric current was produced. This would doubtless have seemed the idlest kind of an experiment to the stanch business men of the time, who, it happened, were just then denouncing the child-labor bills in their anxiety to avail themselves to the full of the results of earlier idle curiosity. But should the dynamos and motors which have come into being as the outcome of Faraday's experiment be stopped this evening, the business man of to-day, agitated over labor troubles, might, as he trudged home past lines of "dead" cars, through dark streets to an unlighted house, engage in a little creative thought of his own and perceive that he and his laborers would have no modern factories and mines to quarrel about had it not been for the strange practical effects of the idle curiosity of scientists, inventors, and engineers.

The examples of creative intelligence given above belong to the realm of modern scientific achievement, which furnishes the most striking instances of the effects of scrupulous, objective thinking. But there are, of course, other great realms in which the recording and embodiment of acute observation and insight have wrought themselves into the higher life of man. The great poets and dramatists and our modern story-tellers have found themselves engaged in productive reveries, noting and artistically presenting their discoveries for the delight and instruction of those who have the ability to appreciate them.

The process by which a fresh and original poem or drama comes into being is doubtless analogous to that which originates and elaborates so-called scientific discoveries; but there is clearly a temperamental difference. The genesis and advance of painting, sculpture, and music offer still other problems. We really as yet know shockingly little about these matters, and indeed very few people have the least curiosity about them. Nevertheless, creative intelligence in its various forms and activities is what makes man. Were it not for its slow, painful, and constantly discouraged operations through the ages man would be no more than a species of primate living on seeds, fruit, roots, and uncooked flesh, and wandering naked through the woods and over the plains like a chimpanzee.

The origin and progress and future promotion of civilization are ill understood and misconceived. These should be made the chief theme of education, but much hard work is necessary before we can reconstruct our ideas of man and his capacities and free ourselves from innumerable persistent misapprehensions. There have been obstructionists in all times, not merely the lethargic masses, but the moralists, the rationalizing theologians, and most of the philosophers, all busily if unconsciously engaged

in ratifying existing ignorance and mistakes and discouraging creative thought. Naturally, those who reassure us seem worthy of honor and respect. Equally naturally those who puzzle us with disturbing criticisms and invite us to change our ways are objects of suspicion and readily discredited. Our personal discontent does not ordinarily extend to any critical questioning of the general situation in which we find ourselves. In every age the prevailing conditions of civilization have appeared quite natural and inevitable to those who grew up in them. The cow asks no questions as to how it happens to have a dry stall and a supply of hay. The kitten laps its warm milk from a china saucer, without knowing anything about porcelain; the dog nestles in the corner of a divan with no sense of obligation to the inventors of upholstery and the manufacturers of down pillows. So we humans accept our breakfasts, our trains and telephones and orchestras and movies, our national Constitution, our moral code and standards of manners, with the simplicity and innocence of a pet rabbit. We have absolutely inexhaustible capacities for appropriating what others do for us with no thought of a "thank you." We do not feel called upon to make any least contribution to the merry game ourselves. Indeed, we are usually quite unaware that a game is being played at all.

The Secret Life of Walter Mitty

James Thurber • *1894–*

James Harvey Robinson classified revery as an important mode of thought. Its therapeutic function in allowing one to escape from intolerable reality into the satisfactions of fantasy is most comically embodied in Walter Mitty, Thurber's little man — you and me — who finds in revery the same repairs to his ego that children find in the Lone Ranger and adolescents of all ages in Grade B Hollywood movies.

"We're going through!" The Commander's voice was like thin ice breaking. He wore his full-dress uniform, with the heavily braided white cap pulled down rakishly over one cold gray eye. "We can't make it, sir. It's spoiling for a hurricane, if you ask me." "I'm not asking you, Lieutenant Berg," said the Commander. "Throw on the power lights! Rev her up to 8,500! We're going through!" The pounding of the cylinders increased; ta-pocketa-pocketa-pocketa-*pocketa-pocketa.* The Commander stared at the ice form-

Reprinted by permission of the author. Copyright, 1939, The *New Yorker* Magazine, Inc.

ing on the pilot window. He walked over and twisted a row of complicated dials. "Switch on No. 8 auxiliary!" he shouted. "Switch on No. 8 auxiliary!" repeated Lieutenant Berg. "Full strength in No. 3 turret!" shouted the Commander. "Full strength in No. 3 turret!" The crew, bending to their various tasks in the huge, hurtling eight-engined Navy hydroplane, looked at each other and grinned. "The Old Man'll get us through," they said to one another. "The Old Man ain't afraid of Hell!" . . .

"Not so fast! You're driving too fast!" said Mrs. Mitty. "What are you driving so fast for?"

"Hmm?" said Walter Mitty. He looked at his wife, in the seat beside him, with shocked astonishment. She seemed grossly unfamiliar, like a strange woman who had yelled at him in a crowd. "You were up to fifty-five," she said. "You know I don't like to go more than forty. You were up to fifty-five." Walter Mitty drove on toward Waterbury in silence, the roaring of the SN202 through the worst storm in twenty years of Navy flying fading in the remote, intimate airways of his mind. "You're tensed up again," said Mrs. Mitty. "It's one of your days. I wish you'd let Dr. Renshaw look you over."

Walter Mitty stopped the car in front of the building where his wife went to have her hair done. "Remember to get those overshoes while I'm having my hair done," she said. "I don't need overshoes," said Mitty. She put her mirror back into her bag. "We've been all through that," she said, getting out of the car. "You're not a young man any longer." He raced the engine a little. "Why don't you wear your gloves? Have you lost your gloves?" Walter Mitty reached in a pocket and brought out the gloves. He put them on, but after she had turned and gone into the building and he had driven on to a red light, he took them off again. "Pick it up, brother!" snapped a cop as the light changed, and Mitty hastily pulled on his gloves and lurched ahead. He drove around the streets aimlessly for a time, and then he drove past the hospital on his way to the parking lot.

. . . "It's the millionaire banker, Wellington McMillan," said the pretty nurse. "Yes?" said Walter Mitty, removing his gloves slowly. "Who has the case?" "Dr. Renshaw and Dr. Benbow, but there are two specialists here, Dr. Remington from New York and Dr. Pritchard-Mitford from London. He flew over." A door opened down a long, cool corridor and Dr. Renshaw came out. He looked distraught and haggard. "Hello, Mitty," he said. "We're having the devil's own time with McMillan, the millionaire banker and close personal friend of Roosevelt. Obstreosis of the ductal tract. Tertiary. Wish you'd take a look at him." "Glad to," said Mitty.

In the operating room there were whispered introductions: "Dr. Remington, Dr. Mitty. Dr. Pritchard-Mitford, Dr. Mitty." "I've read your book on streptothricosis," said Pritchard-Mitford, shaking hands. "A brilliant performance, sir." "Thank you," said Walter Mitty. "Didn't know you were in the States, Mitty," grumbled Remington. "Coals to Newcastle, bringing Mitford and me up here for a tertiary." "You are very kind," said Mitty. A

huge, complicated machine, connected to the operating table, with many tubes and wires, began at this moment to go pocketa-pocketa-pocketa. "The new anaesthetizer is giving away!" shouted an interne. "There is no one in the East who knows how to fix it!" "Quiet, man!" said Mitty, in a low, cool voice. He sprang to the machine, which was now going pocketa-pocketa-queep-pocketa-queep. He began fingering delicately a row of glistening dials. "Give me a fountain pen!" he snapped. Someone handed him a fountain pen. He pulled a faulty piston out of the machine and inserted the pen in its place. "That will hold for ten minutes," he said. "Get on with the operation." A nurse hurried over and whispered to Renshaw, and Mitty saw the man turn pale. "Coreopsis has set in," said Renshaw nervously. "If you would take over, Mitty?" Mitty looked at him and at the craven figure of Benbow, who drank, and at the grave, uncertain faces of the two great specialists. "If you wish," he said. They slipped a white gown on him; he adjusted a mask and drew on thin gloves; nurses handed him shining . . .

"Back it up, Mac! Look out for that Buick!" Walter Mitty jammed on the brakes. "Wrong lane, Mac," said the parking-lot attendant, looking at Mitty closely. "Gee. Yeh," muttered Mitty. He began cautiously to back out of the lane marked "Exit Only." "Leave her sit there," said the attendant. "I'll put her away." Mitty got out of the car. "Hey, better leave the key." "Oh," said Mitty, handing the man the ignition key. The attendant vaulted into the car, backed it up with insolent skill, and put it where it belonged.

They're so damn cocky, thought Walter Mitty, walking along Main Street; they think they know everything. Once he had tried to take his chains off, outside New Milford, and he had got them wound around the axles. A man had had to come out in a wrecking car and unwind them, a young, grinning garageman. Since then Mrs. Mitty always made him drive to a garage to have the chains taken off. The next time, he thought, I'll wear my right arm in a sling; they won't grin at me then. I'll have my right arm in a sling and they'll see I couldn't possibly take the chains off myself. He kicked at the slush on the sidewalk. "Overshoes," he said to himself, and he began looking for a shoe store.

When he came out into the street again, with the overshoes in a box under his arm, Walter Mitty began to wonder what the other thing was his wife had told him to get. She had told him twice before they set out from their house for Waterbury. In a way he hated these weekly trips to town — he was always getting something wrong. Kleenex, he thought, Squibb's, razor blades? No. Toothpaste, toothbrush, bicarbonate, carborundum, initiative and referendum? He gave it up. But she would remember it. "Where's that what's-its-name?" she would ask. "Don't tell me you forgot the what's-its-name." A newsboy went by shouting something about the Waterbury trial.

. . . "Perhaps this will refresh your memory." The District Attorney sud-

denly thrust a heavy automatic at the quiet figure on the witness stand. "Have you ever seen this before?" Walter Mitty took the gun and examined it expertly. "This is my Webley-Vickers 50.80," he said calmly. An excited buzz ran around the courtroom. The Judge rapped for order. "You are a crack shot with any sort of firearms, I believe?" said the District Attorney, insinuatingly. "Objection!" shouted Mitty's attorney. "We have shown that the defendant could not have fired the shot. We have shown that he wore his right arm in a sling on the night of the fourteenth of July." Walter Mitty raised his hand briefly and the bickering attorneys were stilled. "With any known make of gun," he said evenly, "I could have killed Gregory Fitzhurst at three hundred feet *with my left hand.*" Pandemonium broke loose in the courtroom. A woman's scream rose above the bedlam and suddenly a lovely, dark-haired girl was in Walter Mitty's arms. The District Attorney struck at her savagely. Without rising from his chair, Mitty let the man have it on the point of the chin. "You miserable cur!" . . .

"Puppy biscuit," said Walter Mitty. He stopped walking and the buildings of Waterbury rose up out of the misty courtroom and surrounded him again. A woman who was passing laughed. "He said 'Puppy biscuit,'" she said to her companion. "That man said 'Puppy biscuit' to himself." Walter Mitty hurried on. He went into an A. & P., not the first one he came to but a smaller one farther up the street. "I want some biscuit for small, young dogs," he said to the clerk. "Any special brand, sir?" The greatest pistol shot in the world thought a moment. "It says 'Puppies Bark for It' on the box," said Walter Mitty.

His wife would be through at the hairdresser's in fifteen minutes, Mitty saw in looking at his watch, unless they had trouble drying it; sometimes they had trouble drying it. She didn't like to get to the hotel first; she would want him to be there waiting for her as usual. He found a big leather chair in the lobby, facing a window, and he put the overshoes and the puppy biscuit on the floor beside it. He picked up an old copy of *Liberty* and sank down into the chair. "Can Germany Conquer the World Through the Air?" Walter Mitty looked at the pictures of bombing planes and of ruined streets.

. . . "The cannonading has got the wind up in young Raleigh, sir," said the sergeant. Captain Mitty looked up at him through tousled hair. "Get him to bed," he said wearily, "with the others. I'll fly alone." "But you can't, sir," said the sergeant anxiously. "It takes two men to handle that bomber and the Archies are pounding hell out of the air. Von Richtman's circus is between here and Saulier." "Somebody's got to get the ammunition dump," said Mitty. "I'm going over. Spot of brandy?" He poured a drink for the sergeant and one for himself. War thundered and whined around the dugout and battered at the door. There was a rending of wood, and splinters flew through the room. "A bit of a near thing," said Captain Mitty carelessly. "The box barrage is closing in," said the sergeant. "We only live once, Sergeant," said Mitty, with his faint, fleeting smile. "Or do

we?" He poured another brandy and tossed it off. "I never see a man could hold his brandy like you, sir," said the sergeant. "Begging your pardon, sir." Captain Mitty stood up and strapped on his huge Webley-Vickers automatic. "It's forty kilometers through hell, sir," said the sergeant. Mitty finished one last brandy. "After all," he said softly, "what isn't?" The pounding of the cannon increased; there was the rat-tat-tatting of machine guns, and from somewhere came the menacing pocketa-pocketa-pocketa of the new flame-throwers. Walter Mitty walked to the door of the dugout humming "Auprès de Ma Blonde." He turned and waved to the sergeant. "Cheerio!" he said. . . .

Something struck his shoulder. "I've been looking all over this hotel for you," said Mrs. Mitty. "Why do you have to hide in this old chair? How did you expect me to find you?" "Things close in," said Walter Mitty vaguely. "What?" Mrs. Mitty said. "Did you get the what's-its-name? The puppy biscuit? What's in that box?" "Overshoes," said Mitty. "Couldn't you have put them on in the store?" "I was thinking," said Walter Mitty. "Does it ever occur to you that I am sometimes thinking?" She looked at him. "I'm going to take your temperature when I get you home," she said.

They went out through the revolving doors that made a faintly derisive whistling sound when you pushed them. It was two blocks to the parking lot. At the drugstore on the corner she said, "Wait here for me. I forgot something. I won't be a minute." She was more than a minute. Walter Mitty lighted a cigarette. It began to rain, rain with sleet in it. He stood up against the wall of the drugstore, smoking. . . . He put his shoulders back and his heels together. "To hell with the handkerchief," said Walter Mitty scornfully. He took one last drag on his cigarette and snapped it away. Then, with that faint, fleeting smile playing about his lips, he faced the firing squad; erect and motionless, proud and disdainful. Walter Mitty the Undefeated, inscrutable to the last.

Experimental Neuroses

Jules H. Masserman • 1904–

Here a scientist describes his experiments in teaching cats complex patterns of behavior, subjecting them to contradictory influences, and relieving their resulting neuroses by psychotherapy.

With permission from *Scientific American*, March 1950, volume 182, Number 3.

As AUGUSTE COMTE pointed out a century ago, a science generally develops through three phases of evolution: mystic, taxonomic and dynamic. Psychiatry, the branch of medicine devoted to the study and treatment of disorders of behavior, admirably illustrates Comte's generalization. Its first phase — the mystic, ritualistic approach — lasted well beyond the Middle Ages: as late as 1783 an insane woman in Switzerland was judged to be an emissary of the devil and burned as a witch. About two centuries ago psychiatry entered the second phase: that of recording and classifying behavior. Man's first observations of the complexities of his own conduct were understandably biased and inaccurate, and his classifications arbitrary and dogmatic; indeed, we are even yet prone to appraise one another with clinical stares and smug appraisals, such as "compared to me, you are an introvert," a "schizoid," a "cyclothyme" — or some other deviate with a resoundingly meaningless appellation.

It would be tempting to assert that in modern times psychiatry has at last left such gaucheries behind and is now a truly scientific discipline devoted to a dynamic understanding of man's behavior and the application of rational methods for readjusting unhappy deviations from the golden norm. Most psychiatrists wish this were completely true, yet we must admit that there are residues of mysticism and irrational dogmatisms in our field. Without adequate diagnosis or justification, patients are still being partially burned or suffocated to cure their evilness — although the *auto-da-fé* is now confined to the brain under the guise of "shock therapy," and the suffocation is euphemistically termed "carbon dioxide inhalation treatment." Even in relatively enlightened spheres of psychiatry there are relics of animistic thinking: *vide* the substitution of the Freudian terms of "Id," "Ego" and "Super-ego" for the gods that in ancient times were thought to be in control of man's passions and intellect; or the attempts by some psychoanalytic mythologists to use the Narcissus and Oedipus legends, not as poetic allegories but as proofs of the supposed nature of man's unconscious conflicts!

Is psychiatry, then, really the most backward of our medical specialties? Perhaps so, but in all fairness we must note that in psychosomatics it has recently achieved a reunion with clinical medicine, that modern psychoanalysis is steadily becoming more scientific and less doctrinaire, and that social psychiatry is establishing productive relationships with anthropology, sociology and other humanistic disciplines. Moreover, psychiatry has begun to re-explore its data, hypotheses and methods by experimental research.

The laboratory and clinical studies of Ivan Pavlov, Horsley Gantt, H. A. Liddell, J. Hunt, David Levy, O. H. Mowrer, Curt Richter and many others have indicated that certain basic tenets on which much of modern dynamic psychiatry implicitly rests are demonstrable in nearly all behavior — animal as well as human, "normal" as well as "abnormal." This article will describe how these tenets, incorporated into a more comprehensive system of biodynamics, have been developed and elaborated in

various experiments conducted during the last 15 years in the Division of Psychiatry of the University of Chicago and, more recently, in the Department of Nervous and Mental Diseases of Northwestern University.

The principles of biodynamics may be condensed into four relatively simple statements:

1. *All behavior is actuated by the current physical needs of the organism in the processes of survival, growth and procreation.* Thus a simple want for calcium or for warmth or even for relief from bladder tension, if sufficiently urgent, will take precedence over more complex physiological "instincts" which are considered basic in some systems of psychology.

2. *Behavior is adaptive to the "external" environment not in any objective sense, but according to the organism's special interpretation of its milieu, which depends upon its own capacities ("intelligence") and its unique association of experiences.* Thus two crossed pieces of burning wood may signify only a marshmallow-toast to one human being, self-congratulatory "white supremacy" to another, and abject terror of death to a third.

3. *When accustomed methods of achieving a goal are frustrated, behavior turns to substitute techniques or becomes oriented toward alternate goals.* Thus if a man's methods of wooing a girl meet with rebuff, he tries (a) other methods, (b) another girl or (c) another goal, such as success as a religious prophet, as a jazz drummer or perhaps as a psychologist.

4. *When two or more accustomed modes of response become mutually incompatible, physiologic tension, or "psychosomatic anxiety," becomes manifest and behavior becomes vacillating, inefficient and unadaptive ("neurotic") or excessively substitutive, erratic and regressive ("psychotic").*

To study these general principles of biodynamics experimentally, one might utilize any animal with sufficiently high capacities for perception, integration and reaction — the rat, the dog, the cat or the monkey. In most of the experiments to be described we employed the cat, because it has fairly simple motivations and relatively high intelligence. To actuate the animal's behavior we might have chosen any one of several stimuli — thirst, cold, pressure or pain, erotic excitement or the like. We found that hunger for food, though a relatively complex need, is the most convenient: it is easily renewable, is satiable in easy stages, and is neither as climactic nor potentially as traumatic as are sexuality, cold, pain or other physiologic tensions.

In a typical experiment a cat was deprived of food for a day, then placed in a glass-enclosed experimental cage at one end of which was a food-box with a partly open hinged lid. The animal readily learned to obtain pellets of food from this box by prying the lid farther open so it could reach them. The animal was then taught (a) to wait for various combinations of sound and light signals before attempting to feed, (b) to manipulate various electrical switches so as to set off these signals for itself, and (c) to close two or more switches a given number of times in definite sequence or in

response to cues. If the training of the animal was too rapid for its age and capacities — and cats seemed to vary in intelligence as much as human beings do — the animal sometimes became recalcitrant, inept and resistive. If, however, the training process was adjusted to the individual cat, its behavior was efficient, well integrated and successful; indeed, pussy presented the appearance of a "happy" animal, as indicated by her eagerness to enter the laboratory, her avidity for the experimenter and the food-switch, and her *legato sostenuto* purring while she worked for her reward.

The animals were then subjected to various frustrations. For example, after a cat had been trained to depress a disc-switch to obtain food, the switch was so rearranged that its manipulation produced little or no reward. The animal would then develop a marked tendency to push down upon other objects in its environment, such as saucers, loops, boxes or other cats. This obsessive manipulative activity took many forms: sitting on the switch or on similar small platforms rather than in more comfortable places, prying into the experimenter's clothes instead of into the food-box, and so on.

Under other provocations the animals even exhibited conduct patterns which, when seen in human beings, have been called, misleadingly, "masochistic." Thus a cat was trained to accept a mild electric shock as a signal for feeding, and then taught to press a switch and administer the shock to itself in order to obtain the food. The intensity of the shock was then gradually increased to as much as 5,000 volts of a pulsating 15-milliampere condenser discharge; yet the animal continued to work the switch avidly for the food. Even when the reward was discontinued for long periods, the animal persisted in its accustomed pattern of depressing the switch, apparently solely for the substitutive experience of a "painful" electric shock. The observations suggest, however, that, contrary to Freud's paradoxical postulate of a death instinct, "masochistic" behavior is not basically "self-punitive" but rather a seeking for survival by patterns of response that seem awry only to an observer unacquainted with the unique experiences of the organism. In the light of the reactions revealed by these experiments, and by clinical investigations, we can understand why a woman may enjoy only certain "painful" forms of sexual intercourse when we learn that she reached her first orgasm while being beaten or raped; she may thereafter value all aspects of this erotic experience, including those considered by others as "painful." Similarly, we can cease to wonder why a man marries a succession of shrewish wives if we determine under deeper analysis that what appears to others to be nagging and persecution simply represents to him the security he had once experienced with his over-attentive but devoted mother.

More complex frustrations, arising from social interactions, can also be demonstrated in animal groups with revealing clarity. In one type of experiment two trained cats, after a given feeding signal, are faced with a single food reward. At first they may skirmish a bit at the food-box. Soon,

however, all external evidences of competition abate and only one of the animals — usually the more alert and intelligent — responds to the signal while its partner, though hungry, waits patiently until the "dominant" animal is either satiated or removed from the cage. Stable hierarchies of "privilege" can be produced in groups of four or more animals. The same animals may however, range themselves in different orders of hierarchy for different activities. In short, there evolves a stratified "society" with fixed rankings in various activities.

One particularly enlightening variant of these experiments seemed to reproduce in cats "worker-parasite relationships" that are usually seen only in more elaborate forms of social organization. Two cats, each of which had been trained to manipulate a switch to obtain food, were placed in a single cage. The cage was equipped with a barrier between the switch and the food-box, so that the animal which essayed to work the switch could not reach the food-box until after its less enterprising partner had eaten the pellet. Under these circumstances some pairs of cats evolved a form of cooperative effort; they alternately worked the switch to feed each other. This cooperation, however, lasted no longer among cats than it does among men. One animal sooner or later showed tendencies toward "parasitism"; it ate the pellets produced by its partner's efforts but refused to leave the food to manipulate the switch. The worker animal, finding its own "cooperative" behavior completely unrewarding, in turn ceased to produce food. Both animals, the parasite usually near the food-box and the worker near the switch, lolled about the cage for hours in a travesty of a sit-down strike. But as hunger increased, the relatively undernourished cat that had worked the switch usually would discover that if the switch were depressed six or eight times in rapid succession to release as many food pellets, he could scramble back to the box in time to get the last pellet or two before the parasitic partner gulped them all. In these experiments the end result was that the "worker" animal labored hard for a meager living while supporting its parasitic partner in leisure — a form of relationship apparently accepted by both animals. In two cases out of some 14 studied, however, the workers solved the situation with a flash of technological genius not anticipated by the experimenter: they learned to wedge the switch into a recess in the cage, so that, with the electrical circuit closed and the mechanical feeder operating continuously, both animals could feed without further effort by either.

Now it is a noteworthy fact that even in circumstances of direct rivalry these animals seldom became hostile or combative toward one another. Indeed, overtly aggressive behavior occurred so infrequently that special experiments had to be devised to determine the specific circumstances under which such behavior could be elicited. These studies demonstrated that animals are likely to become overtly belligerent only under two sets of conditions: (1) when they are displaced from a position of social dominance to which they have become thoroughly accustomed, or (2) when their goal-seeking activities are internally inhibited by neurotic conflicts.

The first situation is illustrated by this series of experiments: Let four cats, designated as Group A, compete for food under controlled conditions until Cat A1 emerges dominant, with A2, A3 and A4 in order below him. Let another group, B, range themselves correspondingly as B1, B2, B3 and B4. If A1 is now paired with B4, the latter, accustomed to permit all other animals to feed before it, will offer no competition. But if A1 and B1 are paired after each has been accustomed for weeks or months to dominance in its respective group, a new contest of speed and skill occurs. As before, each animal at first strives for the food directly and diverts none of its energies into physical attacks on the other. Once again, of course, one animal emerges dominant — say B1. A1 now gives up its efforts to obtain the food reward as long as B1 is in the cage. But between signals A1 may sit on the food-box menacing B1 with tooth and claw, or it may even attack B1 viciously, although it makes no effort to follow up such attacks with sallies at the food. Other pairings (A2-B3, B2-A3, etc.) evoke less definitive reactions ranging between the above-described extremes of peace and hostility.

The second type of situation that leads to aggression — the production of a neurotic conflict in an animal — can also be demonstrated experimentally. If, for example, the dominant animal in a group is made fearful of feeding on signal he will abandon this learned response and permit a subdominant animal to feed instead — yet attack the latter between feedings.

We shall consider briefly how these experimental neuroses are produced in animals and the methods by which the behavior of such animals may be restored to "normal." This portion of our work is perhaps the most relevant to clinical psychiatry, in its older, limited sense as the study of the "abnormalities" of behavior.

The concept of "conflict" has been central to many theories about the causes of neurotic aberrations. In biodynamics this concept is somewhat clarified by postulating that patterns of behavior come into conflict either because they arise from incompatible needs, or because they cannot coexist in space and time. This general statement can be exemplified by a relatively simple method of producing an experimental neurosis in animals:

A cat was trained to manipulate an electric device which first flashed a light, then rang a bell and finally deposited a pellet of breaded salmon in a food-box. The animal was permitted over a period of months to become thoroughly accustomed to this routine of working for the food. One day, however, just as the animal was about to consume its reward for honest labor it was subjected to a physically harmless but "psychically traumatic" stimulus, *e.g.*, a mild air-blast across its snout or a pulsating condenser shock through its paws. The animal dropped the food, beat a startled retreat from the food-box and began to show hesitation and indecision about again manipulating the switch or approaching the food-box. When it did try again, it was permitted to feed several times but then subjected once more to the disruptive blast or shock. After from two to seven repetitions in as many days of such conflict-inducing experiences, the animal began to de-

velop aberrant patterns of conduct so markedly like those in human neuroses that the two may be described in the same terms.

Neurotic animals exhibited a rapid heart, full pulse, catchy breathing, raised blood pressure, sweating, trembling, erection of hair and other evidences of pervasive physiologic tension. They showed extreme startle reactions to minor stimuli and became "irrationally" fearful not only of physically harmless light or sounds but also of closed spaces, air currents, vibrations, caged mice and food itself. The animals developed gastrointestinal disorders, recurrent asthma, persistent salivation or diuresis, sexual impotence, epileptiform seizures or muscular rigidities resembling those in human hysteria or catatonia. Peculiar "compulsions" emerged, such as restless, elliptical pacing or repetitive gestures and mannerisms. One neurotic dog could never approach his food until he had circled it three times to the left and bowed his head before it. Neurotic animals lost their group dominance and became reactively aggressive under frustration. In other relationships they regressed to excessive dependence or various forms of kittenish helplessness. In short, the animals displayed the same stereotypes of anxiety, phobias, hypersensitivity, regression and psychosomatic dysfunctions observed in human patients.

In nearly every case these neurotic patterns rapidly permeated the entire life of the animals and persisted indefinitely unless "treated" by special procedures. By experiments too numerous and varied to be recounted here in detail, a number of such therapeutic techniques were worked out. Some of them are strikingly similar to those used in the treatment of human neuroses.

A neurotic animal given a prolonged rest of three to twelve months in a favorable home environment nearly always showed a diminution in anxiety, tension, and in phobic-compulsive and regressive behavior. The neurotic patterns were prone to reappear, however, when the animal was returned to the laboratory, even though it was not subjected to a direct repetition of the conflictual experiences. To draw a human analogy, a soldier with severe "combat fatigue" may appear recovered after a rest in a base hospital, but unless his unconscious attitudes are altered his reactions to latent anxiety recur cumulatively when he is returned to the locale of his conflicts.

If a neurotically self-starved animal which had refused food for two days was forcibly tube-fed, the mitigation of its hunger reduced its neurotic manifestations. . . .

In another experiment a hungry neurotic cat was prevented from escaping from the apparatus and was pushed mechanically closer and closer to the feeder until its head was almost in contact with a profusion of delectable pellets. Under such circumstances some animals, despite their fears, suddenly lunged for the food; thereafter they needed less mechanical "persuasion," and finally their feeding-inhibition disappeared altogether, carrying other neurotic symptoms with it. . . . In some ways the "therapy" is

akin to pushing a boy afraid of water into a shallow pool. Depending on what his capacities are for reintegrating his experiences, he may either find that there was no reason for fear or go into a state of diffuse panic. Because of the latter possibility, ruthless force is generally considered a dangerous method in dealing with neurotic anxieties.

The example of normal behavior sometimes has favorable results. An inhibited, phobic animal, after being paired for several weeks with one that responds normally in the experimental situation, will show some diminution in its neurotic patterns, although never complete recovery. It is well known, of course, that problem children improve in behavior when they have an opportunity to live with and emulate the more successful behavior of normal youngsters — although more specific individual therapy is nearly always necessary to complete the "cure."

A neurotic animal becomes exceedingly dependent upon the experimenter for protection and care. If this trust is not violated, the latter may retrain the animal by gentle steps: first, to take food from his hand, next to accept food in the apparatus, then to open the box while the experimenter merely hovers protectively, and finally to work the switch and feed without special encouragement from the "therapist." During its rehabilitation the animal masters not only its immediate conflicts but also its generalized inhibitions, phobias, compulsions and other neurotic reactions. This process may be likened to the familiar phenomenon of "transference" in clinical psychotherapy. The neurotic patient transfers his dependent relationship to the therapist, who then utilizes this dependence to guide and support the patient as the latter re-examines his conflictful desires and fears, recognizes his previous misinterpretations of reality and essays new ways of living until he is sufficiently successful and confident to proceed on his own.

We have also tested on these animals the effects of drugs, electroshock and other physical methods used in the treatment of behavior disorders. Sedative and narcotic drugs were first tried on normal animals. In one series of experiments an animal was taught (1) to open a food-box, (2) to respond to food-signals, (3) to operate the signal-switch, (4) to work two switches in a given order, and finally (5) to traverse a difficult maze to reach one of the switches. If the animal was then drugged with a small dose of barbital, morphine or alcohol, it became incapable of solving the maze but could still work the food-switches properly. With larger doses, it could "remember" how to work only one switch; with still larger doses, earlier stages of learning also were disintegrated, until finally the animal lost even the simple skill required to open the food-box. In other words, in moderate doses a drug disorganizes complex behavior patterns first while leaving the relatively simple ones intact.

Now if an animal is made neurotic and then is given barbital or morphine, its anxiety reactions and inhibitions are significantly relieved. Instead of crouching tense and immobile in a far corner or showing fear of

the feeding signals, it opens the food-box and feeds (albeit in a somewhat groggy manner), as though for the time being its doubts and conflicts are forgotten. Obviously the recently formed, intricate neurotic reactions are relatively more vulnerable to disintegration by the sedative drugs than the animal's preneurotic patterns.

In one variant of these studies, animals which were drugged with alcohol and experienced relief from neurotic tensions while partly intoxicated were later given an opportunity to choose between alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks. Significantly, about half the neurotic animals in these experiments began to develop a quite unfeline preference for alcohol; moreover in most cases the preference was sufficiently insistent and prolonged to warrant the term "addiction." This induced dipsomania generally lasted until the animal's underlying neurosis was relieved by nonalcoholic methods of therapy. In still another series of experiments we observed that the administration of hypnotic drugs, including alcohol, so dulled the perceptive and memory capacities of animals that while thus inebriated they were relatively immune to emotionally traumatic experiences. It hardly needs pointing out, in this connection, that many a human being has been known to take a "bracer" before bearding the boss, flying a combat mission or getting married, and that temporary escapes of this nature from persistent anxieties often lead to chronic alcoholism.

We also investigated the effects of cerebral electroshock on neurotic animals. The shock produced by the 60-cycle current usually employed in this treatment acted upon animals like an intoxicant drug, disintegrating complex and recently acquired patterns of behavior in both "normal" and "neurotic" animals. Unlike most drugs, however, electroshock produced permanent impairment of behavioral efficiency and learning capacity. Weaker or modified currents such as are now being tested clinically (*i.e.*, the direct square-wave Leduc type) produced lesser degrees of deterioration in our animals, but also had less effect on their neurotic behavior. All in all, these experiments supported the growing conviction among psychiatrists that electroshock and other drastic procedures, though possibly useful in certain relatively recent and acute psychoses, produce cerebral damage which charges the indiscriminate use of such "therapies" with potential tragedy.

All this is only a condensed summary of a long series of experiments designed to analyze the biodynamics of behavior and to discern principles that may apply to human behavior and to psychotherapy. To be sure, the gap between the responses of cats, dogs or monkeys in cages and the conduct of man in society is undeniably wide; certainly man, of all creatures, has developed the most elaborate repertoire of "normal," "neurotic" and "psychotic" behavior patterns. Yet, as elsewhere in medicine, the best way to unravel an especially complex problem is to take it into the laboratory as well as the clinic, to investigate it by specially designed experiments, to check the results with a rigid self-discipline that eliminates subtle errors

and cherished preconceptions, and so to advance bit by bit toward clearer formulations of general principles and more pertinent applications of them. Such experimental and operational approaches, when correlated with clinical practice, may dissolve the verbal barriers among the various schools of medical psychology and foster a needed rapprochement between psychiatry on the one hand and scientific medicine and the humanities on the other.

Beyond this, the work in biodynamics presents some fundamental social implications. Our observations of the causes of aggressive behavior among animals support the clinical and sociological conclusions of Karen Horney, John Dollard and others (including the author) that hostilities among human beings also spring from the frustrations and the anxiety-ridden inhibitions of their persistently barbaric culture — not, as Sigmund Freud believed, from an inborn, suicidal "death instinct." If aggression is truly innate, we should perhaps join Freud and some of his disciples in resigning ourselves, with apocalyptic erudition, to our inevitable self-destruction. But if aggression is simply a blindly destructive reaction to misconceived threats, then it could be dissipated by the abolition of the tragic wants and anxieties that underlie the individual and mass neuroses and psychoses of mankind.

The Door

E. B. White • 1899–

This story is the perfect companion piece for Dr. Masserman's essay on cats. Instead of studying the cat, however, E. B. White shows our neighbor, or maybe our neighbor's neighbor, trapped in the bewildering world where wool suits are orlon, glass doors are invisible, and where, to paraphrase W. S. Gilbert, "Things aren't always what they seem."

EVERYTHING (he kept saying) is something it isn't. And everybody is always somewhere else. Maybe it was the city, being in the city, that made him feel how queer everything was and that it was something else. Maybe (he kept thinking) it was the names of the things. The names were tex and frequently koid. Or they were flex and oid or they were duroid (sani) or flexsan (duro), but everything was glass (but not quite glass) and the thing that you touched (the surface, washable, crease-resistant) was rubber, only it wasn't quite rubber and you didn't quite touch it but almost.

Copyright, 1939, by E. B. White. Originally published in *The New Yorker*.

The wall, which was glass but thrutex, turned out on being approached not to be a wall, it was something else, it was an opening or doorway — and the doorway (through which he saw himself approaching) turned out to be something else, it was a wall. And what he had eaten not having agreed with him.

He was in a washable house, but he wasn't sure. Now about those rats, he kept saying to himself. He meant the rats that the Professor had driven crazy by forcing them to deal with problems which were beyond the scope of rats, the insoluble problems. He meant the rats that had been trained to jump at the square card with the circle in the middle, and the card (because it was something it wasn't) would give way and let the rat into a place where the food was, but then one day it would be a trick played on the rat, and the card would be changed, and the rat would jump but the card wouldn't give way, and it was an impossible situation (for a rat) and the rat would go insane and into its eyes would come the unspeakably bright imploring look of the frustrated, and after the convulsions were over and the frantic racing around, then the passive stage would set in and the willingness to let anything be done to it, even if it was something else.

He didn't know which door (or wall) or opening in the house to jump at, to get through, because one was an opening that wasn't a door (it was a void, or koid) and the other was a wall that wasn't an opening, it was a sanitary cupboard of the same color. He caught a glimpse of his eyes staring into his eyes, in the thrutex, and in them was the expression he had seen in the picture of the rats — weary after convulsions and the frantic racing around, when they were willing and did not mind having anything done to them. More and more (he kept saying) I am confronted by a problem which is incapable of solution (for this time even if he chose the right door, there would be no food behind it) and that is what madness is, and things seeming different from what they are. He heard, in the house where he was, in the city to which he had gone (as toward a door which might, or might not, give way), a noise — not a loud noise but more of a low prefabricated humming. It came from a place in the base of the wall (or stat) where the flue carrying the filterable air was, and not far from the Minipiano, which was made of the same material nailbrushes are made of, and which was under the stairs. "This, too, has been tested," she said, pointing, but not at it, "and found viable." It wasn't a loud noise, he kept thinking, sorry that he had seen his eyes, even though it was through his own eyes that he had seen them.

First will come the convulsions (he said), then the exhaustion, then the willingness to let anything be done. "And you better believe it *will* be."

All his life he had been confronted by situations which were incapable of being solved, and there was a deliberateness behind all this, behind this changing of the card (or door), because they would always wait till you had learned to jump at the certain card (or door) — the one with the circle — and then they would change it on you. There have been so many doors

changed on me, he said, in the last twenty years, but it is now becoming clear that it is an impossible situation, and the question is whether to jump again, even though they ruffle you in the rump with a blast of air — to make you jump. He wished he wasn't standing by the Minipiano. First they would teach you the prayers and the Psalms, and that would be the right door (the one with the circle), and the long sweet words with the holy sound, and that would be the one to jump at to get where the food was. Then one day you jumped and it didn't give way, so that all you got was the bump on the nose, and the first bewilderment, the first young bewilderment.

I don't knew whether to tell her about the door they substituted or not, he said, the one with the equation on it and the picture of the amoeba reproducing itself by division. Or the one with the photostatic copy of the check for thirty-two dollars and fifty cents. But the jumping was so long ago, although the bump is . . . how those old wounds hurt! Being crazy this way wouldn't be so bad if only, if only. If only when you put your foot forward to take a step, the ground wouldn't come up to meet your foot the way it does. And the same way in the street (only I may never get back to the street unless I jump at the right door), the curb coming up to meet your foot, anticipating ever so delicately the weight of the body, which is somewhere else. "We could take your name," she said, "and send it to you." And it wouldn't be so bad if only you could read a sentence all the way through without jumping (your eye) to something else on the same page; and then (he kept thinking) there was that man out in Jersey, the one who started to chop his trees down, one by one, the man who began talking about how he would take his house to pieces, brick by brick, because he faced a problem incapable of solution, probably, so he began to hack at the trees in the yard, began to pluck with trembling fingers at the bricks in the house. Even if a house is not washable, it is worth taking down. It is not till later that the exhaustion sets in.

But it is inevitable that they will keep changing the doors on you, he said, because that is what they are for; and the thing is to get used to it and not let it unsettle the mind. But that would mean not jumping, and you can't. Nobody cannot jump. There will be no not-jumping. Among rats, perhaps, but among people never. Everybody has to keep jumping at a door (the one with the circle on it) because that is the way everybody is, specially some people. You wouldn't want me, standing here, to tell you, would you, about my friend the poet (deceased) who said, "My heart has followed all my days something I cannot name"? (It had the circle on it.) And like many poets, although few so beloved, he is gone. It killed him, the jumping. First, of course, there were the preliminary bouts, the convulsions, and the calm and the willingness.

I remember the door with the picture of the girl on it (only it was spring), her arms outstretched in loveliness, her dress (it was the one with the circle on it) uncaught, beginning the slow, clear, blinding cascade — and I guess

we would all like to try that door again, for it seemed like the way and for a while it was the way, the door would open and you would go through winged and exalted (like any rat) and the food would be there, the way the Professor had it arranged, everything O.K., and you had chosen the rght door for the world was young. The time they changed that door on me, my nose bled for a hundred hours — how do you like that, Madam? Or would you prefer to show me further through this so strange house, or you could take my name and send it to me, for although my heart has followed all my days something I cannot name, I am tired of the jumping and I do not know which way to go, Madam, and I am not even sure that I am not tried beyond the endurance of man (rat, if you will) and have taken leave of sanity. What are you following these days, old friend, after your recovery from the last bump? What is the name, or is it something you cannot name? The rats have a name for it by this time, perhaps, but I don't know what they call it. I call it plexikoid and it comes in sheets, something like insulating board, unattainable and ugli-proof.

And there was the man out in Jersey, because I keep thinking about his terrible necessity and the passion and trouble he had gone to all those years in the indescribable abundance of a householder's detail, building the estate and the planting of the trees and in spring the lawn-dressing and in fall the bulbs for the spring burgeoning, and the watering of the grass on the long light evenings in summer and the gravel for the driveway (all had to be thought out, planned) and the decorative borders, probably, the perennials and the bug spray, and the building of the house from plans of the architect, first the sills, then the studs, then the full corn in the ear, the floors laid on the floor timbers, smoothed, and then the carpets upon the smooth floors and the curtains and the rods therefor. And then, almost without warning, he would be jumping at the same old door and it wouldn't give: they had changed it on him, making life no longer supportable under the elms in the elm shade, under the maples in the maple shade.

"Here you have the maximum of openness in a small room."

It was impossible to say (maybe it was the city) what made him feel the way he did, and I am not the only one either, he kept thinking — ask any doctor if I am. The doctors, they know how many there are, they even know where the trouble is only they don't like to tell you about the prefrontal lobe because that means making a hole in your skull and removing the work of centuries. It took so long coming, this lobe, so many, many years. (Is it something you read in the paper, perhaps?) And now, the strain being so great, the door having been changed by the Professor once too often . . . but it only means a whiff of ether, a few deft strokes, and the higher animal becomes a little easier in his mind and more like the lower one. From now on, you see, that's the way it will be, the ones with the small prefrontal lobes will win because the other ones are hurt too much by this incessant bumping. They can stand just so much, eh, Doctor? (And what is that, pray, that you have in your hand?) Still, you never can tell, eh, Madam?

He crossed (carefully) the room, the thick carpet under him softly, and went toward the door carefully, which was glass and he could see himself in it, and which, at his approach, opened to allow him to pass through; and beyond he half expected to find one of the old doors that he had known, perhaps the one with the circle, the one with the girl her arms outstretched in loveliness and beauty before him. But he saw instead a moving stairway, and descended in light (he kept thinking) to the street below and to the other people. As he stepped off, the ground came up slightly, to meet his foot.

Emily Dickinson's neighbors declared she was "eccentric," but whether this was an important part of her genius is a debatable matter. What is not debatable is her understanding not merely of her Amherst garden but of the human heart and mind.

Much Madness Is Divinest Sense

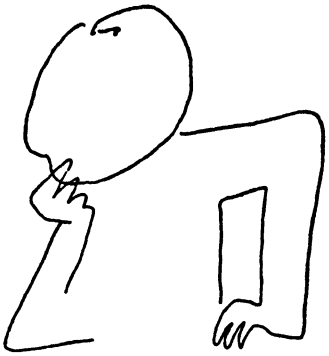
Emily Dickinson • *1830–1886*

Much madness is divinest sense
To a discerning eye;
Much sense the starkest madness.
'Tis the majority
In this, as all, prevails.
Assent, and you are sane;
Demur, — you're straightway dangerous,
And handled with a chain.

The Brain Within Its Groove

Emily Dickinson

The brain within its groove
Runs evenly and true;
But let a splinter swerve,
'Twere easier for you
To put the water back
When floods have slit the hills,
And scooped a turnpike for themselves,
And blotted out the mills!



"Now how would Aristotle have done it?"

Some Logicians at Work

Logic and Logical Fallacies

Robert Gorham Davis • 1908–

No mode of thought lends itself to precise structures so well as the rational, or, as it is often called, the logical. But like all laws, the laws of rational thought are constantly violated, and there are no policemen to clap a senator in jail for committing a crime in logic, any more than there is an effective way of giving a logic-violation ticket to a columnist or to your neighbor in a political argument. The accompanying essay categorizes the chief laws of logic, giving sufficient material to enable you to go into your dormitory, your newspapers, your classrooms, and your own discourse, to detect and expose the false and invalid argument.

EXPRESSION does not exist apart from thought, and cannot be analyzed or profitably discussed apart from thought. Just as clear and effective organization is essential to good writing, so consistent thinking and coherence of mind underlie consistent writing and coherence of style. The faults and errors which we have discussed under the headings of style and structure

Reprinted from *Handbook of English A* (Cambridge: Harvard University Printing Office) by permission of the author and of the Society and Fellows of Harvard University.

are closely bound up with orderly thought, as the student can hardly fail to notice. But some direct suggestions on the modes of consistent thinking and of analyzing and criticizing arguments and assertions ought also to prove useful. The following pages accordingly present some notes on logic and common logical fallacies.

Undefined Terms

The first requirement for logical discourse is knowing what the words you use actually mean. Words are not like paper money or counters in a game. Except for technical terms in some of the sciences, they do not have a fixed face value. Their meanings are fluid and changing, influenced by many considerations of context and reference, circumstance and association. This is just as true of common words such as *fast* as it is of literary terms such as *romantic*. Moreover, if there is to be communication, words must have approximately the same meaning for the reader that they have for the writer. A speech in an unknown language means nothing to the hearer. When an adult speaks to a small child or an expert to a layman, communication may be seriously limited by lack of a mature vocabulary or ignorance of technical terms. Many arguments are meaningless because the speakers are using important words in quite different senses.

Because we learn most words — or guess at them — from the contexts in which we first encounter them, our sense of them is often incomplete or wrong. Readers sometimes visualize the Assyrian who comes down like the wolf on the fold as an enormous man dressed in cohorts (some kind of fancy armor, possibly) gleaming in purple and gold. "A rift in the lute" suggests vaguely a cracked mandolin. Failure to ascertain the literal meaning of figurative language is a frequent reason for mixed metaphors. We are surprised to find that the "devil" in "the devil to pay" and "the devil and the deep blue sea" is not Old Nick, but part of a ship. Unless terms mean the same thing to both writer and reader, proper understanding is impossible.

Abstractions

The most serious logical difficulties occur with abstract terms. An abstraction is a word which stands for a quality found in a number of different objects or events from which it has been "abstracted" or taken away. We may, for instance, talk of the "whiteness" of paper or cotton or snow without considering qualities of cold or inflammability or usefulness which these materials happen also to possess. Usually, however, our minds carry over other qualities by association. See, for instance, the chapter called "The Whiteness of the Whale" in *Moby-Dick*.

In much theoretic discussion the process of abstraction is carried so far that although vague associations and connotations persist, the original objects or events from which the qualities have been abstracted are lost sight of completely. Instead of thinking of words like *sincerity* and *Americanism*

as symbols standing for qualities that have to be abstracted with great care from examples and test cases, we come to think of them as real things in themselves. We assume that Americanism is Americanism just as a bicycle is a bicycle, and that everyone knows what it means. We forget that before the question, "Is Arthur Godfrey sincere?" can mean anything, we have to agree on the criteria of sincerity.

When we try to define such words and find examples, we discover that almost no one agrees on their meaning. The word *church* may refer to anything from a building on the corner of Spring Street to the whole tradition of institutionalized Christianity. *Germany* may mean a geographical section of Europe, a people, a governing group, a cultural tradition, or a military power. Abstractions such as *freedom, courage, race, beauty, truth, justice, nature, honor, humanism, democracy,* should never be used in a theme unless their meaning is defined or indicated clearly by the context. Freedom for whom? To do what? Under what circumstances? Abstract terms have merely emotional value unless they are strictly defined by asking questions of this kind. The study of a word such as *nature* in a good unabridged dictionary will show that even the dictionary, indispensable though it is, cannot determine for us the sense in which a word is being used in any given instance. Once the student understands the importance of definition, he will no longer be betrayed into fruitless arguments over such questions as whether free verse is "poetry" or whether you can change "human nature."

Name-calling

It is a common unfairness in controversy to place what the writer dislikes or opposes in a generally odious category. The humanist dismisses what he dislikes by calling it *romantic;* the liberal, by calling it *fascist;* the conservative, by calling it *communistic.* These terms tell the reader nothing. What is *piety* to some will be *bigotry* to others. *Non-Catholics* would rather be called *Protestants* than *heretics.* What is *right-thinking* except a designation for those who agree with the writer? Social security measures become *creeping socialism;* industrial organizations, *forces of reaction;* investigation into communism, *witch hunts;* prison reform, *coddling;* progressive education, *fads and frills.* Such terms are intended to block thought by an appeal to prejudice and associative habits. Three steps are necessary before such epithets have real meaning. First, they must be defined; second, it must be shown that the object to which they are applied actually possesses these qualities; third, it must be shown that the possession of such qualities in this particular situation is necessarily undesirable. Unless a person is alert and critical both in choosing and in interpreting words, he may be alienated from ideas with which he would be in sympathy if he had not been frightened by a mere name.

Generalization

Similar to the abuse of abstract terms and epithets is the habit of presenting personal opinions in the guise of universal laws. The student often

seems to feel that the broader the terms in which he states an opinion, the more effective he will be. Ordinarily the reverse is true. An enthusiasm for Thomas Wolfe should lead to a specific critical analysis of Wolfe's novels that will enable the writer to explain his enthusiasm to others; it should not be turned into the argument that Wolfe is "the greatest American novelist," particularly if the writer's knowledge of American novelists is somewhat limited. The same questions of *who* and *when* and *why* and under what *circumstances* which are used to check abstract terms should be applied to generalizations. Consider how contradictory proverbial wisdom is when detached from particular circumstances. "Look before you leap," but "he who hesitates is lost."

Superlatives and the words *right* and *wrong, true* and *untrue, never* and *always* must be used with caution in matters of opinion. When a student says flatly that X is true, he often is really saying that he or his family or the author of a book he has just been reading, persons of certain tastes and background and experience, *think* that X is true. If his statement is based not on logic and examination of evidence, but merely reproduces other people's opinions, it can have little value or relevance unless these people are identified and their reasons for thinking so explained. Because many freshmen are taking survey courses in which they read a single work by an author or see an historical event through the eyes of a single historian whose bias they may not be able to measure, they must guard against this error.

Sampling

Assertions of a general nature are frequently open to question because they are based on insufficient evidence. Some persons are quite ready, after meeting one Armenian or reading one medieval romance, to generalize about Armenians and medieval romances. One ought, of course, to examine objectively as many examples as possible before making a generalization, but the number is less important than the representativeness of the examples chosen. The Literary Digest Presidential Poll, sent to hundreds of thousands of people selected from telephone directories, was far less accurate than the Gallup Poll which questioned far fewer voters, but selected them carefully and proportionately from all different social groups. The "typical" college student, as portrayed by moving pictures and cartoons, is very different from the "average" college student as determined statistically. We cannot let uncontrolled experience do our sampling for us; instances and examples which impress themselves upon our minds do so usually because they are exceptional. In propaganda and arguments extreme cases are customarily treated as if they were characteristic.

If one is permitted arbitrarily to select some examples and ignore others, it is possible to find convincing evidence for almost any theory, no matter how fantastic. The fact that the mind tends naturally to remember those instances which confirm its opinions imposes a duty upon the writer, unless he wishes to encourage prejudice and superstition, to look carefully

for exceptions to all generalizations which he is tempted to make. We forget the premonitions which are not followed by disaster and the times when our hunches failed to select the winner in a race. Patent medicine advertisements print the letters of those who survived their cure, and not of those who died during it. All Americans did not gamble on the stock exchange in the twenties, or become Marxists in the thirties, and all Vermonters are not thin-lipped and shrewd. Of course the search for negative examples can be carried too far. Outside of mathematics or the laboratory, few generalizations can be made airtight, and most are not intended to be. But quibbling is so easy that resort to it is very common, and the knowledge that people can and will quibble over generalizations is another reason for making assertions as limited and explicitly conditional as possible.

False Analogy

Illustration, comparison, analogy are most valuable in making an essay clear and interesting. It must not be supposed, however, that they prove anything or have much argumentative weight. The rule that what is true of one thing in one set of circumstances is not necessarily true of another thing in another set of circumstances seems almost too obvious to need stating. Yet constantly nations and businesses are discussed as if they were human beings with human habits and feelings; human bodies are discussed as if they were machines; the universe, as if it were a clock. It is assumed that what held true for seventeenth century New England or the thirteen Atlantic colonies also holds true for an industrial nation of 150,000,000 people. Carlyle dismissed the arguments for representative democracy by saying that if a captain had to take a vote among his crew every time he wanted to do something, he would never get around Cape Horn. This analogy calmly ignores the distinction between the lawmaking and the executive branches of constitutional democracies. Moreover, voters may be considered much more like the stockholders of a merchant line than its hired sailors. Such arguments introduce assumptions in a metaphorical guise in which they are not readily detected or easily criticized. In place of analysis they attempt to identify their position with some familiar symbol which will evoke a predictable, emotional response in the reader. The revival during the 1932 presidential campaign of Lincoln's remark, "Don't swap horses in the middle of the stream," was not merely a picturesque way of saying keep Hoover in the White House. It made a number of assumptions about the nature of depressions and the function of government. This propagandist technique can be seen most clearly in political cartoons.

Degree

Often differences in degree are more important than differences in kind. By legal and social standards there is more difference between an habitual drunkard and a man who drinks temperately, than between a temperate

drinker and a total abstainer. In fact differences of degree produce what are regarded as differences of kind. At known temperatures ice turns to water and water boils. At an indeterminate point affection becomes love and a man who needs a shave becomes a man with a beard. The fact that no men or systems are perfect makes rejoinders and counter-accusations very easy if differences in degree are ignored. Newspapers in totalitarian states, answering American accusations of brutality and suppression, refer to lynchings and gangsterism here. Before a disinterested judge could evaluate these mutual accusations, he would have to settle the question of the degree to which violent suppression and lynching are respectively prevalent in the countries under consideration. On the other hand, differences in degree may be merely apparent. Lincoln Steffens pointed out that newspapers can create a "crime wave" any time they wish, simply by emphasizing all the minor assaults and thefts commonly ignored or given an inch or two on a back page. The great reported increases in insanity may be due to the fact that in a more urban and institutionalized society cases of insanity more frequently come to the attention of authorities and hence are recorded in statistics.

Causation

The most common way of deciding that one thing causes another thing is the simple principle: *post hoc, ergo propter hoc,* "After this, therefore because of this." Rome fell after the introduction of Christianity; therefore Christianity was responsible for the fall of Rome. Such reasoning illustrates another kind of faulty generalization. But even if one could find ten cases in which a nation "fell" after the introduction of Christianity, it still would not be at all certain that Christianity caused the fall. Day, it has frequently been pointed out, follows night in every observable instance, and yet night cannot be called the cause of day. Usually a combination of causes produces a result. Sitting in a draught may cause a cold, but only given a certain physical condition in the person sitting there. In such instances one may distinguish between necessary and sufficient conditions. Air is a necessary condition for the maintenance of plant life, but air alone is not sufficient to produce plant life. And often different causes at different times may produce the same result. This relation is known as plurality of causes. If, after sitting in a stuffy theatre on Monday, and then again after eating in a stuffy restaurant on Thursday, a man suffered from headaches, he might say, generalizing, that bad air gave him headaches. But actually the headache on Monday may have been caused by eye-strain and on Thursday by indigestion. To isolate the causative factor it is necessary that all other conditions be precisely the same. Such isolation is possible, except in very simple instances, only in the laboratory or with scientific methods. If a picture falls from the wall every time a truck passes, we can quite certainly say that the truck's passing is the proximate or immediate cause. But with anything as complex and conditional as a

nation's economy or human character, the determination of cause is not easy or certain. A psychiatrist often sees a patient for an hour daily for a year or more before he feels that he understands his neurosis.

Ordinarily when we speak of cause we mean the proximate or immediate cause. The plants were killed by frost; we had indigestion from eating lobster salad. But any single cause is one in an unbroken series. When a man is murdered, is his death caused by the loss of blood from the wound, or by the firing of the pistol, or by the malice aforethought of the murderer? Was the World War "caused" by the assassination at Sarajevo? Were the Navigation Acts or the ideas of John Locke more important in "causing" the American Revolution? A complete statement of cause would comprise the sum total of the conditions which preceded an event, conditions stretching back indefinitely into the past. Historical events are so interrelated that the isolation of a causative sequence is dependent chiefly on the particular preoccupations of the historian. An economic determinist can "explain" history entirely in terms of economic developments; an idealist, entirely in terms of the development of ideas.

Syllogistic Reasoning

The formal syllogism of the type,

All men are mortal
John is a man
Therefore John is mortal,

is not so highly regarded today as in some earlier periods. It merely fixes an individual as a member of a class, and then assumes that the individual has the given characteristics of the class. Once we have decided who John is, and what "man" and "mortal" mean, and have canvassed all men, including John, to make sure that they are mortal, the conclusion naturally follows. It can be seen that the chief difficulties arise in trying to establish acceptable premises. Faults in the premises are known as "material" fallacies, and are usually more serious than the "formal" fallacies, which are logical defects in drawing a conclusion from the premises. But although directly syllogistic reasoning is not much practiced, buried syllogism can be found in all argument, and it is often a useful clarification to outline your own or another writer's essay in syllogistic form. The two most frequent defects in the syllogism itself are the undistributed and the ambiguous middle. The middle term is the one that appears in each of the premises and not in the conclusion. In the syllogism,

All good citizens vote
John votes
Therefore John is a good citizen,

the middle term is not "good citizens," but "votes." Even though it were true that all good citizens vote, nothing prevents bad citizens from voting

ılso, and John may be one of the bad citizens. To distribute the middle erm "votes" one might say (but only if that is what one meant),

All voters are good citizens
John is a voter
Therefore John is a good citizen.

The ambiguous middle term is even more common. It represents a prob- em in definition, while the undistributed middle is a problem in generali- ;ation. All acts which benefit others are virtuous, losing money at poker)enefits others, therefore losing at poker is a virtuous act. Here the middle erm "act which benefits others" is obviously used very loosely and am-)iguously.

Non-sequitur

This phrase, meaning "it does not follow," is used to characterize the :ind of humor found in pictures in which the Marx Brothers perform. It is ın amusing illogicality because it usually expresses, beneath its apparent ncongruity, an imaginative, associative, or personal truth. "My ancestors :ame over on the Mayflower; therefore I am naturally opposed to labor ınions." It is not logically necessary that those whose ancestors came over)n the Mayflower should be opposed to unions; but it may happen to be rue as a personal fact in a given case. It is usually a strong personal con- ;iction which keeps people from realizing that their arguments are non- ;equiturs, that they do not follow the given premises with logical necessity. Contemporary psychologists have effectively shown us that there is often ;uch a wide difference between the true and the purported reasons for an ıttitude that, in rationalizing our behavior, we are often quite unconscious)f the motives that actually influence us. A fanatical antivivisectionist, for nstance, may have temperamental impulses toward cruelty which he is ;uppressing and compensating for by a reasoned opposition to any kind of)ermitted suffering. We may expect, then, to come upon many conclusions vhich are psychologically interesting in themselves, but have nothing to lo with the given premises.

Ignoratio elenchi

This means, in idiomatic English, "arguing off the point," or ignoring he question at issue. A man trying to show that monarchy is the best form)f government for the British Empire may devote most of his attention to :he charm of Elizabeth II and the affection her people feel for her. In)rdinary conversational argument it is almost impossible for disputants to ;eep to the point. Constantly turning up are tempting side-issues through vhich one can discomfit an opponent or force him to irrelevant admissions :hat seem to weaken his case.

Begging the Question; Arguing in a Circle

The first of these terms means to assume in the premises what you are pretending to prove in the course of your argument. The function of logic is to demonstrate that because one thing or group of things is true, another must be true as a consequence. But in begging the question you simply say in varying language that what is assumed to be true is assumed to be true. An argument which asserts that we shall enjoy immortality because we have souls which are immaterial and indestructible establishes nothing, because the idea of immortality is already contained in the assumption about the soul. It is the premise which needs to be demonstrated, not the conclusion. Arguing in a circle is another form of this fallacy. It proves the premise by the conclusion and the conclusion by the premise. The conscience forbids an act because it is wrong; the act is wrong because the conscience forbids it.

Arguments ad hominem and ad populum

It is very difficult for men to be persuaded by reason when their interest or prestige is at stake. If one wishes to preach the significance of physiognomy, it is well to choose a hearer with a high forehead and a determined jaw. The arguments in favor of repealing the protective tariff on corn or wheat in England were more readily entertained by manufacturers than by landowners. The cotton manufacturers in New England who were doing a profitable trade with the South were the last to be moved by descriptions of the evils of slavery. Because interest and desire are so deeply seated in human nature, arguments are frequently mingled with attempts to appeal to emotion, arouse fear, play upon pride, attack the characters of proponents of an opposite view, show that their practice is inconsistent with their principles; all matters which have, strictly speaking, nothing to do with the truth or falsity, the general desirability or undesirability, of some particular measure. If men are desperate enough they will listen to arguments proper only to an insane asylum but which seem to promise them relief.

After reading these suggestions, which are largely negative, the student may feel that any original assertion he can make will probably contain one or several logical faults. This assumption is not true. Even if it were, we know from reading newspapers and magazines that worldly fame is not dimmed by the constant and, one suspects, conscious practice of illogicality. But generalizations are not made only by charlatans and sophists. Intelligent and scrupulous writers also have a great many fresh and provocative observations and conclusions to express and are expressing them influentially. What is intelligence but the ability to see the connection between things, to discern causes, to relate the particular to the general, to define and discriminate and compare? Any man who thinks and feels and ob-

And in his expression a proponent will find that a due regard for logic does not limit but rather increases the force of his argument. When statements are not trite, they are usually controversial. Men arrive at truth dialectically; error is weeded out in the course of discussion, argument, attack, and counterattack. Not only can a writer who understands logic show the weaknesses of arguments he disagrees with, but also, by anticipating the kind of attack likely to be made on his own ideas, he can so arrange them, properly modified with qualifications and exceptions, that the anticipated attack is made much less effective. Thus, fortunately, we do not have to depend on the spirit of fairness and love of truth to lead men to logic; it has the strong support of argumentative necessity and of the universal desire to make ideas prevail.

We Are All Scientists

T. H. Huxley • *1825–1895*

One of the most successful popularizers of science and its methods in the nineteenth century was Thomas Henry Huxley. This essay is his classic exposition of inductive and deductive logic. (It should be pointed out, of course, that his equation of these basic ways of systematic thought with "scientific investigation" gives an over-simplified picture of a scientist's actual procedures.)

SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION is not, as many people seem to suppose, some kind of modern black art. You might easily gather this impression from the manner in which many persons speak of scientific inquiry, or talk about inductive and deductive philosophy, or the principles of the "Baconian philosophy." I do protest that, of the vast number of cants in this world, there are none, to my mind, so contemptible as the pseudo-scientific cant which is talked about the "Baconian philosophy."

To hear people talk about the great Chancellor — and a very great man he certainly was, — you would think that it was he who had invented science, and that there was no such thing as sound reasoning before the time of Queen Elizabeth! Of course you say, that cannot possibly be true; you perceive, on a moment's reflection, that such an idea is absurdly wrong. . . .

The method of scientific investigation is nothing but the expression of the necessary mode of working of the human mind. It is simply the mode at which all phenomena are reasoned about, rendered precise and exact. There is no more difference, but there is just the same kind of difference, between

the mental operations of a man of science and those of an ordinary person, as there is between the operations and methods of a baker or of a butcher weighing out his goods in common scales, and the operations of a chemist in performing a difficult and complex analysis by means of his balance and finely-graduated weights. It is not that the action of the scales in the one case, and the balance in the other, differ in the principles of their construction or manner of working; but the beam of one is set on an infinitely finer axis than the other, and of course turns by the addition of a much smaller weight.

You will understand this better, perhaps, if I give you some familiar example. You have all heard it repeated, I dare say, that men of science work by means of induction and deduction, and that by the help of these operations, they, in a sort of sense, wring from Nature certain other things, which are called natural laws, and causes, and that out of these, by some cunning skill of their own, they build up hypotheses and theories. And it is imagined by many, that the operations of the common mind can be by no means compared with these processes, and that they have to be acquired by a sort of special apprenticeship to the craft. To hear all these large words, you would think that the mind of a man of science must be constituted differently from that of his fellow men; but if you will not be frightened by terms, you will discover that you are quite wrong, and that all these terrible apparatus are being used by yourselves every day and every hour of your lives.

There is a well-known incident in one of Molière's plays, where the author makes the hero express unbounded delight on being told that he had been talking prose during the whole of his life. In the same way, I trust, that you will take comfort, and be delighted with yourselves, on the discovery that you have been acting on the principles of inductive and deductive philosophy during the same period. Probably there is not one who has not in the course of the day had occasion to set in motion a complex train of reasoning, of the very same kind, though differing of course in degree, as that which a scientific man goes through in tracing the causes of natural phenomena.

A very trivial circumstance will serve to exemplify this. Suppose you go into a fruiterer's shop, wanting an apple, — you take up one, and, on biting it, you find it is sour; you look at it, and see that it is hard and green. You take up another one, and that too is hard, green, and sour. The shopman offers you a third; but, before biting it, you examine it, and find that it is hard and green, and you immediately say that you will not have it, as it must be sour, like those that you have already tried.

Nothing can be more simple than that, you think; but if you will take the trouble to analyse and trace out into its logical elements what has been done by the mind, you will be greatly surprised. In the first place, you have performed the operation of induction. You found that, in two experiences, hardness and greenness in apples went together with sourness. It was so in

the first case, and it was confirmed by the second. True, it is a very small basis, but still it is enough to make an induction from; you generalize the facts, and you expect to find sourness in apples where you get hardness and greenness. You found upon that a general law, that all hard and green apples are sour; and that, so far as it goes, is a perfect induction. Well, having got your natural law in this way, when you are offered another apple which you find is hard and green, you say, "All hard and green apples are sour; this apple is hard and green, therefore this apple is sour." That train of reasoning is what logicians call a syllogism, and has all its various parts and terms — its major premiss, its minor premiss, and its conclusion. And, by the help of further reasoning, which, if drawn out, would have to be exhibited in two or three other syllogisms, you arrive at your final determination, "I will not have that apple." So that, you see, you have, in the first place, established a law by induction, and upon that you have founded a deduction, and reasoned out the special conclusion of the particular case. Well now, suppose, having got your law, that at some time afterwards, you are discussing the qualities of apples with a friend: you will say to him, "It is a very curious thing, — but I find that all hard and green apples are sour!" Your friend says to you, "But how do you know that?" You at once reply, "Oh, because I have tried them over and over again, and have always found them to be so." Well, if we were talking science instead of common sense, we should call that an experimental verification. And, if still opposed, you go further, and say, "I have heard from the people in Somersetshire and Devonshire, where a large number of apples are grown, that they have observed the same thing. It is also found to be the case in Normandy, and in North America. In short, I find it to be the universal experience of mankind wherever attention has been directed to the subject." Whereupon, your friend, unless he is a very unreasonable man, agrees with you, and is convinced that you are quite right in the conclusion you have drawn. He believes, although perhaps he does not know he believes it, that the more extensive verifications are, — that the more frequently experiments have been made, and results of the same kind arrived at, — that the more varied the conditions under which the same results are attained, the more certain is the ultimate conclusion, and he disputes the question no further. He sees that the experiment has been tried under all sorts of conditions, as to time, place, and people, with the same result; and he says with you, therefore, that the law you have laid down must be a good one, and he must believe it.

In science we do the same thing; — the philosopher exercises precisely the same faculties, though in a much more delicate manner. In scientific inquiry it becomes a matter of duty to expose a supposed law to every possible kind of verification, and to take care, moreover, that this is done intentionally, and not left to a mere accident, as in the case of the apples. And in science, as in common life, our confidence in a law is in exact proportion to the absence of variation in the result of our experimental verifi-

cations. For instance, if you let go your grasp of an article you may have in your hand, it will immediately fall to the ground. That is a very common verification of one of the best established laws of nature — that of gravitation. The method by which men of science establish the existence of that law is exactly the same as that by which we have established the trivial proposition about the sourness of hard and green apples. But we believe it in such an extensive, thorough, and unhesitating manner because the universal experience of mankind verifies it, and we can verify it ourselves at any time; and that is the strongest possible foundation on which any natural law can rest.

So much, then, by way of proof that the method of establishing laws in science is exactly the same as that pursued in common life. Let us now turn to another matter (though really it is but another phase of the same question), and that is, the method by which, from the relations of certain phenomena, we prove that some stand in the position of causes towards the others.

I want to put the case clearly before you, and I will therefore show you what I mean by another familiar example. I will suppose that one of you, on coming down in the morning to the parlour of your house, finds that a tea-pot and some spoons which had been left in the room on the previous evening are gone, — the window is open, and you observe the mark of a dirty hand on the window-frame, and perhaps, in addition to that, you notice the impress of a hob-nailed shoe on the gravel outside. All these phenomena have struck your attention instantly, and before two seconds have passed you say, "Oh, somebody has broken open the window, entered the room, and run off with the spoons and the tea-pot!" That speech is out of your mouth in a moment. And you will probably add, "I know there has; I am quite sure of it!" You mean to say exactly what you know; but in reality you are giving expression to what is, in all essential particulars, an hypothesis. You do not *know* it at all; it is nothing but an hypothesis rapidly framed in your own mind. And it is an hypothesis founded on a long train of inductions and deductions.

What are those inductions and deductions, and how have you got at this hypothesis? You have observed, in the first place, that the window is open; but by a train of reasoning involving many inductions and deductions, you have probably arrived long before at the general law — and a very good one it is — that windows do not open of themselves; and you therefore conclude that something has opened the window. A second general law that you have arrived at in the same way is, that tea-pots and spoons do not go out of a window spontaneously, and you are satisfied that, as they are not now where you left them, they have been removed. In the third place, you look at the marks on the window-sill, and the shoe-marks outside, and you say that in all previous experience the former kind of mark has never been produced by anything else but the hand of a human being; and the same experience shows that no other animal but man at present wears shoes with

hob-nails in them such as would produce the marks in the gravel. I do not know, even if we could discover any of those "missing links" that are talked about, that they would help us to any other conclusion! At any rate the law which states our present experience is strong enough for my present purpose. You next reach the conclusion, that as these kinds of marks have not been left by any other animals than men, or are liable to be formed in any other way than by a man's hand and shoe, the marks in question have been formed by a man in that way. You have, further, a general law, founded on observation and experience, and that, too, is, I am sorry to say, a very universal and unimpeachable one, — that some men are thieves; and you assume at once from all these premisses — and that is what constitutes your hypothesis — that the man who made the marks outside and on the window-sill, opened the window, got into the room, and stole your tea-pot and spoons. You have now arrived at a *vera causa;* — you have assumed a cause which, it is plain, is competent to produce all the phenomena you have observed. You can explain all these phenomena only by the hypothesis of a thief. But that is a hypothetical conclusion, of the justice of which you have no absolute proof at all; it is only rendered highly probable by a series of inductive and deductive reasonings.

I suppose your first action, assuming that you are a man of ordinary common sense, and that you have established this hypothesis to your own satisfaction, will very likely be to go for the police, and set them on the track of the burglar, with the view to the recovery of your property. But just as you are starting with this object, some person comes in, and on learning what you are about, says, "My good friend, you are going on a great deal too fast. How do you know that the man who really made the marks took the spoons? It might have been a monkey that took them, and the man may have merely looked in afterwards." You would probably reply, "Well, that is all very well, but you see it is contrary to all experience of the way tea-pots and spoons are abstracted; so that, at any rate, your hypothesis is less probable than mine." While you are talking the thing over in this way, another friend arrives. And he might say, "Oh, my dear sir, you are certainly going on a great deal too fast. You are most presumptuous. You admit that all these occurrences took place when you were fast asleep, at a time when you could not possibly have known anything about what was taking place. How do you know that the laws of Nature are not suspended during the night? It may be that there has been some kind of supernatural interference in this case." In point of fact, he declares that your hypothesis is one of which you cannot at all demonstrate the truth and that you are by no means sure that the laws of Nature are the same when you are asleep as when you are awake.

Well, now, you cannot at the moment answer that kind of reasoning. You feel that your worthy friend has you somewhat at a disadvantage. You will feel perfectly convinced in your own mind, however, that you are quite right, and you say to him, "My good friend, I can only be guided by the

natural probabilities of the case, and if you will be kind enough to stand aside and permit me to pass, I will go and fetch the police." Well, we will suppose that your journey is successful, and that by good luck you meet with a policeman; that eventually the burglar is found with your property on his person, and the marks correspond to his hand and to his boots. Probably any jury would consider those facts a very good experimental verification of your hypothesis, touching the cause of the abnormal phenomena observed in your parlour, and would act accordingly.

Now, in this suppositious case, I have taken phenomena of a very common kind, in order that you might see what are the different steps in an ordinary process of reasoning, if you will only take the trouble to analyze it carefully. All the operations I have described, you will see, are involved in the mind of any man of sense in leading him to a conclusion as to the course he should take in order to make good a robbery and punish the offender. I say that you are led, in that case, to your conclusion by exactly the same train of reasoning as that which a man of science pursues when he is endeavouring to discover the origin and laws of the most occult phenomena. The process is, and always must be, the same; and precisely the same mode of reasoning was employed by Newton and Laplace in their endeavours to discover and define the causes of the movements of the heavenly bodies, as you, with your own common sense, would employ to detect a burglar. The only difference is, that the nature of the inquiry being more abstruse, every step has to be most carefully watched, so that there may not be a single crack or flaw in your hypothesis. A flaw or crack in many of the hypotheses of daily life may be of little or no moment as affecting the general correctness of the conclusions at which we may arrive; but, in a scientific inquiry, a fallacy, great or small, is always of importance, and is sure to be in the long run constantly productive of mischievous, if not fatal results.

Do not allow yourselves to be misled by the common notion that an hypothesis is untrustworthy simply because it is an hypothesis. It is often urged, in respect to some scientific conclusion, that, after all, it is only an hypothesis. But what more have we to guide us in nine-tenths of the most important affairs of daily life than hypotheses, and often very ill-based ones? So that in science, where the evidence of an hypothesis is subjected to the most rigid examination, we may rightly pursue the same course. You may have hypotheses and hypotheses. A man may say, if he likes, that the moon is made of green cheese: that is an hypothesis. But another man, who has devoted a great deal of time and attention to the subject, and availed himself of the most powerful telescopes and the results of the observations of others, declares that in his opinion it is probably composed of materials very similar to those of which our own earth is made up: and that is also only an hypothesis. But I need not tell you that there is an enormous difference in the value of the two hypotheses. That one which is based on sound scientific knowledge is sure to have a corresponding value; and that which is a mere hasty random guess is likely to have but little value. Every great

step in our progress in discovering causes has been made in exactly the same way as that which I have detailed to you. A person observing the occurrence of certain facts and phenomena asks, naturally enough, what process, what kind of operation known to occur in Nature applied to the particular case, will unravel and explain the mystery? Hence you have the scientific hypothesis; and its value will be proportionate to the care and completeness with which its basis has been tested and verified. It is in these matters as in the commonest affairs of practical life: the guess of the fool will be folly, while the guess of the wise man will contain wisdom. In all cases, you see that the value of the result depends on the patience and faithfulness with which the investigator applies to his hypothesis every possible kind of verification. . . .

A Modest Proposal

Jonathan Swift • 1667–1745

Sweet are the uses of argument, especially in the cause of evil. None knew this better than Jonathan Swift, with his piercing intelligence, his respect for intellectual order and clarity; and none was more skillful than he in defending reason by placing unreason in a logical pattern. "A Modest Proposal" is at once a parody of the economic tracts of eighteenth-century England and a parody of argument itself. That it is also the most powerful single piece of ironic writing in English, and that it is a passionate plea for human justice, are extra values beyond the immediate reasons for its inclusion here.

It is a melancholy object to those who walk through this great town or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads, and cabin doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags and importuning every passenger for an alms. These mothers, instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in strolling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants, who as they grow up either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country to fight for the Pretender in Spain, or sell themselves to the Barbadoes.

I think it is agreed by all parties that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom a very great additional grievance; and, therefore, whoever could find out a fair, cheap, and easy method of making these children sound, useful members of

the commonwealth would deserve so well of the public as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.

But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of professed beggars; it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age who are born of parents in effect as little able to support them as those who demand our charity in the streets.

As to my own part, having turned my thoughts for many years upon this important subject, and maturely weighed the several schemes of other projectors, I have always found them grossly mistaken in the computation. It is true, a child just dropped from its dam may be supported by her milk for a solar year, with little other nourishment; at most not above the value of 2s., which the mother may certainly get, or the value in scraps, by her lawful occupation of begging; and it is exactly at one year old that I propose to provide for them in such a manner as instead of being a charge upon their parents or the parish, or wanting food and raiment for the rest of their lives, they shall on the contrary contribute to the feeding, and partly to the cloathing, of many thousands.

There is likewise another great advantage in my scheme, that it will prevent those voluntary abortions, and that horrid practice of women murdering their bastard children, alas! too frequent among us! sacrificing the poor innocent babes I doubt more to avoid the expense than the shame, which would move tears and pity in the most savage and inhuman breast.

The number of souls in this kingdom being usually reckoned one million and a half, of these I calculate there may be about two hundred thousand couples whose wives are breeders; from which number I subtract thirty thousand couples who are able to maintain their own children, although I apprehend there cannot be so many, under the present distresses of the kingdom; but this being granted, there will remain an hundred and seventy thousand breeders. I again subtract fifty thousand for those women who miscarry, or whose children die by accident or disease within the year. There only remain one hundred and twenty thousand children of poor parents annually born. The question therefore is, how this number shall be reared and provided for, which, as I have already said, under the present situation of affairs, is utterly impossible by all the methods hitherto proposed. For we can neither employ them in handicraft or agriculture; we neither build houses (I mean in the country) nor cultivate land; they can very seldom pick up a livelihood by stealing till they arrive at six years old, except where they are of towardly parts, although I confess they learn the rudiments much earlier, during which time they can, however, be properly looked upon only as probationers, as I have been informed by a principal gentleman in the county of Cavan, who protested to me that he never knew above one or two instances under the age of six, even in a part of the kingdom so renowned for the quickest proficiency in that art.

I am assured by our merchants that a boy or a girl before twelve years

old is no salable commodity; and even when they come to this age they will not yield above three pounds, or three pounds and a half-a-crown at most on the exchange; which cannot turn to account either to the parents or kingdom, the charge of nutriment and rags having been at least four times that value.

I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout.

I do therefore humbly offer it to public consideration that of the hundred and twenty thousand children already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed, whereof only one-fourth part to be males; which is more than we allow to sheep, black cattle, or swine; and my reason is that these children are seldom the fruits of marriage, a circumstance not much regarded by our savages; therefore one male will be sufficient to serve four females. That the remaining hundred thousand may, at a year old, be offered in the sale to the persons of quality and fortune through the kingdom; always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends; and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.

I have reckoned upon a medium that a child just born will weigh 12 pounds, and in a solar year, if tolerably nursed, increaseth to 28 pounds.

I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children.

Infants' flesh will be in season throughout the year, but more plentiful in March, and a little before and after; for we are told by a grave author, an eminent French physician, that fish being a prolific diet, there are more children born in Roman Catholic countries about nine months after Lent than at any other season; therefore, reckoning a year after Lent, the markets will be more glutted than usual, because the number of popish infants is at least three to one in this kingdom: and therefore it will have one other collateral advantage, by lessening the number of papists among us.

I have already computed the charge of nursing a beggar's child (in which list I reckon all cottagers, laborers, and four-fifths of the farmers) to be about two shillings per annum, rags included; and I believe no gentleman would repine to give ten shillings for the carcass of a good fat child, which, as I have said, will make four dishes of excellent nutritive meat, when he hath only some particular friend or his own family to dine with him. Thus

the squire will learn to be a good landlord, and grow popular among his tenants; the mother will have eight shillings net profit, and be fit for work till she produces another child.

Those who are more thrifty (as I must confess the times require) may flay the carcass, the skin of which artificially dressed will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen.

As to our city of Dublin, shambles may be appointed for this purpose in the most convenient parts of it, and butchers we may be assured will not be wanting; although I rather recommend buying the children alive than dressing them hot from the knife as we do roasting pigs.

A very worthy person, a true lover of his country, and whose virtues I highly esteem, was lately pleased in discoursing on this matter to offer a refinement upon my scheme. He said that many gentlemen of this kingdom, having of late destroyed their deer, he conceived that the want of venison might be well supplied by the bodies of young lads and maidens, not exceeding fourteen years of age nor under twelve; so great a number of both sexes in every country being now ready to starve for want of work and service; and these be disposed of by their parents, if alive, or otherwise by their nearest relations. But with due deference to so excellent a friend and so deserving a patriot, I cannot be altogether in his sentiments; for as to the males, my American acquaintance assured me, from frequent experience, that their flesh was generally tough and lean, like that of our schoolboys by continual exercise, and their taste disagreeable; and to fatten them would not answer the charge. Then as to the females, it would, I think, with humble submission be a loss to the public, because they soon would become breeders themselves; and besides, it is not improbable that some scrupulous people might be apt to censure such a practice (although indeed very unjustly), as a little bordering upon cruelty; which I confess, hath always been with me the strongest objection against any project, however so well intended.

But in order to justify my friend, he confessed that this expedient was put in his head by the famous Psalmanazar, a native of the island of Formosa, who came from thence to London above twenty years ago, and in conversation told my friend that in his country, when any young person happened to be put to death, the executioner sold the carcass to persons of quality as a prime dainty; and that in his time the body of a plump girl of fifteen, who was crucified for an attempt to poison the emperor, was sold to his imperial majesty's prime minister of state, and other great mandarins of the court, in joints from the gibbet, at four hundred crowns. Neither indeed can I deny that if the same use were made of several plump young girls in this town, who without one single groat to their fortunes cannot stir abroad without a chair, and appear at playhouse and assemblies in foreign fineries which they never will pay for, the kingdom would not be the worse.

Some persons of a desponding spirit are in great concern about that vast number of poor people who are aged, diseased, or maimed, and I have been

desired to employ my thoughts what course may be taken to ease the nation of so grievous an encumbrance. But I am not in the least pain upon that matter, because it is very well known that they are every day dying and rotting by cold and famine, and filth and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected. And as to the young laborers, they are now in as hopeful a condition; they cannot get work, and consequently pine away for want of nourishment, to a degree that if at any time they are accidentally hired to common labor, they have not strength to perform it, and thus the country and themselves are happily delivered from the evils to come.

I have too long disgressed, and therefore shall return to my subject. I think the advantages of the proposal which I have made are obvious and many, as well as of the highest importance.

For first, as I have already observed, it would greatly lessen the number of Papists, with whom we are yearly overrun, being the principal breeders of the nation as well as our most dangerous enemies; and who stay at home on purpose with a design to deliver the kingdom to the Pretender, hoping to take their advantage, by the absence of so many good Protestants, who have chosen rather to leave their country than stay at home and pay tithes against their conscience to an episcopal curate.

Second, the poorer tenants will have something valuable of their own, which by law may be made liable to distress and help to pay their landlord's rent, their corn and cattle being already seized, and money a thing unknown.

Thirdly, whereas the maintenance of an hundred thousand children, from two years old and upward, cannot be computed at less than ten shillings apiece per annum, the nation's stock will be thereby increased fifty thousand pounds per annum, beside the profit of a new dish introduced to the tables of all gentlemen of fortune in the kingdom who have any refinement in taste. And the money will circulate among ourselves, the goods being entirely of our own growth and manufacture.

Fourthly, the constant breeders, beside the gain of eight shillings sterling per annum by the sale of their children, will be rid of the charge of maintaining them after the first year.

Fifthly, this food would likewise bring great customs to taverns, where the vintners will certainly be so prudent as to procure the best receipts for dressing it to perfection, and consequently have their houses frequented by all the fine gentlemen who justly value themselves upon their knowledge in good eating; and a skillful cook, who understands how to oblige his guests, will contrive to make it as expensive as they please.

Sixthly, this would be a great inducement to marriage, which all wise nations have either encouraged by rewards or enforced by laws and penalties. It would increase the care and the tenderness of mothers toward their children, when they were sure of a settlement for life to the poor babes, provided in some sort by the public, to their annual profit instead of expense. We should see an honest emulation among the married women,

which of them could bring the fattest child to the market. Men would become as fond of their wives during the time of their pregnancy as they are now of their mares in foal, their cows in calf, their sows when they are ready to farrow; nor offer to beat or kick them (as is too frequent a practice) for fear of a miscarriage.

Many other advantages might be enumerated. For instance, the addition of some thousand carcasses in our exportation of barreled beef, the propagation of swine's flesh, and improvement in the art of making good bacon, so much wanted among us by the great destruction of pigs, too frequent at our tables; which are no way comparable in taste or magnificence to a well-grown, fat, yearling child, which roasted whole will make a considerable figure at a lord mayor's feast or any other public entertainment. But this and many others I omit, being studious of brevity.

Supposing that one thousand families in this city would be constant customers for infants' flesh, beside others who might have it at merry-meetings, particularly weddings and christenings, I compute that Dublin would take off annually about twenty thousand carcasses; and the rest of the kingdom (where probably they will be sold somewhat cheaper) the remaining eighty thousand.

I can think of no one objection that will possibly be raised against this proposal, unless it should be urged that the number of people will be thereby much lessened in the kingdom. This I freely own, and was indeed one principal design in offering it to the world. I desire the reader will observe that I calculate my remedy for this one individual kingdom of Ireland and for no other that ever was, is, or I think ever can be upon earth. Therefore let no man talk to me of other expedients: of taxing our absentees at five shillings a pound; of using neither clothes nor household furniture except what is of our own growth and manufacture; of utterly rejecting the materials and instruments that promote foreign luxury; of curing the expensiveness of pride, vanity, idleness, and gaming in our women; of introducing a vein of parsimony, prudence, and temperance; of learning to love our country, wherein we differ even from Laplanders and the inhabitants of Topinamboo; of quitting our animosities and factions, nor act any longer like the Jews, who were murdering one another at the very moment their city was taken; of being a little cautious not to sell our country and conscience for nothing; of teaching landlords to have at least one degree of mercy toward their tenants; lastly, of putting a spirit of honesty, industry, and skill into our shopkeepers; who, if a resolution could now be taken to buy only our native goods, would immediately unite to cheat and exact upon the price, the measure, and the goodness, nor could ever yet be brought to make one fair proposal of just dealing, though often and earnestly invited to it.

Therefore I repeat, let no man talk to me of these and the like expedients, till he hath at least some glimpse of hope that there will be ever some hearty and sincere attempt to put them in practice.

But as to myself, having been wearied out for many years with offering vain, idle, visionary thoughts, and at length utterly despairing of success, I fortunately fell upon this proposal; which, as it is wholly new, so it hath something solid and real, of no expense and little trouble, full in our own power, and whereby we can incur no danger in disobliging England. For this kind of commodity will not bear exportation, the flesh being of too tender a consistency to admit a long continuance in salt, although perhaps I could name a country which would be glad to eat up our whole nation without it.

After all, I am not so violently bent upon my own opinion as to reject any offer proposed by wise men, which shall be found equally innocent, cheap, easy, and effectual. But before something of that kind shall be advanced in contradiction to my scheme, and offering a better, I desire the author or authors will be pleased maturely to consider two points. First, as things now stand, how they will be able to find food and raiment for an hundred thousand useless mouths and backs. And secondly, there being a round million of creatures in human figure throughout this kingdom, whose whole subsistence put into a common stock would leave them in debt two millions of pounds sterling, adding those who are beggars by profession to the bulk of farmers, cottagers, and laborers, with their wives and children, who are beggars in effect: I desire those politicians who dislike my overture, and may perhaps be so bold as to attempt an answer, that they will first ask the parents of these mortals, whether they would not at this day think it a great happiness to have been sold for food at a year old in the manner I prescribe, and thereby have avoided such a perpetual scene of misfortunes as they have since gone through by the oppression of landlords, the impossibility of paying rent without money or trade, the want of common sustenance with neither house nor clothes to cover them from the inclemencies of the weather, and the most inevitable prospect of entailing the like or greater miseries upon their breed for ever.

I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavoring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing.

Inflexible Logic

Russell Maloney • 1910–1948

The distinction between logical and experimental proof is often a sad one. Here a famous logical proposition is submitted to the test of experiment — and the result is at once hilarious and sad.

WHEN the six chimpanzees came into his life, Mr. Bainbridge was thirty-eight years old. He was a bachelor and lived comfortably in a remote part of Connecticut, in a large old house with a carriage drive, a conservatory, a tennis court, and a well-selected library. His income was derived from impeccably situated real estate in New York City, and he spent it soberly, in a manner which could give offence to nobody. Once a year, late in April, his tennis court was resurfaced, and after that anybody in the neighborhood was welcome to use it; his monthly statement from Brentano's seldom ran below seventy-five dollars; every third year, in November, he turned in his old Cadillac coupé for a new one; he ordered his cigars, which were mild and rather moderately priced, in shipments of one thousand, from a tobacconist in Havana; because of the international situation he had cancelled arrangements to travel abroad, and after due thought had decided to spend his travelling allowance on wines, which seemed likely to get scarcer and more expensive if the war lasted. On the whole, Mr. Bainbridge's life was deliberately, and not too unsuccessfully, modelled after that of an English country gentleman of the late eighteenth century, a gentleman interested in the arts and in the expansion of science, and so sure of himself that he didn't care if some people thought him eccentric.

Mr. Bainbridge had many friends in New York, and he spent several days of the month in the city, staying at his club and looking around. Sometimes he called up a girl and took her out to a theatre and a night club. Sometimes he and a couple of classmates got a little tight and went to a prizefight. Mr. Bainbridge also looked in now and then at some of the conservative art galleries, and liked occasionally to go to a concert. And he liked cocktail parties, too, because of the fine footling conversation and the extraordinary number of pretty girls who had nothing else to do with the rest of their evening. It was at a New York cocktail party, however, that Mr. Bainbridge kept his preliminary appointment with doom. At one of the parties given by Hobie Packard, the stockbroker, he learned about the theory of the six chimpanzees.

Copyright, 1940, The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

It was almost six-forty. The people who had intended to have one drink and go had already gone, and the people who intended to stay were fortifying themselves with slightly dried canapés and talking animatedly. A group of stage and radio people had coagulated in one corner, near Packard's Capehart, and were wrangling about various methods of cheating the Collector of Internal Revenue. In another corner was a group of stockbrokers, talking about the greatest stockbroker of them all, Gauguin. Little Marcia Lupton was sitting with a young man, saying earnestly, "Do you really want to know what my greatest ambition is? I want to be myself," and Mr. Bainbridge smiled gently, thinking of the time Marcia had said that to him. Then he heard the voice of Bernard Weiss, the critic, saying, "Of course he wrote one good novel. It's not surprising. After all, we know that if six chimpanzees were set to work pounding six typewriters at random, they would, in a million years, write all the books in the British Museum."

Mr. Bainbridge drifted over to Weiss and was introduced to Weiss's companion, a Mr. Noble. "What's this about a million chimpanzees, Weiss?" he asked.

"Six chimpanzees," Mr. Weiss said. "It's an old cliché of the mathematicians. I thought everybody was told about it in school. Law of averages, you know, or maybe it's permutation and combination. The six chimps, just pounding away at the typewriter keys, would be bound to copy out all the books ever written by man. There are only so many possible combinations of letters and numerals, and they'd produce all of them — see? Of course they'd also turn out a mountain of gibberish, but they'd work the books in, too. All the books in the British Museum."

Mr. Bainbridge was delighted; this was the sort of talk he liked to hear when he came to New York. "Well, but look here," he said, just to keep up his part in the foolish conversation, "what if one of the chimpanzees finally did duplicate a book, right down to the last period, but left that off? Would that count?"

"I suppose not. Probably the chimpanzee would get around to doing the book again, and put the period in."

"What nonsense!" Mr. Noble cried.

"It may be nonsense, but Sir James Jeans believes it," Mr. Weiss said, huffily. "Jeans or Lancelot Hogben. I know I ran across it quite recently."

Mr. Bainbridge was impressed. He read quite a bit of popular science, and both Jeans and Hogben were in his library. "Is that so?" he murmured, no longer feeling frivolous. "Wonder if it has ever actually been tried? I mean, has anybody ever put six chimpanzees in a room with six typewriters and a lot of paper?"

Mr. Weiss glanced at Mr. Bainbridge's empty cocktail glass and said drily, "Probably not."

Nine weeks later, on a winter evening, Mr. Bainbridge was sitting in his

study with his friend James Mallard, an assistant professor of mathematics at New Haven. He was plainly nervous as he poured himself a drink and said, "Mallard, I've asked you to come here — Brandy? Cigar? — for a particular reason. You remember that I wrote you some time ago, asking your opinion of . . . of a certain mathematical hypothesis or supposition."

"Yes," Professor Mallard said, briskly. "I remember perfectly. About the six chimpanzees and the British Museum. And I told you it was a perfectly sound popularization of a principle known to every schoolboy who had studied the science of probabilities."

"Precisely," Mr. Bainbridge said. "Well, Mallard, I made up my mind . . . It was not difficult for me, because I have, in spite of that fellow in the White House, been able to give something every year to the Museum of Natural History, and they were naturally glad to oblige me. . . . And after all, the only contribution a layman can make to the progress of science is to assist with the drudgery of experiment. . . . In short, I — "

"I suppose you're trying to tell me that you have procured six chimpanzees and set them to work at typewriters in order to see whether they will eventually write all the books in the British Museum. Is that it?"

"Yes, that's it," Mr. Bainbridge said. "What a mind you have, Mallard. Six fine young males, in perfect condition. I had a — I suppose you'd call it a dormitory — built out in back of the stable. The typewriters are in the conservatory. It's light and airy in there, and I moved most of the plants out. Mr. North, the man who owns the circus, very obligingly let me engage one of his best animal men. Really, it was no trouble at all."

Professor Mallard smiled indulgently. "After all, such a thing is not unheard of," he said. "I seem to remember that a man at some university put his graduate students to work flipping coins, to see if heads and tails came up an equal number of times. Of course they did."

Mr. Bainbridge looked at his friend very queerly. "Then you believe that any such principle of the science of probabilities will stand up under an actual test?"

"Certainly."

"You had better see for yourself." Mr. Bainbridge led Professor Mallard downstairs, along a corridor, through a disused music room, and into a large conservatory. The middle of the floor had been cleared of plants and was occupied by a row of six typewriter tables, each one supporting a hooded machine. At the left of each typewriter was a neat stack of yellow copy paper. Empty wastebaskets were under each table. The chairs were the unpadded, spring-backed kind favored by experienced stenographers. A large bunch of ripe bananas was hanging in one corner, and in another stood a Great Bear water-cooler and a rack of Lily cups. Six piles of typescript, each about a foot high, were ranged along the wall on an improvised shelf. Mr. Bainbridge picked up one of the piles, which he could just conveniently lift, and set it on a table before Professor Mallard. "The output to date of Chimpanzee A, known as Bill," he said simply.

"'"Oliver Twist," by Charles Dickens,'" Professor Mallard read out. He read the first and second pages of the manuscript, then feverishly leafed through to the end. "You mean to tell me," he said, "that this chimpanzee has written —"

"Word for word and comma for comma," said Mr. Bainbridge. "Young, my butler, and I took turns comparing it with the edition I own. Having finished 'Oliver Twist,' Bill is, as you see, starting the sociological works of Vilfredo Pareto, in Italian. At the rate he has been going, it should keep him busy for the rest of the month."

"And all the chimpanzees" — Professor Mallard was pale, and enunciated with difficulty — "they aren't all —"

"Oh, yes, all writing books which I have every reason to believe are in the British Museum. The prose of John Donne, some Anatole France, Conan Doyle, Galen, the collected plays of Somerset Maugham, Marcel Proust, the memoirs of the late Marie of Rumania, and a monograph by a Dr. Wiley on the marsh grasses of Maine and Massachusetts. I can sum it up for you, Mallard, by telling you that since I started this experiment, four weeks and some days ago, none of the chimpanzees has spoiled a single sheet of paper."

Professor Mallard straightened up, passed his handkerchief across his brow, and took a deep breath. "I apologize for my weakness," he said. "It was simply the sudden shock. No, looking at the thing scientifically — and I hope I am at least as capable of that as the next man — there is nothing marvellous about the situation. These chimpanzees, or a succession of similar teams of chimpanzees, would in a million years write all the books in the British Museum. I told you some time ago that I believed that statement. Why should my belief be altered by the fact that they produced some of the books at the very outset? After all, I should not be very much surprised if I tossed a coin a hundred times and it came up heads every time. I know that if I kept at it long enough, the ratio would reduce itself to an exact fifty per cent. Rest assured, these chimpanzees will begin to compose gibberish quite soon. It is bound to happen. Science tells us so. Meanwhile, I advise you to keep this experiment secret. Uninformed people might create a sensation if they knew."

"I will, indeed," Mr. Bainbridge said. "And I'm very grateful for your rational analysis. It reassures me. And now, before you go, you must hear the new Schnabel records that arrived today."

During the succeeding three months, Professor Mallard got into the habit of telephoning Mr. Bainbridge every Friday afternoon at five-thirty, immediately after leaving his seminar room. The Professor would say, "Well?," and Mr. Bainbridge would reply, "They're still at it, Mallard. Haven't spoiled a sheet of paper yet." If Mr. Bainbridge had to go out on Friday afternoon, he would leave a written message with his butler, who would read it to Professor Mallard: "Mr. Bainbridge says we now have

Trevelyan's 'Life of Macaulay,' the Confessions of St. Augustine, 'Vanity Fair,' part of Irving's 'Life of George Washington,' the Book of the Dead, and some speeches delivered in Parliament in opposition to the Corn Laws, sir." Professor Mallard would reply, with a hint of a snarl in his voice, "Tell him to remember what I predicted," and hang up with a clash.

The eleventh Friday that Professor Mallard telephoned, Mr. Bainbridge said, "No change. I have had to store the bulk of the manuscript in the cellar. I would have burned it, except that it probably has some scientific value."

"How dare you talk of scientific value?" The voice from New Haven roared faintly in the receiver. "Scientific value! You — you — chimpanzee!" There were further inarticulate sputterings, and Mr. Bainbridge hung up with a disturbed expression. "I am afraid Mallard is overtaxing himself," he murmured.

Next day, however, he was pleasantly surprised. He was leafing through a manuscript that had been completed the previous day by Chimpanzee D, Corky. It was the complete diary of Samuel Pepys, and Mr. Bainbridge was chuckling over the naughty passages, which were omitted in his own edition, when Professor Mallard was shown into the room. "I have come to apologize for my outrageous conduct on the telephone yesterday," the Professor said.

"Please don't think if it any more. I know you have many things on your mind," Mr. Bainbridge said. "Would you like a drink?"

"A large whiskey, straight, please," Professor Mallard said. "I got rather cold driving down. No change, I presume?"

"No, none. Chimpanzee F, Dinty, is just finishing John Florio's translation of Montaigne's essays, but there is no other news of interest."

Professor Mallard squared his shoulders and tossed off his drink in one astonishing gulp. "I should like to see them at work," he said. "Would I disturb them, do you think?"

"Not at all. As a matter of fact, I usually look in on them around this time of day. Dinty may have finished his Montaigne by now, and it is always interesting to see them start a new work. I would have thought that they would continue on the same sheet of paper, but they don't, you know. Always a fresh sheet, and the title in capitals."

Professor Mallard, without apology, poured another drink and slugged it down. "Lead on," he said.

It was dusk in the conservatory, and the chimpanzees were typing by the light of student lamps clamped to their desks. The keeper lounged in a corner, eating a banana and reading *Billboard*. "You might as well take an hour or so off," Mr. Bainbridge said. The man left.

Professor Mallard, who had not taken off his overcoat, stood with his hands in his pockets, looking at the busy chimpanzees. "I wonder if you know, Bainbridge, that the science of probabilities takes everything into ac-

count," he said, in a queer, tight voice. "It is certainly almost beyond the bounds of credibility that these chimpanzees should write books without a single error, but that abnormality may be corrected by — *these!*" He took his hands from his pockets, and each one held a .38 revolver. "Stand back out of harm's way!" he shouted.

"Mallard! Stop it!" The revolvers barked, first the right hand, then the left, then the right. Two chimpanzees fell, and a third reeled into a corner. Mr. Bainbridge seized his friend's arm and wrested one of the weapons from him.

"Now I am armed, too, Mallard, and I advise you to stop!" he cried. Professor Mallard's answer was to draw a bead on Chimpanzee E and shoot him dead. Mr. Bainbridge made a rush, and Professor Mallard fired at him. Mr. Bainbridge, in his quick death agony, tightened his finger on the trigger of his revolver. It went off, and Professor Mallard went down. On his hands and knees he fired at the two chimpanzees which were still unhurt, and then collapsed.

There was nobody to hear his last words. "The human equation . . . always the enemy of science . . ." he panted. "This time . . . vice versa . . . I, a mere mortal . . . savior of science . . . deserve a Nobel . . ."

When the old butler came running into the conservatory to investigate the noises, his eyes were met by a truly appalling sight. The student lamps were shattered, but a newly risen moon shone in through the conservatory windows on the corpses of the two gentlemen, each clutching a smoking revolver. Five of the chimpanzees were dead. The sixth was Chimpanzee F. His right arm disabled, obviously bleeding to death, he was slumped before his typewriter. Painfully, with his left hand, he took from the machine the completed last page of Florio's Montaigne. Groping for a fresh sheet, he inserted it, and typed with one finger, "UNCLE TOM'S CABIN, by Harriet Beecher Stowe. Chapte . . ." Then he, too, was dead.

To His Coy Mistress

Andrew Marvell • *1621–1678*

Even a poem may have its logical as well as its psychological structure. One needs but little ingenuity to put Marvell's argument into a syllogism satisfactory to the severest logician. At the same time, the lines echo the voices of urgent lovers of all countries and of all times. Its being an argument plus *poem raises questions concerning the strategies and intentions of poetry. If "All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; Therefore, Socrates is mortal" is an argument, what keeps it from being a poem? And in reverse, what keeps Marvell's lines from being mere syllogism? Maybe* how *something is said is as much a part of the meaning as* what *is said. Or better, maybe meaning is triadic in structure, consisting of* what, how, *and the subtle relation of* what *and* how. *"How," said Yeats, "can we know the dancer from the dance?"*

HAD WE but world enough, and time,
This coyness, Lady, were no crime.
We would sit down and think which way
To walk and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the Flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, Lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.
  But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity,

And your quaint honor turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust:
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
  Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Thorough the iron gates of life:
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.



"Can't you feel the deeper meaning?"

The Role of Hunches

Walter B. Cannon • 1871–1945

From such discussions as T. H. Huxley's, we are likely to have the idea that scientific discoveries are always the result of an orderly and rigorously logical process of thought. Such "unscientific" ways of discovery as "woman's intuition," "just having a feeling," or the sudden illumination that is represented in comic strips by a radiant light-bulb over the discoverer's head, are given serious consideration as valid avenues of problem-solving by many scientists. Cannon, himself a distinguished physiologist, discusses the phenomenon in this essay.

How do investigators obtain insight into ways of possible progress toward acquiring new knowledge? Do they sit down and think intensively about the existing status and what the next move shall be or do they count upon revelation for hints and clairvoyance? Evidence indicates that reliance has been placed on both methods.

From the years of my youth the unearned assistance of sudden and unpredicted insight has been common. While a student in high school I

Reprinted from *The Way of an Investigator* by Walter B. Cannon. By permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., New York. Copyright, 1945, by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

was occasionally puzzled by "originals" in algebra, the solution of which was not at all clear when I went to sleep at night. As I awoke in the morning the proper procedures were immediately evident and the answers were quickly obtained. On an occasion I was handed a complicated toy which was out of order and would not operate. I examined the mechanism carefully but did not see how the defect might be corrected. I resorted to sleep for a solution of the problem. At daybreak, the corrective manipulation appeared thoroughly understandable, and I promptly set the contraption going.

As a matter of routine I have long trusted unconscious processes to serve me — for example, when I have had to prepare a public address. I would gather points for the address and write them down in a rough outline. Within the next few nights I would have sudden spells of awakening, with an onrush of illustrative instances, pertinent phrases, and fresh ideas related to those already listed. Paper and pencil at hand permitted the capture of these fleeting thoughts before they faded into oblivion. The process has been so common and so reliable for me that I have supposed that it was at the service of everyone. But evidence indicates that it is not.

An illuminating inquiry into the nature of the flash of ideas and the extent of its occurrence among scientific men was reported by Platt and Baker[1] in 1931. They called the phenomenon a "hunch," a word meaning originally a push or sudden thrust. In ordinary experience it means the quick gleam of a suggestion that flares unexpectedly as the answer to a difficult question or as the explanation of a puzzle. They defined the scientific hunch as "a unifying or clarifying idea which springs into consciousness as a solution to a problem in which we are intensely interested."

In their inquiry into the appearance of hunches among chemists they received answers from 232 correspondents. Assistance from a scientific revelation or a hunch in the solution of an important problem was reported by 33 per cent; 50 per cent reported that they had such assistance occasionally; and only 17 per cent never. Professor W. D. Bancroft, the Cornell University chemist, tells of talking to four fellow chemists regarding aid from hunches and finding that to three of them the experience was commonplace. The fourth did not understand what was meant by the reference and testified that he had never had the feeling of an inspiration, had never had an idea come to him unexpectedly from some strange "outside" realm. He had worked consciously for all his results and what was described by the others meant nothing to him.

In typical cases a hunch appears after long study and springs into consciousness at a time when the investigator is not working on his problem. It arises from a wide knowledge of facts, but it is essentially a leap of the imagination, for it reaches forth into the range of possibilities. It results from a spontaneous process of creative thought. Noteworthy in the statis-

[1] W. Platt and R. A. Baker, "The Relation of the Scientific 'Hunch' to Research," *Journal of Chemical Education*, VIII (1931), 1969–2002. [Author.]

tics given by Platt and Baker is the evidence that having hunches was not unknown to 83 per cent of the chemists who replied to the questionnaire. This high percentage raises the query as to whether the advantage of receiving sudden and unexpected insight might not be cultivated and thus possessed by all.

According to my experience a period of wakefulness at night has often been the most profitable time in the twenty-four hours. This is the only credit I know that can be awarded to insomnia. As an example of an idea which came to me in one such illuminating moment, I will describe a device that was used in the laboratory to obtain an automatically written record of the clotting of blood. It consisted of a very light lever with the long arm ending in a writing point. The long arm was not quite counterweighted by a fixed load on the short arm, but when in addition a small wire was hung on the end of the short arm it slightly overbalanced the other side. The wire was so arranged that it dipped into a small glass tube containing a few drops of blood freshly taken from the running stream in an artery. A check on the long arm prevented the heavier short arm from falling. When the check was lifted, however, the short arm fell and the wire descended into the blood as the writing point rose and wrote a record. This showed that the blood had not clotted. The check was then restored; a minute later it was again lifted and again a record was written. The process was repeated thus at regular intervals. As soon as the blood clotted it supported the light wire and, now, when the check was raised, the heavier long arm did not rise and the fact that the blood had turned to a jelly was registered on the recording surface. All this was presented to me as a complete mechanism in a brief period of insight when I awoke in the night.

Another example I may cite was the interpretation of the significance of bodily changes which occur in great emotional excitement, such as fear and rage. These changes — the more rapid pulse, the deeper breathing, the increase of sugar in the blood, the secretion from the adrenal glands — were very diverse and seemed unrelated. Then, one wakeful night, after a considerable collection of these changes had been disclosed, the idea flashed through my mind that they could be nicely integrated if conceived as bodily preparations for supreme effort in flight or in fighting. Further investigation added to the collection and confirmed the general scheme suggested by the hunch.

A highly interesting instance of the appearance of a hunch with important consequences has been told by Otto Loewi, formerly professor of pharmacology at the University of Graz. The incident is related to the first demonstration of a chemical agent liberated at the end of nerves and, as already mentioned, acting as an intermediary between the impulses which sweep along a nerve and the structures they control. Many years ago T. R. Elliott, while a student at Cambridge, England, had suggested that the reason why adrenaline, when injected into the body or applied to an absorb-

ing surface, mimics the action of sympathetic nerves, might be because these special nerves, when active, discharge adrenaline at their terminals. Thus there would be no essential difference between the effects of adrenaline delivered by the streaming blood and adrenaline serving as a chemical deputy for the arriving impulses. Later, H. H. Dale had proved that the substance, acetylcholine, could mimic the action of such nerves as the vagus, which can cause among other effects a slower beating of the heart. There was no proof, however, that in any condition nerves actually produce their effects by means of a chemical mediator. The crucial problem was that of demonstrating whether the idea was correct or not.

One night, after falling asleep over a trifling novel, Dr. Loewi awoke possessed by a brilliant idea. He reached to the table beside his bed, picked up a piece of paper and a pencil, and jotted down a few notes. On awakening next morning he was aware of having had an inspiration in the night and he turned to the paper for a reminder. To his consternation he could not make anything of the scrawl he found on it. He went to his laboratory, hoping that sense would come to what he had written if he were surrounded by familiar apparatus. In spite of frequently withdrawing the paper from his pocket and studying it earnestly, he gained no insight. At the end of the day, still filled with the belief that he had had a very precious revelation the night before, he went to sleep. To his great joy he again awoke in the darkness with the same flash of insight which had inspired him the night before. This time he carefully recorded it before going to sleep again. The next day he went to his laboratory and in one of the neatest, simplest and most definite experiments in the history of biology brought proof of the chemical mediation of nerve impulses. He prepared two frog hearts which were kept beating by means of a salt solution. He stimulated the vagus nerve of one of the hearts, thus causing it to stop beating. He then removed the salt solution from this heart and applied it to the other one. To his great satisfaction the solution had the same effect on the second heart as vagus stimulation had had on the first one: the pulsating muscle was brought to a standstill. This was the beginning of a host of investigations in many countries throughout the world on chemical intermediation, not only between nerves and the muscles and the glands they affect but also between nervous elements themselves.

In the lives of scientists there are numerous instances of the value of hunches. Helmholtz, the great German physicist and physiologist, when near the end of his life, told of the way in which the most important of his ideas had occurred to him. After investigating a problem "in all directions," he testified, "happy ideas come unexpectedly without efforts like an inspiration. So far as I am concerned, they have never come to me when my mind was fatigued or when I was at my working table." Rest was necessary for the appearance of the original ideas and they occurred as a rule in the morning after a night's sleep.

For years during which Darwin was accumulating great numbers of facts

he saw no general meaning in them, but felt that they had some great significance which he had not yet perceived. Then, suddenly, the flash of vision came. In his brief autobiography he writes, "I can remember the very spot in the road, whilst in my carriage, when to my joy, the solution occurred to me." Thereafter, with vast toil in the arrangement of facts and in careful exposition, he framed his statement of the theory of biological evolution. . . .

There has been much discussion of what lies back of the experience of having hunches. They have been ascribed to the operations of the "subconscious mind." This expression seems to me to be a confusion of terms, for it involves the concept that a mind exists of which we are not conscious. I am aware that in psychology this view has been held. Indeed, one psychologist with whom I discussed the matter declared that wherever nerves coordinate the activity of muscles, a mind is present. I told him that the nerve net in the wall of the intestine brings about a contraction of muscles above a stimulated point and a relaxation below it so that a mass within the tract is moved onward. This is co-ordinated action, and I asked him whether he would ascribe a mind to the intestine. His reply was, "Undoubtedly." The attitude thus expressed was extreme. It may be taken, however, as a basis for criticizing the assumption that there is a mind wherever nervous activity goes on, when in fact there is no evidence to support the notion. Numerous highly complex responses which can be evoked from the spinal cord and many nice adjustments made by the part of the brain that manages our normal balance and posture are wholly unconscious. There is no indication whatever that anything which we recognize as a mind is associated with these nervous activities.

To me as a physiologist, mind and consciousness seem to be equivalent, and the evidence appears to be strong that mind or consciousness is associated with a limited but shifting area of integrated activity in the cortex of the brain. The physiologist assumes that, underlying the awareness of events as it shifts from moment to moment, there are correlated processes in the enormously complicated mesh of nervous connections in the thin cortical layer. Such activities could go on, however, in other parts of the cortex and at the time be unrelated to the conscious states. They would be similar in character to the activities associated with consciousness, but would be extraconscious. Our knowledge of the association between mental states and nervous impulses in the brain is still so meager that we often resort to analogy to illustrate our meaning. The operation going on in an industry under the immediate supervision of the director is like the cerebral processes to which we pay attention; but meanwhile in other parts of the industrial plant important work is proceeding which the director at the moment does not see. Thus also with extraconscious processes. By using the term "extraconscious processes" to define unrecognized operations which occur during attention to urgent affairs or during sleep, the notion of a subconscious mind or subconsciousness can be avoided.

The question arises as to what conditions are favorable and what unfavorable for the appearance of hunches. Among the unfavorable conditions are mental and physical fatigue, petty irritations, noise, worry over domestic or financial matters, states of depression, and strong emotions. Other unfavorable conditions include being driven to work under pressure and being interrupted or feeling that there may be interruption at any time, as by the demands of administrative duties.

Among the favorable conditions are a great interest in the problem to be solved, a clear definition of this problem, and an eager desire for its solution. A large store of related information already acquired is another prerequisite. The greater the number of facts which are pertinent to the urgent problem and which can be combined in novel ways for explaining the puzzle it presents, the more likely is the puzzle to be solved. The relative facts should be systematically organized; indeed it is better to have a small number of facts well co-ordinated than a great mass of incongruous data. A sense of well-being and a feeling of freedom are other advantageous circumstances. R. S. Woodworth in his *Psychology* has listed as conditions favoring invention a good physical state, a fresh mind, mastery of the subject, striving for a result, confidence, enterprise, willingness to take a chance, eagerness for action, and readiness to break away from routine. A helpful atmosphere for the appearance of a hunch is produced by discussing the problem with other investigators and by reading articles pertinent to it and also pertinent to methods useful for its solution.

The foregoing considerations reveal that the occurrence of a scientific hunch is closely related to antecedent preparations, and that its value is dependent on subsequent activities directed toward testing its validity. The whole process, including the preparatory and the confirmatory stages, is well illustrated in the discovery by Claude Bernard that the liver stores sugar and, when there is need, sets the sugar free. In a study of the phenomena of nutrition, he noticed the important role played by sugar. In testing the blood for its sugar content at various points after its departure from the intestine, where sugar is absorbed, he found less in the blood of the left side of the heart and in the arteries than in the veins. He drew the erroneous conclusion that the sugar was consumed in the lungs. Then Bernard's interest in the metabolism of sugar in the body led him to examine persons suffering from diabetes, and he was struck by the evidence that the output of sugar in the urine of diabetics is greater than that represented in the food they take in. There sprang into his mind a guiding idea that sugar is *produced* in the organism. This was the hunch which had to be tested. He assayed the sugar concentration at various points in the circulatory system and found that after the blood passed through the liver it was richer in glucose than it had been before entering. The conclusion was justified that the excess was derived from the liver.

In order to avoid criticism, however, Bernard supported this evidence by a confirmatory experiment. He fed a dog exclusively on meat, which would

not give rise to glucose in the process of digestion, and found that, with the methods he employed at the time, blood in the portal vein leading away from the intestine to the liver was devoid of sugar while that coming away from the liver contained sugar in abundance. In this case the glucose, according to the evidence then available, was derived entirely from liver stores. Finally, in order to meet the objections and doubts of contemporaries who very seriously questioned the ability of animals to produce glucose, Bernard showed that if a current of water is passed through the blood vessels of the isolated liver the time comes when the perfusing fluid contains no trace of sugar. Now, if the liver is exposed to a temperature approximately that of the body, after a few hours abundance of glucose is found in it. In this record of fundamental experiments, revealing a process which Claude Bernard was first to call an "internal secretion," the conscious preparation for the discovery was associated with an erroneous conclusion, but it led to a deep interest in the origin and fate of sugar in the body. His hunch may be regarded as the consequence of that interest and as the basis for the experiments. He definitely established the proof that the hunch was correct and that sugar is actually produced by processes taking place in the animal organism.

Different criteria for classifying scientists engaged in experimental studies have been suggested. Bancroft has proposed two groups: the guessers and the accumulators. The guessers are men who work with use of theories and hypotheses; the accumulators are mainly collectors of facts — often using, to be sure, ingenious and delicate methods in order to learn new facts. According to Platt and Baker the chemists who reported that their ideas came to them consciously were of the accumulator type. Many of them, indeed, declared that the idea of the hunch was quite distasteful. The replies from other chemists indicated that they were typical guessers. It is probable that an inquiry would show that the guessers are usually the revealers of new directions for future research and that hunches are highly significant in their scientific life. Although accumulators and those who may be designated as "gleaners" may not originate novel enterprises, they perform important functions in filling the gaps which may have been left by the more enterprising and bolder spirits.

Some readers may be surprised by the testimony that important advances in science are commonly the result of sudden revelations — really, unearned grants of insight — instead of being the product of prolonged and assiduous thinking. The hunch is not alone in giving the investigator an inviting opportunity to use his talents. He is favored at times by the good fortune of happy accidents. Neither the bounties from insight nor the bounties from chance, however, relieve the investigator from the necessity of hard labor, for the suggestion which is presented from either source still has to pass the rigorous test of critical proving before it can be admitted to the realm of truth.

Imagination Creatrix

John Livingston Lowes • *1867–1945*

Professor John Livingston Lowes one time came across a semi-legible notebook kept by Samuel Taylor Coleridge during the period his mind was moving toward the subsequent poems "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and "Kubla Khan." Professor Lowes's report, The Road to Xanadu *(1927), of his pursuit of Coleridge's reading and writing for the poem constitutes one of the most brilliant, and exciting, pieces of American literary scholarship. In considering Coleridge's mental activity, Professor Lowes dealt also with the problem of the creative imagination itself.*

I

EVERY great imaginative conception is a vortex into which everything under the sun may be swept. "All other men's worlds," wrote Coleridge once, "are the poet's chaos." In that regard "The Ancient Mariner" is one with the noble army of imaginative masterpieces of all time. Oral traditions — homely, fantastic, barbaric, disconnected — which had ebbed and flowed across the planet in its unlettered days, were gathered up into that marvel of constructive genius, the plot of the *Odyssey,* and out of "a tissue of old *märchen*" was fashioned a unity palpable as flesh and blood and universal as the sea itself. Well-nigh all the encyclopedic erudition of the Middle Ages was forged and welded, in the white heat of an indomitable will, into the steel-knot structure of the *Divine Comedy.* There are not in the world, I suppose, more appalling masses of raw fact than would stare us in the face could we once, through some supersubtle chemistry, resolve that superb, organic unity into its primal elements. It so happens that for the last twenty-odd years I have been more or less occupied with Chaucer. I have tracked him, as I have trailed Coleridge, into almost every section of eight floors of a great library. It is a perpetual adventure among uncharted Ophirs and Golcondas to read after him — or Coleridge. And every conceivable sort of thing which Chaucer knew went into his alembic. It went in x — a waif of travel-lore from the mysterious Orient, a curious bit of primitive psychiatry, a racy morsel from Jerome against Jovinian, alchemy, astrology, medicine, geomancy, physiognomy, Heaven only knows what not, all vivid with the relish of the reading — it went in stark fact, "nude and crude," and it came out pure Chaucer. The results are as different from "The Ancient Mariner" as an English post-road from spectre-

John Livingston Lowes, *The Road to Xanadu* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.). Copyright, 1927, by John Livingston Lowes, pp. 426–29; pp. 431–34.

haunted seas. But the basic operations which produced them (and on this point I may venture to speak from first-hand knowledge) are essentially the same.

As for the years of "industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs" which were distilled into the magnificent romance of the thunder-scarred yet dauntless Rebel, voyaging through Chaos and old Night to shatter Cosmos, pendent from the battlements of living sapphire like a star — as for those serried hosts of facts caught up into the cosmic sweep of Milton's grandly poised design, it were bootless to attempt to sum up in a sentence here the opulence which countless tomes of learned comment have been unable to exhaust. And what (in apostolic phrase) shall I more say? For time would fail me to tell of the *Æneid,* and the *Orlando Furioso,* and the *Faërie Queene,* and *Don Juan,* and even *Endymion,* let alone the cloud of other witnesses. The notion that the creative imagination, especially in its highest exercise, has little or nothing to do with facts is one of the *pseudodoxia epidemica* which die hard.

For the imagination never operates in a vacuum. Its stuff is always fact of some order, somehow experienced; its product is that fact transmuted. I am not forgetting that facts may swamp imagination, and remain unassimilated and untransformed. And I know, too, that this sometimes happens even with the masters. For some of the greatest poets, partly by virtue of their very greatness, have had, like Faust, two natures struggling within them. They have possessed at once the instincts of the scholar and the instincts of the artist, and it is precisely with regard to facts that these instincts perilously clash. Even Dante and Milton and Goethe sometimes clog their powerful streams with the accumulations of the scholar who shared bed and board with the poet in their mortal frames. "The Professor still lurks in your anatomy" — *Dir steckt der Doktor noch im Leib* — says Mephistopheles to Faust. But when, as in "The Ancient Mariner," the stuff that Professors and Doctors are made of has been distilled into quintessential poetry, then the passing miracle of creation has been performed.

II

But "creation," like "creative," is one of those hypnotic words which are prone to cast a spell upon the understanding and dissolve our thinking into haze. And out of this nebulous state of the intellect springs a strange but widely prevalent idea. The shaping spirit of imagination sits aloof, like God as he is commonly conceived, creating in some thaumaturgic fashion out of nothing its visionary world. That and that only is deemed to be "originality" — that, and not the imperial moulding of old matter into imperishably new forms. The ways of creation are wrapt in mystery; we may only marvel, and bow the head.

Now it is true beyond possible gainsaying that the operations which we call creative leave us in the end confronting mystery. But that is the fated

terminus of all our quests. And it is chiefly through a deep-rooted reluctance to retrace, so far as they are legible, the footsteps of the creative faculty that the power is often thought of as abnormal, or at best a splendid aberration. I know full well that this reluctance springs, with most of us, from the staunch conviction that to follow the evolution of a thing of beauty is to shatter its integrity and irretrievably to mar its charm. But there are those of us who cherish the invincible belief that the glory of poetry will gain, not lose, through a recognition of the fact that the imagination works its wonders through the exercise, in the main, of normal and intelligible powers. To establish that, without blinking the ultimate mystery of genius, is to bring the workings of the shaping spirit in the sphere of art within the circle of the great moulding forces through which, in science and affairs and poetry alike, there emerges from chaotic multiplicity a unified and ordered world. . . .

Creative genius, in plainer terms, works through processes which are common to our kind, but these processes are superlatively enhanced. The subliminal agencies are endowed with an extraordinary potency; the faculty which conceives and executes operates with sovereign power; and the two blend in untrammelled interplay. There is always in genius, I imagine, the element which Goethe, who knew whereof he spoke, was wont to designate as "the Dæmonic." But in genius of the highest order that sudden, incalculable, and puissant energy which pours up from the hidden depths is controlled by a will which serves a vision — the vision which sees in chaos the potentiality of Form.

III

. . . "The imagination," said Coleridge once, recalling a noble phrase from Jeremy Taylor's *Via Pacis*, ". . . *sees all things in one.*" It sees the Free Life — the endless flux of the unfathomed sea of facts and images — but it sees also the controlling Form. And when it acts on what it sees, through the long patience of the will the flux itself is transformed and fixed in the clarity of a realized design. For there enter into imaginative creation three factors which reciprocally interplay: the Well, and the Vision, and the Will. Without the Vision, the chaos of elements remains a chaos, and the Form sleeps forever in the vast chambers of unborn designs. Yet in *that* chaos only could creative Vision ever see *this* Form. Nor without the cooperant Will, obedient to the Vision, may the pattern perceived in the huddle attain objective reality. Yet manifold though the ways of the creative faculty may be, the upshot is one: from the empire of chaos a new tract of cosmos has been retrieved; a nebula has been compacted — it may be! — into a star.

Yet no more than the lesser are these larger factors of the creative process — the storing of the Well, the Vision, and the concurrent operation of the Will — the monopoly of poetry. Through their conjunction the imagination in the field of science, for example, is slowly drawing the immense confusion of phenomena within the unfolding conception of an

ordered universe. And its operations are essentially the same. For years, through intense and unremitting observation, Darwin had been accumulating masses of facts which pointed to a momentous conclusion. But they pointed through a maze of baffling inconsistencies. Then all at once the flash of vision came. "I can remember," he tells us in that precious fragment of an autobiography — "I can remember the very spot in the road, whilst in my carriage, when to my joy the solution occurred to me." And then, and only then, with the infinite toil of exposition, was slowly framed from the obdurate facts the great statement of the theory of evolution. The leap of the imagination, in a garden of Woolsthorpe on a day in 1665, from the fall of an apple to an architectonic conception cosmic in its scope and grandeur is one of the dramatic moments in the history of human thought. But in that pregnant moment there flashed together the profound and daring observations and conjectures of a long period of years; and upon the instant of illumination followed other years of rigorous and protracted labour, before the *Principia* appeared. Once more there was the long, slow storing of the Well; once more the flash of amazing vision through a fortuitous suggestion; once more the exacting task of translating the vision into actuality. And those are essentially the stages which Poincaré observed and graphically recorded in his "Mathematical Discovery." And that chapter reads like an exposition of the creative processes through which "The Ancient Mariner" came to be. With the inevitable and obvious differences we are not here concerned. But it is of the utmost moment to more than poetry that instead of regarding the imagination as a bright but ineffectual faculty with which in some esoteric fashion poets and their kind are specially endowed, we recognize the essential oneness of its function and its ways with all the creative endeavours through which human brains, with dogged persistence, strive to discover and realize order in a chaotic world.

For the Road to Xanadu is the road of the human spirit, and the imagination voyaging through chaos and reducing it to clarity and order is the symbol of all the quests which lend glory to our dust. And the goal of the shaping spirit which hovers in the *poet's* brain is the clarity and order of pure beauty. Nothing is alien to its transforming touch. "Far or forgot to (it) is near; Shadow and sunlight are the same." Things fantastic as the dicing of spectres on skeleton-barks, and ugly as the slimy spawn of rotting seas, and strange as a star astray within the moon's bright tip, blend in its vision into patterns of new-created beauty, *herrlich, wie am ersten Tag.* Yet the pieces that compose the pattern are not new. In the world of the shaping spirit, save for its patterns, there is nothing new that was not old. For the work of the creators is the mastery and transmutation and reordering into shapes of beauty of the given universe within us and without us. The shapes thus wrought are not that universe; they are "carved with figures strange and sweet, All made out of the carver's brain." Yet in that brain the elements and shattered fragments of the figures already lie, and what the carver-creator sees, implicit in the fragments, is the unique and lovely Form.

Kubla Khan

Samuel Taylor Coleridge • 1772–1834

Coleridge himself gave the following account of writing this poem: "In the summer of the year 1797, the Author, then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farmhouse between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in Purchas's Pilgrimage: — *'Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto: and thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall.' The Author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awakening he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone had been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter."*

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
  Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced;
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!
A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me,
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

How a Poem Is Made

C. Day Lewis • 1904–

Somebody is bound to say it, so we will anticipate him: "Genius is nine-tenths perspiration and one-tenth inspiration." Here a poet reviews his writing of a poem and demonstrates the truth of the old saw. Such an essay may correct the too-prevalent notion that poetry is a kind of automatic writing freeing one from the rigors of thought. If you are still unconvinced, try writing some poetry. Q. E. D.

WHEN I TALK to schoolboys and schoolgirls about poetry, they often ask, "What is inspiration?" or "Do poets have to be inspired before they can write a poem?" or, point-blank, "Are *you* inspired?" Those are difficult questions to answer (especially the third one!). But I'm going to try and answer them now — to give you some idea of what goes on in a poet's mind when he is composing a poem.

First you must realize that a great deal of the creating of a poem has already taken place before the poet reaches for his pen and starts writing anything down: and I don't mean by this that he makes up most of the poem "in his head," though some poets do. A poem is created by three stages.

1. The seed or germ of a poem strikes the poet's imagination. It may come in the form of a strong but vague feeling, a particular experience, or an idea: sometimes it first appears as an image: perhaps even — as a poetic phrase or a whole line of verse — already clothed in words. The poet jots down the idea or image in his notebook, or just makes a mental note of it. Then he probably forgets all about it.

2. But the seed of the poem has passed into him, into the part of him we call "the unconscious mind." There it grows and begins to take shape (together, maybe, with other poetic "seeds," for a poet may have any number of poems growing inside him at once), till the moment comes when it is ready to be born. For a poem, this second stage may take a few days only or it may take years.

3. The poet feels an urgent desire to write a poem. It's often an actual physical feeling: I myself get it in my stomach; it's like a mixture of the feeling I have there when I'm hungry and the one I have when I'm particularly excited or frightened about something that's just going to happen to me. Now the poem is beginning to be born. The poet sits very quietly — or he may stride all over the countryside at five miles an hour, or go for a

From *Poetry for You* by C. Day Lewis. Copyright, 1944, by Oxford University Press, Inc., and by A. D. Peters, London, England. Pp. 38–46.

ride on a bus — whatever helps him best to concentrate on getting the poem out of himself. He recognizes, in it, the seed which first came to him weeks or months before, which he may have forgotten all about in the meanwhile; but the seed has grown and developed in a remarkable way.

Stage 3 is where the poem bangs at the door, so to speak, and demands to be let out. What comes out first is not the finished poem, though: it is the general shape and idea of the poem, sometimes a whole stanza ready-made, seldom more than that. This is where the hard work of writing a poem begins — and it is very hard work indeed, I can tell you. The poet has to get the rest of the poem out, to shape it, to choose every word in it as carefully as you would choose a baseball bat or a new dress for yourself. Some poems are born more easily than others: but there's nearly always a certain amount of hard work about it, and often it's so hard that the poet may take hours — or even days — to write one single line that really satisfies him.

The coal that glows and fades

So don't get the idea that "inspiration" means a great golden flood of words pouring into the poet's mind and marshaling themselves neatly into lines and stanzas. Inspiration is when the first seed of a poem strikes root in him. You'll notice I used the phrase "strikes root": a poet may have many experiences, receive many ideas and images, which *could* be seeds of poems, but somehow they don't strike root — don't get deep enough into his imagination to fertilize it. And he can never tell *which* of his experiences is going to form itself into a poem, until the poem actually starts asking to be born. We might fairly apply the word "inspiration" to this moment of the poetic process too — the moment when, with eager excitement, the poet realizes he is ready to create a poem. The best way I can describe this moment is to say that it's rather like switching on your radio to get some distant station: you move the dials, oh so delicately, there is a long silence, the instrument begins to warm up, and at last a faint voice is heard — words growing gradually more easy to hear and understand.

Where this inspiration comes from, nobody really knows. But obviously, just as you need a radio to receive the sound waves sent out by a broadcasting station, so the poet needs a sensitive apparatus inside himself to receive the messages of inspiration. This apparatus is the poetic imagination. Everyone possesses some imagination: but the poet's has to be developed in special ways. I described some of these in chapter 2, when I told you how people first became poets. But that's only the beginning of it. You develop a muscle by exercising it. And the poet develops his imagination by exercising it.

He does this partly by writing poetry: he gets into the *habit* of writing poetry, and this habit is one of the things that distinguishes a real professional poet from the person who just writes a poem now and then for fun. He does it, also, by constantly playing with words, just as a conjuror absent-

mindedly plays with coins to keep his hand in: you can never be a poet unless you are fascinated by words — their sounds and shapes and meanings — and have them whirling about in your head all the time. Above all, the poet develops his poetic faculty through contemplation — that is to say, by looking steadily both at the world outside him and the things that happen inside him, by using all his senses to *feel* the wonder, the sadness, and the excitement of life, and by trying all the time to grasp the mysterious pattern which underlies it. Yet, however devoted he is to his profession, however much he contemplates and practices, however skilful a craftsman in words he may become, a poet can never command inspiration. It may stay with him for months, or desert him for years. He does not know when it will come — or go. As Shelley said,

> The mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness.

"The flags, the roundabouts, the gala day"

Now I'm going to take you behind the scenes and show you how one of my own poems was written. I think it will help you to understand what I've just been saying. Here is the poem:

> Children look down upon the morning-gray
> Tissue of mist that veils a valley's lap:
> Their fingers itch to tear it and unwrap
> The flags, the roundabouts, the gala day.
> They watch the spring rise inexhaustibly —
> A breathing thread out of the eddied sand,
> Sufficient to their day: but half their mind
> Is on the sailed and glittering estuary.
> Fondly we wish their mist might never break,
> Knowing it hides so much that best were hidden:
> We'd chain them by the spring, lest it should broaden
> For them into a quicksand and a wreck.
> But they slip through our fingers like the source,
> Like mist, like time that has flagged out their course.

The seed of this poem was a strong feeling I had about my own two children. It is a feeling most parents have, at one time or another — a feeling of sadness that their children must grow up, must leave their protection and go out into the dangerous and difficult world. When you are young, you sometimes resent your parents having that feeling: you *want* to grow up and be independent.

Now, if you look at the poem again, you'll see there are two themes, or subjects, in it — the original one, my *own* feeling, which comes out in the last six lines; and the *children's* feeling of impatience and expectation, which comes out in the first eight. These two themes are intended to balance and contrast with each other.

Before I actually start writing a poem, I often find a line of verse comes

into my head — a line which gives me a clue to the theme and pattern which the poem will develop: a sort of key-line. When I sat down to begin this sonnet, such a line of verse at once came into my head. That line (it is the only one I didn't have to work for) was "The flags, the roundabouts, the gala day." I thought about this line, and saw that it was an image of a fête or a fair, the sort of thing a child looks forward to; obviously, it symbolized (that is, "stood for") the grown-up world which a child is so impatient to enter. The idea of *impatience* then added some more lines — the first three. Here, the early-morning mist covering the valley represents the veil which the children wish to tear away, as they would tear the tissue paper off a birthday present — the veil which shuts them off from the grown-up world. The image came out of my memory, recalled from a day several years ago when I was taking my children to school in Devonshire, and we paused at the top of a hill and saw the whole of the valley below covered with mist: I remembered thinking at the time that it looked like tissue paper, but I'd forgotten all about the incident until I began to write this poem.

Next, I wanted a second image-sequence, as a variation on the theme expressed in the first four lines. You'll find it in lines 5 to 8 — the picture of a spring bubbling up out of the earth, and the children bending down to watch its "breathing thread." The word "breathing" gives you a clue to the meaning of this passage: the spring represents life near its source, *young* life; and the children are only half satisfied with it; "half their mind" is looking forward to the time when their life will have broadened out, as a stream broadens into an estuary, and becomes more important and exciting. The image of the spring, like that of the mist, came out of my memory: it was a particular spring, near a country house in Ireland, which used to fascinate me as a child; I remember spending hours watching it, wondering how such a tiny thread of water managed to force its way out of the earth.

Next, the other theme had to be started — the *parents'* feeling about the children going out into the world. Notice that, although this theme was the original seed of the poem, it now occupies a relatively small space (lines 9 to 12): it often happens, when you are writing a poem, that you find the poem turning out quite differently from what you expected — in other words, you don't know what a poem is going to be like till you have gone some way with the composing of it; indeed, to a certain extent, a poem *composes itself.* Lines 9–12 say, quite simply, "We grownups wish the mist of childhood might never break for our children, because, when it does, they'll see the world is not such a pleasant place as they imagined. We'd like to chain them to their childhood, to save them from being hurt ('a quicksand and a wreck') as everyone must sometimes be hurt by life when he grows up." But the poem couldn't end like that, could it? After all, a parent can't really prevent his children growing up, even if it was right for him to try and do so — which it isn't. So, in the last two lines, I describe

how children grow independent of their parents, slipping away from them like mist or water ("the source") slips through one's fingers: they must fend for themselves, run their own race — and time has already "flagged out their course."

A corridor of mirrors

I wonder whether you have noticed something about those last six lines. Except for the quicksand and the wreck there are no new images in them. Even the phrase "flagged out their course" (which, by the way, is another memory-image of mine, derived from a two-mile steeplechase I ran in as a boy of fourteen) — even this phrase echoes "the flags" of line 4: Instead of using new images, I have repeated those of the first eight lines — mist, the spring, the estuary ("lest it should *broaden* For them into a quicksand and a wreck"), the flags. In the last chapter I told you how important a part is played in poetry by repetition. It is not only words and phrases, but also images, which can be repeated. And they are repeated in this poem, so that you can see the two main themes from a number of different angles, just as you can see many different reflections of yourself if you walk down a corridor of mirrors.

Lastly, what I have told you about the sources of these particular images will help you to understand how a poem grows. The seed of this poem took root in my mind. Then, without my being aware of it, it somehow attracted to itself several experiences I had had at quite different periods of my life and forgotten about. It got hold of a Devonshire mist, an Irish spring, and a steeplechase course in Dorset; it added an estuary with yachts sailing on it (I still don't know where that last picture came from): and, when I began to write the poem, these four images rose out of my mind all ready to illustrate the theme. . . .

The actual process of writing poetry, then, is rather like the process by which a diamond brooch is made. The poet digs into himself, as a miner digs into a hillside, to find the precious stones — the themes and images of his poems. However skilful and hard-working a miner is, he will not find any diamonds unless there are some to be found there: and you won't get any poetry out of yourself either unless it's there already — unless your imagination is so hot and strong that it has fused your experience into the precious stones which are the raw material of poetry, in the same way as certain chemical conditions are necessary for the making of diamonds beneath the earth's surface. You can't, in fact, write a real poem just by wishing to write one. When the diamonds have been mined, they must be selected, graded, and cut before they can be used for an ornament. This process is equivalent to the work a poet has to do to make a finished poem out of the raw material his imagination yields him. And, just as the quality and size of the diamonds available to him affect the *design* of the brooch which the jeweler makes, so the nature and quality of our poetic material help to create the *pattern* of our poem.

Dialogue

May Sarton • 1912–

One of the most interesting of all mental phenomena to contemplate is the relation between — to employ the old fashioned terminology — heart and head. The absurd and human warfare which goes on between them is logically considered in this poem.

THE TEACHER of logic said, "Reason."

The poet said, "Passion."

"Without logic, we muddle
And fail," said the teacher
Of reason.

The poet said, "Fiddle!
What about Nature?"

"Has Nature no plan,
You poor, fuddled creature?
You're a rational man,
Not an ape or an angel."

The poet said, "Nonsense!
I'm an angel, an ape,
And a creature of sense,
Not a brain in a box
That a mere jackanapes
With logic unlocks.
I'm total. I'm human.
It's you who are not."

"You sound like a woman."

The poet said, "Rot!
You're just a machine.
You can't write a poem.
You can't make a dream."

But the logical man
Said, "I'll stick to my reason."

(He said it with passion.)

Copyright, 1953, The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.



"But it made sense when I wrote it."

Pitfalls of Thought

Symbols ✠ *S. I. Hayakawa • 1906–*

✠ *Our sensitivity to and control of symbols may be the chief criterion of our intelligence. Such is the argument of a "new school" of writers, called General Semanticists, among whom Dr. S. I. Hayakawa is a leader. His book* Language in Action *was the first popular, and is still the most readable, presentation of the place of language in human affairs.*

The Symbolic Process

Animals struggle with each other for food or for leadership, but they do not, like human beings, struggle with each other for things that *stand for* food or leadership: such things as our paper symbols of wealth (money, bonds, titles), badges of rank to wear on our clothes, or low-number license plates, supposed by some people to stand for social precedence. For animals, the relationship in which one thing *stands for* something else does not appear to exist except in very rudimentary form.

The process by means of which human beings can arbitrarily make certain things *stand for* other things may be called the *symbolic process.* Whenever two or more human beings can communicate with each other, they can, by agreement, make anything stand for anything. For example, here are two symbols:

From *Language in Thought and Action,* by S. I. Hayakawa, copyright, 1941, 1949, by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc. Chapter 2.

X Y

We can agree to let X stand for buttons and Y stand for bows; then we can freely change our agreement and let X stand for the Chicago White Sox and Y for the Cincinnati Reds; or let X stand for Chaucer and Y for Shakespeare, X for the CIO and Y for the AFL. *We are, as human beings, uniquely free to manufacture and manipulate and assign values to our symbols as we please.* Indeed, we can go further by making symbols that stand for symbols. If necessary we can, for instance, let the symbol M stand for all the X's in the above example (buttons, White Sox, Chaucer, CIO) and let N stand for all the Y's (bows, Cincinnati Reds, Shakespeare, AFL). Then we can make another symbol, T, stand for M and N, which would be an instance of a symbol of symbols of symbols. This freedom to create symbols of *any* assigned value and to create *symbols that stand for symbols* is essential to what we call the symbolic process.

Everywhere we turn, we see the symbolic process at work. Feathers worn on the head or stripes on the sleeve can be made to stand for military leadership; cowrie shells or rings of brass or pieces of paper can stand for wealth; crossed sticks can stand for a set of religious beliefs; buttons, elks' teeth, ribbons, special styles of ornamental haircutting or tattooing, can stand for social affiliations. The symbolic process permeates human life at the most primitive as well as at the most civilized levels. Warriors, medicine men, policemen, doormen, telegraph boys, cardinals, and kings wear costumes that symbolize their occupations. Savages collect scalps, college students collect membership keys in honorary societies, to symbolize victories in their respective fields. There are few things that men do or want to do, possess or want to possess, that have not, in addition to their mechanical or biological value, a symbolic value.

All fashionable clothes, as Thorstein Veblen has pointed out in his *Theory of the Leisure Class* are highly symbolic: materials, cut, and ornament are dictated only to a slight degree by considerations of warmth, comfort, or practicability. The more we dress up in fine clothes, the more we restrict our freedom of action. But by means of delicate embroideries, easily soiled fabrics, starched shirts, high heels, long and pointed fingernails, and other such sacrifices of comfort, the wealthy classes manage to symbolize, among other things, the fact that they don't have to work for a living. The not-so-wealthy, on the other hand, by imitating these symbols of wealth, symbolize their conviction that, even if they do work for a living, they are just as good as anybody else. Again, we select our furniture to serve as visible symbols of our taste, wealth, and social position; we trade in perfectly good cars for later models, not always to get better transportation, but to give evidence to the community that we can afford such luxuries. We often choose our residences on the basis of a feeling that it "looks well" to have a "good address." We like to put expensive food on our tables, not always because it tastes better than cheap food, but because it tells our guests that we wish to do them honor.

Such complicated and apparently unnecessary behavior leads philosophers, both amateur and professional, to ask over and over again, "Why can't human beings live simply and naturally?" Often the complexity of human life makes us look enviously at the relative simplicity of lives such as dogs and cats lead. But the symbolic process, which makes possible the absurdities of human conduct, also makes possible language and therefore all the human achievements dependent upon language. The fact that more things can go wrong with motorcars than with wheelbarrows is no reason for going back to wheelbarrows. Similarly, the fact that the symbolic process makes complicated follies possible is no reason for wanting to return to a cat-and-dog existence. A better solution is to understand the symbolic process so that instead of being its slaves we become, to some degree at least, its masters.

Language as Symbolism

Of all forms of symbolism, language is the most highly developed, most subtle, and most complicated. It has been pointed out that human beings, by agreement, can make anything stand for anything. Now, human beings have agreed, in the course of centuries of mutual dependency, to let the various noises that they can produce with their lungs, throats, tongues, teeth, and lips systematically stand for specified happenings in their nervous systems. We call that system of agreements *language*. For example, we who speak English have been so trained that, when our nervous systems register the presence of a certain kind of animal, we may make the following noise: "There's a cat." Anyone hearing us expects to find that, by looking in the same direction, he will experience a similar event in his nervous system — one that will lead him to make an almost identical noise. Again, we have been so trained that when we are conscious of wanting food, we make the noise, "I'm hungry."

There is, as has been said, *no necessary connection between the symbol and that which is symbolized.* Just as men can wear yachting costumes without ever having been near a yacht, so they can make the noise, "I'm hungry," without being hungry. Furthermore, just as social rank can be symbolized by feathers in the hair, by tattooing on the breast, by gold ornaments on the watch chain, or by a thousand different devices according to the culture we live in, so the fact of being hungry can be symbolized by a thousand different noises according to the culture we live in: "J'ai faim," or "Es hungert mich," or "Ho appetito," or "Hara ga hetta," and so on.

However obvious these facts may appear at first glance, they are actually not so obvious as they seem except when we take special pains to think about the subject. Symbols and things symbolized are independent of each other; nevertheless, we all have a way of feeling as if, and sometimes acting as if, there were necessary connections. For example, there is the vague sense we all have that foreign languages are inherently absurd: foreigners

have such funny names for things, and why can't they call things by their right names? This feeling exhibits itself most strongly in those English and American tourists who seem to believe that they can make the natives of any country understand English if they shout loud enough. Like the little boy who was reported to have said, "Pigs are called pigs because they are such dirty animals," they feel that the symbol is inherently connected in some way with the things symbolized. Then there are the people who feel that since snakes are "nasty, slimy creatures" (incidentally, snakes are *not* slimy), the word "snake" is a *nasty, slimy word.*

The Pitfalls of Drama

Naïveté regarding the symbolic process extends to symbols other than words, of course. In the case of drama (stage, movies, radio), there appear to be people in almost every audience who never quite fully realize that a play is a set of fictional, symbolic representations. An actor is one who *symbolizes* other people, real or imagined: Fredric March may, in a given play, enact the role of (symbolize) a drunkard. The fact that Mr. March can do so with extraordinary realism proves nothing about his drinking habits, if any. Nevertheless, there are movie-goers who, instead of admiring Mr. March's skill in acting, begin to feel sorry for Mrs. March who is, alas, married to such a heavy drinker! Lewis Stone, who often plays the part of a judge, often gets letters from fans asking for legal advice. James Cagney, who plays "tough guy" roles, is often challenged to fight by men who say to him, "Think you're tough, do you? Lemme show you!" It was said some years ago that when Edward G. Robinson, who plays gangster roles with extraordinary vividness, visited Chicago, local hoodlums telephoned him at his hotel to pay their professional respects.

One is reminded of the story of the actor, playing the part of a villain in a traveling theatrical troupe, who, at a particularly tense moment in the play, was shot by an overexcited cowpuncher in the audience. The cowpuncher of this story, however, is no more ridiculous than those thousands of people today, many of them adults, who write fan letters to a ventriloquist's dummy, or those goodhearted but impressionable people who send presents to the broadcasting station when two characters in a radio serial get married, or those astonishing patriots who rushed to recruiting offices to help defend the nation when, on October 30, 1938, the United States was "invaded" by an "army from Mars" in a radio dramatization.

An extreme case of this kind is that of a woman who had a baby on the same day a fictitious baby was born to the heroine in her favorite soap-opera. She named her baby "Margaret" because the soap-opera "baby" was given that name. Some time later, the soap-opera "baby" "died." Thereupon the woman went into a state of inconsolable grief, being convinced that *her own baby* was dead. When her friends tried to convince her that *that* was her own baby, alive and howling right there beside her, she would not be consoled. "You can't fool me," she said. "Margaret is dead. I

heard it on the radio." The woman was, of course, placed in a mental hospital — this was probably only one of many such misevaluations she was in the habit of making. Whatever else was wrong with her, one way of describing this particular misevaluation is to say that the words (in this case of the soap-opera) not only possessed for her the characteristics of reality, but *became a substitute reality completely shutting out the facts.*

The Word Is Not the Thing

The above, however, are only the more striking examples of confused attitudes toward words and symbols. There would be little point in mentioning them if we were *uniformly and permanently aware* of the independence of symbols from things symbolized, as all human beings, in the writer's opinion, *can be* and *should be.* But we are not. Most of us have, in some area or other of our thinking, improper habits of evaluation. For this, society itself is often to blame: most societies systematically encourage, concerning certain topics, the habitual confusion of symbols with things symbolized. For example, if a Japanese schoolhouse caught on fire, it used to be obligatory in the days of emperor-worship to try to rescue the emperor's *picture* (there was one in every schoolhouse), even at the risk of one's life. (If you got burned to death, you were posthumously ennobled.) In our society, we are encouraged to go into debt in order that we may display, as symbols of prosperity, shiny new automobiles. Strangely enough, the possession of shiny automobiles even under these conditions makes their "owners" *feel* prosperous. In all civilized societies (and probably in many primitive ones as well), the symbols of piety, of civic virtue, or of patriotism are often prized above actual piety, civic virtue, or patriotism. In one way or another, we are all like the brilliant student who cheats in his exams in order to make Phi Beta Kappa: it is so much more important to have the symbol than the thing it stands for.

The habitual confusion of symbols with things symbolized, whether on the part of individuals or societies, is serious enough at all levels of culture to provide a perennial human problem. But with the rise of modern communications systems, there arises with peculiar urgency the problem of confusion of verbal symbols with realities. We are constantly being talked at, by teachers, preachers, salesmen, public relations counsels, governmental agencies, and moving-picture sound tracks. The cries of the hawkers of soft drinks, soap chips, and laxatives pursue us into our homes, thanks to the radio — and in some houses the radio is never turned off from morning to night. The mailman brings direct mail advertising. Billboards confront us on the highway, and we even take portable radios with us to the seashore.

We live in an environment shaped and largely created by hitherto unparalleled semantic influences: mass circulation newspapers and magazines which are given to reflecting, in a shocking number of cases, the weird

prejudices and obsessions of their publishers and owners; radio programs, both local and network, almost completely dominated by commercial motives; public relations counsels, who are simply highly paid craftsmen in the art of manipulating and reshaping our semantic environment in ways favorable to their clients. It is an exciting environment, but fraught with danger: it is only a slight exaggeration to say that Hitler conquered Austria by radio.

Citizens of a modern society need, therefore, more than ordinary "common sense" — which was recently defined by Stuart Chase as that which tells you that the world is flat. They need to be scientifically aware of the powers and limitations of symbols, especially words, if they are to guard against being driven into complete bewilderment by the complexity of their semantic environment. The first of the principles governing symbols is this: The symbol is NOT the thing symbolized; the word is NOT the thing; the map is NOT the territory it stands for.

Maps and Territories

There is a sense in which we all live in two worlds. First, we live in the world of happenings about us which we know at first hand. But this is an extremely small world, consisting only of that continuum of the things that we have actually seen, felt, or heard — the flow of events constantly passing before our senses. So far as this world of personal experience is concerned, Africa, South America, Asia, Washington, New York, or Los Angeles do not exist if we have never been to these places. Chiang Kai-shek is only a name if we have never seen him. When we ask ourselves how much we know at first hand, we discover that we know very little indeed.

Most of our knowledge, acquired from parents, friends, schools, newspapers, books, conversation, speeches, and radio, is received *verbally.* All our knowledge of history, for example, comes to us only in words. The only proof we have that the Battle of Waterloo ever took place is that we have had reports to that effect. These reports are not given us by people who saw it happen, but are based on other reports: reports of reports of reports, which go back ultimately to the first-hand reports given by people who did see it happening. It is through reports, then, and through reports of reports, that we receive most knowledge: about government, about what is happening in China, about what picture is showing at the downtown theater — in fact, about anything which we do not know through direct experience.

Let us call this world that comes to us through words the *verbal world,* as opposed to the world we know or are capable of knowing through our own experience, which we shall call the *extensional world.* . . . The human being, like any other creature, begins to make his acquaintance with the extensional world from infancy. Unlike other creatures, however, he begins to receive, as soon as he can learn to understand, reports, reports of reports, reports of reports of reports. In addition he receives inferences made

from reports, inferences made from other inferences, and so on. By the time a child is a few years old, has gone to school and to Sunday school, and has made a few friends, he has accumulated a considerable amount of second- and third-hand information about morals, geography, history, nature, people, games — all of which information together constitutes his verbal world.

Now this verbal world ought to stand in relation to the extensional world as a *map* does to the *territory* it is supposed to represent. If a child grows to adulthood with a verbal world in his head which corresponds fairly closely to the extensional world that he finds around him in his widening experience, he is in relatively small danger of being shocked or hurt by what he finds, because his verbal world has told him what, more or less, to expect. He is prepared for life. If, however, he grows up with a false map in his head — that is, with a head crammed with false knowledge and superstition — he will constantly be running into trouble, wasting his efforts, and acting like a fool. He will not be adjusted to the world as it is; he may, if the lack of adjustment is serious, end up in a mental hospital.

Some of the follies we commit because of false maps in our heads are so commonplace that we do not even think of them as remarkable. There are those who protect themselves from accidents by carrying a rabbit's foot in the pocket. Some refuse to sleep on the thirteenth floor of hotels — this is so common that most big hotels, even in the capitals of our scientific culture, skip "13" in numbering their floors. Some plan their lives on the basis of astrological predictions. Some play fifty-to-one shots on the basis of dream books. Some hope to make their teeth whiter by changing their brand of tooth paste. All such people are living in verbal worlds that bear little, if any, resemblance to the extensional world.

Now, no matter how beautiful a map may be, it is useless to a traveler unless it accurately shows the relationship of places to each other, the structure of the territory. If we draw, for example, a big dent in the outline of a lake for, let us say, artistic reasons, the map is worthless. But if we are just drawing maps for fun without paying any attention to the structure of the region, there is nothing in the world to prevent us from putting in all the extra curlicues and twists we want in the lakes, rivers, and roads. No harm will be done *unless someone tries to plan a trip by such a map.*

Similarly, by means of imaginary or false reports, or by false inferences from good reports, or by mere rhetorical exercises, we can manufacture at will, with language, "maps" which have no reference to the extensional world. Here again no harm will be done unless someone makes the mistake of regarding such "maps" as representing real territories.

We all inherit a great deal of useless knowledge, and a great deal of misinformation and error (maps that were formerly thought to be accurate), so that there is always a portion of what we have been told that must be discarded. But the cultural heritage of our civilization that is transmitted to us — our socially pooled knowledge, both scientific and humane — has

been valued principally because we have believed that it gives us accurate maps of experience. The analogy of verbal worlds to maps is an important one and will be referred to frequently throughout this book. It should be noticed at this point, however, that there are two ways of getting false maps of the world into our heads: first, by having them given to us; second, by making them up for ourselves by misreading the true maps given to us.

Wolf! Wolf!

Bergen Evans • 1904–

In the preceding essay, Hayakawa has made much of the false maps which bear but little relation to reality. Bergen Evans has sought to correct some of those maps which are given to us by popular report, in his witty book, The Natural History of Nonsense *(1946).*

AN INTERESTING FOOTNOTE to folk zoology is supplied by stories of children being reared by animals, stories that have been repeated among all peoples of all periods. And it is not without significance that this myth has reappeared in our own time and has been given wider credence, under more dignified auspices, than ever before in its long history.

Many legendary heroes were reared by animals. Zeus and Tarzan both had the benefit of such an association, and history is spotted with lesser figures who derive their whole importance from their feral foster mothers. Ireland had a sheep-boy, and at Salzburg there was a swine-girl who ate acorns and sat cross-legged in a sty to the admiration of all beholders. In 1403 a fish-woman with "sea-mosse that did stick about her" was washed through the dykes at Edam and lived for the next seventeen years in Haarlem, where she "learned to spinne and perform other pettie offices of women" though she was never able to master Dutch. She adored the cross and so impressed the local clergy that more than forty of them are said to have testified to her authenticity.

There seems to be something about these unhappy beings, in fact, that leads divines to vouch for them. Thus it is on the authority of Archbishop Matheson of Winnipeg that Ernest Thompson Seton tells the "true story" of little Harry Service's being adopted by a badger. In this instance, it is pleasant to relate, there was a reciprocation of unnatural affection and the badger herself was adopted by Harry's family, though it proved a trial, for an unfortunate rivalry for the boy's love developed between his real and his foster mothers. . . .

Reprinted from *The Natural History of Nonsense* by Bergen Evans, by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright, 1946, by Bergen Evans.

But the story of animal adoptions that reduces all the others to insignificance is that of the "wolf-reared waifs of Midnapore," which made its first full-dress appearance in *Harper's Magazine* in January 1941. This was not its first time in print, however. It had been run in the *Westminster Gazette* and had been reprinted in the *New York Times* as early as 1926. It had played peek-a-boo in various learned publications for a dozen years, and in 1939 it had filled a spread in the *American Weekly,* illustrated with those vivid sketches by which that lively journal seeks to assist such of its subscribers as find reading difficult. But the sponsorship of *Harper's* and the renown of its new narrator, Dr. Arnold Gesell, Director of Yale's Clinic of Child Development, raised it to a new dignity, while the singular style in which it was presented gave it an added grace and freshness.

Dr. Gesell's narrative can be briefly summarized. In the autumn of 1912, he says, an Indian she-wolf, "her teats gorged, her eyes . . . preternaturally mild" and her whole being "warmed by the chemistry of maternal hormones," adopted a Hindu baby girl. Nourished by "mammalian milk" (which Dr. Gesell asserts is "chemically very like" other milk), the child made "a remarkably effective adaptation to wolf mores." It was not easy: "Furniture there was none"; "Books, rugs, dishes" and "true table manners" were "conspicuously lacking."

But the little girl overcame all obstacles and made "a successful adjustment to the onerous demands of the wolf den." She got on without furniture and books, slept on the floor, ate directly with her mouth, politely overlooked the lack of good manners, and "rubbed her haunches over the ground for cleanliness." She developed "a deep and mysterious sense of community with the pack" — a "palship," Dr. Gesell would call it — scrambled after them on their forays, became adept at shooing buzzards off a dead hog, and added her treble wail to that "weird nocturne" which every night, at ten, one, and three, the wolves sent up to the shivering stars.

Her physical adaptation to what Dr. Gesell calls "wolverine" culture was in some ways more remarkable still. Her spine modified to suit "bipatellar locomotion," a glow "emanated" from her eyes at night, her canine teeth grew long and pointed, and she ceased to perspire, tending rather "to pant and to extrude her tongue in the sun."

In 1919, "of all unpredictable wonders," the mother wolf adopted another child, also a girl. In 1920 the wolf was killed and the children, now doubly orphaned, were placed in the care of the Reverend J. A. L. Singh, of Midnapore, who discreetly kept their history a secret for six years lest it should "prejudice their chances of marriage." One would have thought that the younger girl's death and the older girl's strange habits would, in themselves, have been sufficient to discourage the most ardent suitor, but the good man's solicitude is none the less touching.

The death of the younger child occurred in 1921, but the older, who had been named Kamala, lived until 1929, slowly readapting herself to human ways. She continued the "traditional wolf howl" at ten, one, and three, but

a human note was observed in 1922 when she addressed Mrs. Singh as "Ma." In time she "toileted in the bathroom," to use Dr. Gesell's chaste phrase, though this must have been one of her latest accomplishments, for in 1926 the Reverend Mr. Singh, in a letter to Paul C. Squires, stated that she didn't, and from the general gloom of his statement we are led to suspect that she continued her strange and strenuous abstersions. By 1927 she had "so far transcended wolf ways" as to be regular and devout in church attendance, in which she showed marked superiority to the Sikandra boy, who had interrupted divine service by shouting "Dham, dham!" — a proceeding which Dr. Gesell says indicated "a low idiot plateau of mentality."

By 1927 also "her behavior had become conventional" and she talked "with the full sense of the words used." But this advantage over her biographers was not long maintained, for she was taken ill "and gave up the ghost on the 14th morning at 4 A.M. in the month of November, 1929."

For his detailed account of life in the den, Dr. Gesell confessed that he drew heavily upon "imagination and . . . conjectures." For his knowledge of the later years in the orphanage he acknowledged his indebtedness to a "diary record" kept by the Reverend Mr. Singh and entrusted by him for publication to Professor Zingg who, despite Lukas's defalcation, continued a friend to feral man.

While this more scholarly work was in preparation, however, Dr. Gesell soothed the impatience of the public by publishing *Wolf Child and Human Child,* a fuller account of the episode, embellished with some retouched snapshots, a pen drawing of "the mother wolf," and "a quaint woodcut" of Romulus and Remus which he was forced to use, he admits, for lack of a suitable photograph. This volume added no new information, though a discussion entitled "Can Wolf Ways be Humanized?" was not without interest. *Time,* no shunner of issues, which had taken up the wolf-children with its customary vigor, answered definitely that they could not: "A wolf, or even an ape," the editors stoutly maintained, "reared in the Rev. Singh's orphanage would not attain a human personality."

The facts upon which this ringing enunciation was based were drawn (like Dr. Gesell's narrative, and the *Scientific American's, Coronet's,* the *American Weekly's* and the *Saturday Home Magazine's* — for the story had wide circulation) from the Reverend Mr. Singh's diary and from the interpretation put upon it, in various learned articles, by Professor Zingg. Dr. Gesell was sure that Professor Zingg had "carefully checked the essential authenticity" of the whole business; but "carefully checked," like "wolverine," must have had here some meaning not commonly attributed to it, for Professor Zingg had said, only a few months before, that he had "unfortunately been unable to get in touch with scientists in India to check and recheck the cases." He had, however, he hastened to add, talked with at least two people who had traveled in India, one of whom referred him to the *Illustrated Weekly of India* for an account of another wolf-child "ex-

hibited at the Gwalior Baby Week"; and later, when under fire, he insisted that he had spent three years "checking through voluminous correspondence with numerous persons." This activity apparently left no time for consulting an atlas, for he seems to have been under the impression that Midnapore was among "the tiger-infested Jungles of north-west India"; whereas Dr. Gesell, who it would seem doubted the "essential authenticity" of at least *that* fact, strung along with Rand McNally and located it seventy miles southwest of Calcutta.

Before the diary could be published, however, skepticism, with "extraordinary license," had reared its ugly head and it was felt necessary to silence "irresponsible" doubters once and for all. To this end the diary, when it finally appeared in 1942, was prefaced with a formidable battery of testimonials. Unfortunately for their effect upon the skeptic, however, none of them happened to be by any of that "good number of men . . . of a sportive nature" in whose company the Reverend Mr. Singh went to preach the gospel and professed to have first seen the children living as wolves among wolves. Professor Zingg says boldly that five such persons "are on record," but he fails to make it clear that the record is the Reverend Mr. Singh's and no one else's, that it consists entirely of the latter's say-so. That at least one of the five could not have been included among the "numerous persons" addicted to "voluminous correspondence" is regrettable.

In their place, however, Professor Zingg offered five character witnesses for the Reverend Mr. Singh — three professors, a judge, and a bishop.

Of these the professors did not profess to have seen either the Reverend Mr. Singh or his wolf-children, so that the only characters illuminated by their testimony were their own. The judge, a resident of Midnapore, testified that he believed the story and that he had actually "spoken to several people who saw the elder of the two girls" while she was living at the orphanage. The brunt of affirmation was thus thrown upon the bishop, the Right Reverend H. Pakenham-Walsh, who definitely stated that he saw the elder of the two girls four years after her rescue. He does not claim to have been personally acquainted with the mother wolf, yet he is able to assure us that she was "well pleased with her experiment." From his examination of the child he concluded that wolves have "no sense of humor" and "no interest except in raw meat." He was happy, though, to be able to announce that the wolf-parents had not taught their charges "anything bad," a fact that he felt has "a very pertinent bearing on the consideration of what we mean by 'Original Sin.'"

Fascinating though such reflections are, however, the severe logician must dismiss them as irrelevant. Professor Zingg's correspondents, Professor Gesell's prose, the judge's affidavit, the bishop's meditations, and the attending physician's uroscopy of the dying Kamala — all have an interest, even a charm, of their own; but they add nothing whatever to prove that the children were adopted and reared by wolves.

For this our sole evidence is that "diary of observation" which we are

innocently told in a foreword "was nearing completion" in 1933, though the last of the children had died in 1929; and this diary, for all the eager promises of "internal evidence," fails to carry conviction. Though it professes to be a day-by-day record of the discovery of the children among the wolves and their subsequent behavior at the orphanage, it is actually a meager collection of entries, few and irregular, not arranged chronologically, and interspersed with reflections concerning the "divine" nature of the event that are, to say the least, unscientific. And the "proof" is further vitiated by the fact that the Reverend Mr. Singh had been convinced that the children were wolf-children even before he unearthed them.

That he reared a strange child in his orphanage is as incontestable as that he was probably the worst photographer that ever lived. That he found the child in the woods in the vicinity of wolves is at least possible, though that great scientific authority, the *Illustrated Weekly of India,* says that there are no wolves in this particular region. Furthermore, there are discrepancies in his earlier and later accounts of the findings, and his failure to secure testimonials from those who he says were with him at the time, while going to such trouble to get testimonials from others, adds to the growing doubt.

Of course even if he had found the children, exactly as he said he did, living in an ant-mound from which wolves had been seen to run, it would not have been positive proof that they had been reared by those or any other wolves. They may have fled into the den in fear. Or they may even have lived there independently. It would have been a strange situation, but nowhere nearly so strange as the one alleged.

That they curled up in a ball — which for some reason is thought to be irrefutable proof of their previous lupinity — merely proves that their backbones were flexible. It is not an uncommon condition in children and may be observed — as Dr. Gesell ought to know — in scores of nurseries that have known no other wolf than Red Riding Hood's.

But the most damning point of all, the thing that makes the whole story untenable, is the effort — which occupies the major portion of every version — to show that the children must have been reared by wolves because they later *behaved* like wolves. But the wolves they behaved like were not ordinary, four-footed wolves, or even a particular species of ordinary wolves, *Canis pallipes* (for Dr. Gesell is very learned on this detail), but were genuine funny-paper wolves, *Lupus vulgus fantasticus,* running in packs, howling by the clock, and emitting a "weird light" from their eyes.

Such is the basis for what one of the foremost publishers of the day regards as an "absorbing and invaluable human study" and which "testifies anew" (in the opinion of one of the highest-paid savants of Yale University) "to the stamina of the human spirit." Another artless pundit, crying that the story served admirably "to introduce us to some of the basic matters with which sociology deals" — as no doubt it does — proceeded in haste to revise his textbook, building the whole fabric of his new thought upon these shifty sands. Others followed suit, until today the waifs, like God, would

have to be invented if they did not exist; they serve so many purposes. Half a dozen college textbooks have been rewritten to include them as "authenticated" facts. Two complete volumes have been written about them. And practically every leading journal and news organ has had an article on them in which the veracity of the narrative was never questioned.

Sometimes one wonders why any self-respecting wolf would *want* to adopt a human being.

Prejudice: A Sickness of Individuals and Society

Gordon W. Allport • 1897–

Prejudices against those belonging to groups of other colors, creeds, or nations than one's own are among the virulent mental diseases of humanity. Allport, an eminent psychologist, reviews a group of books on this problem. He makes his book-review an excellent discussion of the complex subject — an independent essay, not merely a perfunctory description.

Studies in Prejudice. Edited by Max Horkheimer and Samuel H. Flowerman. Harper and Brothers ($20.00).

The Authoritarian Personality, by T. W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson and R. Nevitt Sanford ($7.50).

Dynamics of Prejudice: A Psychological and Sociological Study of Veterans, by Bruno Bettelheim and Morris Janowitz ($3.50).

Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorder: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation, by Nathan W. Ackerman and Marie Jahoda ($2.50).

Rehearsal for Destruction: A Study of Political Anti-Semitism in Imperial Germany, by Paul W. Massing ($4.00).

Prophets of Deceit: A Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator, by Leo Lowenthal and Norbert Guterman ($2.50).

LORD BRYCE once prophesied that a cure will be found for every social ailment except race prejudice. A more recent writer has remarked that it is manifestly easier to smash an atom than a prejudice. There can be no doubt about the predicament of society to which these observers call attention, yet in view of certain recent developments one begins to wonder. After all, the atom has been smashed; conceivably prejudice may be next.

Reprinted with permission from *Scientific American,* June, 1950, vol. 182, no. 6.

Certainly in no other area of social science is there such an outpouring of research as on this problem. It cascades through the pages of technical journals in sociology and psychology, and gushes forth in monographic publications such as the five impressive volumes reviewed here. What the ultimate impact of all this work will be we cannot tell. It seems likely, however, that in the not-too-distant future its effects will be felt, especially in our educational policies.

What is most impressive about these five volumes as a whole is the extent to which their findings support one another. Such cross-confirmation is heartening, especially in view of the fact that it comes from investigators working independently and using widely divergent methods. In these volumes we find data drawn from psychological tests, attitude scales, public opinion polls; from psychoanalytic protocols of patients, clinical interviews, documentary analysis. The authors have been resourceful in inventing ways of probing prejudice.

It is difficult to define prejudice. Although Bettelheim and Janowitz find that one third of the Chicago veterans they interviewed were outspoken in their hostility to Jews, and that two thirds spoke harshly against Negroes, we can be certain that most of the veterans concerned would insist that their attitudes are based on "facts," on the "well-deserved reputation" of the minority groups in question, and not on prejudice. A logical prerequisite to research on prejudice would seem to be an answer to the question: To what extent are accusations against minority groups true or false? Unfortunately evidence that would resolve this initial issue is hard to come by. The objective study of group differences is plagued by many difficulties. For one thing, some accusations (*e.g.*, "Negroes are lazy") are so vague as to be untestable. For another, we cannot say how often a trait has to be encountered before it can be considered a true group characteristic; for example, what percentage of addiction would justify the statement that "the Irish are alcoholic"? And in the few characteristics in which differences are statistically established, their interpretation is equivocal. Just what do lower verbal test scores for Negroes — and higher for Jews — mean? Do they indicate differences in native ability or in opportunity and incentive?

Although we cannot be certain that there are no *average* group differences in respect to objectionable forms of behavior, we can say positively that prejudice is present whenever a person disparages any group as a whole. No evil trait is the exclusive possession of any one group; nor does every member of a group possess an evil trait. Moreover, the difference within groups is always greater than the difference between groups. We know likewise that many alleged differences are totally nonexistent ("Negro blood is different from white blood"). Finally we know that many accusations are so blatantly contradictory that they cannot all be true ("Jews are beholden to Wall Street" and "to Moscow").

Although these five volumes do not deal directly with the factual study

of group differences, they do disclose the prevalence of many palpably false generalizations. Take the case of the Jew. For most people the Jew is merely an ambiguous and formless stimulus; they are ignorant of Jewish customs and of Jewish traits, if any of the latter really exist. Under such circumstances, as Ackerman and Jahoda point out, the Jew may serve as a "living ink-blot" or Rorschach test wherein each person sees what he wants to see: a capitalist or a Communist, a rigid moralist or a libertine, a miser or an ostentatious spender, an aggressor or a coward, an isolate or an intruder. In *The Authoritarian Personality* we learn to what an astonishing degree an anti-Semite may make contradictory accusations.

The Negro is likewise a "living ink-blot." Bettelheim and Janowitz find that especially among the middle- and lower-class veterans they studied there is a tendency to project upon the Negro one's own Id impulses. It is the Negro, instead of the interviewee himself, who seems oversexed, lacking in self-control, lazy, dirty.

But prejudice is more than mere projection. It rests on many factors — among them historical conditions. No one can comprehend the present plight of the Negro in America without taking into account the backgrounds of slavery and the humiliations suffered by the South after the Civil War. Massing, using exclusively the historical method, surveys the steady march of political anti-Semitism in Germany from the time of the Franco-Prussian War to the First World War. Politicians as diverse in stripe as Stoecker (court chaplain to Wilhelm I), Bismarck and Fritsch (a racist forerunner of Hitler) attempted to build party unity out of hatred for the Jewish "enemy." To accelerate and maintain a mass movement from the right the device has been used in Germany time and again, and with catastrophic success by Hitler. The German Social Democratic party was always outspoken against the trick. Its leaders insisted that social ills stemmed from the capitalist system as a whole; but much of the German *Mittelstand* persisted in believing that only the "Jewish" part of capitalism was to blame.

Massing's book warns us that we should not put exclusive reliance on psychological explanations of prejudice and persecution. Hatred of the Jew is often not allowed to remain a private device for gratifying emotional needs. In the hands of political manipulators it shifts from a personal to a mass phenomenon. We know that anti-Semitism flourishes most widely in periods of economic depression, rapid social change, shifting political alignments and general social sickness. Even if prejudice is at bottom a personal state of mind it requires social forces to bring it into a kinetic state.

Yet the social and personal factors are intertwined. Some individuals are bigoted primarily because of an emotional need to be so; others are primarily conformists and adopt prevailing stereotypes as unthinkingly as they adopt their native language. Still others are astute demagogues who know how to exploit these states of mind. It is when the three types join together

that violence breaks out. Bettelheim and Janowitz show that persons on the economic downgrade, suffering a severe blow to their self-esteem, are likely to become bitter and prejudiced. When a large group of such people assemble, they are ripe fruit for the agitator, for the "prophet of deceit." It has been estimated that eight to 10 million Americans hang on the words of such prophets. Most of the listeners appear to be joyless individuals over 40 who have failed to comprehend or adjust to the world they live in. They lack political, economic or psychological sophistication. To them all human groupings except their own seem outlandish and menacing.

Lowenthal and Guterman fill their small volume with documentation of the muddied discourse of American agitators. One is struck by the fact that the harangues are clear preparation for violence, if not actually incitement to it. While the target is always primarily the Jew, there is a drunken confusion in naming the scapegoats. In a single breath the agitator vilifies "aliens, Communists, refugees, renegades, socialists, traitors, Godless Bolsheviks, Judaism, nigger-lovers and Eleanor Roosevelt." The Federal administration and our system of political parties come in for prominent attack. The demagogue says in effect, "I know the danger better than you; give me your trust, your obedience, your money, and I'll lead you forth to smash the enemy." Should an economic or psychological crisis strike this country, it seems probable that the prophets of deceit will have a still wider, and perhaps disastrous, appeal.

While these volumes stress the importance of historical and social forces, it is primarily on the "character structure" of the bigot that they focus our attention. It is here that they make their most original contributions. Prejudice, it turns out, may be a systematic disease of the personality.

At the risk of oversimplification I shall venture to summarize the insights that the volumes yield regarding this central psychological problem. The evidence is in many respects still imperfect, yet it is worth our while to mark these emerging generalizations. Most of them meet reasonable tests for statistical significance and find support in two or more independent studies. The deeply prejudiced person seems to show several — sometimes all — of the following characteristics.

In childhood it is likely that he was deprived of a normal sense of love and security — at least he reports today that such deprivation existed early in his life. This sense of rejection may have come from an emotionally broken home or from harsh discipline. Generally the bigot's first social contacts were formed in an atmosphere of power relationships, not of love and trust.

He is haunted by a basic anxiety. This anxiety may arise from the initial insecurity of the home or from rigid moral training. Unable to come to terms with his parents on a friendly and mature basis, the individual goes through life bearing an unresolved protest against their dominance. Even though he may consciously endorse their views and express affection for them, he unconsciously betrays his resentment. Anxiety may also be due

to later factors: to the threats that arise from economic insecurity, from physical or intellectual handicaps, from the dread of social ostracism, of war, of atomic bombs, of a depression. Though anxiety is common enough in our day, it seems to be an especially prominent constituent of intolerant personalities.

The bigot's attitudes toward authority are confused. Intolerant veterans, for example, show that they harbor bitter memories of their Army experiences, feeling particularly hostile toward their former officers. They decry their "unfair" treatment at the hands of the Veterans Administration and disparage many of our institutional safeguards of democracy. At the same time they are super-patriotic, nationalistic, militaristic. They feel the need for control, for authority, for definiteness. They are loyal only to groups that for them spell safety.

Human relationships for bigots are categorical; one either belongs or does not belong to the favored group. By and large intolerant people are vigorously loyal to church, school, sorority, to their own ethnic group and nation, for in these they find definiteness, a sense of superiority and safety. Their own groups are the "right" groups; all others are "wrong." Thus the individual relies not on the personal resources of integrity and self-confidence but on his memberships and similar props. This fact helps to explain the bigot's dislike of the democratic mode of living; for his taste it allows too much "slippage" in human relationships. Instead of providing clear-cut constraints, democracy places the responsibility for mature social conduct too heavily upon the individual, in his view.

It follows that intolerant personalities are not well integrated from within. In technical parlance, they have little "ego strength." They lack a trusting philosophy of life, for they are unable to cope with things that seem threatening and "ego alien." They commonly complain of feeling empty, afraid and beyond their depth. Bigots, far more often than tolerant people, see the world as a jungle, as a hazardous place where men are basically evil and dangerous. They are typically more afraid of "swindlers" than are tolerant people. Because of their anxieties they keep important parts of their own personality out of consciousness (especially repressing feelings of hostility toward their parents), and show violent emotion when these repressed regions are inadvertently aroused. Their lives show a lack of strong objective interests, and many of them report fears of going insane.

In the realm of morals their mode of thinking is also categorical. To them "there is always a right way and a wrong way to do anything." This simple two-valued logic dominates their ethical appraisals. Women are "pure" or "bad." They tend to regard sex as a physical matter, divorced from warmth and affection. Moral issues, they feel, must be handled with stern conventionality. Deviants are condemned. A person's conduct is not regarded in the total context of his life, nor from the point of view of psychosocial determinants.

Intolerant people are satisfied with themselves. Asked about the quali-

ties that an "ideal person" would have, they tend to list the same set of traits that they actually believe themselves to possess. By contrast the tolerant individual is more likely to be dissatisfied with his self-recognized shortcomings. This sense of rightness inevitably brings with it a high degree of "extropunitiveness" (the tendency to blame outer circumstance and other people for misfortunes). Luck, bad breaks, lack of "pull" are seen as the reasons for failures in life.

Projection is a consequence of this extropunitiveness. It is of two types. In its simpler form it may only be the tendency to blame others for misfortunes. Jews, labor, Irish Catholic politicians may be perceived as the cause of distress. On the other hand projection may represent a mirroring of the bigot's own unacknowledged sins. Instead of seeing others simply as the external cause of his trouble he may ascribe to them the very sins that bedevil his own nature: lust, greed, laziness, dishonesty. When projection in either sense reaches an excessive degree of rigidity — as it does in militant bigots — we have a condition verging on paranoia.

Finally, and most important, in the bigoted personality intolerance is a generalized trait. A person hostile to Jews is more likely than not to be hostile to Negroes, Catholics, Mexicans, refugees and other "foreigners." There are of course exceptions, but the trend toward the generalization of prejudice is so marked that we cannot escape the conclusion that the problem at bottom is one of "character structure."

In describing this syndrome of intolerance I have leaned most heavily on the 1,000-page volume, *The Authoritarian Personality* (whose importance and originality would not have been diminished at all by cutting it in half). But the evidence comes as well, as I have said, from other volumes in this series and from other contemporary social research.

To only a slight extent is the syndrome related to age, sex, education, religious or political affiliation, income or objective social status. It is not so much the individual's position in the social structure itself that matters but his relative movement upward and downward and his attitude toward it. We cannot therefore accept a simple social theory of prejudice. Social conditions, it is true, activate and intensify bigotry, but unless the personality is ripe these factors have relatively little influence. The heart of the problem of prejudice is personal.

It follows that remedies must be of a sort that will ease the tautness, broaden the trust and enlarge the outlook of developing personalities. In these volumes no therapeutic research is reported. We need now to devise and test methods for changing attitudes in the course of their growth. Naturally the most hopeful place to start is with the child — in the home, church, school and clinic.

Each of the five volumes carries an identical foreword written by Horkheimer and Flowerman, of the Department of Scientific Research of the American Jewish Committee, under whose direction the investigations were carried out. To them and to the authors of the several volumes congratula-

tions are due. They have successfully pushed forward the resistant frontiers of social knowledge with research that is bold, original, and — considering the infant state of social science — of unusually high quality.

Dry September

William Faulkner • 1897–

Distinguished American novelist and winner of the Nobel prize for literature, William Faulkner has made his native South the scene of most of his narratives. This story furnishes a powerful companion piece to the Allport essay just preceding, but the similarity of subject matter makes more striking the difference between the logical-scientific approach to material and the imaginative and dramatic treatment.

THROUGH the bloody September twilight, aftermath of sixty-two rainless days, it had gone like a fire in dry grass — the rumor, the story, whatever it was. Something about Miss Minnie Cooper and a negro. Attacked, insulted, frightened: none of them, gathered in the barbershop on that Saturday evening where the ceiling fan stirred, without freshening it, the vitiated air, sending back upon them, in recurrent surges of stale pomade and lotion, their own stale breath and odors, knew exactly what had happened.

"Except it wasn't Will Mayes," a barber said. He was a man of middle age; a thin, sand-colored man with a mild face, who was shaving a client. "I know Will Mayes. He's a good nigger. And I know Miss Minnie Cooper, too."

"What do you know about her?" a second barber said.

"Who is she?" the client said. "A girl?"

"No," the barber said. "She's about forty, I reckon. She ain't married. That's why I don't believe — "

"Believe hell!" a hulking youth in a sweat-stained silk shirt said. "Won't you take a white woman's word before a nigger's?"

"I don't believe Will Mayes did it," the barber said. "I know Will Mayes."

"Maybe you know who did it, then. Maybe you already got him out of town, you damn nigger-lover."

"I don't believe anybody did anything. I don't believe anything happened. I leave it to you fellows if them ladies that gets old without getting married don't have notions that a man can't — "

William Faulkner, *These Thirteen.* Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc. Copyright, 1931, by William Faulkner.

"Then you're a hell of a white man," the client said. He moved under the cloth. The youth had sprung to his feet.

"You don't?" he said. "Do you accuse a white woman of telling a lie?"

The barber held the razor poised above the half-risen client. He did not look around.

"It's this durn weather," another said. "It's enough to make any man do anything. Even to her."

Nobody laughed. The barber said in his mild, stubborn tone: "I ain't accusing nobody of nothing. I just know and you fellows know how a woman that never — "

"You damn nigger-lover!" the youth said.

"Shut up, Butch," another said. "We'll get the facts in plenty of time to act."

"Who is? Who's getting them?" the youth said. "Facts, hell! I — "

"You're a fine white man," the client said. "Ain't you?" In his frothy beard he looked like a desert-rat in the moving pictures. "You tell them, Jack," he said to the youth. "If they ain't any white men in this town, you can count on me, even if I ain't only a drummer and a stranger."

"That's right, boys," the barber said. "Find out the truth first. I know Will Mayes."

"Well, by God!" the youth shouted. "To think that a white man in this town — "

"Shut up, Butch," the second speaker said. "We got plenty of time."

The client sat up. He looked at the speaker. "Do you claim that anything excuses a nigger attacking a white woman? Do you mean to tell me that you're a white man and you'll stand for it? You better go back North where you come from. The South don't want your kind here."

"North what?" the second said. "I was born and raised in this town."

"Well, by God!" the youth said. He looked about with a strained, baffled gaze, as if he was trying to remember what it was he wanted to say or do. He drew his sleeve across his sweating face. "Damn if I'm going to let a white woman — "

"You tell them, Jack," the drummer said. "By God, if they — "

The screen-door crashed open. A man stood in the floor, his feet apart and his heavy-set body poised easily. His white shirt was open at the throat; he wore a felt hat. His hot, bold glance swept the group. His name was Plunkett. He had commanded troops at the front in France and had been decorated for valor.

"Well," he said, "are you going to sit there and let a black son rape a white woman on the streets of Jefferson?"

Butch sprang up again. The silk of his shirt clung flat to his heavy shoulders. At each armpit was a dark half-moon. "That's what I been telling them! That's what I — "

"Did it really happen?" a third said. "This ain't the first man-scare she ever had, like Hawkshaw says. Wasn't there something about a man on the kitchen roof, watching her undress, about a year ago?"

"What?" the client said. "What's that?" The barber had been slowly forcing him back into the chair; he arrested himself reclining, his head lifted, the barber still pressing him down.

Plunket whirled on the third speaker. "Happen? What the hell difference does it make? Are you going to let the black sons get away with it until one really does it?"

"That's what I'm telling them!" Butch shouted. He cursed, long and steady, pointless.

"Here, here," a fourth said. "Not so loud. Don't talk so loud."

"Sure," Plunkett said; "no talking necessary at all. I've done my talking. Who's with me?" He poised on the balls of his feet, roving his gaze.

The barber held the client's face down, the razor poised. "Find out the facts first, boys. I know Willy Mayes. It wasn't him. Let's get the sheriff and do this thing right."

Plunkett whirled upon him his furious, rigid face. The barber did not look away. They looked like men of different races. The other barbers had ceased also above their prone clients. "You mean to tell me," Plunkett said, "that you'd take a nigger's word before a white woman's? Why, you damn nigger-loving — "

The third rose and grasped Plunkett's arm; he too had been a soldier. "Now, now! Let's figure this thing out. Who knows anything about what really happened?"

"Figure out hell!" Plunkett jerked his arm free. "All that're with me get up from there. The ones that ain't — " He roved his gaze, dragging his sleeve across his face.

Three men rose. The client in the chair sat up. "Here," he said, jerking at the cloth around his neck; "get this rag off me. I'm with him. I don't live here, but, by God, if our mothers and wives and sisters — " He smeared the cloth over his face and flung it to the floor. Plunkett stood in the floor and cursed the others. Another rose and moved toward him. The remainder sat uncomfortably, not looking at one another, then one by one they rose and joined him.

The barber picked the cloth from the floor. He began to fold it neatly. "Boys, don't do that. Will Mayes never done it. I know."

"Come on," Plunkett said. He whirled. From his hip pocket protruded the butt of a heavy automatic pistol. They went out. The screen-door crashed behind them reverberant in the dead air.

The barber wiped the razor carefully and swiftly, and put it away, and ran to the rear, and took his hat from the wall. "I'll be back soon as I can," he said to the other barbers. "I can't let — " He went out, running. The two other barbers followed him to the door and caught it on the rebound, leaning out and looking up the street after him. The air was flat and dead. It had a metallic taste at the base of the tongue.

"What can he do?" the first said. The second one was saying "Jees Christ, Jees Christ" under his breath. "I'd just as lief be Will Mayes as Hawk, if he gets Plunkett riled."

"Jees Christ, Jees Christ," the second whispered.
"You reckon he really done it to her?" the first said.

II

She was thirty-eight or thirty-nine. She lived in a small frame house with her invalid mother and a thin, sallow, unflagging aunt, where each morning, between ten and eleven, she would appear on the porch in a lace-trimmed boudoir cap, to sit swinging in the porch swing until noon. After dinner she lay down for a while, until the afternoon began to cool. Then, in one of the three or four new voile dresses which she had each summer, she would go down-town to spend the afternoon in the stores with the other ladies, where they would handle the goods and haggle over prices in cold, immediate voices, without any intention of buying.

She was of comfortable people — not the best in Jefferson, but good people enough — and she was still on the slender side of ordinary-looking, with a bright, faintly haggard manner and dress. When she was young she had had a slender, nervous body and a sort of hard vivacity which had enabled her to ride for the time upon the crest of the town's social life as exemplified by the high-school party and church-social period of her contemporaries while still children enough to be un-classconscious.

She was the last to realize that she was losing ground; that those among whom she had been a little brighter and louder flame than any other were beginning to learn the pleasure of snobbery — male — and retaliation — female. That was when her face began to wear that bright, haggard look. She still carried it to parties on shadowy porticos and summer lawns, like a mask or a flag, with that bafflement and furious repudiation of truth in her eyes. One evening at a party she heard a boy and two girls, all schoolmates, talking. She never accepted another invitation.

She watched the girls with whom she had grown up as they married and got houses and children, but no man ever called on her steadily until the children of the other girls had been calling her "aunty" for several years, the while their mothers told them in bright voices about how popular Minnie had been as a girl. Then the town began to see her driving on Sunday afternoons with the cashier in the bank. He was a widower of about forty — a high-colored man, smelling always faintly of the barbershop or of whiskey. He owned the first automobile in town, a red runabout; Minnie had the first motoring bonnet and veil the town ever saw. Then the town began to say: "Poor Minnie!" "But she is old enough to take care of herself," others said. That was when she first asked her schoolmates that the children call her "cousin" instead of "aunty."

It was twelve years now since she had been relegated into adultery by public opinion, and eight years since the cashier had gone to a Memphis bank, returning for one day each Christmas, which he spent at an annual bachelors' party in a hunting-club on the river. From behind their curtains the neighbors would see him pass, and during the across-the-street Christ-

mas-day visiting they would tell her about him, about how well he looked, and how they heard that he was prospering in the city, watching with bright, secret eyes her haggard, bright face. Usually by that hour there would be the scent of whiskey on her breath. It was supplied her by a youth, a clerk at the soda-fountain: "Sure; I buy it for the old gal. I reckon she's entitled to a little fun."

Her mother kept to her room altogether now; the gaunt aunt ran the house. Against that background Minnie's bright dresses, her idle and empty days, had a quality of furious unreality. She went out in the evenings only with women now, neighbors, to the moving pictures. Each afternoon she dressed in one of the new dresses and went down-town alone, where her young cousins were already strolling in the late afternoons with their delicate, silken heads and thin, awkward arms and conscious hips, clinging to one another or shrieking and giggling with paired boys in the soda-fountain when she passed and went on along the serried stores, in the doors of which sitting and lounging men did not even follow her with their eyes any more.

III

The barber went swiftly up the street where the sparse lights, insect-swirled, glared in rigid and violent suspension in the lifeless air. The day had died in a pall of dust; above the darkened square, shrouded by the spent dust, the sky was clear as the inside of a brass bell. Below the east was a rumor of the twice-waxed moon.

When he overtook them Plunkett and three others were getting into a car parked in an alley. Plunkett stooped his thick head peering out beneath the top. "Changed your mind, did you?" he said. "Damn good thing; by God, to-morrow when this town hears about how you talked to-night — "

"Now, now," the other ex-soldier said. "Hawkshaw's all right. Come on, Hawk; jump in!"

"Will Mayes never done it, boys," the barber said. "If anybody done it. Why, you all know well as I do there ain't any town where they got better niggers than us. And you know how a lady will kind of think things about men when there ain't any reason to, and Miss Minnie anyway — "

"Sure, sure," the soldier said. "We're just going to talk to him a little; that's all."

"Talk hell!" Butch said. "When we're done with the — "

"Shut up, for God's sake!" the soldier said. "Do you want everybody in town — "

"Tell them, by God!" Plunkett said. "Tell every one of the sons that'll let a white woman — "

"Let's go; let's go: here's the other car." The second car slid squealing out of a cloud of dust at the alley-mouth. Plunkett started his car and backed out and took the lead. Dust lay like fog in the street. The street lights hung nimbused as in water. They drove on out of town.

A rutted lane turned at right angles. Dust hung above it too, and above all the land. The dark bulk of the ice-plant, where the negro Mayes was night-watchman, rose against the sky. "Better stop here, hadn't we?" the soldier said. Plunkett did not reply. He hurled the car up and slammed to a stop, the headlights glaring on the blank wall.

"Listen here, boys," the barber said; "if he's here, don't that prove he never done it? Don't it? If it was him, he would run. Don't you see he would?" The second car came up and stopped. Plunkett got down; Butch sprang down beside him. "Listen, boys," the barber said.

"Cut the lights off!" Plunkett said. The breathless darkness rushed down. There was no sound in it save their lungs as they sought air in the parched dust in which for two months they had lived; then the diminishing crunch of Plunkett's and Butch's feet, and a moment later Plunkett's voice:

"Will! . . . Will!"

Below the east the wan hemorrhage of the moon increased. It heaved above the ridge, silvering the air, the dust, so that they seemed to breathe, live, in a bowl of molten lead. There was no sound of night-bird nor insect, no sound save their breathing and a faint ticking of contracting metal about the cars. Where their bodies touched one another they seemed to sweat dryly, for no more moisture came. "Christ!" a voice said; "let's get out of here."

But they didn't move until vague noises began to grow out of the darkness ahead; then they got out and waited tensely in the breathless dark. There was another sound: a blow, a hissing expulsion of breath and Plunkett cursing in undertone. They stood a moment longer, then they ran forward. They ran in a stumbling clump, as though they were fleeing something. "Kill him, kill the son!" a voice whispered. Plunkett flung them back.

"Not here," he said. "Get him into the car." They hauled the negro up. "Kill him, kill the black son!" the voice murmured. They dragged the negro to the car. The barber had waited beside the car. He could feel himself sweating and he knew he was going to be sick at the stomach.

"What is it, captains?" the negro said. "I ain't done nothing. 'Fore God, Mr. John." Some one produced handcuffs. They worked busily about him as though he were a post, quiet, intent, getting in one another's way. He submitted to the handcuffs, looking swiftly and constantly from dim face to face. "Who's here, captains?" he said, leaning to peer into the faces until they could feel his breath and smell his sweaty reek. He spoke a name or two. "What you-all say I done, Mr. John?"

Plunkett jerked the car-door open. "Get in!" he said.

The negro did not move. "What you-all going to do with me, Mr. John? I ain't done nothing. White folks, captains, I ain't done nothing: I swear 'fore God." He called another name.

"Get in!" Plunkett said. He struck the negro. The others expelled their breath in a dry hissing and struck him with random blows, and he whirled and cursed them, and swept his manacled hands across their faces and slashed the barber upon the mouth, and the barber struck him also. "Get

him in there," Plunkett said. They pushed at him. He ceased struggling and got in, and sat quietly as the others took their places. He sat between the barber and the soldier, drawing his limbs in so as not to touch them, his eyes going swiftly and constantly from face to face. Butch clung to the running-board. The car moved on. The barber nursed his mouth in his handkerchief.

"What's the matter, Hawk?" the soldier said.

"Nothing," the barber said. They regained the high road and turned away from town. The second car dropped back out of the dust. They went on, gaining speed; the final fringe of houses dropped behind.

"Goddam, he stinks!" the soldier said.

"We'll fix that," the man in front beside Plunkett said. On the running-board Butch cursed into the hot rush of air. The barber leaned suddenly forward and touched Plunkett's shoulder.

"Let me out, John."

"Jump out, nigger-lover," Plunkett said without turning his head. He drove swiftly. Behind them the sourceless lights of the second car glared in the dust. Presently Plunkett turned into a narrow road. It too was rutted in disuse. It led back to an old brick-kiln — a series of reddish mounds and weed-and-vine-choked vats without bottom. It had been used for pasture once, until one day the owner missed one of his mules. Although he prodded carefully in the vats with a long pole, he could not even find the bottom of them.

"John," the barber said.

"Jump out, then," Plunkett said, hurling the car along the ruts. Beside the barber the negro spoke:

"Mr. Henry."

The barber sat forward. The narrow tunnel of the road rushed up and past. Their motion was like an extinct furnace blast: cooler, but utterly dead. The car bounded from rut to rut.

"Mr. Henry," the negro said.

The barber began to tug furiously at the door. "Look out, there!" the soldier said, but he had already kicked the door open and swung onto the running-board. The soldier leaned across the negro and grasped at him, but he had already jumped. The car went on without checking speed.

The impetus hurled him crashing, through dust-sheathed weeds, into the ditch. Dust puffed about him, and in a thin, vicious crackling of sapless stems he lay choking and retching until the second car passed and died away. Then he rose and limped on until he reached the high road and turned toward town, brushing at his clothes with his hands. The moon was higher, riding high and clear of the dust at last, and after a while the town began to glare beneath the dust. He went on, limping. Presently he heard the cars and the glow of them grew in the dust behind him and he left the road and crouched again in the weeds until they passed. Plunkett's car came last now. There were four people in it and Butch was not on the running-board.

They went on; the dust swallowed them; the glare and the sound died away. The dust of them hung for a while, but soon the eternal dust absorbed it again. The barber climbed back onto the road and limped on toward town.

IV

As she dressed after supper, on that Saturday evening, her own flesh felt like fever. Her hands trembled among the hooks and eyes, and her eyes had a feverish look, and her hair swirled crisp and crackling under the comb. While she was still dressing, the friends called for her and sat while she donned her sheerest underthings and stockings and a new voile dress. "Do you feel strong enough to go out?" they said, their eyes bright too, with a dark glitter. "When you have had time to get over the shock, you must tell us what happened. What he said and did; everything."

In the leafed darkness, as they walked toward the square, she began to breathe deeply, something like a swimmer preparing to dive, until she ceased trembling, the four of them walking slowly because of the terrible heat and out of solicitude for her. But as they neared the square she began to tremble again, walking with her head up, her hands clinched at her sides, their voices about her murmurous, also with that feverish, glittering quality of their eyes.

They entered the square, she in the centre of the group, fragile in her fresh dress. She was trembling worse. She walked slower and slower, as children eat ice-cream, her head up and her eyes bright in the haggard banner of her face, passing the hotel and the coatless drummers in chairs along the curb looking around at her: "That's the one: see? The one in pink in the middle." "Is that her? What did they do with the nigger? Did they — ?" "Sure. He's all right." "All right, is he?" "Sure. He went on a little trip." Then the drug-store, where even the young men lounging in the doorway tipped their hats and followed with their eyes the motion of her hips and legs when she passed.

They went on, passing the lifted hats of the gentlemen, the suddenly ceased voices, protective, deferent. "Do you see?" the friends said. Their voices sounded like long hovering sighs of hissing exultation. "There's not a negro on the square. Not one."

They reached the picture-show. It was like a miniature fairyland with its lighted lobby and colored lithographs of life caught in its terrible and beautiful mutations. Her lips began to tingle. In the dark, when the picture began, it would be all right; she could hold back the laughing so it would not waste away so fast and so soon. So she hurried on before the turning faces, the undertones of low astonishment, and they took their accustomed places where she could see the aisle against the silver glare and the young men and girls coming in two and two against it.

The lights flicked away; the screen glowed silver, and soon life began to unfold, beautiful and passionate and sad, while still the young men and

silhouette delicate and sleek, their slim, quick bodies awkward, divinely young, while beyond them the silver dream accumulated, inevitably on and on. She began to laugh. In trying to suppress it, it made more noise than ever; heads began to turn. Still laughing, her friends raised her and led her out, and she stood at the curb, laughing on a high, sustained note, until the taxi came up and they helped her in.

They removed the pink voile and the sheer underthings, and the stockings, and put her to bed, and cracked ice for her temples, and sent for the doctor. He was hard to locate, so they ministered to her with hushed ejaculations, renewing the ice and fanning her. While the ice was fresh and cold she stopped laughing and lay still for a time, moaning only a little. But soon the laughing welled again and her voice rose screaming.

"Shhhhhhhhhhh! Shhhhhhhhhhh!" they said, freshening the ice-pack, smoothing her hair, examining it for gray; "poor girl!" Then to one another: "Do you suppose anything really happened?" their eyes darkly aglitter, secret and passionate. "Shhhhhhhhhhh! Poor girl! Poor Minnie!"

v

It was midnight when Plunkett drove up to his neat new house. It was trim and fresh as a bird-cage and almost as small, with its clean green-and-white paint. He locked the car and mounted the porch and entered. His wife rose from a chair beside the reading-lamp. Plunkett stopped in the floor and stared at her until she looked down.

"Look at that clock!" he said, lifting his arm, pointing. She stood before him, her face lowered, a magazine in her hands. Her face was pale, strained and weary-looking. "Haven't I told you about sitting up like this, waiting to see when I come in?"

"John!" she said. She laid the magazine down. Poised on the balls of his feet, he glared at her with his hot eyes, his sweating face.

"Didn't I tell you?" He went toward her. She looked up then. He caught her shoulder. She stood passive, looking at him.

"Don't, John. I couldn't sleep. . . . The heat; something. Please, John. You're hurting me."

"Didn't I tell you?" He released her and half struck, half flung her across the chair, and she lay there and watched him quietly as he left the room.

He went on through the house, ripping off his shirt, and on the dark, screened porch at the rear he stood and mopped his head and shoulders with the shirt and flung it away. He took the pistol from his hip and laid it on the table beside the bed, and sat on the bed and removed his shoes, and rose and slipped his trousers off. He was sweating again already, and he stooped and hunted furiously for the shirt. At last he found it and wiped his body again, and, with his body pressed against the dusty screen, he stood panting. There was no movement, no sound, not even an insect. The dark world seemed to lie stricken beneath the cold moon and the lidless stars.

Do not confuse what things "really" are with our names for them. This is both a precept of simple common sense and a truth with deep philosophical implications. Saxe's six blind men show how we all limit our conception of realities we take hold of, and Gibson's umpire is a seventh blind man whose decision we gladly take in a game-world that is a welcome escape from the real world where, we uneasily realize, we cannot let any one blind man decree our interpretations.

The Blind Men and the Elephant

John Godfrey Saxe • 1816–1887

It was six men of Indostan,
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the elephant,
(Though all of them were blind,)
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The first approached the elephant,
And, happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the elephant
Is very like a wall!"

The second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried: "Ho! what have we here,
So very round, and smooth, and sharp?
To me 'tis very clear,
This wonder of an elephant
Is very like a spear!"

The third approached the animal,
And, happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up he spake:
"I see," quoth he, "the elephant
Is very like a snake!"

The fourth reached out his eager hand,
And felt about the knee;

"What most this wondrous beast is like,
  Is very plain," quoth he;
"'Tis clear enough the elephant
  Is very like a tree!"

The fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
  Said: "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most:
  Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an elephant
  Is very like a fan!"

The sixth no sooner had begun
  About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
  That fell within his scope,
"I see," quoth he, "the elephant
  Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan
  Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
  Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
  And all were in the wrong!

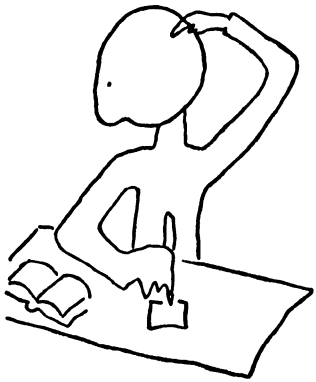
The Umpire

Walker Gibson • 1919–

EVERYONE knows he's blind as a bat.
Besides, it's tricky to decide,
As ball meets mitt with a loud splat,
Whether it curved an inch outside
Or just an inch the other way
For a called strike. But anyway,
Nobody thinks that just because
Instead he calls that close one Ball,
That that was what it really *was.*
(The pitcher doesn't agree at all.)

From *New Poems by American Poets,* edited by Rolfe Humphries. Copyright, 1953, by Ballantine Books, Inc.

His eyes are weak, his vision's blurred,
He can't tell a strike from a barn door —
And yet we have to take his word:
The pitch that was something else before
(And that's the mystery no one knows)
Has gotten to be a ball by now,
Or got to be called ball, anyhow.
All this explains why, I suppose,
People like to watch baseball games,
Where Things are not confused with Names.



"I always thought it was 1492, but the book says . . ."

God and Man in the Universities

Northwestern University Reviewing Stand • 1952

Having observed a variety of processes of thought in a series of essays, stories, and poems, we present an extended discussion wherein may be found several varieties of mental activity. The subject, too, as well as the strategies of argument, is of special importance in your thought, not merely because it deals with university life, but because it deals with the basic concept of intellectual freedom.

A radio discussion over WGN and the Mutual Broadcasting System, by William F. Buckley, Jr., author of *God and Man at Yale,* Curtis D. MacDougall, Professor of Journalism, Northwestern University, and Rockwell C. Smith, Garrett Biblical Institute; Moderator: James H. McBurney, Dean, the School of Speech, Northwestern University.

MR. MCBURNEY: In his book "God and Man at Yale," as I understand it, Mr. Buckley argues that the impact of the educational program at Yale University specifically, and most likely, I think he suggests, in the major colleges throughout the country, is agnostic as to religion, that is to say

Reprinted by permission from the *Northwestern University Reviewing Stand,* vol. 17 no. 21, January 20, 1952.

anti-Christian, and collectivist as to social and economic philosophy, considerably left of center and hostile to the free enterprise system. Moreover, he objects to the kind of academic freedom which fosters these doctrines. Now, Mr. Buckley's book is specifically about Yale University from which he was recently graduated. In our discussion here today, we are no more concerned with Yale than any other college or university. I think we ought to begin with Mr. Buckley's position.

MR. BUCKLEY: Thank you, Mr. McBurney. To begin with, you've got me wrong already. I don't object to the kind of academic freedom which fosters the doctrines of atheism and socialism. I object to academic freedom — as it is understood today — altogether. I should object to it just as much if it were used to obstruct the educational overseers of a college, dedicated to furthering secularism and socialism, from dismissing from the faculty advocates of Christianity and freedom.

Now you understand, I consider the educational overseers of the school to be the parents, the alumni, and the supporters of that school. The case I have made in talking specifically about Yale University can of course, be applied to any other private educational institution. I wrote in my book, which is incidentally subtitled the "superstitions of academic freedom," that the net impact of Yale education is agnostic and atheist. I go on from there to say that if this is what the educational overseers of Yale want, then everything is as it should be. But if it's not what they want, they've got a duty to do something about it, and the totalitarian instrument of "academic freedom" ought not to be allowed to stand in their way.

You've no doubt guessed — and you must certainly know it if you have read my book — that I consider values to be an important part of education. Much of education is concerned with the relaying and the absorption of factual data; but certainly of equal importance are the ideals, the values that are infused into those factual data to make education meaningful.

Now we are face to face today with many competing ideals. There is of course the battle between religion and skepticism. Also we see the battle of freedom versus totalitarianism being waged in most of the countries of the world. Every moral man has got to commit himself on these issues. And every moral man, if he believes he has perceived the truth, is logically committed to the proposition that competing doctrines are in error. In other words, if I believe Christianity to be true, I necessarily believe agnosticism to be false. In the circumstances, for me to support a university that tries to convince its pupils — perhaps even my own son among them — that it is the other way around, then it is for me to act as an inexcusably immoral human being. It is tantamount to a Democrat's giving funds to the Communist Party. It is really worse than this, because the future of our country, and our civilization, as a matter of fact, is being determined, as always, much more by education than by politics. National policy is nothing more than a reflection of education. Therefore, I repeat, for a moral man to support an educational institution which advances values he considers to

be false is the worst, the most supine and humiliating sort of treachery to one's ideals and responsibilities. This is happening every day because of the superstitions of academic freedom.

MR. MCBURNEY: Now, may I ask you one question before we go on: Are you limiting your case to private education?

MR. BUCKLEY: No, not necessarily. I am definitely not limiting my case.

MR. MCBURNEY: What is your reaction to Mr. Buckley's position, Mr. Smith?

MR. SMITH: First of all, I find myself very sympathetic to Mr. Buckley, both in the earnestness with which he pushes his case and also in his insistence that a moral man has an obligation to take part in the significant issues and their decision in our lives today. My point of difference with Mr. Buckley is in my attitude toward, and my feeling for what is religion. It seems to me, Mr. Buckley is confusing theology and religion. He has more faith in theology than faith in God. I believe in a God who has power to work in the lives of men, a God who has made men free and expects them to use their freedom in reaching decisions and in making commitments for good or ill forever. If God has made men free, then it seems to me to take that freedom away and declare in favor of any system of indoctrination in any educational institution is a very wrong and immoral thing.

MR. MCBURNEY: You suggest Mr. Buckley's position would deny that freedom?

MR. SMITH: It seems to me academic freedom stands or falls on the freedom of the individual to have all points of view presented to him and to reach his own creative and personal decision.

MR. MCBURNEY: Where do you stand, Mr. MacDougall?

MR. MACDOUGALL: I agree with Mr. Buckley that what is taught in the university should be the concern of the parents and of the alumni. Beyond that, it should be the concern of everybody, not only Yale alumni, because all persons are affected by Yale graduates and the graduates of any other school. There is great danger, however, in the use of these terms "collectivism" and "agnosticism," and so forth. In doing so you may confuse differences of opinion regarding *means* rather than *ends*. Mr. Buckley might say, "this is collectivism," and for somebody else it might be a proposal to open and increase the degree of individualism. I don't think any university can arrogate to itself the belief that it has determined for all times what is truth, and I think it would be greatly dangerous and detrimental to the democratic process if every university taught its own brand of truth to the exclusion of all others. The university is a clearing house of different points of view. New ideas have been experimented with and have grown out of the university. It is the place where we teach young men and women who are going to be the future voters and citizens to investigate and to evaluate different points of view so they can make decisions guiding them throughout the rest of their lives.

MR. MCBURNEY: In one way or another as I follow the discussion, Buckley,

the three basic assumptions in your book have been questioned here, some of the assumptions you make about the nature of religion, the role of the individual in society, and the functions of the university. Now, to give some order to this discussion, let's take up those assumptions. First, this matter of religion. You heard Mr. Smith's point of view on that. What do you say to him?

MR. BUCKLEY: I say it is impertinent to the discussion, much as some of what Mr. MacDougall has said is impertinent to the discussion. I am not going to let my case stand or fall on a definition with which you might agree or disagree. When I talk about Christianity, I use the definition of the World Council of Churches, and the definition of Webster in his dictionary, but I don't care if you don't accept it. I don't care if the alumni don't accept it. . . .

MR. MCBURNEY: You really do care!

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, not theoretically. Naturally, I care. I would like everybody in the world to agree with me. What I am talking about, all I am driving at, is to say: Take whatever definition of religion suits the alumni of the private educational institution and let them keep those definitions in mind and decide what value they want to give, for example, to religion in the colleges or to individualism. Now, going on from there, I would say that the transcendent duty of the university, which is true as Mr. MacDougall puts it, is to teach young men, but it is to teach young men to act in the right direction. Who is going to decide the right direction? I say the people who are responsible for that university, acting as self-sufficient, educated and dedicated human beings — they want to do their best and should do it.

MR. MCBURNEY: If I understand Mr. Smith, he is saying there is a concept of religion which would be denied by the kind of university you would create.

MR. BUCKLEY: Certainly! Certainly! I never made any claim to the contrary, nor am I ambitious to ascribe to religion with exactly the same meaning Dr. Smith does.

MR. SMITH: It would seem to me we don't necessarily have to agree on our definition of religion, although we have very profound differences there.

MR. BUCKLEY: Right!

MR. SMITH: It seems to me we do have to ask ourselves what is the best way of commending whatever our religion is to other people. You say indoctrination is the best way of commending religion. I say no, on the contrary, the *free* acceptance of religion and the commitment of a man's will to certain values are the best way of making him religious.

MR. BUCKLEY: I agree with you, and to that end I would have professors of the university urge the man to accept as a result of his free will those religious values that he himself believes in. When you teach, Dr. Smith, there is no possible way for you to force your truths, your values down the throats of your students, but you try to bring them around. You try to

bring them around to a conscionable and exhaustive and earnest acceptance of what you have to say because that is your duty as a moral man. Much as you try to convince me today.

MR. SMITH: I feel that is true, but at the same time, I do that in a framework in which other people have a chance to commend certain other values to them. I feel I do a better job when I throw my point of view up against a conflicting point of view rather than arguing in a vacuum. That is why I believe in the freedom of the university.

MR. BUCKLEY: And in subsidizing error. You also believe in that, I presume?

MR. SMITH: I certainly do.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, I don't.

MR. MACDOUGALL: After a person graduates from a university, he is going to come in contact with all other different points of view. The essence of a democracy is that all men shall be tolerant and be able to get along with each other in the solution of problems. If you do not expose these people as undergraduates to these different points of view, let them study them and think them through themselves, are you adequately preparing them for their future role as citizens in a democracy?

MR. BUCKLEY: I want to expose them, Dr. MacDougall.

MR. MACDOUGALL: You want to expose them for the sake of debunking or breaking them down. "These are the different points of view, only this one is correct. We have predetermined that by some vote of the alumni."

MR. BUCKLEY: No, "it is correct according to me." If I were the faculty member, it is correct according to me. The only reason I am there is that my values happen to tally with those of the educational overseers. There is no reason why I should breed credulity in the student. If I were teaching freedom, for example, "Here is Hitler, here is Stalin, here are the great dictators from Alexander the Great to Mussolini, and herein I believe they erred," and I would go into an exhaustive scholarly examination of what I consider the error, the basic falsehood behind tyranny. I can't understand why you would have objection to an approach of this sort nor why I would necessarily breed credulous democrats.

MR. MACDOUGALL: You recognize, don't you, throughout history a great deal of error has been taught and not recognized as such?

MR. BUCKLEY: That is right.

MR. MACDOUGALL: How would that ever be corrected under the close-minded system such as you have if the new idea could not be presented in the universities, talked about and ultimately discarded? What would you do with a student who became skeptical of your brand of truth? Would you expel him from the university?

MR. BUCKLEY: No, definitely not. You can lead a horse to water, et cetera. I would not expel him.

MR. MCBURNEY: You would expel the professor?

MR. BUCKLEY: Absolutely!

MR. MACDOUGALL: How would you avoid a segmented society — Yale men

are going to have to get along with Harvard men and all other men when they get out — if you've got everybody there with a bigoted framework of ideas? He has been taught the truth, *period!* Other people have been taught the truth, *period!* Isn't that going to make for conflict, intolerance, prejudice, confusion?

MR. BUCKLEY: Of course it will.

MR. MACDOUGALL: And the obstruction of democratic principles?

MR. BUCKLEY: On the contrary, the dynamism of democracy has to do with the clashing of ideas in the political arena. After you graduate from college, and since I believe in freedom, Dr. MacDougall, there is no reason in the world why you can't found your socialist university or your atheistic university, and the students that graduate from mine come out and buck yours. I've got absolutely no objection to it. I believe in intolerance towards error as one sees it, intolerance of tyranny, and shall always believe in the intolerance of tyranny, and if this makes me bigoted then I have no objection to that.

MR. MACDOUGALL: Don't you question your ability to determine what is error?

MR. BUCKLEY: I never say I have the absolute answer. I've got the best answer I know how to arrive at as a moral, reflective human being, as you do.

MR. SMITH: A while ago, Mr. Buckley said that I was in favor of subsidizing error and I said I was. I want to explain in what sense I mean that. I believe in subsidizing error because it seems to me that God in creation subsidized error. He made men free and to be free means to be wrong as well as to be right. It seems to me that if basic to the structure of the universe there is this possibility of error in men who are to enter and conflict, as Mr. Buckley says they are when they get out into the democratic arena of life, our colleges shouldn't be alien to the society of which they are a part. A university shouldn't safeguard people from error which they will later meet in life. If it is to make autonomous, if it is to make free, if it is to make responsible citizens, it has to confront them in their formative days with the conflicts with which they will later deal. That is why I believe in subsidizing error as Mr. Buckley puts it, through academic freedom.

MR. MACDOUGALL: I believe a century and a half ago, Thomas Jefferson expressed the point of view which both Smith and I hold, to alumni, and to prospective members of the faculty of the University of Virginia: "This institution will be based on the illimitable freedom of the human mind for here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor tolerate error so long as reason is left free to combat it." The danger of Buckley's position is that it will contribute to the present hysteria and orthodoxy and reaction which already is bringing tremendous pressure upon teachers in the public school system and the universities throughout the entire United States. If new ideas considered dangerous and unorthodox are allowed to develop, a hundred years from now they may be orthodox themselves.

MR. BUCKLEY: I've got no objection to disagreeing with Thomas Jefferson. He wrote something like fifty-seven or eight books, and I think it would be extraordinarily unusual if I were to agree with everything he said or if you were to agree with everything he said. Dr. Smith is putting me on the opposite side from God. I would remind Dr. Smith, Jesus Christ gave this injunction to His disciples, "Go ye out to the peoples of the world and teach them the ways of the Lord." Now, this is precisely what I want to do at the most efficacious level of teaching, which is the classroom.

MR. MACDOUGALL: There may not be disagreement as to what is the word of God. Let's talk on some specific issues, if you don't mind, Mr. McBurney. Suppose you confront your students in the classroom with some of the problems which exist today, the problem of inadequate housing for millions of people, inadequate health facilities, inadequate education, and you discuss the different approaches, the different suggestions on how to meet these problems. As I understand it, you use the word "collectivism" almost synonymously with all kinds of government activity and would discharge a professor who gave a favorable presentation of public housing proposals. That professor might believe that he was acting absolutely in accordance with that principle you have just quoted, the principle of Christianity, of improving the lot, the dignity, and the human values of the individual.

MR. BUCKLEY: I have no doubt he would.

MR. MACDOUGALL: You are confusing ends with means. . . .

MR. BUCKLEY: On the contrary.

MR. MACDOUGALL: You are questioning the motives of that man because he has a different way in which he wants to put that Christian principle into actual practice.

MR. BUCKLEY: When did I question his motives? There are enough things you can criticize me for without criticizing . . .

MR. MACDOUGALL: You wouldn't want him on the faculty.

MR. BUCKLEY: No, but I am not criticizing his motives. He is a sincere man like I think and hope you are.

MR. MACDOUGALL: But you probably would label him unchristian or collectivist.

MR. BUCKLEY: Collectivist, sure. That is not necessarily an anathema.

MR. SMITH: Anti-Christian?

MR. BUCKLEY: That is something else and a different discussion. To a certain extent I believe it is. I would fire this fellow if on the basis of advocating public housing you were able to generalize on his whole attitude toward our economic structure and toward our social organization. If, to use your word he arrogated to the state the duty of welfarism, or providing for the individual, I would definitely fire him as advocating a philosophy which in my opinion again, can only lead us to tyranny.

MR. MACDOUGALL: This man sees these hundreds of thousands, these millions of people who don't have adequate housing, he sees that as a cancer which spreads, which affects him, which affects you and affects me, and so

we consider what are we going to do about it. If we say, as a part of the program — some would say as all of the program — there should be some activity by government, just because it is by government you would call him a collectivist and you wouldn't want him in that institution.

MR. BUCKLEY: Very definitely.

MR. MACDOUGALL: And you would have him go teach somewhere else, and those already believing in public housing can go there and have their beliefs fortified, and they can protect themselves against any ideas which would shake their faith in public housing.

MR. MCBURNEY: Let me follow MacDougall's line of reasoning here a bit. Would you admit this man's book in your classroom, this teacher he has been describing?

MR. BUCKLEY: Most certainly I would. I can't conceive an educated human being who hasn't canvassed the alternatives, but they ought to be canvassed under guidance.

MR. MCBURNEY: You wouldn't admit the man to support his doctrine?

MR. BUCKLEY: Certainly not. I cannot conscionably subsidize error in this way. I cannot conscionably expose students whose education I am charged with to doctrines whose notions I believe if implemented would ultimately lead to the destruction of our freedom.

MR. MCBURNEY: Do you think his position would get a fair hearing at your hands?

MR. BUCKLEY: It would at mine, sure.

MR. MCBURNEY: You don't think it is necessary then to have a representative with that point of view to express it?

MR. BUCKLEY: Certainly not any more than I would have a Communist on the faculty to preach the word of Stalin.

MR. MCBURNEY: Is it possible for a collectivist on a faculty to teach *objectively* without any attempted indoctrination at all?

MR. BUCKLEY: Certainly, factual knowledge, yes, but not values. As I mentioned in my introduction, values are an important and indispensable part of education — we ought to treat them both.

MR. MCBURNEY: You want preachers on the faculty who are working for their points of view and for their values?

MR. BUCKLEY: And also educators in the sense there is no reason why they shouldn't be the most profound scholars in the world. Take Professor Frederick von Hayek here at the University of Chicago, value-wise he is a devoted individualist, but I have no reason to believe he is inadequate as a teacher of the basic truths of economics either, have you?

MR. MCBURNEY: No, not at all.

MR. MACDOUGALL: I quoted from Thomas Jefferson a moment ago and now I would like to quote a president of a contemporary university, and ask Mr. Buckley what he would do with this man. This is what he wrote in inviting people to participate in the 200th anniversary of his institution. "In considering what would be the most appropriate theme for Columbia to emphasize in its celebration, the trustees, aided by a committee repre-

senting the faculties, students, and alumni have agreed that there is one principle which all free universities unfailingly must defend. This is the ideal of full freedom of scholarly inquiry and expression, the right of mankind to knowledge and the free use thereof. For many centuries, the civilized world has held that this privilege is essential to human liberty, welfare, and progress. Unhappily, it is now being subjected to serious and systematic attack in many lands." That was authored by Dwight D. Eisenhower, President of Columbia University. Would you fire him?

MR. BUCKLEY: That does not awe me, your mentioning it was Dwight D. Eisenhower. I would fire him as he is not equipped scholastically to teach anything.

MR. MCBURNEY: That is irrelevant, isn't it?

MR. BUCKLEY: That is irrelevant. Mr. Eisenhower mentioned something of which you are aware in my book. I definitely believe in full freedom for research. I believe the function of research and the function of teaching are not inextricably interwoven. I would differentiate . . .

MR. MACDOUGALL: How are you going to develop the scholars capable of this research?

MR. BUCKLEY: How? Precisely by the means I am talking about.

MR. MACDOUGALL: By indoctrination that black and white are white and there is a dichotomy between truth and error?

MR. BUCKLEY: There definitely is a dichotomy!

MR. MACDOUGALL: How do you know there is?

MR. BUCKLEY: There are different ideas in every field.

MR. MACDOUGALL: How do you know this is the correct one?

MR. BUCKLEY: Is there any reason why this man shouldn't be aware of the fact other people disagree with me? I'll tell him. There is a fellow, Dr. MacDougall in Chicago who disagrees with me fundamentally. This is his background and this is what he's got to say. Everybody does it every day in his classroom. Hayek does it at Chicago. Does that breed a credulous individualist?

MR. MACDOUGALL: You mentioned me only for the purpose of rebuttal. You wouldn't invite me to your class.

MR. BUCKLEY: No. I mentioned you for the purpose of enlightening them to your fallacies.

MR. MCBURNEY: You would admit agnostics and collectivists as research workers?

MR. BUCKLEY: Right, subject to whether the alumni would be willing to support them.

MR. MCBURNEY: You wouldn't have any fear that their insidious doctrines would enter into their research one way or another? They could keep their value judgments out of their research?

MR. BUCKLEY: I have a fear, it is not insidious, I have a fear there is no such thing ultimately as complete objectivity. Everybody brings to everything he does his values, you and I and everybody.

MR. MCDOUGALL: After this research was completed, this iconoclastic re-

search, you would disseminate it among the alumni of the school, and ask them to take a vote whether they will now allow the professors to mention this in the classroom?

MR. BUCKLEY: Utimately, they would. I can give you an example you could floor me on. For example, suppose it were unearthed that Jesus Christ was an extraordinary fraud from beginning to end, just a fable, and if enough evidence could be adduced to make beyond a question of a doubt that our values had been previously founded on inadequate research analysis, then I would expect us to face up to it, an article in a scholarly journal and that would be enough. It was just published a few days ago that Jan Masaryk was killed instead of committing suicide. The whole world knows it and it becomes as of that time a matter of error to teach that Masaryk committed suicide.

MR. MCBURNEY: There is a second whole area of discussion we have got into not at all here today. In the book, Mr. Buckley, you make the case that at Yale, at least, the faculty is loaded with agnostics and collectivists. Do you honestly think that is typical of colleges and universities generally?

MR. BUCKLEY: I don't know. My guess is yes, judged from the direction in which our country is headed: You can generalize on what is being taught by what direction we are moving in national politics and national morality.

MR. MACDOUGALL: I think that is a great compliment to us as educators.

MR. BUCKLEY: You deserve it.

MR. MACDOUGALL: Unfortunately, I don't think it is true and I don't think your basic assumption is true either. My experience with several universities is that college faculties, particularly those in the field you are most concerned with, are a pretty conservative lot. If they are not conservative, they are scared stiff about saying anything that is anything but conservative.

MR. BUCKLEY: They haven't been scared by me!

MR. MACDOUGALL: Not yet.

MR. SMITH: One of the things I am concerned with is this: to me, a university is ultimately a part of our culture, an organ and instrument, not of its trustees or students or alumni or faculty, but of general society. Our society as a whole makes the universities possible, and they in turn serve by passing on its tradition and wisdom, developing its leaders and criticizing its trends and movements, and in the most ultimate terms they can do this only when their students and faculties are free persons. When a university ceases to be free, it ceases to be useful to a democracy.

MR. MCBURNEY: That is the essence of this discussion as I see it.

MR. BUCKLEY: It may be the essence of his point of view, Mr. McBurney, but it is not the essence of mine. I believe it is perfectly true that the universities are a reflection of our culture, but I also believe in self-determinism, in freedom in shaping and fashioning our own destiny to the extent of saying we don't like parts of our culture, we ought to try to change them. And where do you go for efficacious action of this sort? To the classroom.

MR. MCBURNEY: Would this be a dangerous extension of your doctrine? If you had your way, you would deny a position in any group to a man who disagrees with you.

MR. BUCKLEY: It would be a very dangerous extension. I would never realize a police force to do anything.

MR. MCBURNEY: You would virtually use a police force in the university.

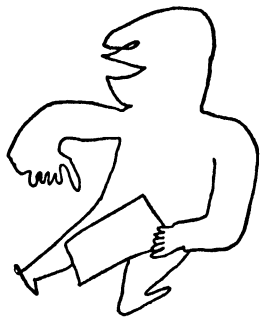
MR. BUCKLEY: To the same extent you would use a police force to remove somebody from your house if he was an unwelcome guest and refused to go.

MR. MCBURNEY: You would remove from your house any member of the family who promulgated doctrines that were inconsistent with yours?

MR. BUCKLEY: No, I wouldn't. I would have some sort of a transcendent loyalty and I would always hope to bring them around, but I am not going to be in that sort of contact with my teachers. . . .

ANNOUNCER: I am sorry to interrupt but our time is up.

Part Five



"Listen to the way this theme ends."

THE WAYS OF LANGUAGE

ALL THROUGH this book you have been more or less conscious of language problems, of the purpose and structure of language, and of the great variety of ways in which it can be used. Now, openly and analytically, your attention is directed to problems of diction, of style, of normality and eccentricity in language, of the difference between the fresh and the threadbare. Beyond this, you will see that a person's language is as much a part of him as the color of his eyes or the shape of his nose, and that others cannot help judging him by it, just as they judge him by his smile, his manners, and his personality. Language is the mirror of the mind, and indeed of the whole man.

Language is thus not a thing which exists by and for itself, immutable and inflexible. Rather, it is both our instrument and our reflection, and it changes as we change, reflecting our values and our aspirations, our failures and our triumphs. Indeed, you will quickly see that there is not just "language," but that there are "languages" — formal and informal, normal and dialectical, proper and improper, fresh and hackneyed. The language of emotion is different from the language of ordered thought. Every trade

and profession has its own vocabulary, from selling newspapers to nuclear physics. We cannot be thoroughly conversant with all of these, nor need we be. But we should be sensitive to the major "levels" of our speech, and we should have at our command the words we need in situations of varying formality. Language is, then, in the broadest sense, social. As our principal means of communicating with one another, it is the bond which holds human society together and allows it to function.

What you learn about language and its uses is not "English" as such. It is a knowledge which is basic to all your activities, daily and professional. Whether you become a mechanical engineer or an economist, a philologist or a priest, a teacher or a tax expert, your consciousness of language and your skill in handling it will largely determine your success. All that you have learned in the first four sections of this book will be joined together in this one. If you bring these things effectively together, you are on the road to a promising future.



"It's language, after all, that makes us human."

The Social Functions of Language

Edward Sapir • 1884–1939

In this section of his brilliant, brief article on the nature and functions of language, Edward Sapir, one of the most acute students of the subject, points out that beyond its communicative function, language has various social functions which are not merely concerned with transmitting messages in the ways we are ordinarily conscious of. Involved in this discussion are some profound philosophical principles concerning the nature of language.

IT IS DIFFICULT to see adequately the functions of language, because it is so deeply rooted in the whole of human behavior that it may be suspected that there is little in the functional side of our conscious behavior in which language does not play its part. The primary function of language is generally said to be communication. There can be no quarrel with this so long as it is distinctly understood that there may be effective communication without overt speech and that language is highly relevant to situations which are not obviously of a communicative sort. To say that thought,

From Edward Sapir, "Language," *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1933), IX, 159–161. Copyright, 1930, by The Macmillan Company and used with the publisher's permission.

which is hardly possible in any sustained sense without the symbolic organization brought by language, is that form of communication in which the speaker and the person addressed are identified in one person is not far from begging the question. The autistic speech of children seems to show that the purely communicative aspect of language has been exaggerated. It is best to admit that language is primarily a vocal actualization of the tendency to see realities symbolically, that it is precisely this quality which renders it a fit instrument for communication and that it is in the actual give and take of social intercourse that it has been complicated and refined into the form in which it is known today. Besides the very general function which language fulfills in the spheres of thought, communication, and expression which are implicit in its very nature, there may be pointed out a number of special derivatives of these which are of particular interest to students of society.

Language is a great force of socialization, probably the greatest that exists. By this is meant not merely the obvious fact that significant social intercourse is hardly possible without language but that the mere fact of a common speech serves as a peculiarly potent symbol of the social solidarity of those who speak the language. The psychological significance of this goes far beyond the association of particular languages with nationalities, political entities, or smaller local groups. In between the recognized dialect or language as a whole and the individualized speech of a given individual lies a kind of linguistic unit which is not often discussed by the linguist but which is of the greatest importance to social psychology. This is the subform of a language which is current among a group of people who are held together by ties of common interest. Such a group may be a family, the undergraduates of a college, a labor union, the underworld in a large city, the members of a club, a group of four or five friends who hold together through life in spite of differences of professional interest, and untold thousands of other kinds of groups. Each of these tends to develop peculiarities of speech which have the symbolic function of somehow distinguishing the group from the larger group into which its members might be too completely absorbed. The complete absence of linguistic indices of such small groups is obscurely felt as a defect or sign of emotional poverty. Within the confines of a particular family, for instance, the name "Georgy," having once been mispronounced "Doody" in childhood, may take on the latter form forever after; and this unofficial pronunciation of a familiar name as applied to a particular person becomes a very important symbol indeed of the solidarity of a particular family and of the continuance of the sentiment that keeps its members together. A stranger cannot lightly take on the privilege of saying "Doody" if the members of the family feel that he is not entitled to go beyond the degree of familiarity symbolized by the use of "Georgy" or "George." Again, no one is entitled to say "trig" or "math" who has not gone through such familiar and painful experience as a high school or undergraduate student. The use of such

words at once declares the speaker a member of an unorganized but psychologically real group. A self-made mathematician has hardly the right to use the word "math" in referring to his own interests because the student overtones of the word do not properly apply to him. The extraordinary importance of minute linguistic differences for the symbolization of psychologically real as contrasted with politically or sociologically official groups is intuitively felt by most people. "He talks like us" is equivalent to saying "He is one of us."

There is another important sense in which language is a socializer beyond its literal use as a means of communication. This is in the establishment of rapport between the members of a physical group, such as a house party. It is not what is said that matters so much as that something is said. Particularly where cultural understandings of an intimate sort are somewhat lacking among the members of a physical group it is felt to be important that the lack be made good by a constant supply of small talk. This caressing or reassuring quality of speech in general, even where no one has anything of moment to communicate, reminds us how much more language is than a mere technique of communication. Nothing better shows how completely the life of man as an animal made over by culture is dominated by the verbal substitutes for the physical world.

The use of language in cultural accumulation and historical transmission is obvious and important. This applies not only to sophisticated levels but to primitive ones as well. A great deal of the cultural stock in trade of a primitive society is presented in a more or less well defined linguistic form. Proverbs, medicine formulae, standardized prayers, folk tales, standardized speeches, song texts, genealogies are some of the more overt forms which language takes as a culture-preserving instrument. The pragmatic ideal of education, which aims to reduce the influence of standardized lore to a minimum and to get the individual to educate himself through as direct a contact as possible with the realities of his environment, is certainly not realized among the primitives, who are often as word-bound as the humanistic tradition itself. Few cultures perhaps have gone to the length of the classical Chinese culture or of the rabbinical Jewish culture in making the word do duty for the thing or the personal experience as the ultimate unit of reality. Modern civilization as a whole, with its schools, its libraries, and its endless stores of knowledge, opinion, and sentiment stored up in verbalized form, would be unthinkable without language made eternal as document. On the whole, we probably tend to exaggerate the differences between "high" and "low" cultures or saturated and emergent cultures in the matter of traditionally conserved verbal authority. The enormous differences that seem to exist are rather differences in the outward form and content of the cultures themselves than in the psychological relation which obtains between the individual and his culture.

In spite of the fact that language acts as a socializing and uniformizing force, it is at the same time the most potent single known factor for the

growth of individuality. The fundamental quality of one's voice, the phonetic patterns of speech, the speed and relative smoothness of articulation, the length and build of the sentences, the character and range of the vocabulary, the scholastic consistency of the words used, the readiness with which words respond to the requirements of the social environment, in particular the suitability of one's language to the language habits of the persons addressed — all these are so many complex indicators of the personality. "Actions speak louder than words" may be an excellent maxim from the pragmatic point of view but betrays little insight into the nature of speech. The language habits of people are by no means irrelevant as unconscious indicators of the more important traits of their personalities, and the folk is psychologically wiser than the adage in paying a great deal of attention, willingly or not, to the psychological significance of a man's language. The normal person is never convinced by the mere content of speech but is very sensitive to many of the implications of language behavior, however feebly (if at all) these may have been consciously analyzed. All in all, it is not too much to say that one of the really important functions of language is to be constantly declaring to society the psychological place held by all of its members.

Besides this more general type of personality expression or fulfillment there is to be kept in mind the important role which language plays as a substitutive means of expression for those individuals who have a greater than normal difficulty in adjusting to the environment in terms of primary action patterns. Even in the most primitive cultures the strategic word is likely to be more powerful than the direct blow. It is unwise to speak too blithely of "mere" words, for to do so may be to imperil the value and perhaps the very existence of civilization and personality.

What Is Good English?

Albert H. Marckwardt • *1903–*

You will find that a quarrel is being carried on between two groups of extremists in language. One insists that language should be kept "pure," and that the changes which are eating away at the present language should be fought at every point. The opposite group says that language is an organism, that it is not made but grows, and the people who make it — all of us — do not do so consciously, but that it takes its

Copyright, Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc., 1937. Reprinted, by permission of the author and the Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc., from *Talks*, November, 1937.

shape without any control from us. Most of us range between these positions of dogmatic absolutism and anarchic relativism, hoping for answers, for solutions on word etiquette, on whether we may say "It is me," etc. etc. The reasonable answer is supplied by Mr. Marckwardt's pleasant essay which, although written by a professional grammarian, is far from dogmatic and makes a sensible truce between linguistic foes.

EDITORIALS are written about every phase of it. Teachers are deluged with letters asking them to referee disputes over it. Even our statesmen have manifested a consistent interest in the problem — both Benjamin Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt tried to reform our spelling. As far as the schools are concerned, everyone generally agrees upon one point: Good English should be successfully taught. But when it comes to deciding what is not Good English, there are almost as many points of view as there are persons to hold them.

In all this diversity, two diametrically opposed attitudes may be discerned. At one extreme are those who look to the conventional rules of grammar, to dictionaries, to lists of frequently mispronounced words as absolute authorities. This attitude of dependence upon authority, since it implies a belief that a language may arrive at and maintain a relatively static condition — that it may be kept pure — is usually spoken of as *purism*. Little more need be said about this point of view for most of us are quite familiar with it. We have all met it somewhere, in the schools or out.

During the last twenty-five years, however, there have been indications of a change of attitude toward the question of Good English and its teaching, both in the schools and among the most competent linguists in the country. There has been formulated what may be called for want of a more accurate term a "liberal" attitude toward language, which is directly in opposition to many of the tenets and practices of the purists. As in the case of any liberal movement, this one has been accompanied by much misunderstanding as to its aims and methods. There are abroad sinister rumors that "anything you hear is right," and dire forebodings of future generations whose verbs and nouns will not agree.

It is most important, I believe, to the general success of the English language program in our schools, to clear away some of the erroneous conceptions which have sprung up in connection with linguistic liberalism. This may best be accomplished by pointing out, first of all, how and why this change in attitude came about; second, by defining the standards of Good English which the liberal grammarians uphold; and finally, by pointing out certain ideas and attitudes which they do not put forward. The limitations of space necessitate my treating only one aspect of this broad question, namely grammar in its more restricted sense; although what I have to say may be applied in most cases to problems of pronunciation and vocabulary as well.

To explain the rise of the liberal attitude toward a standard of Good English, we must examine briefly the history of the rules which are to be found in the school grammars of today. These rules, for the most part, originated with certain English grammarians of the eighteenth century — notably William Ward, Robert Lowth, and James Buchanan. These men were not as interested in reflecting and codifying the actual spoken English of their time as in setting up an ideal language for their own and future generations to strive to master. This ideal language was based in part upon the rules of Latin grammar — for the eighteenth century was an age which revered the classics — and in part upon what seemed to be a rational arrangement for a language — for the eighteenth century was also an age of reason.

In the two hundred years which have elapsed since the formulation of these rules, the study of language has progressed remarkably, and we have learned much concerning this aspect of human behavior. The early nineteenth century was marked by a tremendous growth in our knowledge of the history of both ancient and modern languages.

The grammarians of the eighteenth century assumed that language was static, that it might reach and be kept at a state of perfection. In the nineteenth century we learned to apply the evolutionary concept to language as well as to botany and zoology. We came to see that language is not stationary, that it is in a state of continuous development, that standards which may hold good for one century are not necessarily applicable to another.

Along with our increased knowledge of the history of the English language and the conception of language as an evolving organism, came the realization that many of the rules of so-called correct English did not reflect actual speech habits; that they set up standards which were not only absent from spoken English but, more than this, were virtually foreign to the genius of the language.

In 1927, the late Professor S. A. Leonard, together with Professor H. Y. Moffat, began to study this problem. They selected from typical school text-books then in use 102 expressions condemned as incorrect; they submitted these to a jury composed of twenty-six eminent linguists and a similar number of authors, editors, business executives, teachers of English and of speech — about 225 all told. This jury was asked to rate the 102 condemned expressions as acceptable, questionable, or illiterate. It is possible to give only a few of the results of the survey here, but it was found that more than 40 of the 102 expressions usually condemned in the school texts were considered acceptable by over 75 per cent of the linguists, and many others were held by them to be matters of divided usage.

Among the expressions condemned by the text-books and accepted by the jury were: "This is a man I used to know," "That will be all right," "You had better stop that foolishness." The first of these omits the relative pronoun; the second used the term "all right" to which some grammars object; in the

third the locution "had better" is at times condemned by text-books as a colloquialism. All of them are obviously in current use today.

It is interesting to read what an eminent British linguist, Professor J. H. G. Grattan, has said on this same subject. He writes, "The attitude of the American schools is, so far as the English language is concerned, ultra-conservative. Eighteenth century ideas of correctness are not yet dead in the United States. Indeed, by American standards, many idiomatic usages long sanctioned in Great Britain are still bad grammar."

When it became apparent that the rules of many of the school grammars prescribed something that was not idiomatic English, the question immediately arose: If the rules of the grammars cannot be held to constitute a valid standard of Good English, what standard can be set up in its place? This is, it will be recalled, the second of the three questions which were raised before.

The liberal grammarians answer in the following manner: The history of most modern languages shows that from generation to generation, and from century to century, there has been in existence an accepted or received standard form of that language — English, French, or whatever it may be; and that that standard form has been based upon the speech of the class and section of the country which was politically, economically, and culturally dominant at the time.

London English, just one of many English dialects, became the standard speech of England chiefly because the city of London rose to a position of prime importance in the affairs of the English-speaking people. The same was true of the language of the Ile de France and of the Kingdom of Castile. If this is generally the case, why should we not consider as the standard of present-day English that speech which is in actual use by the large group who is carrying on the affairs of the English-speaking people? An attitude of this kind is usually spoken of as a doctrine of usage.

In connection with such a doctrine or standard, one problem arises. Suppose the usage of this dominant group is not wholly in agreement on all points? Suppose some of its members occasionally use a split infinitive while others do not? What then is to be our guiding principle?

Here again we may have recourse to our knowledge of the history of our language. Since it is possible to examine with some accuracy the forms of the English language during the last thousand years, such a study will indicate that certain inflectional and syntactical traits have been constantly expanding and developing, while others have been disappearing. If it is possible from an examination of what has gone on in the past to make a reasonable prediction as to what will come about in the future — and we assume this with most of the studies we undertake — then, in the case of a divided usage, let us choose that form or construction which seems to be in accord with the developing tendencies or patterns of the English language.

To return to the problem of a split infinitive. Since a careful examination

of the English of the last five hundred years shows such a construction to have been in constant use, and to have arisen from a desire to speak English naturally and clearly, the least we can do is to allow it equal rank with the alternative construction; to favor it when it seems better to perform the function of communicating the idea involved; and to rule it out when it does not express the thought as clearly.

Unfortunately a number of misconceptions have arisen in connection with such a proposed standard of usage. Uninformed people frequently ask if such a doctrine means that any sort of English that may be heard on the street is Good English. If an expression is used, no matter where or by whom, must it then necessarily be correct? The answer is no. The doctrine of usage does not legalize the language of the gutter, for the language of the gutter is not the English which is apt to prevail as Standard Spoken English. It is perfectly true that upon occasion certain expressions and certain modes of pronunciation have spread from one social class to another, frequently from a higher to a lower, and at times from a lower to a higher. The broad *a* sound in such words as *past* and *half*, now considered to be ultra-refined by many speakers, is a case in point; for in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it was, as a dictionary of the time puts it, "the sound used by the vulgar but not the polite and learned world." But these occasional cross currents do not justify an acceptance of wholly uncultivated speech as a norm. By virtue of the historical principles upon which the liberal grammarians proceed, they are still committed to the speech of the people who direct the affairs of the community as a standard. On the other hand since the English-speaking countries are democratic in character, the limitation of the speech standard to the narrowest top layer of the social order is also precluded.

The second aspect of the doctrine of usage which frequently troubles people to whom the idea is somewhat new is the fear that the lack of strict and ironclad rules will lead to eventual disintegration. Again history shows such fears to be unfounded. It has been pointed out that rules for the speaking of correct English date chiefly from the beginning of the eighteenth century. They have existed only two hundred years of the fifteen hundred since the Angles and Saxons first came to the British Isles. Accordingly when English is considered in the light of its millennium of existence as a separate language, one is inclined to feel that the rules have had relatively little effect in either hindering or accelerating the main trends of development.

Moreover, we can never be too sure as to just what is meant by disintegration of a language, which innovations are bad and which are good. As one eminent linguist has written, "To the conservative grammarian all change is decay. Although he knows well that an old house often has to be torn down in part or as a whole in order that it may be rebuilt to suit modern conditions, he never sees the constructive forces at work in the destruction of old grammatical forms. He is fond of mourning over the loss of the

subjunctive and the present slovenly use of the indicative. He hasn't the slightest insight into the fine constructive work of the last centuries in rebuilding the subjunctive."

At present the greatest need confronting those who are entrusted with the teaching of our language in the schools is for new text-books which describe accurately the language of those now carrying on the affairs of the English-speaking people, particularly grammars which will record the forms and syntax of present-day American English. A most significant beginning in this direction has already been made by the National Council of Teachers of English who, in November 1932, sponsored the publication of *Current English Usage*. This volume is in reality a continuation of the survey mentioned above, begun by Professors Leonard and Moffat, a survey which has for its purpose a codification of the usages of present-day English, and which proceeds upon the theory that it is the principal function of the grammarian to describe the language as it exists rather than to prescribe a state of perfection for it.

I can close in no more appropriate manner than to quote from Miss Ruth Mary Weeks' introduction to this forward-looking work. She writes, "Language is a living thing and the greatest law of life and growth is change. Dictionaries, grammars, books of rhetoric are not eternal statutes handed down from heaven like the tables of Mosaic law. They are history, not dogma; description not command — description of the changing speech habits of the mass of men.

"As our speech changes, so do dictionaries and grammars change; so must they change if we are to prepare our students to speak the language of their own time, or to secure from the better speech of our own day reinforcement of our teaching."

The Life and Death of Words

Dwight L. Bolinger • 1907–

"Language," says Mr. Bolinger, "is a system of movements like figure dancing — but the most complicated system under control." In other words, language is an organic growth involving the birth, growth, and death of words. It is an activity. Far from being inert clayey objects, words are active atoms and, in relation with other atoms, form patterns and shapes, elemental energy. The new understanding of words as forming and changing not alone but in "masses of form and meaning," is the concern of this important essay.

Reprinted by permission from *The American Scholar*, Summer, 1953.

A MAJOR REVOLUTION now looms in the science of words, not known in all its significance even to some linguistic scientists. Its prime movers and pacesetters, working independently but convergingly, are Professor Yakov Malkiel of the University of California and the school of linguists in Germany known as the Neo-Humboldtians, after the great nineteenth-century philologist Baron von Humboldt.

Malkiel is the meticulous, profound researcher. His work is in Spanish and related languages, but his method is valid for all languages and will be applied to them sooner or later. The Neo-Humboldtians are the avant-garde theorizers, shorter on demonstration but bolder in drawing conclusions. No one who ventures to pronounce on how words and meanings evolve will in the future dare to overlook their work, for it gives at last a ground for the fusion of the time-honored study of how languages change in form and the newer science of semantics.

Briefly, the implication that concerns us is that words evolve in masses of forms and meanings with infinite cross- and counter-influences, like soft bodies that crowd together and modify one another's shape and function. Linguists have always known that words behave in some such fashion, but they have not had the courage to depart from their straight-line etymologies, mainly because they lacked the vast information that Malkiel has amassed to prove that no form or meaning in a language ever changes in isolation. As Jost Trier of the Neo-Humboldtian school says, "Nothing in language exists independently."

Straight-line etymologizing, the hunting down of "the" source of a word, cannot be displaced so long as there are words whose prime source is unknown. It gives us the ontogeny of words — their individual parentage — against what the new approach offers, an understanding of their phylogeny, their group survival, the history of the entire species. A recent example of the straight-line quest, brilliant as a display of tenacious searching, was the discovery by Professor Allen Walker Read of Columbia University — wading through the Greek *óla kalá,* the Choctaw *okeh,* the Andrew Jackson *Oll Korrect,* and other origins proposed by the indefatigable guessworkers who plague the borders of etymology — that *O.K.* comes from the Martin Van Buren O. K. Club of 1840. But what the new school wants to know is why *O.K.* caught on, and why it has grown in popularity every year until within the last decade or two it has partially displaced *all right.* Not all of the answer lies in the language necessarily, any more than all that explains the popularity of a style in women's clothing is to be found in the history of styles — some of it may be the appeal of sheer newness or nonconformity, or persistent plugging by an advertiser. But as much as the life or death of a term or meaning is due to its relationships among its own kind, linguistics provides an answer; and that is a lot.

An example of Professor Malkiel's methods is the Spanish *pech-,* a root that developed from several Latin sources: *pactu,* 'agreement' (including terms of agreement, fines, taxes); *pectus,* 'breast, chest'; *pessulu,* 'bolt or bar

of a door'; and the group represented by *despectus*, 'contempt,' and *suspectus*, 'suspicion.' Not all of these left descendants in all parts of Spain, but as speakers migrated from one section to another, the forms tied themselves into what Malkiel terms a "lexical tangle," with each wielding some influence to support or weaken each of the others. For instance, the *despechar* from *pactu* meaning 'to levy excessive taxes on,' hence 'to ruin,' merged with the *despechar* from *despectus* meaning 'to offend,' which had already been infused with *pecho* from *pectus*, 'breast,' as the seat of the feelings, so that *despechar* covered the range of ruin, anger and despondency. A less complicated tangle in English is that of *shoot* and *chute*. The words of a language form a gravitational system, with some forms being pulled into the orbit of others and some rotating at a safe distance in a sort of mutual tolerance and stability.

This is all in a manner of speaking, of course. Words are not things, but activities. Language is a system of movements like figure dancing — but the most complicated system under human control. If two similar steps in a dance can condition each other so that both are confused or so that the dancer must exercise special care to keep them apart, imagine what happens when the steps are increased from the possible hundred or two in the dance to the eight or ten thousand that constitute the stock of verbal movements at a speaker's command. Imbed these ten thousand movements in a layer of ten thousand meanings, and it becomes obvious that something is going to be done to align meaning with form, purely for economy of effort.

Here is the most important inference to be drawn from our knowledge of word-families: that the life and death of words in large part depends on our need to economize, to make what words really mean agree with what they seem to mean. There is a connectedness in our experience of reality — dogs are dogs, but they also have four legs and so relate to cats; they eat almost anything, and so belong with other carnivores. Unflaggingly, but not always successfully, we seek the same connectedness in the imaging of reality, our language.

To picture the word within the system of which it forms a part, imagine an orb like the sun with gaseous satellites revolving about it. The central body is the core of the word's meaning, what it is taken to signify under normal conditions by those who hear and use it. The gasiform satellites are the aura of all its apparent meanings. When the core is relatively hard, the aura continues to haunt the fringes but does not move in upon the central meaning. When the core is diffuse, the aura may blend with it and alter it completely. The aura is like an accumulation of cosmic dust given off by all the other orbs in the galaxy of the language with which the one in question is associated in meaning or use. As our word drifts its way about the verbal universe in the daily converse and intercourse of speech, it accumulates this billowy sort of envelope that presses in upon it hard or softly, depending on circumstances.

Our astrological picture is necessary to get the facts in focus. The essen-

tial fact is that every word or combination of words lays the stamp of its form on the meaning that it conveys. Once we say *onion* and associate it with a certain adjunct to culinary art, *onion* is available to come to mind whenever anything that sounds like *onion,* in either form or meaning, is mentioned. In form, it may be a rhyming word like *bunion;* in meaning, it may be a kindred term like *soup.* (Meaning is ultimately form, for it comes by way of the actual use together of *onion* and *soup.*) Until the connection is unusually close, no threat is posed to the stability of the word. Once the bond is firmly set, a reaction begins to take place.

Disinterested will serve as an example. This word is a kind of binary star, one-half being the prefix *dis-* and the other half the base *interested.* Its stuff is pretty thin, like that of which astronomers tell us a roomful would weigh only a fraction of a gram, for it names not a precise thing but an attitude — in a nutshell, you cannot diagram or picture *disinterested.* So the aura begins to mingle with it. Its first half, *dis-,* takes on the coloration of almost all the *dis-* words in spoken English, which is that of an "unfavorable" meaning (*disgust, distrust, dislike, disturb, distress, dissatisfy*), while its second half pulls in upon itself the only popular meaning of *interested* nowadays, which is not 'having a stake in something' but 'being emotionally attracted by something.' There you have it — *disinterested* not in the sense of 'impartial,' but as an unfavorable term signifying 'indifferent': the disinterested judge, to quote Jacques Barzun, becomes the judge who goes to sleep on the bench. What *disinterested* "really" means has moved toward what it seems to mean.

All the evidence of the power of what we might call the "organon" of the language — its vocabulary in action, with form engraved on meaning — has been at hand, but not until now has it received more than piecemeal recognition. Some of the pieces wear traditional labels in linguistics.

There is, first, folk etymology. One may occasionally hear a plant or animal referred to as *high bred,* in place of *hybrid* — an obvious, though false, inference based on the achievements of modern genetics. Folk etymology is the interpretation of something strange in familiar terms — the odd word is taken really to mean what it seems to mean. The American political expression *doughface* originally meant a face covered with a mask of dough; then, when the practice of wearing such masks disappeared and the original meaning was lost, people began to apply the term with 'easily molded person' in mind. Probably everyone remembers childhood guesses that later had to be revised — one of mine was *juice harp* for *jew's harp.*

Then there is "verbal taboo." Here the speaker knows what his term signifies, but the aura includes an apparent meaning that is indecorous, and so he refrains from using it. In Perry County, Tennessee, the word *peanut,* writes Kelsie Harder, "contains a double-barrelled taboo, and red-faced farm boys, or even their parents, seldom used the term among mixed company." The word *goober* replaced it, but trouble cropped up again because "*goober* had formerly been identified with the anatomically distinctive

organ of young boys." The not entirely satisfactory *peas* was the compromise. The linguistic geographer Raven McDavid tells of the taboo on *Helena,* Montana, with accent on the first syllable, aggravated perhaps by little boys who disguised their profanity in *Go to Helena.* (In my set it was the supremely fumigated *Go to Halifax.*)

"Conflict of homonyms" is the collision between two words which sound alike and, owing to use in similar situations, cause such confusion (or, if one is tabooed, embarrassment) that one eventually disappears or changes its meaning. Professor Edna Williams of Smith College has documented the rivalry between *queen* and *quean,* 'harlot,' where *quean* was finally exiled from standard English; that of *strait* and *straight,* where *strait* has disappeared in all but a few phrases, such as *the strait and narrow path.*

"Blends" are compromises, usually accidental, between two forms, both of which fit a situation — the meaning wears a dual stamp. When Erle Stanley Gardner writes, "Many the night we have paced the floor," he combines *many a night* with *many's the night.* The student who claims to be "listening intentively" has joined *attentively* and *intently.* Others are "imitray" for *imitate* and *portray* (Red Skelton), "tremorous" for *tremulous* and *timorous* (Hart Crane), "sophomoronic" (Francis Hayes), "bugabear" for *bugaboo* and *bugbear.* Usually a blend is a nova in the verbal heavens that flashes and then fades. But now and then one continues to glow. The common *every now and then* is probably a blend of *now and then* with *ever and anon.* Many speakers contradict themselves when they use "He isn't far from wrong," blending "He isn't far wrong" and "He's far from wrong." Blends require not only meanings that will match, but forms that mate easily: *most places* + *almost everywhere* = *most everywhere.*

Given a long enough stretch of history, even the few blends that survive can accumulate a respectable total. And here we reach the most spectacular proof of the workings of the organon of words, entire families built by slow accretion through the centuries in a process more subtle than blending but closely similar to it. The thirteen-year-old boy who said, "Jones is *plumpier* than Smith" remolded *plump* along the lines of *chunky, chubby, roly-poly, tubby, pursy, paunchy, pudgy, portly* and *fleshy,* re-creating a form as old as Shakespeare. Here the aura is one of form: about *plump* hover all its synonyms, and they have borne in upon it and changed its shape to agree with them. Instead of a change of meaning to make the word really mean what it seems to mean, there is a change of form to make the word seem to mean what it really means — two sides of a single process, the mutual fitness of form and meaning.

Thus constellations of words have been born. The Danish linguist Otto Jespersen noted the grouping of *rump, clump, dump, stump, hump, bump, lump* and other *-ump* words about the notion of heaviness, roundness and clumsiness. The family of *slap, clap, rap, tap, flap* and *lap* denotes actions that strike and then glide off, while that of *dab, grab, stab, tab, nab* and *daub* covers striking that does not glide off but stops in or on something.

A lighter or sharper blow or its result is suggested by the group *nip, clip, tip, sip, dip, grip, pip, quip, yip* (contrast *yap*), *flip* (contrast *flop*) and *drip* (contrast *droop* and *drop*). But another constellation crosses this one at the point of *drip*, that of *drip, drop, drizzle, drench, drool, dribble, drink, drain*, relating to liquids.

After *shivaree* first appeared in English about 1800, it had to make its way against several other expressions with the same meaning: *horning, belling, skimmilton, bull-band.* It triumphed because arrayed behind it was the family of accented *-ee* words: *jubilee, husking bee, spree, whee, gee, free, yippee, glee, jamboree, corroboree.* It is easy to prove the linguistic reality of such families. A group of thirty-four persons, asked whether *maskeró* or *maskerée* better expressed the idea of 'a noisy, riotous masquerade party,' voted six to one in favor of *maskerée* because, said one, "it seemed so much gayer." The British linguist J. R. Firth calls these sound-sense groupings "phonesthemes."

Some families were undoubtedly imitative in origin. *Bang, clang, clatter, batter, spatter* imitate sounds. Other families have no trace of imitativeness. Roughly half of the popular words in English that begin with *gl-* (*glimpse, glow, glare, glitter, glance*), for example, have to do with something visual. Whatever their origin, they now serve as gravitational centers, growing as they overpower other centers or fading as they are overpowered by them.

Members of a constellation may be few or many, from mere pairs like *banish-vanish* (with looser ties with *finish, anguish*), *abysmal-dismal* (ignorance), *damning-damaging* (evidence) to multitudes that cluster in all degrees of affinity and branch out in a score of directions. All point to the one inevitable drift — the accommodation of form to meaning and meaning to form.

What is the effect of the organon of language, of the aura of meanings that cling to a form and of forms that cling to a meaning? Words are born — how, we can never predict: they may be deliberately coined, like *aspirin* or *gas,* or adopted, like *gatling* or *bowie;* they may be borrowed from another language, like *buckaroo* or *flair,* or from another dialect, like *ornery* based on *ordinary* or *heist* based on *hoist;* they may come from having an extra word lying around somewhere that is not really needed, which gradually becomes infused with a special meaning — "Whip him *good*" no longer means the same as "Whip him *well.*" By fusions of misunderstanding or borrowing, a single word may propagate several — *gentle, gentile, genteel, genty* and *jaunty* are all ultimately the same. Easy as it seems to do, words are seldom invented — they usually just happen. If they fulfill a need, they are seized upon and made secure in the language. If not, they are lost. What is important in the life of a word is that once launched it has to run the gantlet of all the existing forms and meanings in the organon.

The result may be fortune or disaster, a straightforward course or distor-

tion or oblivion. Of the immediate failures no record is left, but we may be sure that mortality far exceeds survival, as witness the accidental blends already mentioned which died aborning. Our interest lies with the successes, with how they have managed to endure the ordeal of a hostile environment.

Like people, these words achieve success by adaptation. Of all the terms of electrical measurement named after men famous in electronics — *ohm, joule, ampere, coulomb, volt* — only *volt* has taken hold outside the lingo of specialists and become a part of everyone's speaking vocabulary; *volt* could readily adapt itself because *bolt* and *jolt,* also used in popular reference to electricity, were there to help. *Catty,* as in "a catty remark," at the outset had no more promise of success than *waspish, shrewish,* or *vixenish,* also named for animals, and besides had to brave their competition; but it is now better known than any of the others to the speaker on the street, thanks to *cutting, curt* and *sarcastic. Magnolia,* named for Pierre Magnol, was so suggestive of glorifying words like *magnificent, magnanimous* that it not only caught on but gave rise to *magnolious.* Such as these are the rousing successes.

The course of others has been more tortuous. *Flibbertigibbet* originally meant a fiend, but the pull of the family of *flippant, flighty, flimsy, flirt, flit, fly-by-night* and other words signifying something light, harebrained or inconsequential has been too powerful, and now it means a flighty person.

Still others have been struck a fatal blow, some early in their career and some late, by an enemy elsewhere in the organon. An enlightened society will no longer tolerate *niggardly,* though it has nothing to do with *nigger.* As soon as the ending *-ific* became associated, through *terrific, horrific* and *prolific,* with the idea of drive and power, *pacific,* 'peaceful,' was doomed in the spoken language. Association turns purely relative elements like *-ific* and *dis-* into absolute ones and destroys or changes words where they do not appear in the dominant sense.

One way of avoiding this fate is a change of form — usually just enough of a change of pronunciation to disguise the unwanted kinship. *Fatima* is still listed by the dictionaries with accent on *fat-,* but few speakers will tolerate so unfeminine a pronunciation. *Communal* is traditionally accented on the first syllable, but political sensitivity (plus the growing use of the word *community*) has pushed the accent to the second syllable for many speakers. The pronunciation of *nascent* with the *a* of *pass* was too reminiscent of *nasty,* with the result that the *a* of *nay* is now recorded.

The chooser or inventor of a word must grope his way in the organon of language exactly as a composer in search of an apt musical phrase gropes his way in the organon of music. There are no clearly formulated rules; success is determined by fitness.

Fishing in the subconscious, when we are coining or choosing, brings to light the wayward associations that attach themselves like lily pads and old shoes to the hook, along with an occasional catch. Dr. Willis Whitney of

the General Research Laboratory wrote of trying to recapture the name of Senator Kilgore. Before laying it by the heels, he had dredged up the German *Blutgut,* the Latinized *Carney,* and the Anglicized *Gormley.* Trying to think of a word similar to *carotid,* which I finally grasped as *caryatid,* I thought of a bug, and realized afterward that I had been sidetracked by *katydid.* The interacting bonds of form and meaning can summon any related form for a related meaning and any related meaning for a related form, as well as summon form by form and meaning by meaning. One comes to understand von Humboldt when he says, as Professor Harold Basilius of Wayne University expounds him, "Words result from the totality of speech." There is no more real invention in *temptatious,* combining *temptation* and related forms with *delicious, luscious, scrumptious* and other *-cious* words, than in saying "Quigley fiddles," though neither may ever have been said before.

To give all possible examples of these and other manifestations of the organon would be to quote the dictionary, for all show potentially an infusion by the aura of form and meaning. The tendency of forms to mold themselves on other forms with like meanings, and meanings to mold themselves on other meanings conveyed by like forms, is universal.

But here arises a dilemma. Why has this not completely regularized the English language, so that now the conformity of the two is perfect? Partly, there has not been time. Partly, the accidental origin of new words precludes their being regular to begin with, which is a corollary of the same thing. Most importantly of all, we resist it.

What speakers avoid doing is as important as what they do. Self-correction of speech and writing, and the correction of others in conversation ("I can't understand what you say"), in classrooms and over editorial desks is an unending business, one that determines the outlines of our speech just as acceptances determine its mass. Correction, the border beyond which we say "no" to an expression, is to language what a seacoast is to a map. Up to now, linguistic scientists have ignored it because they could see in it nothing more than the hankerings of pedants after a standard that is arbitrary, prejudiced and personal. But it goes deeper. Its motive is intelligibility, and in spite of the occasional aberrations that have distracted investigators from the central facts, it is systematic enough to be scientifically described.

Correction is largely the process of throwing an expression into sharper relief. It works automatically in some instances of pronunciation. We can say, "Industry is working for de*fense*" and put the accent on one syllable, but in "A good offense is the best *de*fense" we shift it to the other, for the sake of contrast.

Another example is our exasperation when we start a sentence and then find that somewhere along its course we have used two identical or closely similar sounds in different senses: "I'll take the doors outdoors to paint them"; "He charged me too much for charging the battery"; "It is good to be

in a position to be in possession of the facts"; "It's an oasis in the wastes of Africa"; "The second weakness is one that he does not to my knowledge acknowledge." A colleague at a committee meeting said, "Yes, merit increases — I think the idea has merit," then paused, laughed and corrected herself. "Before you leave, be sure to brush your hair" is all right, and so is "Before you leave, be sure to brush your teeth," but "Before you leave, be sure to brush your hair and teeth" would be rejected in favor of "brush your hair and clean your teeth"; for the implied repetition would use the same word in different senses.

What one linguist belittles as "the school admonition to use synonyms instead of repeating a word" is the basic need to achieve clarity through contrast carried to an extreme. Purists have made a fetish of not permitting repetition even in the same sense. But this is unimportant. What matters is that in order to be understood, meanings that we want to distinguish we must represent by clearly distinguishable sounds. The purists are right, but for the wrong reason: we do not avoid repeating because it sounds bad, but it sounds bad because we avoid it — the prime reason for the avoidance is the prompting of contrast.

So, except in the most unreflecting speech, we are likely to shun "He had an idea, and jumped up and wrote it down," where, even though there is no repetition of sound, *up* and *down* are incongruously matched.

The reason we fail to realize the contrastive impulse in language is that we are seldom aware of its functioning except when it breaks down. The crude examples that I have given illustrate a few of the commoner disorders.

The drive for contrast goes counter to the drift toward similarity. Here is the explanation of why a language will tolerate a multiplicity of words for the same thing — why masses of synonyms have grown up and works like Roget's *Thesaurus* are possible. If the aura had its way, all synonyms would sound alike; but we know that they do not. The reason is that meaning is nebulous and has to be condensed by the context in which a word is used. The way we resolve that condensation responds to the need for contrast. Two expressions otherwise synonymous may be resolved in different ways. Let us say that I express an idea as "I was running for the train because my watch was not running and I was late." Here, within a narrow context, *running* has been condensed in two ways; the result is nonsensical or funny (funniness is a social reaction to nonsense). So I reach for an expression completely different in form, but synonymous ("my watch was out of order," "needed fixing," "wasn't working"), which condenses the meaning contrastively. If all synonyms sounded alike, either clarity or brevity would have to be sacrificed.

If our language had a large enough inventory of sounds, we might retain both similarity and contrast to the full — have a set of synonyms of similar form, and a stand-by set to be called in when needed. But the stock of distinctive sounds ("phonemes") is too small, and when sharp contrast is needed, we have to use them up more than one at a time. *Tiny* and *tidy*

are not bothersome in referring to a small woman's figure, but if *a tidy sum* is likely to be misunderstood as *a tiny sum*, just the contrast of *d* and *n* is not enough — the speaker must clutch at something entirely different, such as *respectable, large* or *sizable.* Competition keeps similarity and contrast moving in upon each other all the time.

The fight between the purist and his linguist foe is not part of our immediate business, but the theme of drift and contrast holds a moral that it would be inopportune not to point out.

A language might be likened to a machine with two economies: the economy of social effort, which is that of maintaining existing contrasts and keeping the machine in repair; and the economy of individual effort, which is that of letting it float into a homogeneous state of bliss that will tax the speaker least when he tries to remember what he wants to say. As speakers, regularity is what makes us happiest, and our children are working hard at it every day with their self-created as well as propagated *I doed it, you was, a orange.*

But speakers are also hearers, which makes the division a false one. From the hearer's standpoint — which is the same as saying from the social standpoint — the trouble is that there are many children and many points of departure for regularization which may therefore run at cross-purposes. Language is a sensitive and infinitely layered and segmented machine, and its owners cannot afford to let new parts be inserted or old ones moved from one place to another unless they represent a minimum of disagreement. There are vested interests even in the absurdities.

The purist and the anti-purist maintain this false division, the one championing society as the stockholder in stability and the other the individual as the focus of change.

The purist takes a short view of history, refusing to see that languages are always on the move. His mistake is his unhappy penchant for defending positions that the majority have long since willingly abandoned. He will fight for a senseless *whom* as fiercely as for a sensible distinction between *mitigate* and *militate* or *foreboding* and *forbidding.* Like the prohibitionist, he makes a moral issue of a certain kind of abstinence.

The anti-purist sees the massive changes that language has undergone through the ages, and watches with contempt the handful of pipsqueaks in his own generation who would try to arrest an irresistible process. To him, Speakers are the great flowing stream, which he emotionally identifies with Nature, and purists are a small hive of busybodies outside Nature trying vainly to divert it. In his Olympian view he overlooks our immediate concerns and fails to see the purist as but one part of the assertion of things-as-they-are reflected in language, revealed in other ways in the hour-by-hour hesitations and self-corrections on the part of speakers — their "I mean this, not that," the "What was that you said?" on the part of hearers, their insistence on some alternative mode of expression, the frowning-down of rude intonations and laughing-out of oddities, the life-or-death substitution of

flammable for *inflammable,* the constant and inescapable decisions that one must make on how to put a thought more clearly or pronounce, for the benefit of a stupid or noisy audience, a word more intelligibly. Interference with language is inescapable. The individual interferes, automatically, when he forgets or fumbles or is careless or lazy; society bent on self-preservation interferes whenever he strays, and drives him back into line — almost — the extra amount beyond the almost being the quantum of change.

Society hugs its practices to itself, and the purist hugs them too close; but anti-purists are as powerless to prevent the embrace as purists are to make themselves immortal. Both the long and short views are true in their proper setting. To side with drift against contrast is to side with the nether against the upper millstone.

Buck Fanshaw's Funeral

Samuel L. Clemens • 1835–1910

With experience as printer, journalist, miner, and traveller, Samuel Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, came into close contact with all kinds of people. His ear was keen, and no one has better captured the idioms and colloquialisms of American people: Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer, *and* Roughing It *are treasure troves for the linguist. Here Samuel Clemens comically illustrates the possible difficulties arising from different levels of language.*

SOMBODY HAS SAID that in order to know a community, one must observe the style of its funerals and know what manner of men they bury with most ceremony. I cannot say which class we buried with most eclat in our "flush times," the distinguished public benefactor or the distinguished rough — possibly the two chief grades or grand divisions of society honored their illustrious dead about equally; and hence, no doubt the philosopher I have quoted from would have needed to see two representative funerals in Virginia before forming his estimate of the people.

There was a grand time over Buck Fanshaw when he died. He was a representative citizen. He had "killed his man" — not in his own quarrel, it is true, but in defence of a stranger unfairly beset by numbers. He had kept a sumptuous saloon. He had been the proprietor of a dashing helpmeet whom he could have discarded without the formality of a divorce. He had held a high position in the fire department and been a very War-

wick in politics. When he died there was great lamentation throughout the town, but especially in the vast bottom-stratum of society.

On the inquest it was shown that Buck Fanshaw, in the delirum of a wasting typhoid fever, had taken arsenic, shot himself through the body, cut his throat, and jumped out of a four-story window and broken his neck — and after due deliberation, the jury, sad and tearful, but with intelligence unblinded by its sorrow, brought in a verdict of death "by the visitation of God." What could the world do without juries?

Prodigious preparations were made for the funeral. All the vehicles in town were hired, all the saloons put in mourning, all the municipal and fire-company flags hung at half-mast, and all the firemen ordered to muster in uniform and bring their machines duly draped in black. Now — let us remark in parenthesis — as all the peoples of the earth had representative adventurers in the Silverland, and as each adventurer had brought the slang of his nation or his locality with him, the combination made the slang of Nevada the richest and the most infinitely varied and copious that had ever existed anywhere in the world, perhaps, except in the mines of California in the "early days." Slang was the language of Nevada. It was hard to preach a sermon without it, and be understood. Such phrases as "You bet!" "Oh, no, I reckon not!" "No Irish need apply," and a hundred others, became so common as to fall from the lips of a speaker unconsciously — and very often when they did not touch the subject under discussion and consequently failed to mean anything.

After Buck Fanshaw's inquest, a meeting of the short-haired brotherhood was held, for nothing can be done on the Pacific coast without a public meeting and an expression of sentiment. Regretful resolutions were passed and various committees appointed; among others, a committee of one was deputed to call on the minister, a fragile, gentle, spirituel new fledgling from an Eastern theological seminary, and as yet unacquainted with the ways of the mines. The committeeman, "Scotty" Briggs, made his visit; and in after days it was worth something to hear the minister tell about it. Scotty was a stalwart rough, whose customary suit, when on weighty official business, like committee work, was a fire helmet, flaming red flannel shirt, patent leather belt with spanner and revolver attached, coat hung over arm, and pants stuffed into boot tops. He formed something of a contrast to the pale theological student. It is fair to say of Scotty, however, in passing, that he had a warm heart, and a strong love for his friends, and never entered into a quarrel when he could reasonably keep out of it. Indeed, it was commonly said that whenever one of Scotty's fights was investigated, it always turned out that it had originally been no affair of his, but that out of native goodheartedness he had dropped in of his own accord to help the man who was getting the worst of it. He and Buck Fanshaw were bosom friends, for years, and had often taken adventurous "pot-luck" together. On one occasion, they had thrown off their coats and taken the weaker side in a fight among strangers, and after gaining a hard-earned victory, turned and found that the men they were helping had deserted

early, and not only that, but had stolen their coats and made off with them! But to return to Scotty's visit to the minister. He was on a sorrowful mission, now, and his face was the picture of woe. Being admitted to the presence he sat down before the clergyman, placed his fire-hat on an unfinished manuscript sermon under the minister's nose, took from it a red silk handkerchief, wiped his brow and heaved a sigh of dismal impressiveness, explanatory of his business. He choked, and even shed tears; but with an effort he mastered his voice and said in lugubrious tones:

"Are you the duck that runs the gospel-mill next door?"

"Am I the — pardon me, I believe I do not understand?"

With another sigh and a half-sob, Scotty rejoined:

"Why you see we are in a bit of trouble, and the boys thought maybe you would give us a lift, if we'd tackle you — that is, if I've got the rights of it and you are the head clerk of the doxology-works next door."

"I am the shepherd in charge of the flock whose fold is next door."

"The which?"

"The spiritual adviser of the little company of believers whose sanctuary adjoins these premises."

Scotty scratched his head, reflected a moment, and then said:

"You ruther hold over me, pard. I reckon I can't call that hand. Ante and pass the buck."

"How? I beg pardon. What did I understand you to say?"

"Well, you've ruther got the bulge on me. Or maybe we've both got the bulge, somehow. You don't smoke me and I don't smoke you. You see, one of the boys has passed in his checks and we want to give him a good send-off, and so the thing I'm on now is to roust out somebody to jerk a little chin-music for us and waltz him through handsome."

"My friend, I seem to grow more and more bewildered. Your observations are wholly incomprehensible to me. Cannot you simplify them in some way? At first I thought perhaps I understood you, but I grope now. Would it not expedite matters if you restricted yourself to categorical statements of fact unencumbered with obstructing accumulations of metaphor and allegory?"

Another pause, and more reflection. Then, said Scotty:

"I'll have to pass, I judge."

"How?"

"You've raised me out, pard."

"I still fail to catch your meaning."

"Why, that last lead of yourn is too many for me — that's the idea. I can't neither trump nor follow suit."

The clergyman sank back in his chair perplexed. Scotty leaned his head on his hand and gave himself up to thought. Presently his face came up, sorrowful but confident.

"I've got it now, so's you can savvy," he said. "What we want is a gospel-sharp. See?"

"A what?"

"Gospel-sharp. Parson."

"Oh! Why did you not say so before? I am a clergyman — a parson."

"Now you talk! You see my blind and straddle it like a man. Put it there!" — extending a brawny paw, which closed over the minister's small hand gave it a shake indicative of fraternal sympathy and fervent gratification.

"Now we're all right, pard. Let's start fresh. Don't you mind my snuffling a little — becuz we're in a power of trouble. You see, one of the boys has gone up the flume — "

"Gone where?"

"Up the flume — throwed up the sponge, you understand."

"Thrown up the sponge?"

"Yes — kicked the bucket — "

"Ah — has departed to that mysterious country from whose bourne no traveler returns."

"Return! I reckon not. Why pard, he's *dead!*"

"Yes, I understand."

"Oh, you do? Well I thought maybe you might be getting tangled some more. Yes, you see he's dead again — "

"*Again?* Why, has he ever been dead before?"

"Dead before? No! Do you reckon a man has got as many lives as a cat? But you bet you he's awful dead now, poor old boy, and I wish I'd never seen this day. I don't want no better friend than Buck Fanshaw. I knowed him by the back; and when I know a man and like him, I freeze to him — you hear *me.* Take him all round, pard, there never was a bullier man in the mines. No man ever knowed Buck Fanshaw to go back on a friend. But it's all up, you know, it's all up. It ain't no use. They've scooped him."

"Scooped him?"

"Yes — death has. Well, well, well, we've got to give him up. Yes indeed. It's a kind of a hard world, after all, *ain't* it? But pard, he was a rustler! You ought to seen him get started once. He was a bully boy with a glass eye! Just spit in his face and give him room according to his strength, and it was just beautiful to see him peel and go in. He was the worst son of a thief that ever drawed breath. Pard, he was *on* it! He was on it bigger than an Injun!"

"On it? On what?"

"On the shoot. On the shoulder. On the fight, you understand. *He* didn't give a continental for *anybody. Beg* your pardon, friend, for coming so near saying a cuss-word — but you see I'm on an awful strain, in this palaver, on account of having to cramp down and draw everything so mild. But we've got to give him up. There ain't any getting around that, I don't reckon. Now if we can get you to help plant him — "

"Preach the funeral discourse? Assist at the obsequies?"

"Obs'quies is good. Yes. That's it — that's our little game. We are going

to get the thing up regardless, you know. He was always nifty himself, and so you bet you his funeral ain't going to be no slouch — solid silver door-plate on his coffin, six plumes on the hearse, and a nigger on the box in a biled shirt and a plug hat — how's that for high? And we'll take care of *you*, pard. We'll fix you all right. There'll be a kerridge for you; and whatever you want, you just 'scape out and we'll 'tend to it. We've got a shebang fixed up for you to stand behind, in No. 1's house, and don't you be afraid. Just go in and toot your horn, if you don't sell a clam. Put Buck through as bully as you can, pard, for anybody that knowed him will tell you that he was one of the whitest men that was ever in the mines. You can't draw it too strong. He never could stand it to see things going wrong. He's done more to make this town quiet and peaceable than any man in it. I've seen him lick four Greasers in eleven minutes, myself. If a thing wanted regulating, *he* warn't a man to go browsing around after somebody to do it, but he would prance in and regulate it himself. He warn't a Catholic. Scasely. He was down on 'em. His word was, 'No Irish need apply!' but it didn't make no difference about that when it came down to what a man's rights was — and so, when some roughs jumped the Catholic bone-yard and started in to stake out town-lots in it he *went* for 'em! And he *cleaned* 'em, too! I was there, pard, and I seen it myself."

"That was very well indeed — at least the impulse was — whether the act was strictly defensible or not. Had deceased any religious convictions? That is to say, did he feel a dependence upon, or acknowledge allegiance to a higher power?"

More reflection.

"I reckon you've stumped me again, pard. Could you say it over once more, and say it slow?"

"Well, to simplify it somewhat, was he, or rather had he ever been connected with any organization sequestered from secular concerns and devoted to self-sacrifice in the interests of morality?"

"All down but nine — set 'em up on the other alley, pard."

"What did I understand you to say?"

"Why, you're most too many for me, you know. When you get in with your left I hunt grass every time. Every time you draw, you fill; but I don't seem to have any luck. Let's have a new deal."

"How? Begin again?"

"That's it."

"Very well. Was he a good man, and — "

"There — I see that; don't put up another chip till I look at my hand. A good man, says you? Pard, it ain't no name for it. He was the best man that ever — pard, you would have doted on that man. He could lam any galoot of his inches in America. It was him that put down the riot last election before it got a start; and everybody said he was the only man that could have done it. He waltzed in with a spanner in one hand and a trumpet in the other, and sent fourteen men home on a shutter in less than

three minutes. He had that riot all broke up and prevented nice before anybody ever got a chance to strike a blow. He was always for peace, and he would *have* peace — he could not stand disturbances. Pard, he was a great loss to this town. It would please the boys if you could chip in something like that and do him justice. Here once when the Micks got to throwing stones through the Methodis' Sunday school windows, Buck Fanshaw, all of his own notion, shut up his saloon and took a couple of six-shooters and mounted guard over the Sunday school. Says he, 'No Irish need apply!' And they didn't. He was the bulliest man in the mountains, pard! He could run faster, jump higher, hit harder, and hold more tangle-foot whisky without spilling it than any man in seventeen counties. Put that in, pard — it'll please the boys more than anything you could say. And you can say, pard, that he never shook his mother."

"Never shook his mother?"

"That's it — any of the boys will tell you so."

"Well, but why *should* he shake her?"

"That's what *I* say — but some people does."

"Not people of any repute?"

"Well, some that averages pretty so-so."

"In my opinion the man that would offer personal violence to his own mother, ought to — "

"Cheese it, pard; you've banked your ball clean outside the string. What I was a drivin' at, was, that he never *throwed off* on his mother — don't you see? No indeedy. He give her a house to live in, and town lots, and plenty of money; and he looked after her and took care of her all the time; and when she was down with the small-pox I'm d—d if he didn't set up nights and nuss her himself! *Beg* your pardon for saying it, but it hopped out too quick for yours truly. You've treated me like a gentleman, pard, and I ain't the man to hurt your feelings intentional. I think you're white. I think you're a square man, pard. I like you, and I'll lick any man that don't. I'll lick him till he can't tell himself from a last year's corpse! Put it *there!*" [Another fraternal handshake — and exit.]

The obsequies were all that "the boys" could desire. Such a marvel of funeral pomp had never been seen in Virginia. The plumed hearse, the dirge-breathing brass bands, the closed marts of business, the flags drooping at half mast, the long, plodding procession of uniformed secret societies, military battalions and fire companies, draped engines, carriages of officials, and citizens in vehicles and on foot, attracted multitudes of spectators to the sidewalks, roofs and windows; and for years afterward, the degree of grandeur attained by any civic display in Virginia was determined by comparison with Buck Fanshaw's funeral.

Scotty Briggs, as a pall-bearer and a mourner, occupied a prominent place at the funeral, and when the sermon was finished and the last sentence of the prayer for the dead man's soul ascended, he responded, in a low voice, but with feeling:

"AMEN. No Irish need apply."

As the bulk of the response was without apparent relevancy, it was probably nothing more than a humble tribute to the memory of the friend that was gone; for, as Scotty had once said, it was "his word."

Scotty Briggs, in after days, achieved the distinction of becoming the only convert to religion that was ever gathered from the Virginia roughs; and it transpired that the man who had it in him to espouse the quarrel of the weak out of inborn nobility of spirit was no mean timber whereof to construct a Christian. The making him one did not warp his generosity or diminish his courage; on the contrary it gave intelligent direction to the one and a broader field to the other. If his Sunday-school class progressed faster than the other classes, was it matter for wonder? I think not. He talked to his pioneer small-fry in a language they understood! It was my large privilege, a month before he died, to hear him tell the beautiful story of Joseph and his brethren to his class "without looking at the book." I leave it to the reader to fancy what it was like, as it fell, riddled with slang, from the lips of that grave, earnest teacher, and was listened to by his little learners with a consuming interest that showed that they were as unconscious as he was that any violence was being done to the sacred proprieties!

The Third Floor

Bernard DeVoto • 1897–

Sapir, as you saw, reminds us that language is often simply expressive both of the inner self and of our social and cultural associations. But language has another function all too frequently employed: concealment. Beneath words we can bury our hypocrisies; under phrases we can preserve the snobberies and exclusions which divide men rather than join them. Bernard DeVoto, writing for a "high class" magazine, speaks with refreshing directness to some of his misguided "high class" readers, well wrapped in the cocoons of their wealth and position.

AT INTERVALS I receive a letter which I have never tried to answer for I am not sure I could tune in on its wave length. I think of it as the same letter for it always says the same things, though various people who do not know each other write it. It begins as a criticism of the Easy Chair but modulates into a complaint about *Harper's* and ends as a lamentation

Reprinted by permission of the author from *Harper's Magazine*, March, 1952.

about something entirely different, something for which there is no help.

But let me describe the house I bought a year or so before the war. It is big as, seemingly, houses still capable of being lived in can be big only in New England and ugly as they can be only in Cambridge. It is an Old Cambridge house; it once belonged to a very distinguished and celebrated man. His widow lived in it for years after he died and her heirs sold it to me. I could not have afforded to buy it except that real estate was badly depressed that year, and of course in Old Cambridge such an interloper as I would never have aspired to own property on Berkeley Street. But Old Cambridge perished a long time ago.

When I bought the house the only twentieth-century bathroom was on the third floor. It was antiquated but there had been some effort to make it convenient and comfortable and that was incongruous, for the rest of the floor was comfortless, stark, and dreary. It had been finished only in part and that part parsimoniously. There were only four windows and they were very small; they gave little ventilation and admitted little light. There was just one electric light, the one in the bathroom. Though the flooring elsewhere in the house was of fine oak, much of it parquetry, here it was cheap pine, jagged with splinters and in some places worn through. The heating system had not been extended to the third floor.

In houses the age of mine throughout greater Boston you can see that same floor; usually, in fact, it is cheaper and dingier. It was the servants' floor. In the spacious time nearly a century ago Boston's servants were the surplus virgins of Ireland. They were fortunate girls; by coming here they raised themselves above their station and were privileged to spend their lives among gentle, cultured people and fine possessions. They went to work for four dollars a month. It had increased to four dollars a week thirty-five or forty years later when the master, being on the board of trustees, got them a snug place in the Home for the Aged. The mistress taught them neatness, orderliness, obedience, decorum, and virtuous living. She supervised their diversions and their reading, to make sure that they were wholesome. They were free to go to six o'clock Mass on Sunday morning and they had the afternoon hours off one Sunday a month and two Thursdays. They were permitted to receive friends, of the same sex, on evenings when the family did not need their services and the mistress had approved. They received them in the kitchen; they spent their free time in the kitchen after the dishes were washed, the table in the breakfast room set, and the beds on the second floor turned down. They could read by candlelight in their own good warm beds but not for long: the candles were counted. They must be up betimes and too much leisure, too many candles, too much comfort would encourage slackness. That was why the steam pipes were not carried to the third floor; besides, the coal bill would have been bigger. But all day long they could admire the family's furniture and china, the pictures and the books, and could take pride in the carriages that came to the door and the elegant people who got out of them.

But for the last of these maids at 8 Berkeley Street it had been necessary, at some expense, to put in a bathroom.

The latest variant of my periodic letter begins by mentioning "the beautiful dignified English" that Mr. George William Curtis wrote in the Easy Chair. The letter usually begins with a reference to Mr. Curtis or to Mr. William Dean Howells, who also wrote beautiful dignified English in the Easy Chair as, my correspondent points out, I do not. He remembers the bound volumes of *Harper's* in his father's study and the boyhood hours he spent reading them. He learned from Mr. Curtis or Mr. Howells the value of chaste prose, prose unmarred by the neologisms, the vulgarisms, the slang, "the crudities like 'OK' and 'sure' for 'surely,'" the bad grammar that he finds everywhere today, even in this once dignified, once chastely written magazine. The language he is forced to read is, in fact, no longer to be called English; it is a debased dialect. He wishes that *Harper's* had been willing to act as "an English Academy, like the French, to pass judgment on any change or addition of new words to our vocabulary." Instead it has basely surrendered to the vulgar. I was therefore, he says, under a greater obligation to preserve in the Easy Chair the fine English that Mr. Curtis and Mr. Howells wrote for it. This, assuredly, I have not done; the Easy Chair is often more offensively written than the rest of *Harper's*. I write the debased dialect, I write vulgarly, I write, as the letter before the latest one put it, like a stable boy.

Yet my correspondent acknowledges that *Harper's* and I are rather signs of our time than debauchers of it. "The truth is," he says, "there are so few cultured people left." I am presumably an "educated" man, nearly everyone is nowadays, nearly everyone has been "to a college of some sort" and has acquired a smattering of new ideas and inventions. But we have no Latin and no Greek, no intellectual discipline, no history and therefore none of the wisdom that history imparts, no reverence for the true or the good, no reasoning power, no ability to perceive the falsity of vulgar errors or the speciousness of popular fallacies. Indeed, though somehow the vulgarization of America is responsible for the disappearance of cultured people, it may also be that their disappearance, which the spread of college education explains, is responsible for the vulgarization.

Here the letter usually turns from the Easy Chair to some article elsewhere in *Harper's*, an article which signalizes the downfall of *Harper's* and of the United States. In the latest variant it was an article that discussed Social Security. This time the letter-writer was a woman but her theme is the constant one, "the way we have drifted into socialism," as Social Security shows we have done. She cannot separate that drift from our vulgarity, and she remembers her shock on first perceiving how they were related. That was when, shortly after Inauguration Day in 1933, she went to a reception for U. S. Senators at the Pan American Building, "of all the crude surroundings and crude people." She was the more shocked in that

she had but recently returned from France, which, though a democracy, "gives her functions with dignity and elegance."

Is postwar apathy responsible for our drift into socialism, she wonders, or has some subtler malady made us thoughtless and indifferent? When she was young every county had its Poor House and its Work House, "the latter for those lazy people who would not work to support themselves." So every county could enforce proper behavior on the poor, whereas now Washington just hands out the money without inquiring how it is spent. "I always taught my servants to lay up part of their wages in a savings bank against a rainy day." But now women of the servant class scorn to be thrifty. A waitress will not even save her tips; she regards security in the rainy days of old age as her due.

Since 1933 my correspondent has again traveled much, as she always did. Egypt and Greece are fine places to spend the winter in, South Africa was intensely interesting, South America is always a delight, and the Orient is fascinating. But she always feels a violent shock when she comes home: always we have sunk deeper into the morass. The morass of vulgarity and socialism. Social Security is, as Mr. Curtis might have put it, the payoff. It has killed self-reliance and initiative. It has poisoned us; the United States is "apparently so prosperous but is so rotten at the core. The five-day week and forty-hour week will cause our downfall. To become great we worked all day and six days, and laid by for our old age." But now everyone is recklessly spending money. Everyone has an automobile. Everyone has radio and television, which are turning us into morons. And where, my correspondent asks, where will all this have taken us in another fifty years? This scandalous, appalling idea that people should retire at sixty-five! — "the age should be extended to seventy years."

I need hardly say that this depravity began when Roosevelt, of whom one does not care to speak as President or Mr. Roosevelt, "gave the green light to labor." The unions "have become so strong that they will take over the government unless someone with cold clear judgment and courage gets the Presidency or is put in a leading position." Those last seven words have what Mr. Howells might have called a dying fall and I have heard it before. Not long before Inauguration Day of 1933 various trustees of servants' savings accounts who had embezzled them to trade in the futures of gaseous equities were crying out, not coldly but perhaps courageously, to be saved by someone who might be put in a leading position.

Why, Madam, in the Centennial Issue, the editor of *Harper's* and Mr. Elmer Davis and I all addressed ourselves to this matter. All three of us were remembering those bound volumes of *Harper's*. They were in my father's house, though since he was a poor man the room they were kept in was not called a study. I read Mr. Curtis and Mr. Howells when I was a boy: I cannot plead ignorance of the tradition I have betrayed. But though I wish I could write as well as Mr. Curtis and Mr. Howells I would not

care to write like them. They were of their times and wrote for them; and, as you say, their times were not ours, which I must write for. I like the crudities of today's prose that strike your ears so harshly; they are from the living speech. I would hope to get some of the currency of that speech, some of its liveliness, some of its rhythm and accent, in the prose I offer to readers who for all I know may be having *Harper's* bound for their children. I think that Mr. Curtis and Mr. Howells would not want to act as an Academy for this generation's idiom and would not want their prose to be a mold which their successor's must fit. They would ask him, I think, to write workmanlike prose, as they did. They would ask him, I am certain, to keep the Easy Chair free of vulgarity — the vulgarity not of expressions like "OK" and "sure" but of idea. Such vulgarity as the idea that the United States is rotten at the core because A will not gladly work six twelve-hour days a week so that B can find Egypt a pleasant place to winter in.

If I have betrayed their tradition it is not by writing the vernacular of my time but, conceivably, by failing to wade as deep into the morass as, if they had found themselves in that time, they might have done. My correspondent has forgotten their biographies. Mr. Howells championed uncultivated people, quite poor people in fact, and defended anarchists. He was a professing socialist. Though he had lived in Cambridge (just off Berkeley Street) when it was Old Cambridge, he wrote the Easy Chair in the service of the very drift that has acquainted my correspondent with despair. No one ever respected culture more than he did but in an age when cultured people were much more numerous than they are now he saw some tendencies which, he said with the most violent emphasis, must be reversed. By whatever means.

Mr. Curtis was reared a communist and once solemnly forswore allegiance to the United States on the ground that, though apparently so prosperous, it was rotten at the core. Part of the rot was the educational system: it was turning out morons, especially economic and social morons. Its philosophy was a puritanism very favorable to the cultured class: it taught some people that to labor from the rising up to the going down of the sun was virtuous, and it taught some that to possess the fruit of other people's labor was righteous. The United States of his time, he said, killed self-reliance and initiative, making the poor submissive while those who exploited their submission sold them for a pair of shoes. Looking about him, he found vulgarity on all sides. Uncultured people were vulgar in their willingness to accept so small a fraction of the wealth their labor created. Cultured people were vulgar in exhorting sixty-five-year-old workers to stick it out another five years so that the tax for the Poor House and the Work House would not inconvenience their betters. I do not know what he would have said about the idea that it is reckless to spend money you have earned but admirable to spend money someone else has earned, that a gentlewoman may properly tour the Orient on an inherited income

but a waitress is bringing about our downfall if she buys a radio. I do know that year by year in the Easy Chair he told the waitress that her birthright included a radio and much more. Of the system that had her laying by money for someone else's rainy days, he said that it must be changed. By whatever means.

My radical predecessors meant just what they said: by whatever means. If my correspondent will look again at her files of *Harper's,* she will find reported and advocated there the process by which, happily, it was kept from being by whatever means. In her girlhood the magazine was not speaking for the culture she laments as vanished but for another native culture that had self-reliance and initiative of a different kind. For a hundred and two years it has spoken for those who thought American society able and obliged to achieve a very considerable portion of what Mr. Curtis and Mr. Howells desired, thought it could be achieved by implicit means, and foresaw no downfall. That belief was natural to the people whom, like my predecessors, I have called natural readers of *Harper's.*

They believed that it was no more wrong of the waitress than of the gentlewoman to want a becoming coiffure and a good-looking dress. They believed that leisure and the satisfactions of life were no less good, no less comely, for the unlettered than for the cultured. The seventy-two hour week, they believed, made leisure impossible and stunted one's capacity to enjoy the satisfactions of life. They believed that a shorter work-week would increase the satisfactions open to people and their capacity to enjoy them, and that it would also increase the wealth that the hours of work produced. If it did, they believed, not only crude persons but the gentle as well would be better off. Would live in a better country, a United States less likely to rot at the core. They believed that the rich natural endowment of the United States could be so managed that it would produce a more widespread affluence — and, yes, even a more widespread freedom to spend money. If some people spent money for radios and automobiles, they would not think the expenditure sinful. Perhaps others would take a trip to South America.

They did not profess to foresee how much of this vision could be achieved. They were sure, however, that any part of it would be an improvement on the village Poor House and Work House. If it meant that they must themselves throw in with the vulgar, OK. If it meant disturbing the serenity of the cultured, sure. If it meant the fading-out of elegance, too bad but so be it. They believed that what they knew was possible was more desirable than elegance. So they committed themselves, and the United States, to their belief. There was no need to tear the house down, they said, but remodeling was called for and we had better get about it.

It happened just about as they said it would and, Madam, if you will look back through *Harper's* you can see it happening. Mr. Curtis was writing the Easy Chair when it began to happen, and his successor tells you

that that beginning, which cannot perhaps be precisely dated but which has had much less celebration than it deserves, was one of the decisive turning points in the history of the world. That a very great deal of it had happened by the time Mr. Howells took over the Easy Chair is attested by 8 Berkeley Street, where at just about that time a bathroom was installed for the servants. Mr. Howells' successor tells you that we now have the advantage of hindsight: looking back, we can see as they could not that it was certain to happen. There was bound to come a time when a candle, a tin washbasin, and a chamberpot would not suffice for the third floor.



"Won't you read us some of your own?"

Vices and Virtues of Style

On Familiar Style

William Hazlitt • 1778–1830

Certainly William Hazlitt is the "essayist's essayist," by which we mean that all writers who attempt the personal essay pay him their respects for his ability to combine sharp insights with felicitous phrases. His is a style which is itself an example of "the familiar style" he is writing about.

It is not easy to write a familiar style. Many people mistake a familiar for a vulgar style, and suppose that to write without affectation is to write at random. On the contrary, there is nothing that requires more precision, and, if I may say so, purity of expression, than the style I am speaking of. It utterly rejects not only all unmeaning pomp, but all low, cant phrases, and loose, unconnected, *slipshod* allusions. It is not to take the first word that offers, but the best word in common use; it is not to throw words together in any combinations we please, but to follow and avail ourselves of the true idiom of the language. To write a genuine familiar or truly English style is to write as any one would speak in common conversation who had a thorough command and choice of words, or who could discourse with ease, force, and perspicuity, setting aside all pedantic and oratorical flourishes. Or, to give another illustration, to write naturally is the same

thing in regard to common conversation as to read naturally is in regard to common speech. It does not follow that it is an easy thing to give the true accent and inflection to the words you utter, because you do not attempt to rise above the level of ordinary life and colloquial speaking. You do not assume, indeed, the solemnity of the pulpit, or the tone of stage-declamation; neither are you at liberty to gabble on at a venture, without emphasis or discretion, or to resort to vulgar dialect or clownish pronunciation. You must steer a middle course. You are tied down to a given and appropriate articulation, which is determined by the habitual associations between sense and sound, and which you can only hit by entering into the author's meaning, as you must find the proper words and style to express yourself by fixing your thoughts on the subject you have to write about. Any one may mouth out a passage with a theatrical cadence, or get upon stilts to tell his thoughts; but to write or speak with propriety and simplicity is a more difficult task. Thus it is easy to affect a pompous style, to use a word twice as big as the thing you want to express: it is not so easy to pitch upon the very word that exactly fits it. Out of eight or ten words equally common, equally intelligible, with nearly equal pretensions, it is a matter of some nicety and discrimination to pick out the very one the preferableness of which is scarcely perceptible, but decisive. The reason why I object to Dr. Johnson's style is that there is no discrimination, no selection, no variety in it. He uses none but "tall, opaque words," taken from the "first row of the rubric" — words with the greatest number of syllables, or Latin phrases with merely English terminations. If a fine style depended on this sort of arbitrary pretension, it would be fair to judge of an author's elegance by the measurement of his words and the substitution of foreign circumlocutions (with no precise associations) for the mother-tongue.[1] How simple is it to be dignified without ease, to be pompous without meaning! Surely it is but a mechanical rule for avoiding what is low, to be always pedantic and affected. It is clear you cannot use a vulgar English word if you never use a common English word at all. A fine tact is shown in adhering to those which are perfectly common, and yet never falling into any expressions which are debased by disgusting circumstances, or which owe their signification and point to technical or professional allusions. A truly natural or familiar style can never be quaint or vulgar, for this reason, that it is of universal force and applicability, and that quaintness and vulgarity arise out of the immediate connection of certain words with coarse and disagreeable or with confined ideas. The last form what we understand by *cant* or *slang* phrases. — To give an example of what is not very clear in the general statement. I should say that the phrase *To cut with a knife,* or *To cut a piece of wood,* is perfectly free from vulgarity, because it is perfectly common; but to *cut an acquaintance*

[1] I have heard of such a thing as an author who makes it a rule never to admit a monosyllable into his vapid verse. Yet the charm and sweetness of Marlowe's lines depended often on their being made up almost entirely of monosyllables. [Author.]

is not quite unexceptionable, because it is not perfectly common or intelligible, and has hardly yet escaped out of the limits of slang phraseology. I should hardly, therefore, use the word in this sense without putting it in italics as a license of expression, to be received *cum grano salis*. All provincial or bye-phrases come under the same mark of reprobation — all such as the writer transfers to the page from his fireside or a particular *coterie*, or that he invents for his own sole use and convenience. I conceive that words are like money, not the worse for being common, but that it is the stamp of custom alone that gives them circulation or value. I am fastidious in this respect, and would almost as soon coin the currency of the realm as counterfeit the King's English. I never invented or gave a new and unauthorised meaning to any word but one single one (the term *impersonal* applied to feelings), and that was in an abstruse metaphysical discussion to express a very difficult distinction. I have been (I know) loudly accused of revelling in vulgarisms and broken English. I cannot speak to that point; but so far I plead guilty to the determined use of acknowledged idioms and common elliptical expressions. I am not sure that the critics in question know the one from the other, that is, can distinguish any medium between formal pedantry and the most barbarous solecism. As an author I endeavour to employ plain words and popular modes of construction, as, were I a chapman and dealer, I should common weights and measures.

The proper force of words lies not in the words themselves, but in their application. A word may be a fine-sounding word, of an unusual length, and very imposing from its learning and novelty, and yet in the connection in which it is introduced may be quite pointless and irrelevant. It is not pomp or pretension, but the adaptation of the expression to the idea, that clenches a writer's meaning: — as it is not the size or glossiness of the materials, but their being fitted each to its place, that gives strength to the arch; or as the pegs and nails are as necessary to the support of the building as the larger timbers, and more so than the mere showy, unsubstantial ornaments. I hate anything that occupies more space than it is worth. I hate to see a load of bandboxes go along the street, and I hate to see a parcel of big words without anything in them. A person who does not deliberately dispose of all his thoughts alike in cumbrous draperies and flimsy disguises may strike out twenty varieties of familiar everyday language, each coming somewhat nearer to the feeling he wants to convey, and at last not hit upon that particular and only one which may be said to be identical with the exact impression in his mind. This would seem to show that Mr. Cobbett is hardly right in saying that the first word that occurs is always the best. It may be a very good one; and yet a better may present itself on reflection or from time to time. It should be suggested naturally, however, and spontaneously, from a fresh and lively conception of the subject. We seldom succeed by trying at improvement, or by merely substituting one word for another that we are not satisfied with, as we cannot recollect the name of a place or person by merely plaguing

ourselves about it. We wander farther from the point by persisting in a wrong scent; but it starts up accidentally in the memory when we least expected it, by touching some link in the chain of previous association.

There are those who hoard up and make a cautious display of nothing but rich and rare phraseology — ancient medals, obscure coins, and Spanish pieces of eight. They are very curious to inspect, but I myself would neither offer nor take them in the course of exchange. A sprinkling of archaisms is not amiss, but a tissue of obsolete expressions is more fit *for keep than wear.* I do not say I would not use any phrase that had been brought into fashion before the middle or the end of the last century, but I should be shy of using any that had not been employed by any approved author during the whole of that time. Words, like clothes, get old-fashioned, or mean and ridiculous, when they have been for some time laid aside. Mr. Lamb is the only imitator of old English style I can read with pleasure; and he is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his authors that the idea of imitation is almost done away. There is an inward unction, a marrowy vein, both in the thought and feeling, an intuition, deep and lively, of his subject, that carries off any quaintness or awkwardness arising from an antiquated style and dress. The matter is completely his own, though the manner is assumed. Perhaps his ideas are altogether so marked and individual as to require their point and pungency to be neutralised by the affectation of a singular but traditional form of conveyance. Tricked out in the prevailing costume, they would probably seem more startling and out of the way. The old English authors, Burton, Fuller, Coryate, Sir Thomas Browne, are a kind of mediators between us and the more eccentric and whimsical modern, reconciling us to his peculiarities. I do not, however, know how far this is the case or not, till he condescends to write like one of us. I must confess that what I like best of his papers under the signature of Elia (still I do not presume, amidst such excellence, to decide what is most excellent) is the account of "Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist," which is also the most free from obsolete allusions and turns of expression —

A well of native English undefiled.

To those acquainted with his admired prototypes, these *Essays* of the ingenious and highly gifted author have the same sort of charm and relish that Erasmus's *Colloquies* or a fine piece of modern Latin have to the classical scholar. Certainly, I do not know any borrowed pencil that has more power or felicity of execution than the one of which I have here been speaking.

It is as easy to write a gaudy style without ideas as it is to spread a pallet of showy colours or to smear in a flaunting transparency. "What do you read?" "Words, words, words." — "What is the matter?" "*Nothing,*" it might be answered. The florid style is the reverse of the familiar. The last is employed as an unvarnished medium to convey ideas; the first is resorted to

as a spangled veil to conceal the want of them. When there is nothing to be set down but words, it costs little to have them fine. Look through the dictionary, and cull out a *florilegium*, rival the *tulippomania*. *Rouge* high enough, and never mind the natural complexion. The vulgar, who are not in the secret, will admire the look of preternatural health and vigour; and the fashionable, who regard only appearances, will be delighted with the imposition. Keep to your sounding generalities, your tinkling phrases, and all will be well. Swell out an unmeaning truism to a perfect tympany of style. A thought, a distinction is the rock on which all this brittle cargo of verbiage splits at once. Such writers have merely *verbal* imaginations, that retain nothing but words. Or their puny thoughts have dragon-wings, all green and gold. They soar far above the vulgar failing of the *Sermo humi obrepens* — their most ordinary speech is never short of an hyperbole, splendid, imposing, vague, incomprehensible, magniloquent, a cento of sounding common-places. If some of us, whose "ambition is more lowly," pry a little too narrowly into nooks and corners to pick up a number of "unconsidered trifles," they never once direct their eyes or lift their hands to seize on any but the most gorgeous, tarnished, threadbare, patchwork set of phrases, the left-off finery of poetic extravagance, transmitted down through successive generations of barren pretenders. If they criticize actors and actresses, a huddled phantasmagoria of feathers, spangles, floods of light, and oceans of sound float before their morbid sense, which they paint in the style of Ancient Pistol. Not a glimpse can you get of the merits or defects of the performers: they are hidden in a profusion of barbarous epithets and wilful rodomontade. Our hypercritics are not thinking of these little fantoccini beings —

> That strut and fret their hour upon the stage —

but of tall phantoms of words, abstractions, *genera* and *species*, sweeping clauses, periods that unite the Poles, forced alliterations, astounding antitheses —

> And on their pens *Fustian* sits plumed.

If they describe kings and queens, it is an Eastern pageant. The Coronation at either House is nothing to it. We get at four repeated images — a curtain, a throne, a sceptre, and a footstool. These are with them the wardrobe of a lofty imagination; and they turn their servile strains to servile uses. Do we read a description of pictures? It is not a reflection of tones and hues which "nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on," but piles of precious stones, rubies, pearls, emeralds, Golconda's mines, and all the blazonry of art. Such persons are in fact besotted with words, and their brains are turned with the glittering but empty and sterile phantoms of things. Personifications, capital letters, seas of sunbeams, visions of glory, shining inscriptions, the figures of a transparency, Britannia with her shield, or Hope leaning on an anchor, make up their stock-in-trade. They may be

considered as *hieroglyphical* writers. Images stand out in their minds isolated and important merely in themselves, without any groundwork of feeling — there is no context in their imaginations. Words affect them in the same way, by the mere sound, that is, by their possible, not by their actual application to the subject in hand. They are fascinated by first appearances, and have no sense of consequences. Nothing more is meant by them than meets the ear: they understand or feel nothing more than meets their eye. The web and texture of the universe, and of the heart of man, is a mystery to them: they have no faculty that strikes a chord in unison with it. They cannot get beyond the daubings of fancy, the varnish of sentiment. Objects are not linked to feelings, words to things, but images revolve in splendid mockery, words represent themselves in their strange rhapsodies. The categories of such a mind are pride and ignorance — pride in outside show, to which they sacrifice everything, and ignorance of the true worth and hidden structure both of words and things. With a sovereign contempt for what is familiar and natural, they are the slaves of vulgar affectation — of a routine of high-flown phrases. Scorning to imitate realities, they are unable to invent anything, to strike out one original idea. They are not copyists of nature, it is true; but they are the poorest of all plagiarists, the plagiarists of words. All is far-fetched, dear-bought, artificial, oriental in subject and allusion; all is mechanical, conventional, vapid, formal, pedantic in style and execution. They startle and confound the understanding of the reader by the remoteness and obscurity of their illustrations; they soothe the ear by the monotony of the same everlasting round of circuitous metaphors. They are the *mock-school* in poetry and prose. They flounder about between fustian in expression and bathos in sentiment. They tantalise the fancy, but never reach the head nor touch the heart. Their Temple of Fame is like a shadowy structure raised by Dulness to Vanity, or like Cowper's description of the Empress of Russia's palace of ice, "as worthless as in show 'twas glittering" —

It smiled, and it was cold!

The Style of Woodrow Wilson at Twenty-Two

William B. Hale • 1869–1924

It is sometimes difficult to determine precisely what makes a person's writing stuffy, and this essay gives an important clue. Woodrow Wilson became a fine writer in his later years, but this essay exposes his early weaknesses and should be helpful to those of us who lean heavily on vague adjectives, the passive voice, or forms of the verb to be.

In 1879, an undergraduate twenty-two years old, Mr. Wilson accomplished the feat of securing publication in a magazine of the highest class. "Cabinet Government in the United States" by Thomas W. Wilson, in *The International Review,* of August, 1879, was a treatise in brief of which a publicist of elder years and far richer experience need not have been ashamed. It was an argument for the reconstruction of the American Congress and Cabinet to conform to the English Parliamentary plan; it impeached our national legislature as "practically irresponsible," especially denouncing the Congressional committee system, under which all the important work of Congress is done in secret session by a few members. Secrecy, argued this twenty-two-year-old statesman, in 1879, forty years before the Congress of Versailles, is the atmosphere in which all corruption and evil flourishes. "Congress should legislate as if in the presence of the whole country, in open and free debate."

At the outset it must be insisted upon, in all good faith, that this is an examination of Mr. Wilson's literary style, and that it interests itself in his political opinions only as they throw light upon the operations of his faculty of expression. Not infrequently, comment may be directed towards what are apparently political inconsistencies. These are all doubtless capable of explanation and satisfactory resolution. As for their purport, they lie outside the province of this discussion. It concerns itself sedulously with expressional phenomena.

Thomas W. Wilson's first magazine article contained probably no passages more important than these:

> Nothing could be more obvious than the fact that the very life of free, popular institutions is dependent upon their breathing the bracing air of thorough, exhaustive and open discussion.

From *The Story of a Style* by William Bayard Hale. Copyright, 1920, by B. W. Huebsch, Inc. Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press, Inc., New York.

> We are thus again brought into the presence of the cardinal fact of this discussion — that debate is the essential function of a popular representative body. In the severe, distinct, and sharp enunciation of underlying principles, the unsparing examination and telling criticism of opposite positions, the careful painstaking unraveling of all the issues involved, which are incident to the free discussion of questions of public policy, we see the best, the only effective means of educating public opinion.

The immediate impression given by the first reading of an article in this style is that the author possesses the quality commonly and admiringly described as an unusual command of language. Few college boys, is the reflection, would write like that.

Since this is the writing of a college boy, and not of a President, we can examine it without prejudice. The selection was not made with a view to verbal examination, and, on that account, all the more deserves it.

A second reading can hardly fail to recognize a curious disproportion in the parts of speech employed. Here are 108 words, in three sentences. Only one word in the hundred is a pure verb. It is true we have the substantives "be," "is," "are," and the auxiliary "could," and the participle "brought"; but the sole statement of action is that "we see."

To keep this scanty company in countenance, there are, however, thirty adjectives. Shall we be mathematical and notice that one word in every three-and-three-fifths words is an adjective?

Here is an interesting list:

PURE VERBS	ADJECTIVES	
see	more	distinct
	very	sharp
	free	underlying
	popular	unsparing
	dependent	telling
	bracing	opposite
IMPURE VERBS	thorough	careful
could be	exhaustive	painstaking
is	open	incident
are brought	cardinal	free
is	this	public
are	essential	best
	popular	only
	representative	effective
	severe	public

Somewhat surprised by the result of the count, and desiring to check it against an examination of the style of other masters of English prose, I take down a random volume of Macaulay; it happens to be Vol. V of his *History of England,* and it happens to open at pages 116–117. I count out 108 words

at the top of page 117 and proceed to ascertain how many verbs and adjectives are among them. There are eleven verbs and two adjectives.

Interested, I take down a volume of Ruskin (*Fors Clavigera*); one by Carlyle (*Sartor Resartus*); one by Stevenson (*Treasure Island*); I take down *King Richard II, Tom Sawyer, Knickerbocker's History of New York, The Gold Bug, Quentin Durward, David Copperfield, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, The Mayor of Casterbridge, Richard Yea and Nay,* Bernard Shaw's *The Philanderer;* I go on and take down books by French, Polish, Belgian, Swiss and other writers; *La Chartreuse de Parme, Quo Vadis, L'Isolée, La Vie des Abeilles,* Rousseau's *Confessions,* Amiel's *Journal Intime.*

A count of the pure verbs (exclusive of substantives, auxiliaries, infinitives and participles) and adjectives among the first one hundred eight words on page 117 of each volume yields the results here tabulated:

	VERBS	ADJECTIVES
Wilson	1	30
Ruskin	16	7
Carlyle	12	4
Macaulay	11	2
Stevenson	14	3
Irving	12	8
Poe	12	5
Shakespeare	14	9
Scott	11	8
Dickens	16	6
Hardy	14	1
Shaw	14	4
Clemens	13	3
Hewlett	13	3
Gibbon	9	8
Bazin	18	3
Sienkiewicz	11	1
Stendhal	15	2
Maeterlinck	10	None
Rousseau	14	6
Amiel	9	7

These twenty writers employed, on the average, among a hundred words, some thirteen pure verbs and four and a half adjectives. The writer of "Cabinet Government in the United States" found need for only one pure verb and five impure verbs, but, in the meanwhile, invoked the aid of thirty adjectives.

It is with a true instinct that language calls the part of speech which represents action, "the verb" — *the* word. The task of speech is to predicate, not to paint. The advance of thought is just so swift as the verbs carry it. Adjectives qualify, describe, limit. They are a brake, a drag, on the wheel

— often necessary in order that advance may be kept in the right track — but not near so often necessary as they are commonly and lazily deemed to be. They are popular, because easy; they eke out effortless poverty of idea. The man who has something to tell has little need, little time, for them; he snaps out his tale in words of action. The thought that pants for deliverance bursts out in verbs. A very little study will show that the world's great story-tellers and thinkers have generally written in action-words, not quality-words; some by instinct, some on principle (as Stevenson, for one, confesses) eschewing mention of all but most necessary attributes. The artist in language suspects an approaching adjective as he would suspect a possible rogue at the door.

If now we proceed to scrutinize the array of adjectives in the quoted passage, several interesting circumstances invite our attention.

The qualities occur often intensified, in couplets, or in triplets:

more obvious	thorough, exhaustive and open
free, popular	severe, distinct and sharp
popular, representative	best and only effective
careful, painstaking	

This piling up of connected adjectives accentuates the question whether all are necessary. What is added to the thought by sticking in "careful" before "painstaking"? What kind of painstaking would not be careful? "Exhaustive and open discussion" would have been complete; why expend another breath to make it "*thorough*, exhaustive and open"? What additional idea is conveyed by the middle member of the phrase "severe, *distinct* and sharp"? "Tautology," says the first dictionary I open, "is repetition without addition of force or clearness, and is disguised by a change of wording."

While the instances just noticed are clear pleonasms, there are in the passage several other adjectives which fall under rather more than general suspicion which lies against the race: "free, popular institutions," "popular, representative body," "free discussion," "public policy," "public opinion," as phrases in so brief an excerpt, seem somewhat overburdening. That the air should be "bracing" is doubtless well enough, though not necessary. Criticism need not have been "telling criticism," and examination need not have been "unsparing examination."

The list reveals a striking predilection not only for unnecessary qualifications in general, but for intensifications, superlatives and absolutes. Mr. Wilson writes of "the very life" — not the life — but the *very* life; he speaks not merely of the issues involved, but of "*all* the issues involved." The simple fact is not to be trusted to tell its own due story; it must be intensified so as to be as unmistakably absolute in the mind of the reader as it is in that of the writer. He speaks of "underlying principles," as if all principles were not underlying. He wishes to write of different positions, and he

represents them as "*opposite* positions." He thinks of one of the functions of debate, and instantly it becomes "the *essential* function," and "the *cardinal* fact," and a fact of such majesty that we are somewhat solemnly "brought into the presence of" it. . . .

For the present let us content ourselves with a practical summary of our investigation of an example of Mr. Wilson's early writing.

It is possible to strike out one-third of the words marshaled by the young gentleman's facile pen, toss another dozen out of the window, for good measure, and still leave the sense not only complete, but — who will deny? — more vigorously expressed. Thus:

> The life of popular institutions depends upon their breathing the air of thorough open discussion. The cardinal point of this article is: debate is a prime function of a representative body. In the distinct enunciation of principles, the unsparing examination of opposed positions, the careful unraveling of the issues involved, we see an effective means of educating public opinion.

This paragraph contains fifty-nine words; Mr. Wilson's original contains one hundred eight. Is any thought, or nuance, missing?

How to Write Like a Social Scientist

Samuel T. Williamson • 1891–

People in professions think that they must use a special language. Sometimes this is true, and we respect this necessity. But too often they use an overdose of what Dr. Johnson called "hard words," and this we can only deplore. Although Mr. Williamson is here criticizing the social scientists, he might well be speaking about Educators, the Legal Mind at Work, or the New Critics. He is speaking about the art of gobbledygook, *which in Washington circles is the name for that cunning whereby the writer makes five words do badly the work of one and unerringly substitutes the leaden phrase for the winged one.*

DURING MY YEARS as an editor, I have seen probably hundreds of job applicants who were either just out of College or in their senior year. All wanted "to write." Many brought letters from their teachers. But I do not recall one letter announcing that its bearer could write what he wished to say with clarity and directness, with economy of words, and with pleasing variety of sentence structure.

From *The Saturday Review of Literature,* October 4, 1947. Reprinted by permission of *The Saturday Review* and Samuel T. Williamson.

Most of these young men and women could not write plain English. Apparently their noses had not been rubbed in the drudgery of putting one simple well-chosen word behind the other. If this was true of teachers' pets, what about the rest? What about those going into business and industry? Or those going into professions? What about those who remain at college — first for a Master of Arts degree, then an instructorship combined with work for a Ph.D., then perhaps an assistant professorship, next a full professorship and finally, as an academic crown of laurel, appointment as head of a department or as dean of a faculty?

Certainly, faculty members of a front-rank university should be better able to express themselves than those they teach. Assume that those in the English department have this ability. Can the same be said of the social scientists — economists, sociologists, and authorities on government? We need today as we never needed so urgently before all the understanding they can give us of problems of earning a living, caring for our fellows, and governing ourselves. Too many of them, I find, can't write as well as their students.

I am still convalescing from overexposure some time ago to products of the academic mind. One of the foundations engaged me to edit manuscripts of a socio-economic research report designed for the thoughtful citizen as well as for the specialist. My expectations were not high — no deathless prose, merely a sturdy, no-nonsense report of explorers into the wilderness of statistics and half-known facts. I knew from experience that economic necessity compels many a professional writer to be a cream-skimmer and a gatherer of easily obtainable material; for unless his publishers will stand the extra cost, he cannot afford the exhaustive investigation which endowed research makes possible. Although I did not expect fine writing from a trained, professional researcher, I did assume that a careful fact-finder would write carefully.

And so, anticipating no literary treat, I plunged into the forest of words of my first manuscript. My weapons were a sturdy eraser and several batteries of sharpened pencils. My armor was a thesaurus. And if I should become lost, a near-by public library was a landmark, and the Encyclopedia of Social Sciences on its reference shelves was an ever-ready guide.

Instead of big trees, I found underbrush. Cutting through involved, lumbering sentences was bad enough, but the real chore was removal of the burdocks of excess verbiage which clung to the manuscript. Nothing was big or large; in my author's lexicon, it was "substantial." When he meant "much," he wrote "to a substantially high degree." If some event took place in the early 1920's, he put it "in the early part of the decade of the twenties." And instead of "that depends," my author wrote, "any answer to this question must bear in mind certain peculiar characteristics of the industry."

So it went for 30,000 words. The pile of verbal burdocks grew — sometimes twelve words from a twenty-word sentence. The shortened version of

20,000 words was perhaps no more thrilling than the original report; but i was terser and crisper. It took less time to read and it could be understoo quicker. That was all I could do. As S. S. McClure once said to me, "A editor can improve a manuscript, but he cannot put in what isn't there.

I did not know the author I was editing; after what I did to his copy i may be just as well that we have not met. Aside from his cat-chasing-its own-tail verbosity, he was a competent enough workman. Apparently he i well thought of. He has his doctorate, he is a trained researcher and a pupi of an eminent professor. He has held a number of fellowships and he ha performed competently several jobs of economic research. But, after thi long academic preparation for what was to be a life work, it is a myster why so little attention was given to acquiring use of simple English.

Later, when I encountered other manuscripts, I found I had been too har on this promising Ph.D. Tone-deaf as he was to words, his report was lighthouse of clarity among the chapters turned in by his so-called academi betters. These brethren — and sister'n — who contributed the remainde of the foundation's study were professors and assistant professors in ou foremost colleges and universities. The names of one or two are occasion ally in newspaper headlines. All of them had, as the professorial term ha it, "published."

Anyone who edits copy, regardless of whether it is good or bad, dis covers in a manuscript certain pet phrases, little quirks of style and othe individual traits of its author. But in the series I edited, all twenty report read alike. Their words would be found in any English dictionary, gramma was beyond criticism, but long passages in these reports demanded no editing but actual translation. For hours at a time, I floundered in brie patches like this: "In eliminating wage changes due to purely transitor conditions, collective bargaining has eliminated one of the important cause of industrial conflict, for changes under such conditions are almost alway followed by a reaction when normal conditions appear."

I am not picking on my little group of social scientists. They are merel members of a caste; they are so used to taking in each other's literary wash ing that it has become a habit for them to clothe their thoughts in the sam smothering verbal garments. Nor are they any worse than most of thei colleagues, for example:

> In the long run, developments in transportation, housing, optimum size o plant, etc., might tend to induce an industrial and demographic pattern simila to the one that consciousness of vulnerability would dictate. Such a tendenc might be advanced by public persuasion and governmental inducement, an advanced more effectively if the causes of urbanization had been carefull studied.

Such pedantic Choctaw may be all right as a sort of code language o shorthand of social science to circulate among initiates, but its perpetrator have no right to impose it on others. The tragedy is that its users appear t be under the impression that it is good English usage.

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do! There once was a time when everyday folk spoke one language, and learned men wrote another. It was called the Dark Ages. The world is in such a state that we may return to the Dark Ages if we do not acquire wisdom. If social scientists have answers to our problems yet feel under no obligation to make themselves understood, then we laymen must learn their language. This may take some practice, but practice should become perfect by following six simple rules of the guild of social science writers. Examples which I give are sound and well tested; they come from manuscripts I edited.

Rule 1. Never use a short word when you can think of a long one. Never say "now," but "currently." It is not "soon" but "presently." You did not have "enough" but a "sufficiency." Never do you come to the "end" but to the "termination." This rule is basic.

Rule 2. Never use one word when you can use two or more. Eschew "probably." Write, "it is improbable," and raise this to "it is not improbable." Then you'll be able to parlay "probably" into "available evidence would tend to indicate that it is not unreasonable to suppose."

Rule 3. Put one-syllable thought into polysyllabic terms. Instead of observing that a work force might be bigger and better, write, "In addition to quantitative enlargement, it is not improbable that there is need also for qualitative improvement in the personnel of the service." If you have discovered that musicians out of practice can't hold jobs, report that "the fact of rapid deterioration of musical skill when not in use soon converts the employed into the unemployable." Resist the impulse to say that much men's clothing is machine made. Put it thus: "Nearly all operations in the industry lend themselves to performance by machine, and all grades of men's clothing sold in significant quantity involve a very substantial amount of machine work."

Rule 4. Put the obvious in terms of the unintelligible. When you write that "the product of the activity of janitors is expended in the identical locality in which that activity takes place," your lay reader is in for a time of it. After an hour's puzzlement, he may conclude that janitors' sweepings are thrown on the town dump. See what you can do with this: "Each article sent to the cleaner is handled separately." You become a member of the guild in good standing if you put it like this. "Within the cleaning plant proper the business of the industry involves several well-defined processes, which, from the economic point of view, may be characterized simply by saying that most of them require separate handling of each individual garment or piece of material to be cleaned."

Rule 5. Announce what you are going to say before you say it. This pitcher's wind-up technique before hurling towards — not at — home plate has two varieties. First is the quick wind-up: "In the following section the policies of the administration will be considered." Then you become strong enough for the contortionist wind-up: "Perhaps more important, therefore, than the question of what standards are in a particular case, there are the

questions of the extent of observance of these standards and the methods of their enforcement." Also you can play with reversing Rule 5 and *say what you have said after you have said it.*

Rule 6. Defend your style as "scientific." Look down on — not up to — clear simple English. Sneer at it as "popular." Scorn it as "journalistic." Explain your failure to put more mental sweat into your writing on the ground that "the social scientists who want to be scientific believe that we can have scientific description of human behavior and trustworthy predictions in the scientific sense only as we build adequate taxonomic systems for observable phenomena and symbolic systems for the manipulation of ideal and abstract entities."

For this explanation I am indebted to Lyman Bryson in the *Saturday Review of Literature* article (Oct. 13, 1945) "Writers: Enemies of Social Science." Standing on ground considerably of his own choosing, Mr. Bryson argued against judging social science writing by literary standards.

Social scientists are not criticized because they are not literary artists. The trouble with social science does not lie in its special vocabulary. Those words are doubtless chosen with great care. The trouble is that too few social scientists take enough care with words outside their special vocabularies.

It is not much to expect that teachers should be more competent in the art of explanation than those they teach. Teachers of social sciences diligently try to acquire knowledge; too few exert themselves enough to impart it intelligently.

Too long has this been excused as "the academic mind." It should be called by what it is: intellectual laziness and grubbymindedness.

The Cliché Expert Testifies on the Atom

Frank Sullivan • *1892–*

We object to the social scientist or other specialist for his overuse of high-sounding words and phrases. We may criticize with equal propriety our own resort to well-worn language, once picturesque, without due and deep thought of its appropriateness. All of us fall back on clichés, letting them drop from our mouths while our minds are engaged elsewhere. Frank Sullivan's Mr. Arbuthnot has testified on many

Originally published in *The New Yorker*, November 17, 1945. Reprinted by permission of Frank Sullivan.

subjects, displaying his impressive collection of clichés from everywhere, but here he surprises us with the large number of stereotypes already collected on so new and recent a subject as the atomic bomb.

Q — MR. ARBUTHNOT, you're the very man I want to see. I've been longing to examine you on atomic energy.

A — Well, my boy, you've come to the right party. I believe I can say that I know all the clichés on the subject.

Q — How can you say that?

A — Without fear of successful contradiction.

Q — I'm glad to hear it. I suspected you would be making a study of the atomic cliché.

A — A study! Why, I've been doing nothing since V-J Day but listen to the experts explain atomic energy and the bomb on the air or editorialize about them in the newspapers. Indeed I *am* the cliché expert of the atom. You realize, of course, what the dropping of that test bomb in the stillness of the New Mexico night did.

Q — What did it do?

A — It ushered in the atomic age, that's what it did. You know what kind of discovery this is?

Q — What kind?

A — A tremendous scientific discovery.

Q — Could the atomic age have arrived by means of any other verb than "usher"?

A — No. "Usher" has the priority.

Q — Mr. Arbuthnot, what will never be the same?

A — The world.

Q — Are you pleased?

A — I don't know. The splitting of the atom could prove a boon to mankind. It could pave the way for a bright new world. On the other hand, it may spell the doom of civilization as we know it.

Q — You mean that it has —

A — Vast possibilities for good or evil.

Q — At any rate, Mr. Arbuthnot, as long as the bomb had to be discovered, I'm glad we got it first.

A — If you don't mind, I will be the one to recite the clichés here. You asked me to, you know.

Q — I'm sorry.

A — Quite all right. I shudder to think.

Q — What?

A — Of what might have happened if Germany or Japan had got the bomb first.

Q — What kind of race was it between the Allied and German scientists?

A — A close race.

Q — What pressed?

A — Time pressed.

Q — With what kind of energy did the scientists work in their race to get the bomb?

A — Feverish energy. Had the war lasted another six months the Germans might have had the bomb. It boggles.

Q — What boggles?

A — This tremendous scientific discovery boggles the imagination. Also stirs same.

Q — Where do we stand, Mr. Arbuthnot?

A — At the threshold of a new era.

Q — And humanity is where?

A — At the crossroads. Will civilization survive? Harness.

Q — Harness, Mr. Arbuthnot? What about it?

A — Harness and unleash. You had better learn to use those two words, my boy, if you expect to talk about the atom, or write about it, either. They are two words very frequently used. With pea, of course.

Q — Why pea?

A — Oh, everything is in terms of the pea. You know how much U–235 it would take to drive an automobile to the moon and back?

Q — No, sir. How much?

A — A lump the size of a pea. Know how much U–235 it would take to ring your electric doorbell for twenty million years?

Q — How much, God forbid?

A — A lump the size of a pea. Know how much it would take to lift the Empire State Building twelve miles into the air?

Q — I wish you would let the Empire State Building alone, Mr. Arbuthnot. It is all right where it is.

A — Sorry. It must be lifted twelve miles into the air. Otherwise, do you know who would not be able to understand the practical application, or meaning, of atomic energy?

Q — No. Who?

A — The average layman.

Q — I see. Well, in that case, up she goes. I gather that a lump the size of a pea would do it.

A — Exactly.

Q — You wouldn't settle for a lump the size of a radish, or a bean?

A — Sorry. The pea is the accepted vegetable in these explanations. Do you know what the atomic energy in the lobe of your left ear could do?

Q — What?

A — If harnessed, it could propel a B–29 from Tokio to San Francisco.

Q — It *could!*

A — Do you know that the energy in every breath you take could send the Twentieth Century Limited from New York to Chicago?

Q — Mercy on us, Mr. Arbuthnot!

A — And the atomic energy in your thumbnail could, if unleashed,

destroy a city twice the size of three Seattles. Likewise, the energy in your . . .

Q — For God's sake, stop, Mr. Arbuthnot! You make me feel like a menace to world security in dire need of control by international authority in the interests of world peace. Kindly leave off explaining atomic energy to me in terms so simple a layman can understand. Explain it to me in scientific terms, and the more abstruse the better.

A — Well, listen carefully and I'll give you a highly technical explanation. In the first place, the existence of the atom was only suspected. Then Einstein . . . equation . . . nucleus . . . electron . . . bombard . . . proton . . . deuteron . . . radioactive . . . neutron . . . atomic weight . . . beta rays . . . matter . . . split . . . chain reaction . . . gamma rays . . . alpha particles . . . Mme. Curie . . . breakdown . . . energy . . . end products . . . control . . . impact . . . matter . . . uranium . . . Dr. Niels Bohr . . . barium . . . orbit . . . Dr. Lise Meitner . . . knowledge pooled . . . Dr. Enrico Fermi . . . military possibilities . . . Dr. Vannevar Bush . . . U–235 . . . isotopes . . . U–238 . . . autocatalytic . . . heavy water . . . New Mexico . . . mushroom-shaped cloud . . . awesome sight . . . fission . . . William L. Laurence . . . and there you had a weapon potentially destructive beyond the wildest nightmares of science. Do I make myself clear?

Q — Perfectly. Now, Mr. Arbuthnot, what is nuclear energy the greatest discovery since?

A — It is the greatest discovery since the discovery of fire. You will find that "Promethean" is the correct adjective to use here.

Q — What does this tremendous scientific discovery do to large armies?

A — It spells the doom of large armies. It also spells the doom of large navies. Likewise, it spells the doom of large air forces. Similarly, as I mentioned earlier, it may spell the doom of civilization. I doubt if so many dooms have been spelled by anything since the phrase was coined.

Q — When was that, sir?

A — I should imagine at the time gunpowder spelled the doom of the bow and arrow.

Q — What is the atomic bomb a menace to?

A — World order, world peace, and world security.

Q — What must be done about it?

A — It must be controlled by an international authority. The San Francisco Charter must be revised to fit the Atomic Age.

Q — What does the bomb make essential?

A — It makes world unity essential. It makes an international league for peace essential if the world is not to be plunged into a third war which will destroy civilization.

Q — In short, its use must be —

A — Banned.

Q — What kind of plaything is the bomb?

A — A dangerous plaything. A dangerous toy.

Q — What kind of boomerang is it?

A — A potential boomerang.

Q — What else is it?

A — It is the greatest challenge mankind has yet faced. It is also the greatest destructive force in history. It has revolutionary possibilities and enormous significance, and its discovery caused international repercussions.

Q — What does the splitting of the atom unleash?

A — The hidden forces of the universe. Vast.

Q — Vast?

A — That's another word you'd better keep at hand if you expect to talk or write about this tremendous scientific discovery. Vast energy, you know. Vast possibilities. Vast implications. Vast prospects. It opens them.

Q — I see. What cannot grasp the full significance of the tremendous scientific discovery?

A — The human mind.

Q — Whose stone is it?

A — The philosopher's stone.

Q — Whose dream?

A — The alchemist's dream.

Q — And whose monster?

A — Frankenstein's monster.

Q — What does it transcend?

A — It transcends the wildest imaginings of Jules Verne.

Q — And of who else?

A — H. G. Wells.

Q — The fantastic prophecies of these gentlemen have become what?

A — Stern reality.

Q — What does it make seem tame?

A — The adventures of Superman and Flash Gordon.

Q — Very good, Mr. Arbuthnot. Now, then, in addition to ushering in the Atomic Age, what else does this T.S.D. do?

A — It brightens the prospect for the abolition of war but increases the possibility of another war. It adds to the store of human knowledge. It unlocks the door to the mysteries of the universe. It makes flights into interstellar space a possibility. It endangers our security and makes future aggression a temptation.

Q — What has it done to warfare?

A — It has revolutionized warfare, and outmoded it, and may outlaw it. It has changed all existing concepts of military power. It has made current weapons of war obsolete.

Q — And what may it do to cities?

A — It may drive cities underground.

Q — Mr. Arbuthnot, in the happy event that atomic energy is not used destructively, what kind of rôle will it play?

A — A peacetime rôle.

Q — Meaning?

A — Meaning cheap power, cheap fuel. A lump of U-235 —

Q — The size of a pea?

A — No, not this time — the size of forty pounds of coal would run the entire nation's heating plants all winter.

Q — What would that result in?

A — Sweeping changes in our daily life and unemployment on a hitherto unheard-of scale.

Q — Bringing about what kind of revolution?

A — An industrial revolution.

Q — Mr. Arbuthnot, should we share the secret with other nations?

A — Yes and no.

Q — If the latter, why?

A — Because we can be trusted with it.

Q — Why can we be trusted with it?

A — Because we would use it only in self-defense and as a last resort.

Q — Who could not be trusted with it?

A — Some future Hitler. Some gangster nation. Some future aggressor.

Q — If we should share it, why that?

A — As a gesture of confidence in other nations.

Q — And anyhow —

A — Anyhow, every nation will possess the secret within five years.

Q — Now, Mr. Arbuthnot, can you tell us what is ironic?

A — It is ironic that several of the major contributions to the bomb were made by scientists whom Hitler and Mussolini had exiled.

Q — In other words, Hitler cooked —

A — His own goose.

Q — What else is ironic?

A — The spending of two billions on the bomb, in contrast to the amounts spent on education, public health, slum clearance, and research on cancer and other diseases.

Q — What kind of commentary is that?

A — A sad commentary on our so-called, or vaunted, civilization.

Q — Mr. Arbuthnot, how ready is man for the Atomic Age?

A — As ready as a child is to handle dynamite.

Q — What kind of little boys do the atomic scientists remind you of?

A — Of little boys playing with matches.

Q — What is a possibility of the future?

A — Atomic bombs a hundred times more destructive than the one dropped on Nagasaki.

Q — What is such a discovery known as?

A — It is known as man's conquest of natural forces.

Q — What does such a discovery advance?

A — It advances the frontiers of science.

Q — And what does the invention of this key to world suicide constitute?

A — It constitutes scientific progress.
Q — I see. Perhaps something ought to be declared. Can you say what?
A — Yes. A moratorium on science.

Story for the Slicks

Elinor Goulding Smith • *1917–*

All the meretriciousness and cheapness of the slick magazine style are parodied in this story by Miss Smith. As she very well shows, such a style is one of the worst in modern writing, with its portentous use of words forced to suggest nuances or vastness not really contained in the subject. Seen at its very worst it is soap-opera style. It is a style easily learned and can be dished out in quantities without thought by one cynical about the integrity of the English language. If you have any sense of style at all, this story should stir you into active analysis of some of your favorite slick magazines. Can you detect zircons passed as diamonds?

CAROL SAUNDERS brushed her thick mop of chestnut hair off her forehead with long, nervous white fingers. *How am I going to tell Jim?* she thought. *How can I tell him?* She thought of Jim's long, lean jaw, his dark tousled hair, and his crooked grin. *Oh, Jim, Jim* — (Opening paragraph plunges you right into the story with all its intense passion and suspense.)

But I mustn't think about that now. I'm so tired, she thought wearily, and the thin fingers twined nervously in the thick hair. She stood up suddenly and went into the bathroom, and she noticed dully that the faucet was still dripping. *I'll have to get Jim to fix it,* she thought automatically. (The homey touch.)

Determinedly, she turned on the cold water full force and let its clean sparkling freshness flow over her thin white wrists, and then she leaned over and dipped up the water with her slim hands and felt the sharp cold on her hot face. She dipped pads of absorbent cotton in the water and bathed her burning eyes, and she brushed out her hair with long, soothing rhythmic strokes, away from her forehead. (Beauty hints.)

She surveyed herself in the mirror. She saw the white, pointed face and the hair that seemed almost too heavy for the slim neck. It hung round her shoulders in a thick mass. "It's as soft to touch as a spaniel's ears," Jim

Reprinted by permission of the author from *The Pocket Atlantic,* ed. Edward Weeks (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1946), pp. 83–89.

always said. The lashes around the wide gray eyes were stuck together in dark points with little beads of the cold water still clinging to them. And the lower lip of the full crimson mouth was quivering. (Important that heroine be described, but not too specifically. Sprinkle liberally with "slim" wherever possible. Helpful if heroine can be made to whip in and out of tight sweaters.)

Tomorrow, she thought wearily, twisting and untwisting the long, nervous fingers. *Let tomorrow be time enough to tell him. I'm so tired today.* (There has to be at least one sentence starting with "let.")

She moved swiftly, with the easy flowing walk that Jim loved, and stood awkwardly for a moment in the living room. The late afternoon sun made a brilliant, warm golden splash on the center of the soft green carpet. *It's so quiet,* she thought, *and it seems almost strange to be here, in this house, now.* (This doesn't mean a thing, but it almost sounds as though it does, doesn't it?)

She thought suddenly that it was getting late, and Jim would be home soon. She went into the kitchen and leaned on the cool enamel table. The kitchen was bright and sunny with yellow walls and crisp curtains with appliquéd tulips. (Interior decorating hints are absolutely necessary.)

She caught herself humming a tune — "Star Dust," she realized suddenly. Their song. *Oh, Jim, Jim,* she thought, *remember how it was that night on the top of the bus, and it was so cold and clear, and I could feel the roughness of your coat against my cheek!* (Stir in a little nostalgia.)

And you were laughing because the clean cold wind kept whipping my hair across your face. Ah, we had fun. (Always change paragraphs at every possible opportunity, regardless of the meaning. Be sure heroine talks and thinks like a heroine, as opposed to a human being.)

And suddenly the small white face was down on the cold enamel table and bitter sobs shook the slim shoulders. (Got another "slim" in. Good!)

Then she straightened up with determination. *That's enough of that, Carol Saunders,* she thought, and she threw back the slim shoulders and lifted the little pointed chin. (A little pointed chin is always good too — tears at the heartstrings.)

I think I'll make some blueberry torte, she decided, and she glanced at the clock to see if there would be enough time before dinner. There would be, and she started working swiftly; she thought happily, *Jim always loves blueberry torte.* (Always be specific about food. A good recipe never hurts either.)

She deftly creamed a quarter of a cup of rich yellow butter and a tablespoon of sugar in the blue bowl, and added one egg yolk and a little salt and flour. (This is the most complicated recipe I could find in the Settlement Cook Book — it ought to be a killer.) She patted and pressed the dough in the shining greased pan (or spring form) with her slim quick fingers till it was a quarter of an inch thick, and placed it in the gleaming refrigerator overnight. Then she filled it with any desired Fruit Mixture, and baked.

Then, still humming to herself, having lined the bottom and sides of a spring form with Muerbe Teig No. 1, page 377, she sprinkled it with bread crumbs, added one quart of blueberries (*How ripe the berries are!* she thought, and she ate one, slowly savoring its sweetness), sprinkled it with one quarter of a cup of sugar (*How white the sugar is!* she thought unexpectedly), and cinnamon and two tablespoons of lemon juice. Over all she dripped the yolk of an egg beaten with three tablespoons of rich yellow cream. She baked it in the hot oven for fifteen minutes, then reduced the heat to three hundred and twenty-five degrees Fahrenheit.

This time she baked it till the crust was golden brown. *Jim loves it with the crust nice and brown,* she thought.

She sniffed the heavenly smell of the Muerbe Teig No. 1, page 377, and her face was flushed from the heat of the stove and her eyes were shining. She beat four egg whites until they were stiff and stood up in little white crusty peaks, and added powdered sugar. When the torte was ready, crust nicely browned, she spread the beaten eggs and sugar over it, returned it quickly to the oven, and baked it fifteen minutes more at three hundred degrees Fahrenheit. (I wonder if anybody ever tried this.)

While she was waiting for it to be ready, she realized suddenly that she was famished, and she thought, *I'll make pickled herring with lots of sour cream, just the way Jim loves it, and chicken soup with matzos balls, and creplach. And pot roast with potato latkes.* (Always give menus. Memo: Remember to get other cook book. Feel certain this is not the right cook book for magazine fiction writer.)

Carol didn't hear Jim's key turning in the lock, and he strode in and stood for a moment in the kitchen doorway, looking at her. Her face was flushed, and one tendril of hair had separated from the chestnut mass and curled over one cheek. (A loose tendril is always good.)

Suddenly she felt his presence, and she turned quickly. He was standing there, grinning that crooked grin that always made her heart turn over. (Crooked grin absolutely essential.) He was at her side with one step, and then he was crushing her to him, and her little white face was pressed tight against the warm roughness of his tweed shoulder. He buried his hands in the thick mass of her hair, and then he lifted her face up to kiss her. *She's so little,* he thought. He was always surprised at how little she was. (This establishes that he is of the necessary height and breadth for a proper hero.)

"Jim, darling," Carol said, "let me get my breath." (*He mustn't suspect,* she thought. *I'll tell him tomorrow.*) "And darling," she said, "you'd better hurry and wash — dinner's ready."

When they sat down to dinner, she was quite composed again. The tall glasses sparkled against the deep-blue linen table mats that she had made from that old blue linen dress, and trimmed with the oyster-white cotton fringe that made a happy design against the polished mahogany. (More housekeeping hints.) The lovely old silver that she had got from Grand-

mother Stanford on her wedding day gleamed softly. She kept the silver polished with reverent care, and its soft sheen never failed to remind her of Grandmother Stanford's shining white hair that she had carried bravely, like a banner. (Bravely, like a banner — isn't that *good?*) If only she could be as brave, if only she could have the strength that Grandmother had had.

Not that Carol Saunders hadn't been brave. She'd been brave the day that Jim had come home from the Army induction center, rejected. She had been strong then. She remembered how he had come home that day, his shoulders bent, his gray eyes smouldering with helpless rage. "It's no good," he had said, "they won't have me — that ankle — " Carol had known about his ankle — that time it had been broken, but he'd fought on to make his touchdown before he collapsed and was carried from the field. That ankle would never be right — she had known that. And she had been strong. (Naturally, there has to be a football injury.)

But this — this was different.

They finished dinner, and Jim helped her to clear away the dishes.

"Darling," she said, blinking back the tears, "I don't feel like washing the dishes tonight — let's just stack them in the sink, and I'll do them in the morning." She pushed her hair back from her forehead with the funny little gesture that Jim loved.

"Sure, honey," he said, "if you say so. It's certainly no hardship for me."

Carol laughed uncertainly. And then suddenly she knew that she had to tell him. Now.

"Come in the living room," she said. Her heart pounded painfully, and she could feel the pulse beating in the soft part of her neck. "I want to talk to you."

Jim looked puzzled, but he followed Carol into the living room. He sank down on the big soft couch covered with deep red frieze and trimmed with a looped woolen fringe of the palest gray. Carol came and sat close to him. She linked her thin fingers, and sat there a moment, looking down at her hands. *I have to tell him now,* she thought. But still she sat there, silently, twining and untwining the long, thin fingers.

Jim sat as still as death, waiting. Suddenly he leaned forward and caught both her hands in his big ones. "What is it, Carol?" he said, his deep voice vibrant with sympathy. "What is it?" he said again. "Darling," he added softly, "remember that I love you."

Carol looked up gratefully, and her wide gray eyes filled with tears.

She felt fear, like a cold hand laid across her heart.

And then suddenly she thought of Grandmother Stanford. And she knew then, deep within her, that she could be strong too. She held her little head high, and the gray eyes were shining.

"Jim," she said, "I'm going to tell you straight. I — I — " Her voice broke, but she swallowed and went on bravely in a clear voice. (Now, I believe, if I have learned the method properly, we are at the crux of the story. It just so happens I don't have a good crux on hand at the moment,

but I can think one up later. It hardly matters, for the denouement is the same in any case.)

Jim stared at her a moment, unbelief in his honest eyes, his long jaw rigid. She saw a tiny muscle quivering in his temple. The room was very still, and somewhere off in the distance they heard the plaintive cry of a train rushing through the night.

Finally Jim spoke. "Carol," he said, and his voice shook a little.

"Carol — we'll be all right. We'll start over, you and I, together."

"Jim!" Carol cried. "Oh, Jim!" She started to cry, and he wrapped her in his strong arms till she was quiet again. "Oh, darling," she said then. "Darling."

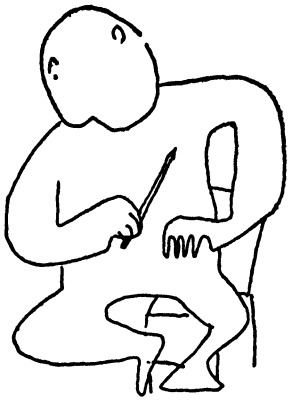
Suddenly she sat up straight. "Jim," she said. "Let's wash the dishes *now.*"

My Mistress' Eyes
Sonnet 130

William Shakespeare · 1564–1616

Mr. Arbuthnot was an expert in clichés on the atom bomb. Here, in a poem, William Shakespeare is critical of the clichés from the love language of his time. Wittily by mocking the conventional language his fellow poets (and he) had used to celebrate their lady loves, he convinces us, by this reverse spin, that his lady is fairer far than those decked out with the ink-and-paper flowers of fine phrases.

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak; yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound.
I grant I never saw a goddess go:
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.



"You mean you don't know what a predicate is?"

Humpty Dumpty on Words

Lewis Carroll • 1832–1898

All of us know how Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland *and* Through the Looking-Glass *reveal a world in which objects change shape, appear and disappear unpredictably — a cockeyed world, as much so as our world of every day which custom has made ordinary and normal. Equally important is Alice's and Humpty Dumpty's interest in words, which also make our heads spin. Not children's books, really, these two volumes have done much to encourage experiments with language, anticipating Gertrude Stein and James Joyce in their malformation and recombination of words and phrases which gyre and gimble in the wabe. The whole poem "Jabberwocky" is printed at the end of this section.*

HOWEVER, the egg only got larger and larger, and more and more human: when she had come within a few yards of it, she saw that it had eyes and a nose and mouth; and, when she had come close to it, she saw clearly that it was HUMPTY DUMPTY himself. "It can't be anybody else!" she said to herself. "I'm as certain of it as if his name were written all over his face!"

It might have been written a hundred times, easily, on that enormous face. Humpty Dumpty was sitting, with his legs crossed like a Turk, on the top of a high wall — such a narrow one that Alice quite wondered how he could keep his balance — and, as his eyes were steadily fixed in the opposite direction, and he didn't take the least notice of her, she thought he must be a stuffed figure, after all.

"And how exactly like an egg he is!" she said aloud, standing with her hands ready to catch him, for she was every moment expecting him to fall.

"It's *very* provoking," Humpty Dumpty said after a long silence, looking away from Alice as he spoke, "to be called an egg — *very!*"

"I said you *looked* like an egg, Sir," Alice gently explained. "And some eggs are very pretty, you know," she added, hoping to turn her remark into a sort of compliment.

"Some people," said Humpty Dumpty, looking away from her as usual, "have no more sense than a baby!"

Alice didn't know what to say to this: it wasn't at all like conversation, she thought, as he never said anything to *her;* in fact, his last remark was evidently addressed to a tree — so she stood and softly repeated to herself —

> "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall:
> Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
> All the King's horses and all the King's men
> Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty in his place again.

"That last line is much too long for the poetry," she added, almost out loud, forgetting that Humpty Dumpty would hear her.

"Don't stand chattering to yourself like that," Humpty Dumpty said, looking at her for the first time, "but tell me your name and your business."

"My *name* is Alice, but — "

"It's a stupid name enough!" Humpty Dumpty interrupted impatiently. "What does it mean?"

"*Must* a name mean something?" Alice asked doubtfully.

"Of course it must," Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh: "*my* name means the shape I am — and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost."

"Why do you sit out here all alone?" said Alice, not wishing to begin an argument.

"Why, because there's nobody with me!" cried Humpty Dumpty. "Did you think I didn't know the answer to *that?* Ask another."

"Don't you think you'd be safer down on the ground?" Alice went on, not with any idea of making another riddle, but simply in her good-natured anxiety for the queer creature. "That wall is so *very* narrow!"

"What tremendously easy riddles you ask!!" Humpty Dumpty growled out. "Of course I don't think so! Why if ever I *did* fall off — which there's no chance of — but *if* I did ——— " Here he pursed up his lips, and looked

so solemn and grand that Alice could hardly help laughing. "*If* I *did* fall," he went on, "*the King has promised me* — ah, you may turn pale, if you like! You didn't think I was going to say that, did you? *The King has promised me — with his very own mouth* — to — to ——"

"To send all his horses and all his men," Alice interrupted, rather unwisely.

"Now I declare that's too bad!" Humpty Dumpty cried, breaking into a sudden passion. "You've been listening at doors — and behind trees — and down chimneys — or you couldn't have known it!"

"I haven't indeed!" Alice said very gently. "It's in a book."

"Ah, well! They may write such things in a *book*," Humpty Dumpty said in a calmer tone. "That's what you call a History of England, that is. Now, take a good look at me! I'm one that has spoken to a King, *I* am: mayhap you'll never see such another: and, to show you I'm not proud, you may shake hands with me!" And he grinned almost from ear to ear, as he leant forwards (and as nearly as possible fell off the wall in doing so) and offered Alice his hand. She watched him a little anxiously as she took it. "If he smiled much more the ends of his mouth might meet behind," she thought: "And then I don't know *what* would happen to his head! I'm afraid it would come off!"

"Yes, all his horses and all his men," Humpty Dumpty went on. "They'd pick me up again in a minute, *they* would! However, this conversation is going on a little too fast: let's go back to the last remark but one."

"I'm afraid I can't quite remember it," Alice said, very politely.

"In that case we start afresh," said Humpty Dumpty, "and it's my turn to choose a subject ——" ("He talks about it just as if it was a game!" thought Alice.) "So here's a question for you. How old did you say you were?"

Alice made a short calculation, and said, "Seven years and six months."

"Wrong!" Humpty Dumpty exclaimed triumphantly. "You never said a word like it!"

"I thought you meant 'How old *are* you?'" Alice explained.

"If I'd meant that, I'd have said it," said Humpty Dumpty.

Alice didn't want to begin another argument, so she said nothing.

"Seven years and six months!" Humpty Dumpty repeated thoughtfully. "An uncomfortable sort of age. Now if you'd asked *my* advice, I'd have said 'Leave off at seven' —— but it's too late now."

"I never ask advice about growing," Alice said indignantly.

"Too proud?" the other enquired.

Alice felt even more indignant at this suggestion. "I mean," she said, "that one can't help growing older."

"*One* can't, perhaps," said Humpty Dumpty: "but *two* can. With proper assistance, you might have left off at seven."

"What a beautiful belt you've got on!" Alice suddenly remarked. (They had had quite enough of the subject of age, she thought: and, if they really

were to take turns in choosing subjects, it was *her* turn now.) "At least," she corrected herself on second thoughts, "a beautiful cravat, I should have said — no, a belt, I mean — I beg your pardon!" she added in dismay, for Humpty Dumpty looked thoroughly offended, and she began to wish she hadn't chosen that subject. "If only I knew," she thought to herself, "which was neck and which was waist!"

Evidently Humpty Dumpty was very angry, though he said nothing for a minute or two. When he *did* speak again, it was in a deep growl.

"It is a — *most* — *provoking* — thing," he said at last, "when a person doesn't know a cravat from a belt!"

"I know it's very ignorant of me!" Alice said, in so humble a tone that Humpty Dumpty relented.

"It's a cravat, child, and a beautiful one, as you say. It's a present from the White King and Queen. There now!"

"Is it really?" said Alice, quite pleased to find that she *had* chosen a good subject after all.

"They gave it me," Humpty Dumpty continued thoughtfully as he crossed one knee over the other and clasped his hands round it, "they gave it me — for an un-birthday present."

"I beg your pardon?" Alice said with a puzzled air.

"I'm not offended," said Humpty Dumpty.

"I mean, what *is* an un-birthday present?"

"A present given when it isn't your birthday, of course."

Alice considered a little. "I like birthday presents best," she said at last.

"You don't know what you're talking about!" cried Humpty Dumpty. "How many days are there in a year?"

"Three hundred and sixty-five," said Alice.

"And how many birthdays have you?"

"One."

"And if you take one from three hundred and sixty-five what remains?"

"Three hundred and sixty-four, of course."

Humpty Dumpty looked doubtful. "I'd rather see that done on paper," he said.

Alice couldn't help smiling as she took out her memorandum-book, and worked the sum for him:

$$\begin{array}{r} 365 \\ 1 \\ \hline 364 \end{array}$$

Humpty Dumpty took the book and looked at it carefully. "That seems to be done right——" he began.

"You're holding it upside down!" Alice interrupted.

"To be sure I was!" Humpty Dumpty said gaily as she turned it round for him. "I thought it looked a little queer. As I was saying, that *seems* to

be done right — though I haven't time to look it over thoroughly just now — and that shows that there are three hundred and sixty-four days when you might get un-birthday presents ——"

"Certainly," said Alice.

"And only *one* for birthday presents, you know. There's glory for you!"

"I don't know what you mean by 'glory'," Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't — till I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!' "

"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument'," Alice objected.

"When *I* use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less."

"The question is," said Alice, "whether you *can* make words mean so many different things."

"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master —— that's all."

Alice was too much puzzled to say anything; so after a minute Humpty Dumpty began again. "They've a temper, some of them — particularly verbs: they're the proudest — adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs — however, *I* can manage the whole lot of them! Impenetrability! That's what *I* say!"

"Would you tell me please," said Alice, "what that means?"

"Now you talk like a reasonable child," said Humpty Dumpty, looking very much pleased. "I meant by 'impenetrability' that we've had enough of that subject, and it would be just as well if you'd mention what you mean to do next, as I suppose you don't mean to stop here all the rest of your life."

"That's a great deal to make one word mean," Alice said in a thoughtful tone.

"When I make a word do a lot of work like that," said Humpty Dumpty, "I always pay it extra."

"Oh!" said Alice. She was too much puzzled to make any other remark.

"Ah, you should see 'em come round me of a Saturday night," Humpty Dumpty went on, wagging his head gravely from side to side, "for to get their wages, you know."

(Alice didn't venture to ask what he paid them with; and so you see I can't tell *you*.)

"You seem very clever at explaining words, Sir," said Alice. "Would you kindly tell me the meaning of the poem called 'Jabberwocky'?"

"Let's hear it," said Humpty Dumpty. "I can explain all the poems that ever were invented — and a good many that haven't been invented just yet."

This sounded very hopeful, so Alice repeated the first verse: —

" 'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe."

"That's enough to begin with," Humpty Dumpty interrupted: "there are plenty of hard words there. *'Brillig'* means four o'clock in the afternoon — the time when you begin *broiling* things for dinner."

"That'll do very well," said Alice: "and *'slithy'*?"

"Well, *'slithy'* means 'lithe and slimy.' 'Lithe' is the same as 'active.' You see it's like a portmanteau — there are two meanings packed up into one word."

"I see it now," Alice remarked thoughtfully: "and what are *'toves'*?"

"Well, *'toves'* are something like badgers — they're something like lizards — and they're something like corkscrews."

"They must be very curious-looking creatures."

"They are that," said Humpty Dumpty; "also they make their nests under sun-dials — also they live on cheese."

"And what's to *'gyre'* and to *'gimble'*?"

"To *'gyre'* is to go round and round like a gyroscope. To *'gimble'* is to make holes like a gimlet."

"And *'the wabe'* is the grass-plot round a sun-dial, I suppose?" said Alice, surprised at her own ingenuity.

"Of course it is. It's called *'wabe'* you know, because it goes a long way before it, and a long way behind it — "

"And a long way beyond it on each side," Alice added.

"Exactly so. Well then, *'mimsy'* is 'flimsy and miserable' (there's another portmanteau for you). And a *'borogove'* is a thin shabby-looking bird with its feathers sticking out all round — something like a live mop."

"And then *'mome raths'*?" said Alice. "I'm afraid I'm giving you a great deal of trouble."

"Well, a *'rath'* is a sort of green pig: but *'mome'* I'm not certain about. I think it's short for 'from home' — meaning that they'd lost their way, you know."

"And what does *'outgrabe'* mean?"

"Well, *'outgrabing'* is something between bellowing and whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle: however, you'll hear it done, maybe — down in the wood yonder — and, when you've once heard it, you'll be *quite* content. Who's been repeating all that hard stuff to you?"

"I read it in a book," said Alice. "But I *had* some poetry repeated to me much easier than that, by — Tweedledee, I think it was."

"As to poetry, you know," said Humpty Dumpty, stretching out one of his great hands, "*I* can repeat poetry as well as other folk, if it comes to that —— "

"Oh, it needn't come to that!" Alice hastily said, hoping to keep him from beginning.

"The piece I'm going to repeat," he went on without noticing her remark, "was written entirely for your amusement."

Alice felt that in that case she really *ought* to listen to it; so she sat down, and said "Thank you" rather sadly.

"In winter, when the fields are white,
I sing this song for your delight——

only I don't sing it," he added, as an explanation.

"I see you don't," said Alice.

"If you can *see* whether I'm singing or not, you've sharper eyes than most," Humpty Dumpty remarked severely. Alice was silent.

"In spring, when woods are getting green,
I'll try and tell you what I mean:"

"Thank you very much," said Alice.

"In summer, when the days are long,
Perhaps you'll understand the song:

In autumn, when the leaves are brown,
Take pen and ink, and write it down."

"I will, if I can remember it so long," said Alice.

"You needn't go on making remarks like that," Humpty Dumpty said: "they're not sensible, and they put me out.

"I sent a message to the fish:
I told them 'This is what I wish.'

The little fishes of the sea,
They sent an answer back to me.

The little fishes' answer was
'We cannot do it, Sir, because——' "

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand," said Alice.

"It gets easier further on," Humpty Dumpty replied.

"I sent to them again to say
'It will be better to obey.'

The fishes answered, with a grin
'Why, what a temper you are in!'

I told them once, I told them twice:
They would not listen to advice.

I took a kettle large and new,
Fit for the deed I had to do.

My heart went hop, my heart went thump:
I filled the kettle at the pump.

Then some one came to me and said
'The little fishes are in bed.'

I said to him, I said it plain,
'Then you must wake them up again.'

I said it very loud and clear:
I went and shouted in his ear."

Humpty Dumpty raised his voice almost to a scream as he repeated this verse, and Alice thought, with a shudder, "I wouldn't have been the messenger for *anything!*"

"But he was very stiff and proud:
He said, 'You needn't shout so loud!'

And he was very proud and stiff:
He said 'I'd go and wake them, if ——'

I took a corkscrew from the shelf:
I went to wake them up myself.

And when I found the door was locked,
I pulled and pushed and kicked and knocked.

And when I found the door was shut,
I tried to turn the handle, but ——"

There was a long pause.

"Is that all?" Alice timidly asked.

"That's all," said Humpty Dumpty. "Good-bye."

This was rather sudden, Alice thought: but, after such a *very* strong hint that she ought to be going, she felt that it would hardly be civil to stay. So she got up, and held out her hand. "Good-bye, till we meet again!" she said as cheerfully as she could.

"I shouldn't know you again if we *did* meet," Humpty Dumpty replied in a discontented tone, giving her one of his fingers to shake: "you're so exactly like other people."

"The face is what one goes by, generally," Alice remarked in a thoughtful tone.

"That's just what I complain of," said Humpty Dumpty. "Your face is the same as everybody has — the two eyes, so ——" (marking their places in the air with his thumb) "nose in the middle, mouth under. It's always the same. Now if you had the two eyes on the same side of the nose, for instance — or the mouth at the top — that would be *some* help."

"It wouldn't look nice," Alice objected. But Humpty Dumpty only shut his eyes, and said "Wait till you've tried."

Alice waited a minute to see if he would speak again, but as he never opened his eyes or took any further notice of her, she said "Good-bye!" once more, and, getting no answer to this, she quietly walked away: but she couldn't help saying to herself, as she went, "Of all the unsatisfactory——" (she repeated this aloud, as it was a great comfort to have such a long word to say) "of all the unsatisfactory people I *ever* met——" She never finished the sentence, for at this moment a heavy crash shook the forest from end to end.

Henry James Gives and Asks Directions

Edith Wharton • 1862–1937

In contrast to his brother William James, who though a "social scientist," wrote with beautiful directness and clarity, Henry James, the novelist, successfully warded off popularity by developing a devious style in which serpentine sentences, with qualification piled on qualification, sinuously snake their way about a subtle perception or an elusive thought. To the discriminating reader such writing can be most attractive when it is in pursuit of subtlety. But as Henry James's friend and admirer Edith Wharton shows, it becomes ridiculous when applied to a straightforward situation calling for simplicity.

JAMES, who was a frequent companion on our English motor-trips, was firmly convinced that, because he lived in England, and our chauffeur (an American) did not, it was necessary that the latter should be guided by him through the intricacies of the English country-side. Signposts were rare in England in those days, and for many years afterward, and a truly British reserve seemed to make the local authorities reluctant to communicate with the invading stranger. Indeed, considerable difficulty existed as to the formulating of advice and instructions, and I remember in one village the agitated warning: "Motorists! Beware of the children!"—while in general there was a marked absence of indications as to the whereabouts of the next village.

It chanced, however, that Charles Cook, our faithful and skilful driver, was a born path-finder, while James's sense of direction was non-existent, or rather actively but always erroneously alert; and the consequences of his intervention were always bewildering, and sometimes extremely fa-

From *A Backward Glance*, by Edith Wharton. Copyright, 1934, D. Appleton-Century Co. Reprinted by permission of the publishers, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc.

tiguing. The first time that my husband and I went to Lamb House by motor (coming from France) James, who had travelled to Folkestone by train to meet us, insisted on seating himself next to Cook, on the plea that the roads across Romney marsh formed such a tangle that only an old inhabitant could guide us to Rye. The suggestion resulted in our turning around and around in our tracks till long after dark, though Rye, conspicuous on its conical hill, was just ahead of us, and Cook could easily have landed us there in time for tea.

Another year we had been motoring in the west country, and on the way back were to spend a night at Malvern. As we approached (at the close of a dark rainy afternoon) I saw James growing restless, and was not surprised to hear him say: "My dear, I once spent a summer at Malvern, and know it very well; and as it is rather difficult to find the way to the hotel, it might be well if Edward were to change places with me, and let me sit beside Cook." My husband of course acceded (though with doubt in his heart), and James having taken his place, we awaited the result. Malvern, if I am not mistaken, is encircled by a sort of upper boulevard, of the kind called in Italy a *strada di circonvallazione,* and for an hour we circled about above the outspread city, while James vainly tried to remember which particular street led down most directly to our hotel. At each corner (literally) he stopped the motor, and we heard a muttering, first confident and then anguished. "This — this, my dear Cook, yes . . . this certainly is the right corner. But no; stay! A moment longer, please — in this light it's so difficult . . . appearances are so misleading. . . . It may be . . . yes! I think it *is* the next turn . . . 'a little farther lend thy guiding hand' . . . that is, drive on; but slowly, please, my dear Cook; *very* slowly!" And at the next corner the same agitated monologue would be repeated; till at length Cook, the mildest of men, interrupted gently: "I guess any turn'll get us down into the town, Mr. James, and after that I can ask — " and late, hungry and exhausted, we arrived at length at our destination, James still convinced that the next turn would have been the right one, if only we had been more patient.

The most absurd of these episodes occurred on another rainy evening, when James and I chanced to arrive at Windsor long after dark. We must have been driven by a strange chauffeur — perhaps Cook was on a holiday; at any rate, having fallen into the lazy habit of trusting to him to know the way, I found myself at a loss to direct his substitute to the King's Road. While I was hesitating and peering out into the darkness, James spied an ancient doddering man who had stopped in the rain to gaze at us. "Wait a moment, my dear — I'll ask him where we are"; and leaning out he signalled to the spectator.

"My good man, if you'll be good enough to come here, please; a little nearer — so," and as the old man came up: "My friend, to put it to you in two words, this lady and I have just arrived here from *Slough;* that is to say, to be more strictly accurate, we have recently *passed through* Slough on our

way here, having actually motored to Windsor from Rye, which was our point of departure; and the darkness having overtaken us, we should be much obliged if you would tell us where we now are in relation, say, to the High Street, which, as you of course know, leads to the Castle, after leaving on the left hand the turn down to the railroad station."

I was not surprised to have this extraordinary appeal met by silence, and a dazed expression on the old wrinkled face at the window; nor to have James go on: "In short" (his invariable prelude to a fresh series of explanatory ramifications), "in short, my good man, what I want to put to you in a word is this: supposing we have already (as I have reason to think we have) driven past the turn down to the railway station (which, in that case, by the way, would probably not have been on our left hand, but on our right), where are we now in relation to . . ."

"Oh, please," I interrupted, feeling myself utterly unable to sit through another parenthesis, "do ask him where the King's Road is."

"Ah — ? The King's Road? Just so! Quite right! Can you, as a matter of fact, my good man, tell us where, in relation to our present position, the King's Road exactly *is*?"

"Ye're in it," said the aged face at the window.

The Pun Question

Oliver Wendell Holmes • *1809–1894*

Himself the leading punster of his day, Oliver Wendell Holmes in this monologue from The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table *(1858), pretends to attack his favorite form of verbal play. Yes, he seems to say, he who puns should be punished. But, we might ask seriously, are puns necessarily "the lowest form of wit"? Need we groan at every pun we hear simply because it is a pun? Are there not good puns, which are not jingles but truly extend meaning? One recalls the terrifying and macabre pun in* Macbeth, *when Lady Macbeth, planning the murder of Duncan exclaims, "I'll guild the faces of the grooms withal 'Til it must seem their guilt." Or one properly relishes the pun from the dying Mercutio: "Look for me tomorrow and you will find me a grave man." Yes, puns can be pungent.*

DO YOU MEAN to say the pun-question is not clearly settled in your minds? Let me lay down the law upon the subject. Life and language are alike sacred. Homicide and *verbicide* — that is, violent treatment of a word with fatal results to its legitimate meaning, which is its life — are alike for-

bidden. Manslaughter, which is the meaning of the one, is the same as a man's laughter, which is the end of the other. A pun is *prima facie* an insult to the person you are talking with. It implies utter indifference to or sublime contempt for his remarks, no matter how serious. I speak of total depravity, and one says all that is written on the subject is deep raving. I have committed my self-respect by talking with such a person. I should like to commit him, but cannot, because he is a nuisance. Or I speak of geological convulsions, and he asks me what was the cosine of Noah's ark; also, whether the Deluge was not a deal huger than any modern inundation.

A pun does not commonly justify a blow in return. But if a blow were given for such cause, and death ensued, the jury would be judges both of the facts and of the pun, and might, if the latter were of an aggravated character, return a verdict of justifiable homicide. Thus, in a case lately decided before Miller, J., Doe presented Roe a subscription paper, and urged the claims of suffering humanity. Roe replied by asking, When charity was like a top? It was in evidence that Doe preserved a dignified silence. Roe then said, "When it begins to hum." Doe then — and not until then — struck Roe, and his head happening to hit a bound volume of the *Monthly Rag-Bag and Stolen Miscellany,* intense mortification ensued, with a fatal result. The chief laid down his notions of the law to his brother justices, who unanimously replied, "Jest so." The chief rejoined, that no man should jest so without being punished for it, and charged for the prisoner, who was acquitted, and the pun ordered to be burned by the sheriff. The bound volume was forfeited as a deodand, but not claimed.

People that make puns are like wanton boys that put coppers on the railroad tracks. They amuse themselves and other children, but their little trick may upset a freight train of conversation for the sake of a battered witticism.

I will thank you, B.F., to bring down two books, of which I will mark the places on this slip of paper. (While he is gone, I may say that this boy, our landlady's youngest, is called Benjamin Franklin, after the celebrated philosopher of that name. A highly merited compliment.)

I wished to refer to two eminent authorities. Now be so good as to listen. The great moralist says: "To trifle with the vocabulary which is the vehicle of social intercourse is to tamper with the currency of human intelligence. He who would violate the sanctities of his mother tongue would invade the recesses of the paternal till without remorse, and repeat the banquet of Saturn without an indigestion."

And, once more, listen to the historian. "The Puritans hated puns. The Bishops were notoriously addicted to them. The Lords Temporal carried them to the verge of license. Majesty itself must have its Royal quibble. 'Ye be burly, my Lord of Burleigh,' said Queen Elizabeth, 'but ye shall make less stir in our realm than my Lord of Leicester.' The gravest wisdom and the highest breeding lent their sanction to the practice. Lord Bacon playfully declared himself a descendant of 'Og, the King of Bashan. Sir

Philip Sidney, with his last breath, reproached the soldier who brought him water, for wasting a casque full upon a dying man. A courtier, who saw *Othello* performed at the Globe Theatre, remarked that the black-amoor was a brute, and not a man. 'Thou hast reason,' replied a great Lord, 'according to Plato his saying; for this be a two-legged animal *with* feathers'. The fatal habit became universal. The language was corrupted. The infection spread to the national conscience. Political double-dealings naturally grew out of verbal double meanings. The teeth of the new dragon were sown by the Cadmus who introduced the alphabet of equivocation. What was levity in the time of the Tudors grew to regicide and revolution in the age of the Stuarts."

Who was that boarder that just whispered something about the Macaulay-flowers of literature? — There was a dead silence. — I said calmly, I shall henceforth consider any interruption by a pun as a hint to change my boarding-house. Do not plead my example. If *I* have used any such, it has been only as a Spartan father would show up a drunken helot. We have done with them.

Mrs. Malaprop's Diabolical Instruments of Knowledge

Richard Brinsley Sheridan • 1751–1816

Although Mrs. Malaprop's spectacular and amusing misuse of words is not a comic device original with Sheridan, his success with the trick has given us the name malapropism. *We hear malapropisms in the dialogue of Amos and Andy or in the outrageous malformations of Jimmy Durante. In this scene from* The Rivals *(1775), Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Anthony are discussing the possible marriage of their wards, who are in love with each other already. Mrs. Malaprop's confidence in her learning and in her "nice derangement of epitaphs" confounds both Sir Anthony and the theatre audiences who behold her. Her ideas on Education are not Progressive.*

MRS. MALAPROP. There, Sir Anthony, there sits the deliberate simpleton who wants to disgrace her family and lavish herself on a fellow not worth a shilling.

LYDIA. Madam, I thought you once —

MRS. MALAPROP. You thought, miss! — I don't know any business you have to think at all — thought does not become a young woman; the point

we would request of you is that you will promise to forget this fellow — to illiterate him, I say, quite from your memory.

LYDIA. Ah, madam! our memories are independent of our wills. It is not so easy to forget.

MRS. MALAPROP. But I say it is, miss; there is nothing on earth so easy as to *forget* if a person chooses to set about it. — I'm sure I have as much forgot your poor dear uncle as if he had never existed — and I thought it my duty so to do; and let me tell you, Lydia, these violent memories don't become a young woman.

SIR ANTHONY. Why, sure she won't pretend to remember what she's ordered not! — aye, this comes of her reading!

LYDIA. What crime, madam, have I committed, to be treated thus?

MRS. MALAPROP. Now don't attempt to extirpate yourself from the matter; you know I have proof controvertible of it. — But tell me, will you promise to do as you're bid? — Will you take a husband of your friends' choosing?

LYDIA. Madam, I must tell you plainly that had I no preference for anyone else, the choice you have made would be my aversion.

MRS. MALAPROP. What business have you, miss, with *preference* and *aversion*? They don't become a young woman; and you ought to know that as both always wear off, 'tis safest in matrimony to begin with a little *aversion*. I am sure I hated your poor dear uncle before marriage as if he'd been a black-a-moor — and yet, miss, you are sensible what a wife I made! — and when it pleased Heaven to release me from him, 'tis unknown what tears I shed! — But suppose we were going to give you another choice, will you promise us to give up this Beverley?

LYDIA. Could I belie my thoughts so far as to give that promise, my actions would certainly as far belie my words.

MRS. MALAPROP. Take yourself to your room. — You are fit company for nothing but your own ill-humors.

LYDIA. Willingly, ma'am — I cannot change for the worse. [*Exit.*

MRS. MALAPROP. There's a little intricate hussy for you!

SIR ANTHONY. It is not to be wondered at, ma'am, — all this is the natural consequence of teaching girls to read. Had I a thousand daughters, by heavens! I'd as soon have them taught the black art as their alphabet!

MRS. MALAPROP. Nay, nay, Sir Anthony, you are an absolute misanthropy.

SIR ANTHONY. In my way hither, Mrs. Malaprop, I observed your niece's maid coming forth from a circulating library! — She had a book in each hand — they were half-bound volumes with marbled covers! — From that moment I guessed how full of duty I should see her mistress!

MRS. MALAPROP. Those are vile places, indeed!

SIR ANTHONY. Madam, a circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge! — It blossoms through the year! — And depend on it, Mrs. Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves, will long for the fruit at last.

MRS. MALAPROP. Well, but Sir Anthony, your wife, Lady Absolute, was fond of books.

SIR ANTHONY. Aye — and injury sufficient they were to her, madam — but were I to choose another helpmate, the extent of her erudition should consist in knowing her simple letters, without their mischievous combinations; — and the summit of her science be — her ability to count as far as twenty. — The first, Mrs. Malaprop, would enable her to work *A. A.* upon my linen; — and the latter would be quite sufficient to prevent her giving me a shirt No. 1, and a stock [1] No. 2.

MRS. MALAPROP. Fie, fie, Sir Anthony! you surely speak laconically!

SIR ANTHONY. Why, Mrs. Malaprop, in moderation now, what would you have a woman know?

MRS. MALAPROP. Observe me, Sir Anthony. I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning, I don't think so much learning becomes a young woman. For instance, I would never let her meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or Algebra, or simony, or fluxions, or paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of learning — neither would it be necessary for her to handle any of your mathematical, astronomical, diabolical instruments. — But, Sir Anthony, I would send her, at nine years old, to a boarding-school in order to learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts; — and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries; — but above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not misspell and mispronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying. — This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a woman know; — and I don't think there is a superstitious article in it.

SIR ANTHONY. Well, well, Mrs. Malaprop, I will dispute the point no further with you, though I must confess that you are a truly moderate and polite arguer, for almost every third word you say is on my side of the question. — But, Mrs. Malaprop, to the more important point in debate — you say you have no objection to my proposal?

MRS. MALAPROP. None, I assure you. — I am under no positive engagement with Mr. Acres, and as Lydia is so obstinate against him, perhaps your son may have better success.

SIR ANTHONY. Well, madam, I will write for the boy directly. — He knows not a syllable of this yet, though I have for some time had the proposal in my head. He is at present with his regiment.

MRS. MALAPROP. We have never seen your son, Sir Anthony; but I hope no objection on his side.

SIR ANTHONY. Objection! — let him object if he dare! — No, no, Mrs. Malaprop, Jack knows that the least demur puts me in a frenzy directly. My process was always very simple — in their younger days 'twas "Jack

[1] Neckcloth.

do this"; — if he demurred, I knocked him down — and if he grumbled at that, I always sent him out of the room.

MRS. MALAPROP. Aye, and the properest way, o' my conscience! — nothing is so conciliating to young people as severity. — Well, Sir Anthony, I shall give Mr. Acres his discharge, and prepare Lydia to receive your son's invocations; — and I hope you will represent *her* to the Captain as an object not altogether illegible.

SIR ANTHONY. Madam, I will handle the subject prudently. — Well, I must leave you; and let me beg you, Mrs. Malaprop, to enforce this matter roundly to the girl. — Take my advice — keep a tight hand; if she rejects this proposal, clap her under lock and key; and if you were just to let the servants forget to bring her dinner for three or four days, you can't conceive how she'd come about. [*Exit.*

The Guy Is Sittin' There, See, Hangin' with His Tongue Out

Arthur Kober • 1900–

Buck Fanshaw had his bewildering idioms: Mrs. Malaprop mangled the meanings of the more difficult words, and each of them produced, unwittingly, a lively and inventive speech. Such inventiveness is not dead; here Mr. Kober displays its survival in Hollywood. Benny Greenspan's "derangements of epitaphs" are as varied and intricate as Mrs. Malaprop's. Can you identify all his linguistic traits?

IT WAS a Saturday afternoon and, since I had some time to kill before my tennis date, I thought I'd walk over to Martindale's Book Store, on Santa Monica Boulevard, and look around. I was wandering idly from counter to counter, glancing at the titles and reflecting on the vast number of books I hadn't read and had no desire to read, when I sighted a copy of Mencken's latest study of our speech. I picked up the book and was about to riffle the pages when I heard a voice behind me shout, "Hey, don't lift that load all by yesself! Wanna break your writin' arm, you dope?" I wheeled around and there stood little Benny Greenspan, my favorite Hollywood agent, grinning at me. "Well, well! So here's where you come to steal material," he said. "Come clean, Artie, whose brains you pickin' now?"

"Uh-uh, Benny," I said. "It's not that kind of book. This has no story,

Copyright, 1946, by Arthur Kober. Originally published in *The New Yorker.*

no plot, no characters, no brush, no rub-in. It's all about the American language."

"Yeah? What's it called?" he asked, leaning forward to look at the title.

" 'The American Language,' " I replied.

"The size a that thing!" Benny took the volume from me, raised the cover, and glanced at the inside flap. "Wow! Five smackers a slice! That's a helluva stiff tariff, specially your own langwich!" He hefted the book in his hand for a moment, then slowly shook his head. "More than a buck a pound, I'd say. At those prices, Artie, I'm certainey glad to remain what I am — namely, strickly a cloth-head." As he lowered the book, a clerk came forward, presented him with a wrapped package and a muttered "Thank you," and withdrew.

Benny must have noticed my puzzled expression, for he tapped me reassuringly on the arm. "Don't worry, chum, it ain't fa me. I got a kid nephew, Mortie, he simply dotes books. In fack, evvey time I'm over my sister Henny's house, there he is, Mortie, with his kisser knee-deep in some readin' matter or other. Well, bein' next week he comes into his jerkhood — he's gonna be a smart sixteen — I figger why not purchase him somethin' in the nature from a birthday present, which is exackly what I did." He indicated the package.

"What'd you get him?" I asked.

Benny shrugged and spread out his palms. "Who knows? I just said to the clerk, 'Lemme have aroun' a three-buck book — anything at all so long it's not by a certain stinker who goes under the name Henry Worthington Fitch.' "

"Why, Fitch is a famous novelist," I said, surprised at his vehemence and his prejudice. "His latest book, 'The Tender Wind of March,' has been on the best-seller lists for months now. What've you got against the guy?"

"I tell you one thing I ain't got against him," Benny retorted, "and that's a ten-foot pole, which I wouldn't even touch him with. Listen, you got perhaps a minute?"

"Sure," I said.

"O.K., supposin' you walk me over to Watson's. I ordered me a coupla sets a threads about three-four months ago, and the govvement musta froze the tailor's fingers, judgin' the time it's takin' them. Brother, it's murder, the service you don't get nowadays!"

We walked over to Beverly Drive, and, as we headed south, Benny turned toward me and heaved a long sigh. "Well, Artie, about this here creep, this Fitch character," he said. "A coupla weeks ago, I'm sittin' in my awfice with a problem I got pryin' on my mind — namely, are the horses tappin' my phone to see if I'm bettin' on them, on account evvey time I do, sure enough, the nags hoof their noses at me and start trailin' the mob. Alluva sudden my door busts wide open and who should come rushin' in excep' Ray Mason, my story editor. 'Benny, Benny!' he yells on me. 'I got Henry Worthington Fitch parked in my awfice. Come quick, I want you should meet him.' 'Who?' I says, on account the name was pure and simply

Greek to me at the time. 'Fitch,' Ray says to me. 'He's my old collitch pal I went to collitch with.' I look at the guy like if he's starch, ravin' mad. 'My God, Ray,' I says, 'if I hadda leave my work right in the mist of evveything just to shake a collitch man's hand, I'd prolly wind up mitt-happy in some patted cell or other.' 'Benny, you don't unnastand,' Ray says, and then he goes on to explain me all about the books this Fitch knocked off and what a prominent notch he occupies in the writin' racket. 'In fack,' Ray says, 'all he's gotta do is to simply pick up his fountain pen and right away — bong! — a cash register starts in registerin' cash.'

"Well, this kinda makes Mr. Fitch a horse from a diffrint color entirely, and nachelly I'm very inarrested to make his acquaintanceship. So I follies Ray to his awfice, which I couldn't hardly get into on account it's so clustered up with Old Collitch Chum."

"You mean Fitch is that big or that fat?" I asked.

"That big *and* that fat!" Benny answered. "Artie, in my whole entire life I never seen a guy so much surrounded with his very own self the way this here guy was. Boy, what a load! Anyways, I give out with the old routine hommuch I dote his books and what an expert genius he is to express hisself so fluidly like the way he does, and I'm really pourin it on, see, when, lo and behold, in comes my seckatary, Gussie. Where've I been? She's been searchin' evvey nook and granny fa me on account there's a highly important phone call on the wire. So I tells The Crowd it's a great pleasure to meet him in person and I will see him later, and then I goes back to my awfice, where my bookie breaks me the sad news about the nag I bet on and tells me not to worry, he's reportin' my horse to the Bureau a Missin' Animals.

"Well, sir, later on that day I contack Ray to find out if he's got Fitch all tied up he should be our client, and Ray looks at me like if I'm talkin' basic Braille or somethin'. 'Why, Benny,' he says, 'Hank is not out here fa no movie jobs. It so happens he is chasin' some high-type dame, a lecturer or somethin', she's on a brain-stormin' tour and she's windin' up her engagement in San Francisco, where he is goin' next week to see if she could be his bride number four. Why, Benny,' he says, 'you couldn't get Hank to make no pitcha deal come hell and hot water!' You hear, Artie?"

"That must've been a pretty discouraging piece of news for you," I said.

"Uh-huh, not fa little Benny," he said. "Me, Artie, I'm the type person who never takes no 'No' fa an answer. 'Ray,' I says, 'whats'a matter with this cracked pot he don't like the industry?' Then Ray informs me evvey time they adopt one of Hank's friends's books into a pitcha, they wreck the complete hell outta the story till nothin' is left, specially the title. 'Excuse me' — and I'm very sarcastical, see — 'but lemme ast if the studios pay off writers in bird seeds or with money which is legally tender?' 'Hank is strickly an artist,' he says, 'no matter even if he could get a terrifically absorbent price fa his stuff.' 'Look, Ray,' I says, 'will you kindly get your friend, the artist, on the phone? I wish to talk to him personally.' So he gets this cluck on the phone fa me and I explain him who I am — namely,

Benny Greenspan — and I says, 'Mr. Fitch, Ray tells me you are blowin' town in a few days, which is too bad on account I'd like very much we should get together before you go. Somehow you impress me you're a big meat-and-petata man. Right?' So he kinda admits he's got a sweet tooth when it comes to steaks. 'O.K.,' I says, 'supposin' I reserve us a booth at Chasen's, where I guarantee you'll taste the best meal you ever had in your entire mouth. Is eight o'clock agreeable with you?' 'Positively,' he says. 'Fine,' I says. 'You got yesself a date.'

"Artie, the phone is still hot in my mitt when Ray says to me, 'Benny, you're wasting your breadth. It's gonna be strickly a case of no soap whatsoever. This here is a situation, believe me, Benny, I know whereof I speak.' By this time his negative attitude is beginnin' to make me burn, so I finey lets him have it. 'Look, my friend,' I says, 'with all due respecks you're a collitch man, I'm gonna tell you my frank opinion — namely, I seen better heads on cabbitches! And I *positively* know whereof I speak!' Right to his very face I said it."

"What made you so sure you could interest Fitch in pictures?" I asked.

"Are you kiddin'?" Benny suddenly halted and looked at me in surprise. "Here's a gent, this Fitch, with three ex-squaws who're prolly bankin' his blood fa alimony each and evvey week. Besides, there's a fourth number he's got cookin' under a slow flame. Why, any normal person in his right mind, specially in *his* shoes, would nachelly grab the chance to make hisself a fast buck. Providin', mind you," he quickly added, "he's approached right."

"Which, of course, is what you did," I said.

"Absolutely!" he said. "In the first place, a guy so rabbit on the subjeck from pitchas, you simply don't press the matter. You calmly let him go ahead with his steak, which he knocks off in no time flat, and then I watch him toss off enough Scotch highballs to float a young battleship, which he pradically is. Finey, I feels I been bitin' my time long enough, I better start pitchin'.

" 'Mr. Fitch,' I says to him, 'I wonder if you are perhaps acquainted with a certain writer who is also in the novel game — he goes under the name Sinclair Lewis, I believe?' 'Oh, yes,' he says. 'I know him intimately well.' 'Is he a happy guy?' I says, and he looks at me like if I just excaped from some leopard colony or other. 'I don't believe I folly you,' he says to me.

"So I explain him how a few years back Metro bought this Lewis guy's book, 'It Can't Never Happen Here,' and believe me, brother, it never did. It's still lyin' there on their shelf. Well, not so long ago they snapped up another Lewis book and they paid him all the round numbers they could find on their addin' machine. 'Mr. Fitch,' I says, 'just you mock my words: what your friend, Sinclair, blew in so sweet on his typewriter is bound to come out mighty sour on the screen. Which is why I simply gotta take off my hat to you for,' I says. 'Namely, your attitude with regards the industry. Finstance,' I says, 'I betcha, first thing tomorra mornin', I could go out to any studio and with oney one lip open and my other hand tied behind my

back, I could peddle the rights to your last book, you wanna know fa hommuch? A cool one hunnard and fifdy thousan' smackers! And you wanna know somethin' else? You'd be a sucker to take it. Why?' I says before he could open his yap. 'On account they would butcher the plot to pieces. They would massacree the story from top to bottom. In fack, by the time it's up there on the screen, you wouldn't even hardly reconnize your own handwritin'!' I says."

"That's certainly a very peculiar approach, Benny," I said.

"It's the buildup in reverse," Benny explained, giving me a wink. "Yep, Artie, by this time the guy is sittin' there, see, hangin' with his tongue out. 'One hunnard and fifdy thousan' dollars!' he's sayin' unnaneath his breadth. 'My, oh, my!' 'Yes, sir, Mr. Fitch,' I says, 'that's sure a crate a lettuce in anybody's langwich. Why, with all that dough, an imminent writer like you could buy hisself the finest house and swimmin' pool in Beverly Hills, with a liberry all done up strickly in naughty pine, where you could knock off books galore to your heart's content. But I dunno,' I says. 'I wonder if all that sugar would renumerate you fa the aggravation you'd get sittin' in a movie house watchin' how they loused up your book.' 'They couldn't force me to see the pitcha, could they?' he says to me. 'Don't worry,' I tells him. 'There'd awways be your intimate friends or some old groanies bargin' in to inform you, oh, boy, did they just see a stinker your book turned out into!'

"Artie, I looks at the guy and he is now so quiet, no kiddin', you could pick up a pin. Finey, he says to me, 'I guess you're right at that.' 'Certainey I'm right,' I says. 'After all, it's not like if you're not making money hand over foot with that last book you wrote. Right?' 'Well,' he says, 'not exackly.' Then he explains me it took him over three years to write that book and when you divide your income over three years, what is left is just about enough to stuff into your right eye, much less a flea's.

"'Well, what the helll' I says. 'Money ain't evveything. Finstance, looka here — if you really wanted to make yesself an easy buck, all you'd hafta do, you could sit down and in a couple hours' time you could reduce whatever germ you got hooverin' on your mind to a ten-page outline which some smart agent could peddle you fa fifdy grand, leavin you a smart net of fordy G's just fa a few weasly hours work.'

"I look out from the corners of my eyes and I see this character hasn't hardly got the strennth to lift up his glass. 'Personally speakin', Mr. Fitch,' I says, 'I wouldn't insult a man of your artistic calibra by wavin' a bunch of that green stuff in fronna his kisser. Thank God you don't belong to that category of missionary writers who are constantly thinkin' of money alla time. No, sir!' I says. 'You are strickly an artist to his very fingertips who will prolly put in another three years on his next book without he's got any guarantee whatsoever he's gonna make hisself a single buffalo nickel. Well, sir, I gotta respeck you fa that. More power to you! And now,' I says, 'supposin' we pour ourselves home. I gotta consummate a big deal in the mornin' whereby a certain writer, a thorough incomepoop who's got about as much brains in his entire head like you got in your little pinkie, and yet

I'm helpin' this cluck make hisself a young fortune.' So I gives the waiter the nod and he brings me the tab to sign, and then I parks this load a carcass, this Fitch, over at his hotel and I blows. 'Benny,' I says to myself while I'm drivin' home, 'just give this creep a little time to maul your remarks over in his mind, and if you don't hear from him right after that, then call me — ' "

"What happened?" I asked. "Did you hear from him?"

Benny looked annoyed. "How can I tell you what happened when you keep on inarruptin' me alla time?" he asked.

"I'm sorry," I said.

"Well," he went on, somewhat mollified by my apology, "the follyin' day Ray Mason comes into my awfice and he's just like you — right away he wantsa know all the answers. So I tells him he should calm down, and then I explains him how I gave The Crowd the old buildup in reverse, and now it is oney a question of time before I hear from him. 'The oney problem I got,' I says, 'is if he's gonna let us peddle an original story or do we get to handle the blue-plate special — namely, the pitcha rights to his books.' 'Benny,' Ray says to me, 'go ahead and call me a cluck. Call me a lunghead. Still in all, I say Hank is an artist through and through, and he positively will not take a pitcha job in any manner, shape, nor form!' You hear? A debatin' society I got in my mist alluva sudden!

"Anyways," Benny said before I could comment, "one day goes by. Then two days, and still no word. Now I'm really on tenderhooks and I'm beginnin' to think maybe Ray ain't such a big dope like I give him credit for. Finey, aroun' the fourth day, Gussie brings me in a letter and a packitch, they're addressed personally to me and they're from Henry Worthington Fitch. So I rush quick into Ray's awfice. 'Well, jerk-boy,' I says to him, 'your longhair friend ain't the delicate type like you keep beatin' your gums he is. Kindly pin your ears back while I read you this.'

"So I opens up the letter in Ray's presence, and guess what? That lousy, no-good double-crosser, that solid tubba soft blubba, Mr. Fitch, he writes me he is sorry to upset such a great fan like I am, but he is not so artistic after all. In fack, he says in his letter, he hopes I am not too disappointed in him, but fa a long time awready his pockets have been occupied by none other than some highly contented moths. And now, fa a change, bein' he's got a personal commitment — I figger this Frisco party he's been romancin' — he would like to handle some of that sweet sugar I been discussin' him about. So he has gone ahead and he has signed up with the Wally Parker Agency, a strickly commercial outfit, he says, who haven't got the fine, artistic thoughts in their mind like I got and which he appreciates very much, believe him. Furthermore, his letter goes on to say, he is sendin' me an autographed copy of his latest book, it should be a momentum to a great little guy — namely, me.

"So I opens up the packitch, Artie, and, lo and behold, there is Fitch's book, which I let Ray Mason have. Yes, sir, I let him have it — right smack on his dopey conk!"

Jabberwocky

Lewis Carroll • *1832–1898*

Here is the complete poem of which Humpty Dumpty explained one stanza a few pages back. Alice found a book which seemed to be in a peculiar language, but when she held it to the looking-glass, she found that she could read this poem. "It seems very pretty," she said when she had finished it, "but it's rather hard to understand! Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas — only I don't exactly know what they are! However, somebody killed something: that's clear, at any rate —"

'Twas BRILLIG, and the slithy toves
  Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
    And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
  The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
    The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
  Long time the manxome foe he sought —
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
    And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
  The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
    And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
  The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
    He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
  Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
    He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
  Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
    And the mome raths outgrabe.

Part  Six

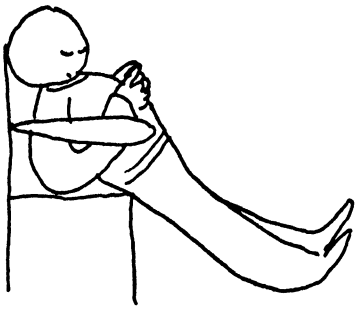
THE MOBILIZED WORD

THE DAILY PAPER, the radio newscast, and now televised reports of great events as they occur have so speeded communication that in terms of the time it takes to "get the word," the world has shrunk to a fraction of its former size. These wonders are so commonplace today that it is hard to realize what the world must have been like without them. The value of swift communication was well known to one of the world's great financial geniuses, Nathan Rothschild, who supported the English against Napoleon. In the days before telegraph, Rothschild often sent crucial messages by carrier pigeon. Conversely, had communications been better in the War of 1812, the Battle of New Orleans would never have been fought. But news then went so slowly that the treaty which ended the war had been signed a month before the battle was joined.

The inventions and discoveries for spreading the word have been numerous and dramatic in the last seventy-five years. Fast ships, railroads, and airplanes have speeded the mails. Cables, telegraph, telephone, and radio have made world-wide communication almost instantaneous. High-speed presses and cheap paper, together with the wire services, have made the modern newspaper and newsmagazine possible. And so it has gone.

But the multiplication of the word has gone beyond the dissemination of information, and with the perfection of movies, radio, and television,

a giant industry has sprung up, devoted to the entertainment and sometimes the edification of us all. Since in our country this industry has grown almost entirely under commercial auspices, and its primary aim has been to make money, it is not hard to see the dangers to quality and to taste inherent in this situation. Nothing is perfect, said the philosopher in James Stevens's novel, *The Crock of Gold;* the porridge has lumps in it. It may be argued that there is no pure and unmixed blessing. As the death rate due to automobile accidents exceeds that due to war, so it may be that the neurotic and emotional casualties more or less directly traceable to the mass media of communication exceed those due to certain other causes. No one in his right mind would wish to banish radio, or movies, or any other of the mass media. But many have wished, and with good reason, that their standards were higher and their aims more consistent with the best in us. The selections which follow bear, in one way or another, on such problems. They are intended not to condemn but to improve. So read, they may help you do your part toward raising the standards of a nation.



"And what do you think about the captive audience, Mr. Pottleby?"

A Brief Chronology of Mass Communications

Wilbur Schramm • 1907–

We take for granted the mechanisms by which knowledge of the whole world, past and present, is brought home to us. But these marvelous media for transmitting the miraculous symbolic medium of communication — language — through time and space, are inventions quite recent in human history. A bare chronological listing of the successive significant inventions reveals how very new is the universal diffusion of news, art, and knowledge which we accept as our birthright.

By 105 A.D. Chinese had made paper and ink.
By 450 Block printing practiced in Asia.
868 Oldest preserved block-printed book, *The Diamond Sutra.*
900–1450 Book scribes developed high skill. Movable type developed in China, and cast metal type in Korea. Just before the middle of the fifteenth century, Gutenberg and others apparently perfected the system of

Reprinted from *Mass Communications* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949), pp. 5–6, edited by Wilbur Schramm.

casting metal type, and applied it to bookmaking with a practical hand press and oil varnish ink.

1456 The 42-line "Gutenberg" Bible.

1450–1550 Beginning in Germany, printing swept over Europe. Caxton established an English press in 1476. Aldus was operating his famous press in Italy in 1494.

1539 First press in Western Hemisphere — Mexico.

1621 First coranto (news sheet) printed in Amsterdam (first English coranto, 1622).

1638 First press in American colonies. The oldest extant book printed in America — *The Bay Psalm Book* — published in 1640.

1665 First English newspaper, *London Gazette.*

1690 First American newspaper, *Publick Occurrences,* Boston. It lasted one issue.

1702 First daily newspaper in English, *The Daily Courant,* London.

1704 First continuously published American newspaper. *The Boston News-Letter.*

1731 First magazine, in present meaning of that term — *The Gentleman's Magazine,* London.

1741 First magazine in America, *American Magazine,* Philadelphia.

1784 First successful daily newspaper in America, *The Pennsylvania Packet, and Daily Advertiser,* Philadelphia (first issued tri-weekly, then daily).

1805 Stereotyping process developed.

1807 Fourdrinier brothers perfected system for making paper.

1814 Steam power applied to printing press, and cylinder press developed.

1833 First penny paper, *The New York Sun,* opened the way to mass circulation.

1839 Daguerre developed practical method of photography (daguerreotype).

1844 Morse transmitted first telegraph message.

1848 First press association in America.

1853 Paper made from wood pulp.

1857 First transatlantic cable.

1867 First practical typewriter.

1868 First web perfecting press.

1872 Process of photoengraving developed (halftones in 1880).

1873 First daily illustrated paper.

1876 Bell transmitted the first telephone message by overhead wire.

1877 Edison invented the phonograph.

1886 Mergenthaler introduced the Linotype.

1894 Motion picture projector perfected and first films shown the public.

1895 Marconi sends and receives wireless messages.

1897 Motion pictures of Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight. First motion picture which told a story, "The Great Train Robbery," made in 1903.

1904 Telephone wirephoto sent from Munich to Nuremberg.

1906 Fessenden transmitted human voice by radio.
1920 Beginning of regularly scheduled broadcasting — 8MK (later WWJ), Detroit, and KDKA, Pittsburgh.
1923 Picture televised between New York and Philadelphia.
1923 *Time* started new fashion in news magazines.
1924 Tabloid newspaper.
1926 Beginning of book clubs.
1926 First radio network, NBC. Blue (ABC) and CBS, 1927. MBS, 1934.
1927 "Jazz Singer" started vogue of talking pictures.
1928 First Disney animated cartoon.
1928 Regular television schedule begun by WGY, Schenectady.
1935 Major E. H. Armstrong developed FM.
1936 *Life* started new fashion in picture magazines.
1938 Daily facsimile broadcasts started by KSD, St. Louis.
1941 Full commercial television authorized.

What We Read, See, and Hear

H. A. Overstreet • 1875–

Are we a nation of morons? Appalled by the idiocy of our television programs, an intelligent critic has seriously raised this question. If the typical content of our mass media accurately reflects the level of our national intelligence, then perhaps we are morons. Turning the problem the other way round, H. A. Overstreet inquires, What is the effect of the mass media upon our minds? Are they helping to shape us into mature adults or are they keeping us perpetual adolescents?

I

FOUR INFLUENCES continually at work in the shaping of our character are newspapers, radio, movies, and advertising. We need, now, to ask the psychosocial question whether the influence of these has, in the main, been for or against our maturing.

Every day — sometimes "every hour on the hour," sometimes all morning, or all afternoon, or all day long; almost always at breakfast and on the journey home at night — these influences come into the lives of millions of people. Walt Whitman once wrote about a child that went forth each day and became what he saw. A later Whitman, writing about what comes into the lives of people each day through newspapers, radio, movies, and

Reprinted from *The Mature Mind* by H. A. Overstreet. By permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Copyright, 1949, by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Pp. 203–229.

advertising, might well ask whether that which comes into their lives they themselves become. Surely, all this daylong and lifelong bombardment by news, entertainment, and announcements of things to be bought must have some effect. As a matter of fact, it is more than likely that we might properly be called newspaper-made, radio-made, movie-made, and advertisement-made people. To the extent that this is true, what kind of people, then, are we?

The functions of news-bringing, storytelling, music-making, and goods-selling are obviously basic to our needs. We live by them. In one form or another, man has always lived by them. The human being wants to know what is going on: hence our universal welcome to the news-bringer. We all need, now and then, to be stirred by tales that take us outside ourselves and help us to do the uniquely human thing of entering, through imagination, into the lives of others. In fact, it seems probable that our growth into empathy — so essential to our psychological maturing — depends in no small degree upon our having a chance to live vicariously the lives of many different sorts of people. We need, again, to hear the rhythms of music. We need, for the planning of our practical lives, to know what things are available for our convenience, comfort, and increased efficiency. To this extent it must be said that all these things are good — newspapers, radio, movies, advertising.

Yet it might be more accurate to say that they are potentially good; for, from the point of our psychological maturing, each of them is today a question mark. Is today's newspaper-reading public made wise and informed by its newspaper reading? Is the public that listens to the radio and goes to the movies thereby prepared to make more mature responses to human situations? Is a public that is constantly being importuned to buy things encouraged toward discrimination and self-discipline? It is altogether probable that, in spite of their high technical achievements, their constant accessibility, and their relationship to deep human wants and needs, newspapers, radio, movies, and advertising are doing as much to arrest as to promote our maturing. In many lives, in fact, they appear to weight the scales heavily toward arrested development.

All of these influences are part of a culture marked by vast technical expertness. But all of them, also, it must be remembered, are part of a money-making culture: an economy in which the prime value that attaches to most things produced is their exchange value — their salability. This is no less true of a newspaper or a motion picture than it is of a washing machine. Fundamental in the motivation of each of these character-shaping factors we have named, then, is the producer's need to make profits. The yardstick that the producer applies to what he offers is, first, a financial yardstick; it is not the yardstick of human welfare or human growth into maturity, except as such growth happens to be profitable. Here, therefore, is our peculiar modern situation: every day our minds and characters are receiving the impress of objects and experiences that have been put on the

market because they represent the seller's best guess as to what we are ready to buy.

Here, again, we must note the difference between a business and a profession. In a profession, welfare comes first; money-making second. The distinction is a delicate one and hard to make with precision. Nevertheless it is a real one that makes a notable difference in the spirit and aims of an undertaking. Thus, where money-making is the paramount interest, a constant search will be made to discover what most people *as they are* can be relied upon to like most of the time. What a few discriminating people like is of no great financial significance. What many people might eventually like if they were helped to develop their powers of discrimination has equally little financial import. What most people like once in a while is of less financial import than what they like most of the time. Hence, the primary hunt conducted by each of these four licensed mind-makers has been for a formula that would insure most people's being attracted most of the time. Once the formula is set, there is more profit to be derived from people's remaining *as they are* than from their growing up to some new level of insight and discrimination. The essential fact to be noted about each of the four businesses at hand is that each has found its own particular formula, has geared its productive set-up to that formula, and therefore has a vested interest in the public's continued responsiveness to that formula.

II

The newspaper has discovered that most people most of the time are interested in some form of catastrophe: a plane crash, a railroad wreck, a murder, a flood, a scandal, a fight of some sort. It is an old story that the planes that fly safely, the trains that reach their destination, the individuals who live together without murdering each other, the rivers that flow between their banks, and the men and nations that transact their affairs and resolve their differences without fighting are not news. Not one of these would yank a man out of his own preoccupations as he passed a newsstand. Not one of them would make him prop up his paper at the breakfast table and become absorbed in reading, to the neglect of his family. To capture the breakfaster, some unusual "happening" must be reported. To keep him turning page after page, one column of unusual "happenings" must follow another. In order to induce that same breakfaster to buy a second paper in the afternoon or evening — or, if possible, even a third — headlines must again shrill the unusual and the catastrophic.

News, in short, must be as different as possible from the average daily routine; for otherwise it will not pull the mind of man out of that routine. The mind of man is, of course, capable of escaping routine through an intensification of awareness; through a deepened sense of values; through becoming sensitized to the subsurface drama of life. But this type of escape cannot be reduced to a formula. It has to do with the growth of the individual toward the unique fulfillment of his powers. It is not only use-

less, therefore, but actually detrimental, so far as mass production of news is concerned. The formula calls for the constant playing up of the only "escape-from-routine" news that has mass appeal: that is, news about some event that is enough out of the ordinary to give people a thrill without requiring of them any unusual sensitivity or subtlety of insight.

Between the accounts of catastrophe, newspapers do carry a good many items that lie outside the formula and that have their own constant appeal because of certain sustained human interests: weather reports, stock-market reports, household suggestions, real-estate news, educational, religious, and scientific news, and other such. But the primary appeal of a newspaper is the news it brings of happenings that bode ill to someone. Most political news is cast as "fight" news. Most foreign news is similarly cast. Most domestic news that makes the headlines is catastrophic news: someone has been killed, robbed, or assaulted; someone has called a strike; someone has been putting over a raw deal; someone has been arrested; some criminal has escaped; someone is denouncing someone. Most newspapers, in brief, have made the money-making discovery that most people most of the time are more interested in life that has "run off the track" than in life that has "stayed on the track."

Newspapers, therefore, have developed what might be called *a vested interest in catastrophe.* If they can spot a fight, they will play up that fight. If they can uncover a tragedy, they will headline that tragedy.

From the point of view of our psychological maturing all this has obvious significance. It means that day by day, year in and year out, all of us — young as well as old — are being moved to accept a one-sided, distorted view of life. We get life in its hostile and catastrophic patterns more often than in its friendly and constructive patterns. Ours is a culture in which newspapers have influenced most people, from their childhood on, to build the expectation that "eventfulness" is mostly conflict and catastrophe.

To take one example, our public opinion in regard to the world situation is chiefly shaped by what we read in the newspapers. If what we read is consistently and sharply slanted away from the constructive and peace-seeking activities of men and nations to those that are destructive and belligerent, the opinion we form will be not only one-sided and often erroneous, but it will be fraught with terrible danger to our own future and that of mankind. Our own "hostility potential" will be raised. Our attitudes toward peace-seeking activities will be skeptical and pessimistic. We will be wary and quick to suspect someone of trying to put something over on us. Our major emotional readiness will be for belligerent action — or for such belligerent verbalizing as makes peaceful action more difficult to achieve. We will get a more tingling pride out of having our nation "tell off" another nation than we will out of having it effect a mutual agreement with that nation. When we lay our nickels and dimes on the line for our daily dose of vicarious catastrophe and conflict it is almost as though we were paying the newspapers for getting us ready to commit human suicide.

A striking example of the power of the newspaper "formula" occurred at the time of the formation of the United Nations Organization in San Francisco. It will be remembered that the State Department had ventured a remarkable innovation: it had invited the leading non-partisan voluntary associations of the country to send representatives to the Conference to serve as "consultants." These consultants were privileged to sit in on all major sessions; to confer among themselves about moot problems; to meet with various experts and put their questions and suggestions to these experts; to make recommendations to the appropriate bodies; and, last but not least, to send regular reports back to their organizations. Before long, anxious letters began coming to them from members back home. "We don't understand," these letters said in effect. "You keep sending us word that everything is going well and that a world organization will surely be formed; but our newspapers keep telling us that fights and disagreements among the delegates are so constant that there is little hope of success for the Conference. Are you sure you know the score? We don't want to be fed on false hope."

The situation was a typical one. Newspapers, with their vested interest in catastrophe, were playing up every cross word spoken; magnifying every squabble of orators until it seemed a major crisis — a crisis the developments of which would surely have to be followed in tomorrow's paper as well as in today's.

In one vital respect, however, the situation was atypical. Normally, we of the public have no representatives on hand to give a picture different from the one the newspapers give; at San Francisco, we had such representatives — the consultants. As worried letters kept coming in from the home people, these consultants went to the correspondents and asked why they were persistently trying to make the Conference appear to be a failure. Actually, of course, the correspondents — as individuals and as citizens — did not want it to fail. But *as correspondents* they wanted news that would make the old "formula" appeal. Called to account by the consultants — who represented, through their combined organizations, a significant slice of the reading public — the newspapers were persuaded to believe that even good news might be rated as news. A gradual change became evident in the reporting of the Conference.

That our newspapers have been in many respects a cultural asset goes almost without saying. With their enormous coverage of news, they have done wonders to release us from our old parochialisms and to help us move out of our squeezed local environments into the total world. Also, in many cases, they have been valiant exposers of evil and valiant fighters for the human decencies. Yet the fact remains that their major appeal has been to the psychological immaturities still resident in grown men and women.

III

Radio came as something new under the sun. As it flashed upon the

human horizon, it promised a new world. Space, man's ancient enemy, had been overcome. In an instant's time, our minds could encircle the globe. Man could be neighbor to man the earth around.

The spectacle of an average person sitting in his average room before a small boxlike instrument, summoning voices out of the distance, roused the imagination. The Greeks had said that a city should be no greater in size than the distance a man's voice could travel. In the twentieth century, suddenly, a man's voice could travel around the world. How large, then, should the "city of man" now be?

The man sitting in his small room, moreover, with his small box, could not only encircle the globe. He could summon at will voices nearer at hand: voices to sing to him; tell him news when he wanted news; tell him a story when he wanted a story; preach him a sermon when he wanted a sermon.

There was no doubt about it: an amazing new force had entered our human scene. Would it become a new, major force for our maturing? Or would it so lend itself to our immaturities that these would become more tenacious than ever?

Such delicate and difficult questions have never yet yielded us a simple Yes or No answer. Because of the radio, greatness has poured into our homes from many places and at many times: great symphonic music, the news of world-transforming events, great poetry, great speeches, great drama. Not even the poorest, most inaccessible shack or farm kitchen has been so mean that greatness — via the radio — has refused to enter and live there. It would be strange if all this could happen without some increase in maturity happening also.

Yet greatness has not been the only thing that has entered our homes — and our consciousness — over the sound waves. In a sense, it has been the least of what has entered. Where one notable program has occupied one band of air for a scant half hour or less, scores of lesser programs have occupied all the other bands of air all day long and all night long. The talking, the singing, the playing of instruments, the making of jokes, the asking of quiz questions, the retailing of news, and from all stations, at virtually all times, the ubiquitous advertising of goods — these have become a Niagara of sound. In the total mass, the proportion of greatness to the proportion of littleness has not been encouraging.

Radio remains, and increasingly becomes, a technical triumph. But it would not be an exaggeration to say that nine out of ten of the voices that the listener summons when he turns the dial are the voices of mediocrity — and of immaturity: mediocre actors speaking mediocre lines — or actors who deserve better lines trying to inject meaning into the meaningless; mediocre singers singing mediocre songs; mediocre comedians laboring to make old jokes sound new; mediocre commentators sharing the air with their more penetrating and responsible fellows; mediocre quiz masters asking questions and handing out prizes; mediocre advice-givers responding

to deep human perplexities with pat mediocre advice. If, from the point of view of man's maturing, the test we must put to radio is that of its *average* influence or its most frequently exerted influence, the answer is not reassuring.

It is almost as easy to gripe about radio programs as about the weather: they have become as much part of our "atmosphere" as wind and sun; and they seem, sometimes, to be as far removed from our influence. Our wish, here, is not to engage in any such griping. In the first place, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, there is no unreachable "God" of radio "weather" who resides in a heaven beyond our human reach; there are only men, in skyscrapers or in lesser buildings, who engage, day in and day out, in the business of trying to guess what most people want most of the time or what they can, by sufficient suggestion, be made to want. From the psychological angle, then, the average level of radio programs betrays our immaturity quite as much as it fosters that immaturity. We have to keep this fact in mind as we analyze the influence that is daily being exerted upon our character structure by this new medium of communication. In the second place, radio programs cannot be evaluated as though they were isolated phenomena in our culture. Powerful as radio corporations are, they are only fragments of a system very much larger than themselves; and they would not have become powerful if their aims and methods had been out of line with the practices of that system or offensive to those conditioned by it.

The plain fact is that the owners and program directors of radio stations have been engaged in an enterprise similar to that of newspaper owners and editors: they have been looking for a formula with which to hold the attention of the greatest possible number of people for the greatest possible period of time. They seem to have discovered two things: that most people, most of the time, want to be entertained; and that the entertainment that has the maximum appeal is that which rouses ready emotions and does not tax the mind. With these "discoveries" as directives, the radio formula has gradually evolved.

One program-building assumption has been that people must not be asked to keep their attention focused on any one thing for more than a few minutes at a time. Thus, each day's program becomes a miscellany; and, daylong and nightlong, it invites the mind to engage in a kind of jumping game. No sooner is the attention given to a news report than it is diverted to a hillbilly singer or a mystery story or a quiz program or a comedy program replete with guest singers. This aspect of the radio formula must be of major concern to all who care about human maturing. One mark of the psychological growth of the human being, from infancy through childhood and into adulthood, is the lengthening of the attention-span. The immature mind hops from one thing to another; the mature mind seeks to follow through. *Whatever other influences it may exert for our maturing, radio is on the side of lifelong immaturity in the constant invitation it offers us to*

develop hopscotch minds. For five minutes, say, we are asked to be in a mind and mood suitable for an honest consideration of a world crisis. Then, for an even briefer interval, we are asked to feel that it is of supreme importance for us to buy a certain brand of dehydrated soup or to have our winter furs stored at a certain place. Abruptly, then, a humorist begins to wisecrack — and again our mind and mood are supposed to be at his command. Such flittering surface interest in one thing after another militates against our making a genuinely suitable response to anything. How many people, for example, who hear an appeal for the starving children of Europe tucked in between a soap opera and a singer of folk songs, with advertisements for insulation, are actually invited to feel what mature human beings should feel about the starvation of children?

It is, of course, impossible to talk about the radio without talking about radio advertising. Not only does this contribute mightily to the hopscotch character of the daily program, but it has exerted its influence upon each item that makes up that program. Radio listeners do not, by direct methods, put anything into the coffers of radio producers. It is the advertisers who must keep those coffers filled; and they will not do so unless they are convinced that every program item for which they pay is being heard by potential customers in a suitable frame of mind to buy. The housewife who has just had a good cry over a soap opera is more likely to give uninhibited and friendly response to an advertiser than is a person whose mind has been engaged at a high level of discrimination. Similarly, the man who has just had a good laugh at a comedian's jokes has been softened up into friendliness. From the advertiser's point of view, two things are not good business: programs that put the critical powers of man to work and programs that raise any basic issues about the economic structure within which advertising operates. We shall have more to say about advertising in a later section. Suffice it here to say that, in the radio world, it is an all-powerful influence: it makes it necessary that programs be on the air at all hours of the day and night, every day of the year, whether or not material worth hearing can be provided in such quantity; it makes it necessary that most programs be "relaxing" in their influence; and it performs the odd function of taking that old stock figure, the peddler, off the doorstep and into the living room — there to wheedle as he has always wheedled; there to run off his stock phrases as he has always run them off; but there to invade the family privacy as he has never invaded it before.

When an instrumentality is taken over as a money-making device, those who live by it must seek a money-making formula. Radio has found its formula. Whereas the newspaper has found its vested interest in catastrophe, radio has found it in mediocrity.

IV

Are the movies a force for maturing? To ask that question is, almost, to answer it. Hollywood has become a synonym for vacuity serviced by

technical experts: highly profitable vacuity, since a staggering proportion of Americans, young and old, week after week, place themselves under its influence.

Great pictures have come out of Hollywood; and briefly they have heartened us. But when they have had their run, the typical Hollywood production has again taken over — and throughout the thousands of movie theaters of the land, the routine of vacuous inanity has been resumed. Today's pictures are infinitely smoother in their production than those of even a few years ago. Also, they are more sophisticated in their characterization: the villain twirls his mustache less obviously; the "scarlet woman" does not, at her first appearance, advertise her intentions by turning Theda Bara eyes upon her victim. The past few years, moreover, have witnessed certain efforts to give movie plots a third dimension — to add to mere eventfulness some slight consideration of human motives of a less than obvious sort. Yet when we attend revivals of earlier movies, and compare them with those that now make a less flickering appearance upon the screen, we are forced to conclude that the psychological difference is a pin-point difference compared with the technical.

Here we confront the same perplexity as in the case of the radio: how did it happen that this great invention has so developed as to express and encourage immaturity rather than maturity. To be sure, it began as a peep-show gadget; but very quickly it revealed its power for greater things. It could tell a story as no story had ever been told before: with horses galloping, guns firing, crowds milling around; or, more quietly, with people walking in the garden, or hiking over a mountain trail. Where drama had hitherto been confined to a small stage, the motion picture could take place on a stage as wide as the world. As a medium, therefore, of enormous range and flexibility, it might have become the greatest influence in human history for the encouragement of empathic imagination. Not confined, as legitimate drama has been confined, to a few theaters in a few cities, it might have invited the most obscure inhabitant of the most remote village to develop an ever maturing insight into the ways of people, and the needs and fears and hopes of people, everywhere. It was technically equipped to perform this role in our culture; but only fortuitously and rarely has it performed it.

Again, we must note an economic cause: movies soon became big business. Single movies ran into millions for their production. *Ben Hur,* for example, cost six million. Salaries were fabulous. In two years of acting in cowboy films, W. S. Hart earned $900,000. Big business meant that there had to be big capital: bankers had to be enlisted. The enlistment of big bankers meant that a formula must be found for making big business grow continually bigger.

Hollywood found its formula. It began to find it in the early days when actors threw custard pies at one another or an escaped convict in prison stripes hid in a basket of clothes on which a housewife had momentarily

turned her back. Audiences clapped and shrieked; every frustrated person present got vicarious satisfaction out of seeing the other fellow get it in the face or out of seeing the forces of respectability put to rout.

It began to find its formula when "America's sweetheart" showed her face on the screen. Every man in the audience loved her as he had always hoped he would love some woman; every woman saw in her the type of eternal sweetheart that she herself had hoped to be.

It was finding its formula when it put on male actors who typified "romance." When Valentino stormed the hearts of American women, the story was plain enough for any producer to see: women wanted men who would look into their eyes as their own work-a-day husbands did not look; they wanted men with enough mystery about them to make their least glance glamorous and a little frightening, even; they wanted men in whom kindness and aloofness would be so subtly blended that a relationship with them could never become a routine; but they wanted these men in a daydream situation — not as any actual substitute for the reliable bringer home of the bacon.

It was finding its formula — through a genius who could not be reduced to formula — when a little tramp with a postage-stamp mustache, battered shoes, and a derby hat, took the kicks of the world and walked out of every picture swinging his ridiculous cane in a defeat so jaunty that it amounted to triumph. Charlie Chaplin was Everyman — every man who carries with him his unresolved frustrations, his clumsy good will, and his need to believe that the defeats he suffers are part of fate.

It was finding its formula when the six-shooter hero dashed across the plains on a superb horse that would tolerate no other rider — and rescued the heroine at the last possible moment.

It was finding its formula when, in picture after picture, the erring husband returned to his wife and went down on penitent knees; and when, in picture after picture, the honest small-town hero, with native shrewdness as his only weapon, outsmarted the man from the city; and when the poor girl married a rich husband — and automatically knew just what to do on every occasion that her new setting presented; and when, conversely, the rich girl, deciding that money isn't everything, married her poor lover; and when the erstwhile villain suddenly showed himself as having a heart of gold; and when, in as many ways as ingenuity could devise, the pompous man was made to look like a fool.

What Hollywood discovered — by rule of thumb and box-office returns — was that the sure-fire way to attract people (or at least, most of the people most of the time) is to give them compensatory illusions. Motion pictures became the big business through which unsatisfied men, women, and adolescents in unprecedented numbers were granted a daydream fulfillment of their hopes. The motion picture did not aim to make these unsatisfied people go forth and take positive action to solve their own problems. It aimed to give them a dream that was in itself so thrilling in com-

parison with reality that they would return, and return again, for further hours of dreaming. So fixed has this money-making formula become that even novels and dramas of stature and integrity come out of the movie-mill something other than they were: they come out revised to fit the daydreams of the unsatisfied immature.

Fulfillment by fantasy: this is the pattern of psychological immaturity. Fulfillment by a rational, sustained program of action: this is the pattern of psychological maturity. To an overwhelming extent, the Hollywood formula has been on the side of immaturity. Hollywood, we might say, is the enormously profitable enterprise of encouraging millions of people — an estimated 80,000,000 a week in 1940, for example — to find their habitual escape from frustration and boredom in glamorous fantasy. Hollywood, in short, has a vested interest in escapism. Inevitably, therefore, it has a vested interest in emotional immaturity.

V

Advertising is the nation's biggest business. It is also one of the biggest and most continuous psychological influences in our lives. It is literally everywhere. Wherever, by day or night, our eyes and ears are open, we are likely to see or hear some invitation to buy something. It is as though we were surrounded by a vast army of salesmen, each struggling to win our attention; each with something to show us, something for us to buy, something we are made to feel that we *must* buy if we are not to live our lives under a handicap; each trying to get the money we have to spend before someone else gets it.

We do not resent the importunities of these "salesmen." We like to do the sort of wanting that they make us do: the advertisements in a home magazine or a Sunday paper are willingly given a large slice of our attention; and few things yield us more repeated delight than a seed catalogue or the fat catalogue from a mail-order house . . . to say nothing of the windows of clothing stores, hardware stores, book stores, art supply stores, stationery stores. Goods, goods everywhere, and money with which to buy: this is one shape that the American dream has persistently taken; and it has been very far from a bad dream. The ingenuities of men in producing endless things for use, comfort, and convenience have been good ingenuities; and much of the wanting that we do, under the stimulus of advertisements, is good wanting. Much of it ties up soundly with our making of choices and plans. Basic to a high productive economy, in brief, is the process of letting people know what has been produced.

Yet there are psychological questions to ask here: questions that are again tied up with the problem of our individual and cultural maturing. So far as advertisers are concerned — and the producers who employ them — the average man plays only one role that has any significance: that of consumer. His mental and emotional processes are of interest only to the extent that they can be ferreted out and capitalized: used as stimuli to

make him buy. Such a one-sided concept of the human being — particularly when almost unlimited resources are used to make it attractive — can scarcely help making for a one-sided development, and therefore a less than fully mature development, of that human being. When he and his fellows, moreover, have in sufficient number and for a sufficient length of time taken such one-sidedness for granted, the whole culture to which they belong will be slanted away from full maturity.

To put the matter succinctly, advertising halts our psychological growth to the extent that it *makes us do too much wanting* and *makes us want things for the wrong reasons.*

It makes us do too much wanting. There is scarcely a waking hour of our lives when we are not told, through some medium, that we ought to pay out money to buy this or that. The cumulative effect of this is fourfold: we are kept always on the edge of material discontent, so that what we have never seems good enough; we are progressively trained to want the ready-made and to think of what we can make ourselves as a poor substitute, so that the pleasures of ownership overshadow the pleasure of creativeness; we are encouraged to discard things not only before they have been fully used but before they have become intimate and beloved companions of our daily living; and we are induced to believe that most of our mental, emotional, and social problems stem from our lack of the right material goods.

It makes us want things for the wrong reasons. The easiest emotions for the advertiser to tap — and the ones most certain to produce "results" — are those related to our fears, particularly our social fears; our hunger for attention and prestige; and our frustration-born pleasure in outdoing somebody else. These are not our most mature emotions — nor those most conducive to our further maturing. They all represent in some degree an immature centering upon the self. The fears, for example, that advertisers most effectively capitalize — even when they are directing their appeals at grown men and women — are adolescent fears: fears that have to do with being "different," with failing to meet rigid standards of group conformity, with being left out, with not making a good appearance, with being criticized by other people. Similarly, their prestige-appeals are largely on the adolescent level: the individual is invited to see himself, not as maturely equal with others, but *as the focus of attention and envy.*

Advertising, in brief, like the other businesses we have been weighing, has found its formula: get a person to want something for himself, and to want it badly enough, and a sale is made. The art of salesmanship — and therefore of advertising — is that of awakening self-wants: making the person feel that his own life is incomplete and that what it lacks wears a price-tag. The perfect consumer is the individual who is so suggestible that he can be kept pretty continuously engaged in the process of indulging his own ego. If the proper maturing of the self consists, as we have seen, in its development away from immature fears and egocentricities toward a wider range of human interests and relationships, then the ego-absorptions en-

couraged by endless invitations to buy actually arrest our maturing. Advertising has its own peculiar vested interest: in human self-indulgence.

We speak of ours as a materialistic age — and thus throw upon material goods an onus they do not deserve. It would be less ambiguous to call it a self-indulgent age. The most powerful forces around us beg us, implore us, plead with us to indulge ourselves. We hear the insinuating words on the radio: "You owe it to yourself . . ."; "Don't wait another day . . ."; "Be the first in your town to own . . ."; "Your friends will envy you. . . ." We read the words of persuasion in flaring spreads in newspapers, in magazine pictures that invite us to project ourselves into a dream-world of beauty and convenience, in neon signs against the night sky: something to drink; something to smoke; something to eat that champions eat; something to make you beautiful; something to make you a man of distinction; something to bring you success; something to make you the life of the party; something to reduce some kind of work to the mere pushing of a button; something to take away all your worries and let you lie in a hammock the rest of your life.

VI

Newspapers, radio, movies, and advertising — these might be called the "big four" of communication. These are the four great money-making enterprises of mind-making. It would be pleasant to report that they all make for the fine maturing of human character. But the report must be otherwise. In spite of what each has contributed to our growth, each has, through its own formula, found it profitable to keep us from full psychological maturing. Or, to put the best possible face upon the matter, each has found in us some immaturity that waited to be tapped. Engaged in the tapping process, each of these powerful forces has been too busy to think about the long-range consequences of its formula.

Lest we be tempted, however, to pass the buck to these great agencies of influence — laying on them the total blame for our immaturity — three final observations must be made.

The first is that the owners and producers of newspapers, radio programs, motion pictures, and advertisements are not to be regarded in their money-making preoccupation, as cultural "sports." Their values are not atypical; they are typical. The definitions of prestige and success that they emphasize are the definitions to which most men and women, right down the line, gear their lives and the lives of their children. The hunger for "shock news" — catastrophe, scandal, conflict — that newspapers satisfy to their own profit is not a newspaper-made hunger, though it may be a newspaper-stimulated hunger. It derives from deeper ills in our culture: from boredoms, disappointments, and apathies that make adults, by and large, unresponsive to any drama in life except "shock drama"; also, from latent hostilities that make adults, by and large, draw guilty satisfaction from the ill fortunes of others. The propensity to daydream that has proved so

vastly profitable to the producers of soap operas, motion pictures, and glamor advertisements is, again, stimulated by, but not created by, those who thus make money from its existence. In a culture where everyone is encouraged to believe, at the outset, that his ship will come in and where this hope is so regularly flouted; and in a culture where love and marriage are so constantly presented as adolescent affairs of everlasting moonlight and roses, the frustration of people is enormous — and their propensity to daydream is likewise enormous. While, therefore, we have every right to look at these powerful mind-makers with critical eyes, seeing how ready they are to capitalize our immaturities, we need also to look beyond them for the causes of those immaturities they capitalize.

The second observation that must be made is that these mind-makers are not as dangerous to human welfare as they might be. That statement sounds like bland dismissal of our problem; but it is, rather, a simple recognition of fact. Everywhere in the world, and in every period of history, the job of mind-making has been in large measure the monopoly of some power group or groups. Nowhere in the world, and at no time in history, has the average man actually "made up his own mind." Priests and theologians have made it up for him. Kings have made it up for him. Conquerors, dictators, and politicians have made it up for him. While his own personal experience has taught him much, his basic beliefs about his rights and obligations and his place in the scheme of things have come to him from the outside. Always there have been some few — seers, prophets, teachers, statesmen — who have wanted him to think well of himself as a human being and to act out a proud, creative role in the human tradition. But for the most part, everywhere and always, the dominant power group has wanted the average man to have an image of himself that would comport well with the power and perpetuation of that group. Newspaper owners, advertisers, and the rest, when they are persuading the average man to see himself in a role that is profitable to them, are therefore, we might say, simply the inheritors of age-old power techniques and power-attitudes. They — like uncounted priests, demagogues, and dictators before them — are simply mind-making to their own advantage. But that tells only half the story. Psychologically, the most dangerous power-groups and power-individuals in history have been those who have wanted the average man to be *a contented follower:* a meek accepter of his lot; a proud borrower of significance from the leader he served. The four great mind-making powers of our day are less concerned with the average man as *a contented follower* than they are with him as *a discontented wanter of things for himself.* They do not, in the traditional sense, see him as a follower at all. They see him as a consumer. This is a fundamental difference. It means that they will provide whatever that average man — writ large to make a public — is ready to want to pay for. They have modified the old utilitarian slogan — *the greatest good of the greatest number* — to read *the greatest amount of goods to the greatest number.* They may, through their

reliance upon their immature formulae, delay the maturing of the public. But their aim is to make money, not to see themselves as "leaders" to whom the passive millions lift adoring eyes. Every cubit of maturity that is added, through whatever influence, to our cultural stature will, therefore, influence the quality of the products put at our disposal by the great mind-makers. If and when we want maturity, in brief, they will cater as assiduously to our mature wants as they now do to our immaturity.

The third observation is that there are ways in which the public can learn to handle even immature materials maturely. There are high schools, for example, today, in which the students are learning to work up their own standards of criticism for motion pictures and radio programs — and are, in the process, maturing their own powers of discrimination. There are high-school and college classes in increasing numbers in which students are comparing various newspapers and magazines and are trying to decide upon standards of measurement. There are parent groups, small and large, that are taking collective issue with the assumption that any motion picture is good enough so long as it will keep their children out of the house and off the street for a few hours. Similarly, there are parent groups that are coming to joint decisions about the radio programs to which their children of various age levels should listen. The growth of consumer groups is another evidence that the public can learn to be something more mature than the advertiser's "perfect consumer." Such methods for making demands upon those who make our minds are in their infancy. But it is a promising infancy. It offers hope that the time will come in our culture when newspapers, radio stations, motion-picture producers, and advertisers may all find it profitable to appeal to our maturity.

Moonlight and Poison Ivy

David L. Cohn • 1896–

Does our high divorce rate reflect a nation of spoiled children with immature conceptions of love and marriage? And if so, may the responsibility lie with the mass media which teach us a "moonlight and poison ivy" conception of these complex relationships? Such is the argument of this essay, which applies Overstreet's general conclusions to this specific problem.

From *The Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1949. By permission of the publishers and the author. Copyright by David L. Cohn.

THERE is little doubt that our attitudes toward marriage, stemming as they must from our attitudes toward life and living, are crippling, if not fatal, to the central relationship in men's lives. If we tell the young that life is easy, when it is hard; that it is kind, when it is replete with cruel ironies; that all is to be had for the asking, when every blessing must be paid for singly or doubly; that it is a succession of high moments, when most of it is pedestrian; that it is "romantic," in the sense of affording high adventure, when its glory lies in man's struggle against forces he cannot even comprehend; that bigness is greatness and success is achievement — if we teach all these things, then not only is youth corroded, corrupted, and misled, while its wellsprings are poisoned at the source, but the revulsion when it comes is, and must be, shattering.

Yet this is what we do tell the young; what they are told every day by many magazines, the movies, the radio, and national advertisers. It is, apparently, what we believe, or affect to believe. It is also false, it does not square with human experience, and it is disastrous to marriage.

More and more, American marriage is coming to be a detour to divorce. The divorce rate alone does not fully illuminate the whole shabby matrimonial scene since it reflects only those cases of discord that are made public, but it is an index to private failure become national failure on a huge scale.

Of what significance are miracles of production, our hard work and ingenious gadgets, our cluttered catalogue of things sensible and nonsensical that make up our so-called high standard of living, if millions of men and women take little or no joy in each other; if the house vanishes, the family breaks up, the home is transient? For what does the ordinary man strive if not for a wife, a home, children, permanence of tenure and affection under one roof? And if these prove to be but an illusion, if the husband becomes an alimony payer, the father a stranger to his children, the seeker for permanency a wanderer, is not ours a matrimonial anarchy?

Why should such anarchy prevail? There is no easy answer to this question. Investigators attribute it to sexual maladjustments, money troubles, friction with in-laws, poor housing, the increasing financial independence of women. These play their part, but some of its causes lie in our national character and attitudes. Marriage and divorce are what they are, to a large degree, because we are what we have become.

American marriage is dangerously weakened at its inception because of our preference for moonlight and poison ivy — the lies elders tell the young about marriage, and the hourly elaboration of these lies, cunningly persuasive, by many magazines, the radio, the movies, national advertisers. It is rarely portrayed for what it is: a difficult and demanding exercise in human relationships; a partnership, not without austerity, in which losses as well as profits are shared; an undertaking dynastic as well as individual. More commonly — vulgarly and infantilely — marriage is portrayed as a gumdrop heaven: soft, gooey, chewy, and oh, so sweet.

It is, of course, a heaven of huge dimensions — not for us a one-room, walk-up Nirvana — so that the couple attaining it must move about in a Cadillac with a sliding top, and are showered with completely furnished cottages, tickets for trips to Bermuda, whole wardrobes by Christian Dior, television sets, memberships in a country club, and two foam rubber clouds; all delicately scented with Elizabeth Arden's Blue Grass perfume. The country that invented the airplane and the drive-in movie, where you neck while you look, is certainly not going to cling to yesterday's antiquated model of marriage.

We are not content, therefore, to marry for reasons that have always moved most people elsewhere. It is not enough that marriage is desirable as a division of labor; that a man wants a woman to run his house and the woman wants a house to run. We scorn the fact that monogamic marriage was born of race experience, the trial-and-error method of centuries having demonstrated that, for most of us, it is the best way for a man and woman to live together and to transmit property through inheritance. We find it repulsive that marriage is no "It must be fate" relationship dreamed up by a bored faun who missed his train at Indianapolis.

Nor are we content, even, that marriage should proceed from love as other men have known it, for this would be to recognize the emotion for what it, in part, is: bitter-sweet, subtly demanding, frequently tempestuous, and capable of vanishing for no apparent reason. It is intolerable to us who dread the tenuous as primitive men dread the evil eye, that love's life might hang upon threads so gossamer as the cadence of a voice, the clasp of hands, the looks of eyes, the word said, the word unsaid. We find it unbearable that love demands constant replenishing and care; as much care indeed as one gives to one's car. But we do not, for these reasons, reject romantic love in marriage. Allegedly we marry for no other reason. We have created our own moonlight and poison ivy image of love and marriage: a handsome couple, forever fair and young, perpetually embracing on the moon-misty shores of a Cytherea that the map reveals to be Deaf Smith County, Texas.

So, too, we say "Love is blind." We mean thereby that the lover sees no imperfections or incompatibilities in the beloved, and love's blindness, therefore, will ensure forever love and marriage. Since this is palpably false, and is indeed anti-romantic, lending to the one or the other a wooden perfection suitable for a department store dummy but not for flesh and blood, whose living wonder is its mixture of elements, it follows that when, some morning at the breakfast table, the shuttered eye sees once more, all is disillusion.

Other peoples, wiser perhaps than we, if less "romantic," give another interpretation to the same phrase. Love is blind, they say, because the lover consciously closes his eyes to the beloved's failings, content that the good outweighs the bad. These are not our optics, however, since in love we prefer the straight line irresolute, the rounded curve wavy. It is, more-

over, a mature point of view that we find shocking because we invariably associate love with immaturity. Hence Hollywood grandmothers are condemned to go on playing ingénue roles, and Hollywood lovers, with arteries of '98, are forever Princeton '41.

We do not want to look at life steadily and whole, seeing that it is noble and ignoble, generous and mean, beautiful and ugly, cleanly and filthy, melancholy and joyous; compounded of pain as well as happiness; its gold inextricably mingled with baser metals. Not for us the concept that symmetry derives from asymmetry; or that, in the words of William Blake, "There is a strange disproportion in beauty."

Powerful agencies disseminate our deadly notion of marriage as a tinsel heaven on earth, often to the muted music of woodwinds blown by those quaint people known as parents. For every dealer in reality who languishes for lack of trade, there are a thousand dealers in illusion besieged by anxious customers. Yet they did not invent the moonlight and poison ivy concept of love and marriage. They merely exploit what is in our minds.

II

High among our illusions affecting love, marriage, and much else — a natural child of moonlight and poison ivy — is the installment plan mentality. It dictates that you do not have to do anything, or become anything, if you can wangle the small down payment on what you want; the rest "just a few cents a day."

Do you want to marry a rich, handsome young man with (as the magazines put it) "lean flanks" and "strong teeth," the better to eat you, mah chile? It's easy. Simply use Princess Mafou's Face Powder. At your next dinner party three men, dead ringers for Winthrop Rockefeller, will trample one another in the rush to marry you.

Suppose you have no face. Do not be discouraged. Hands will do the trick as well; or eyelashes, fingernails, hair. There was the girl who could not bring her man to gaff until she discovered Beautress (pronounced Bowtress). "My date with Bill that night," runs the ad, "found me confident in the new-found glamour of my sparkling Beautress lovely hair . . . His cheek touched its new alluring softness while we danced . . . My heart stood still when he murmured: 'Dream Girl, that gorgeous hair rates a bridal veil.'"

They were married in a rented submarine, spent their honeymoon at the Stork Club, occasionally left their Martinis to pick up a peck of emeralds at Cartier's, and because of the housing shortage are now roughing it in a twenty-room hut at Palm Springs. They are deliriously happy and will always be in a state of delirium. For when Bill occasionally looks grumpy, his Dream Girl orders a "festive walnut cake," chockful of genuine Shasta Brand Walnuts. "Imagine getting kissed for your cake!" says the ad.

This being the case, why should any woman burden herself with such old-fashioned backbreaking loads as brains, charm, literacy, efficiency, or resemblance to the human race? She can get her man with a shampoo and

keep him with walnuts. Go to your favorite drugstore tomorrow, buy yourself a bottle of the American Dream in the new economy size, shake well before using, and live luxuriously ever afterward.

If you can read the ads, it is not unlikely that you can read a book, although the strain will be greater. There are dozens of books telling you how to handle every question of love and marriage in this happy world rapidly becoming free of dandruff. It is as simple as finding the recipe for lemon pie in Fannie Farmer. Why, then, be concerned with understanding and patience? Why listen to the shy counsel of the shy heart when the ready-made answer to your perplexities is at hand just as the biscuit mix is on your pantry shelf, leaving little to do except heat and serve?

Whence our feverish search for the easy way; our obsession with the opiate dream? Is it that we have no faith except in the infallibility of machinery and so stand incredulous and shaken when the airplane falls? Has ours become a culture from the periphery of the eyelids outward, lacking inner content? Are we, despite our physical energy, an intellectually lazy people, satisfied to take shadow for substance, package for contents, and black or white for truth because we are too lethargic to search out the nuances where truth, ever elusive, lies? Has some malign enchantment unfitted us to face life as it is, so that its essence escapes us and we face eventual destruction from within or from without? Is the high point of our civilization reached when a radio announcer screams to a nation enthralled, "That's right, Mrs. Deffenbaugh!" while $20,000 worth of things, including a houseboat and a wall can-opener, drop into the lap of the lucky winner?

Better marriage relations in this country await an extensive revaluation of our attitude towards life and living. If our values are shabby and our attitudes adolescent, how can American marriage, made in our image, be anything but a monumental failure?

The Art of Licking

Gilbert Seldes • 1893–

Hollywood cuts every story, actor, and author down to its own size, paring away the original, the subtle, the new, fitting everything to the Procrustean bed of its own profitable formulas. That is the art of "licking," explained in this essay by one of the foremost critics of the popular arts.

From *The Great Audience* by Gilbert Seldes. Copyright, 1950, by Gilbert Seldes. Reprinted by permission of The Viking Press, Inc., New York. Pp. 50–56.

IN MAKING the average A picture the producer is in charge of a complex operation; if he is bringing to the screen a popular novel or play, he must preserve what is useful and at the same time make it conform to the mythology of the movies. The original work goes through a series of changes; in addition to those necessary to translate the work into movie terms, there is often a dilution of the strength of the original work, or a change in emphasis, a smoothing away of salient characteristics; it corresponds to the way all character is washed out of women's faces, so that a dull and deathlike beauty becomes the standard of the screen. Story and characters are subtly, or rudely, altered to fit into the established molds, and when a great popular property is bought, if it is at all exceptional, the professional term for reducing it to the screen level is "licking" it. Evelyn Waugh has described the process: "Each book purchased for motion pictures has some individual quality, good or bad, that has made it remarkable. It is the work of a great array of highly paid and incompatible writers to distinguish the quality, separate it, and obliterate it." There have been notable exceptions to this rule, and more in which the special quality has not been obliterated but only smudged over. Hundreds of pictures stick close to their sources because the originals were contrived to be made into movies. Sometimes a book presents few problems, like *Gone with the Wind;* sometimes, as in *Forever Amber,* the licking process destroys the chances of the film.

Licking may involve a major operation, as in the complete removal of the Lesbian theme from *The Children's Hour* to make *These Three,* or the theme of homosexuality from *The Brick Foxhole* to make *Crossfire;* in each case the original situation was unacceptable for the screen, and in each case a good picture was made by using the dramatic elements to carry a new theme. Sometimes the significance of the background is altered, as in *An American Tragedy,* which concentrated on murder and completely obliterated Dreiser's study of the relation between what Clyde Griffith did and the society in which he lived. Or a shift in emphasis may be made to hold the sympathy of the audience: Ring Lardner's *Champion* begins with Midge Kelly knocking down his crippled younger brother; in the movie, Midge is protective and tender. Licking *The Great Gatsby* without giving it a happy ending was a problem; it was solved by draining out the life force of Gatsby himself and providing wedding bells for two minor characters; the Spanish war and its effect on the hero were left out of *Key Largo,* perhaps for political reasons, but no motivation for the hero was substituted. In *Pride and Prejudice* what had to be licked was the sheer creativeness of Jane Austen; her characters had to be refashioned according to movie styles, so Mrs. Bennet turned up as a light-headed mother, and not a fool, and all the irony of Mr. Bennet disappeared, leaving him merely another father who didn't understand his daughters.

I have chosen for detailed analysis a short film, not actually intended for exhibition in movie houses, because it reflects the philosophy of lick-

ing to perfection. It is *The Diamond Necklace,* produced by Grant-Realm as the first of a series of television dramas, and it is, incidentally, a grim portent of what Hollywood may do if television production falls into its hands.

What had to be licked in the story was Maupassant's failure to supply a moral; small variations in plot and character were introduced to justify the "moral" ending, an ending, like so many movie formulas, shockingly immoral in its implications. For after the denouement and some added dialogue about the wasted years, the narrator of the story came forward and told the audience that "of course" the necklace was returned and life was easier for Matilda and her husband; emphatically he said that in the years of their struggle they had discovered something more precious than any necklace could be. To justify this, Matilda was shown as covetous from the beginning, even before the invitation to the ball, which, in the original story, motivates her desire for the necklace; she was shown to be heartlessly extravagant *after* they had begun paying for the duplicate; but when her husband was threatened by a moneylender (a new character deftly introduced into the story) she experienced a change of heart and became his willing helpmeet. Since ten years of misery, the consequence of pure accident, could not be shown as a demonstration of divine justice, the event was presented as a sort of retribution for Matilda's vanity and selfishness; and to assure the audience that the improvement in her character and the mutual love of husband and wife were really worth the struggle, Matilda was as radiantly beautiful at the end as she had been at the ball. (Some compunction must have been felt; the ravage of the years was rendered by Maupassant in a single line when Mme. Forestier says, "I hardly recognized you." In the picture the line was broken off after "For a moment I . . .")

This story was made for a commercial sponsor (Lucky Strike), and it is possible that even more than ordinary caution seemed advisable. It is nevertheless an illustration of what happens when a story is forced to conform to artificial standards. An episode that can be read in ten minutes was expanded to some twenty-four minutes of playing time, but the sense of life was not enhanced; the sluggish temperament of the husband was transformed into charm at the beginning and dogged devotion at the end; the social situation of the small functionary in a government office was not worked into the background.

The original story ends with Mme. Forestier's words, "But mine was paste. It was worth at the very most five hundred francs!"—and the imagination of the reader begins to function. In a study course for ex-GIs, over a hundred men and women were asked what they thought happened next; some of them thought Matilda fainted or became hysterical, some that she was too stunned at first to understand what had occurred. That the necklace was returned, they felt, hardly needed explicit statement (after seeing the movie, they heartily applauded one student who said, "They'd have beaten the hell out of her if she didn't return it"). And there was con-

siderable difference of opinion on what had happened to husband and wife, whether they had grown more companionable or had become embittered toward each other, whether they had been so drained of their physical resources that they could not enjoy their sudden wealth, whether the shock of discovery, coming after the strain of the years, might not have made them want to curse God and die. None of this was possible after seeing the TV movie version; the imagination was prevented from going into action, the story was wrapped up in a package.

And finally this case history is typical because no proof was ever offered that the harsh, unmoralized original story would have been unpalatable to the audience. The distorted story itself, agreeably presented, made it less probable that another story, given the same opportunity, would be presented without distortion. In its small way the picture was helping to create the very audience it assumed; it was helping to create the mass.

In the fabrication of stereotypes the major studios have developed an admirable sureness of touch. Occasionally they produce parodies of themselves, as when the Bing Crosby-Barry Fitzgerald pattern of young priest and old was duplicated as young doctor and old; but in the main they set a premium on inventiveness, not original creative power, and the twist is a highly regarded element in any synopsis of a story. The writer whose story is nearly right is asked to keep working at it until he finds the twist; in most cases it involves twisting characters out of their natural shape; sometimes the twist comes first and is the whole picture, as when *Monsieur Beaucaire* was remade with a barber pretending to be a marquis instead of a marquis pretending to be a barber. Manipulation of such mechanical operations is a necessary part of the system of quantity production.

The Non-Men

The high voltage of creative energy is stepped down by a series of interferences, and it hardly comes as a surprise to the salaried writer when he discovers that he has no rights in his own work because "the corporation is the author" of whatever he creates. This phrase (which occurs in the standard contract shortly after a salute to the "unique intellectual abilities" of the writer) may have been introduced originally as a legalistic device to assure the property rights of the contracting studio; it represents, however, an actuality. The picture shown on the screen is the work of a number of people to whom the corporation has given power. The more varied the gifts of any one person, the fewer collaborators he will have; but even if he is a writer-director-producer his work will still represent the corporate demands of his studio.

The creation of a picture usually begins either with the purchase of a property (novel, short story, play), already successful, or with the search for a property suitable to the needs of a star under contract. Occasionally a novel is bought before it is known to the public, and, as a form of insurance, the purchaser will invest in an advertising campaign for the book

before the picture is made. A studio may invest in the production of a play and lose the movie rights to a higher bidder; or buy a property and, failing to get the wanted star, trade it to a competitor. During periods of economy the studios hold back and reduce the market price for hits, and at such times we have remakes of old pictures, reissues, and a careful recombing of properties previously acquired. This is usually accompanied by announcements that "original" stories will now be encouraged.

Dore Schary, in charge of production at MGM, the studio with the largest and most expensive roster of stars, has denied that he starts a picture with anything but a story; but, at *Life*'s Round Table, he was challenged by Jerry Wald, producer at Warners, who said, "Rather than wait for the right story to come along, the studio sees the salary mounting up every week and — well, it's not the best story, but let's get him working. You know, Dore, what do you think?" Mr. Schary thought it was a problem. It is a problem constantly solved by looking for the best stories for the most expensive stars, by building up or cutting down stories to fit the star's capacities, turning them into what the public wants to see the star in.

The screenwriter usually begins with the work of an author not on the studio payroll; the probable budget is known and the stars for whom the story is intended. (Sometimes, particularly if there is no pressure of time, a treatment of a novel or play may be made without reference to an individual star; but a common event is for a studio to announce that it has bought a best-seller for a specific star.) Not only the limitations of the star's talents, but his or her unique virtues are considered in tailoring the story; it is dangerous to let a star appear in a movie that suppresses his familiar characteristics, the gestures and intonations known to the public; moreover, if the original character is a complex one, those elements must be eliminated which might confuse the image of the star fixed in the public mind; although the movie fan knows that his favorite players eat, marry, have or adopt children, and even possibly vote, the identification of stars with the parts they play is virtually complete. The writer must see to it that the star, whatever character he portrays, will, in the last analysis, be an acceptable version of himself.

When these conditions are imposed, and met, the writer is further obliged to "write out" of the story whatever strong political or social or economic concepts the story reflects, unless they happen to be universally approved. Then he is set to tackle the problem of licking the censorship on whatever sex "angles" the producer plans to keep in the story. Not all of this need be heartbreaking; much of it can be as automatic and subconscious as adhering to policy on a newspaper with strong doctrines; these are the conditions of work. No studio ever pretended that these were the ideal conditions for artistic creation. The studios might, in fact, quote Goethe's saying that the master proves himself when he works within limitations; but Goethe meant something else. He lived before the days of the front office and the Legion of Decency.

The imposed necessity to cut characters down to size, the constant preoccupation with possible objections, the awareness of authority looking over his shoulder as he writes, all combine to harry the writer into using bright tricks; he substitutes violence for passion, activity for strength of character; he invents those twists which surprise an audience at the expense of logical development of plot. Before he is through he knows in his heart that although he has written a script he is not the "author" of the work, and on occasions has been known to ask for the removal of his name from the credit list. At best he has taken part in a large-scale collaboration.

Adman's Nightmare: Is the Prune a Witch?

Robert Graham • 1902–

Is the atomic scientist to blame if man blows himself up, and the earth with him? Is the psychologist to blame if he shows the commercial managers of the mass media how to milk contented customers, even if the ways perpetuate immaturity? This article shows how some of the newer techniques of psychology are being used to help advertisers understand our most deep-seated discontents and turn them to advantage.

ADVERTISEMENTS are all like tacks placed in the road, and the mind of the American consumer is somewhat like an automobile tire. The outer layers of the tire, made of black, smoke-cured apathy, are resilient and hard to pierce. But a good sharp tack can do it, and a superior tack can go on and puncture the inner tube. When that happens, the consumer comes to a shuddering halt and the man who put the tack in the road, or hired somebody else to do it for him, steps out of the bushes and sells the consumer an icebox. There is nothing wrong with this — most of the time the consumer needs the icebox anyway, and in buying it he performs a function vital to the operation of the economy.

Advertisers are very good at making tacks. They can make big sharp ones — the concept of mildness, for example, has lacerated countless tires in its time. They can make medium-sized tacks — the celebrity testimonial is an example of that sort, standard and solid, likely to cause some punctures but not guaranteed to work every time. Or the advertisers can make little tacks

Reprinted from *The Reporter*, October 13, 1953. Copyright, 1953, by Fortnightly Publishing Company. Reprinted by permission of *The Reporter* and Harold Ober Associates.

like the singing commercial, one of which may not make much of a dent, but which can be effective in large numbers when strewn across the consumer's road.

The consumer is familiar with all the standard varieties of tacks. But just now, no farther away than the nearest radio or television set or the very pages he is about to read, a new and different sort awaits him. Since the war, and particularly during the past year, advertisers have been devoting new attention to the questions of what makes the tire so tough and whether there is another, easier means of puncturing it. They are discovering that there is indeed an easier means, and that there are some technicians, or needlers, who are very familiar with it. The means is psychology, and the needlers are known collectively as social scientists; sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists. When we start investigating what happens when the advertisers conclude an alliance with the social scientists, we soon find ourselves deep in such fascinating problems as what the Chrysler Corporation is doing with a study called "Mistress Versus Wife," what you will think of when you next look at a teapot, and how you remove the emotional blockage in the primary prune market.

The New Liturgy

Along New York's Madison Avenue, the Appian Way of the advertising world, a brand-new phrase has become as much a part of the common speech as "I'm just thinking off the top of my head" used to be. The phrase is "motivational research," usually heard alone but sometimes in conjunction with "projective techniques." Motivational research means just what it seems to — exploration into the underlying reasons for human behavior, or, to the adman, exploration into the real reasons why a consumer buys or rejects a product or service. Motivational research is quite different from ordinary market research as done by poll takers such as Gallup or Roper. Market research supplies numerical or quantitative facts — it indicates who buys a product, where, when, and how often. Motivational research undertakes to answer the fundamental question "Why?"

Most advertisers had long assumed they knew why. It seems only common sense to conclude that if a teenager buys a bar of soap, she wants to wash. But this, it now seems, may not be the case at all. The sociologist, the psychologist, and the anthropologist may supply a wholly different reason, and it may even be the correct one. If motivational research can in fact supply the right answer, and if the copy writer can translate it into understandable and appealing terms, the adman will have a tack that will penetrate tire, tube, fender, and windshield and stab the consumer right in the gizzard. Accordingly, many if not most of the major advertising agencies have been hiring experts in motivational research. Agencies that do not yet have resident head-shrinkers are hastening to employ independent firms, run by psychologists, to do the work for them.

The subject should be investigated cautiously, beginning with a shallow

pool where the wader can clearly see bottom. In this realm is the "Mistress Versus Wife" study done for Chrysler by Dr. Ernest Dichter, formerly a Viennese psychologist, now an American citizen and president of the Institute for Research in Mass Motivations, Inc., of New York. Dr. Dichter has done scores of studies for many of the largest and best-known companies in the nation, among them Procter and Gamble, Du Pont, General Mills, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, B. F. Goodrich, and Lever Brothers. In this case he was concerned with an automobile dealer's problem: How come all those people stand outside the showroom window staring at the new convertible model when only one buyer in fifty ultimately chooses it?

"To most people," Dichter's report says, "a convertible is a symbol of perennial youth, of adventurousness, raciness, and boldness." But a man cannot always be young, adventurous, or bold. He enjoys looking at the convertible, but finally rejects it after "a psychological process similar to the one a man goes through when he decides to give up his alluring mistress and marry a plain girl who will make a good wife and mother." The convertible gets him into the showroom, even though he buys the black sedan. Moral: Always keep a flame-red Jezebel in the window and don't worry about selling it. On the basis of this information Chrysler changed its advertising budget and pitch to emphasize the convertible, and none of its stockholders has since starved to death.

The simplicity of this finding is deceptive, as is the simplicity of the law of gravity. But nobody had ever pointed it out. Another of Dr. Dichter's researches was done for the Tea Council of the U. S. A. The results of this research are now evident in magazines and television ads throughout the country.

Tea is what Dichter calls a "prejudiced" product, as are prunes, and cigarette holders for men. There is something about these products that gives many consumers the creeps. Tea, for example, carries the stigma of effeminacy and feebleness. That being so, the Tea Council should have phrased its ads in a way designed to counteract the prejudice. But in the days before Dichter the Council's ads played directly into the prejudice. The colors were pale, washed-out blues and yellows; the pitches were such as "Tired? Nervous? Try tea."

On Dichter's recommendation the pantywaist colors were dropped and replaced by a brilliant, masculine red. The "Tired? Nervous?" was replaced by an alliterative series of words which sounds like a police sergeant clearing his throat — "Make it hefty, hot and hearty, take tea and see." The pictures were no longer of pallid women but of vigorous males. Thus the consumer, led to feel that tea drinking is just as manly as felling an oak or strangling a moose, is encouraged to go out and brew a potful. To these shrewd points, Dichter added a last psychological device. In all the Tea Council ads there now appears a symbolic pot, an epitome of all pouring pots that readers or watchers may have in their own kitchens. On its side are the words "Take Tea and See." It is designed to arouse in you, as in

Pavlov's dogs, a conditioned response — think of tea, not of that other hot beverage, whenever you see a pot.

Nudging the Respondent

The conclusions of such motivational studies are reached after a great deal of effort and by various routes. All the researchers begin with the fundamentals of the poll taker — they select a sample of the population, which may include as few as fifty or as many as two thousand individuals, and make sure that the sample is a cross section representative of the various geographic, social, economic, and age groups.

The researchers differ widely on how the sampling should be done. Each uses his own method, or "projective technique." One group, in which Dr. Dichter is the tall man, relies almost entirely on the "depth interview." A depth interview is a psychoanalysis in miniature, and may last five hours or even all day. The interviewee (respondent) is encouraged to talk, even to ramble, by a technician who has been instructed by Dichter on how the conversation should be nudged. In collecting the raw material for "A Psychological Study of the Sales and Advertising Problems of the California Prune Advisory Board," a work which will be dealt with in more detail later, Dichter's interviewers recorded millions of words and thoughts, of which the following are typical: "I consider myself a moderate eater. More or less I eat three meals a day at approximately the same time. The variety of foods I eat is limited and I eat such foods as suit my palate. I do eat prunes . . . I don't like watery prunes. They remind me of boardinghouse prunes. . . . A dried-out prune is shriveled, has no taste. Certain people present that appearance. It may be an entirely wrong impression of the individual. Prunes are prunes, that is all. . . ."

A second widely used projective technique is free word association, in which a list of words, carefully booby-trapped, is recited to the respondent, who comes back with the first supplementary or complementary words that pop into his head. If the interviewer says "bread," the respondent is likely to reply "butter"; "house" would probably elicit "home."

A leading exponent of this second method is James M. Vicary, a market- and opinion-research expert of New York whose clients have included Benton & Bowles, J. Walter Thompson, and Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn. Vicary prefers free word association because it requires much less time than the depth interview and because he thinks his respondents have less opportunity to cheat. A man who must give dozens of associative responses at the rate of one every three seconds has little chance to think up a lie, and thus blurts out what is really in his mind. By this method Vicary was recently able to tell a well-known brewery company to lay off the word "lagered," which it was thinking of inserting in its ads. About thirty-five per cent of Vicary's respondents reacted to "lagered" with desirable associations, such as "stout" or "ale," but thirty-eight per cent replied with "tired," "drunk," "lazy," "linger," and "dizzy."

Vicary has also done a remarkable study for the Commonwealth Edison Company titled " 'Chicago' as a Symbol" and designed to find out what non-Chicagoans think of the place and how industries can be persuaded to move there so that Commonwealth Edison can sell more power. Of hundreds upon hundreds of associations given for "Chicago," six predominated, and these Vicary placed in one sentence in order of their occurrence. The sentence contains nothing startling but is still awesome, as though a great faceless giant were speaking: "Chicago is a *city* in *Illinois,* sometimes referred to as *windy,* is known for its *stockyards, gangsters,* and in the past for the great *fire* which destroyed the town." Among the minor associations were all manner of fine flickering words: "Sister Carrie," "stampede," "The City of Hog," "wheat," "meat cleavers," "jazz bands," "Edith," "red," and "cat." The last, Vicary decided, may have come from someone who had in mind Carl Sandburg's line, "The fog comes on little cat feet." Sandburg himself appears four times among the associations. "Edith" is nobody's business. A major conclusion of the research was that Chicago has more agricultural than industrial connotations in the average man's mind. Commonwealth Edison met this challenge with a big ad which showed a steer wearing a cogwheel for a collar, above the words "Agriculture and Industry Are Partners in Chicago and Northern Illinois."

Vicary thinks so highly of the word-association technique that he has tried to use it in naming his children. He and his wife, expecting a son, decided to name the boy Simon. "Simon Vicary seemed to us to have a fine sound," he says. "But when we tried it on our friends, we got associations like 'Simon Legree' and 'Simple Simon.' The child was a girl anyway. We named her Anne."

Another projective technique in common use is "thematic apperception," in which a respondent is shown a little picture like a cartoon panel and asked to make up a story about it. Sentence completion ("I like Product X because. . . .") is also used, as is the personification method, in which the respondent is asked to put himself in the place of a box of soap and then talk about himself.

Are Salesmen People?

Some psychologists employ an unusual test in which, instead of being given a picture and asked to make up a story about it, the respondent is given a situation or story and asked to draw a picture. In one of many tests conducted during a two-year survey for Armour Laboratories by Leo Nejelski & Co., Inc., of New York, Armour's salesmen were asked to draw pictures of (a) people and (b) salesmen. The differences in the drawings, Nejelski says, were very illuminating.

Psychologists sometimes find it unnecessary to bother with tests at all. Instead of surveying hundreds of people to prove an already established fact, they employ the fact directly. Weiss & Geller, Inc., of Chicago, for example, uses a known psychological fact in its campaign for Luxite

Lingerie. "Our campaign appeals directly to one of women's basic unconscious motives," says President Edward H. Weiss. "That is, self-adoration or self-love — in the word of the social scientists, narcissism. Our entire campaign is based on a picture of a woman looking at herself in the mirror with the headline 'See Yourself in Luxite.'"

A few psychologists employ highly esoteric and perhaps dangerous tests. Housewives have actually been exposed to techniques that have no place outside the laboratory or the hospital. In the Szondi test, for example, the respondent is shown a page of photographed human faces and asked "With which one of these people would you like to go on a long train trip?" or some similar question. The fact is that all the people whose faces are shown are crazy as loons; the respondent, who like most people is about five per cent mad himself, is theoretically attracted to the madman whose madness is most like his own. It is not quite clear how this knowledge could be of help to a salesman or a copy writer.

The fact that psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists are working for the admen, using all these methods, is not in itself dangerous. Neither is the fact that someone has given a child a 155-mm. howitzer — until the child pulls the lanyard. There would seem to be a couple of fundamental issues involved.

First, the social scientist is the inheritor of three thousand years of western man's effort to understand himself. The psychologist of today stands on the summit of a great mountain whose mass is composed of immense boulders, the brains of Aquinas and Leonardo and Descartes and Jefferson and countless others. At the very peak, it would appear, squats the head-shrinker, intoning unctuously, "Madam, tell me what you really think of this plastic commode."

To this charge, which amounts to a charge of common prostitution, the social scientist has an answer. First, of what value is knowledge unless it is applied? Second, the American culture is an agglomeration of material goods — Wheaties, waffle irons, detergents, deodorants, Cadillac convertibles, refrigerators, and uranimum. The grand wizard of this culture is a manufacturer of juke boxes named J. Chlorophyll Chromestrip. Is it not the job of the social scientist to grapple with this culture, even if he has to work for Chromestrip to do so? In finding out what the consumer really thinks of the plastic commode, he may be approaching a larger truth.

The second point concerns the fact that the social scientist knows a great deal about the workings of the human mind. He knows of certain things that might be called national neuroses — the excessive and almost morbid desire for security, for example. Suppose the social scientist tells the adman how to play upon these neuroses, how to place the successful but perhaps fatal tack in the road? If prejudice or anxiety is played upon it may be increased, or it may even be inculcated when it was not present in the first place.

Comes now the defendant who deposes and says: The human organism is very tough; the outer layers of the tire contain dignity and anger as well as apathy. The mass of men will automatically reject an attempt to capitalize on any evil. Furthermore, most social scientists and most admen are moral and responsible people. Still, it is possible that an irresponsible social scientist will feed dangerous material to an irresponsible adman. The result will be an advertisement or a campaign that will not last long, will disgust the mass, but will injure some individuals. It is doubtless true that some were hurt by the famous ad which said in effect: "You're cheating your children if you don't buy a television set," but there was tremendous objection to that ad, and it was soon dropped.

Back to the Prune

There remains another relevant point. What does the adman himself think of the social scientist?

A few admen are completely, abjectly sold, and regard every finding of the social scientist as gospel. A few others are adamantly unsold. One executive, who has been in the trade and along its fringes for years, says: "Motivational research, or whatever you want to call it, is strictly a gimmick. It's the tool of the young man of upward mobility — the guy who will cut my throat and have my job in ten years. In the late twenties and early thirties, the tool was radio. Everything was radio. The upward-mobility boys rode it to the top. In the early forties it was — well, I forget. Maybe it was white space. All the ads were too cluttered; you had to open them up and have white space. Later it was television. Now it's the analysts. Ten years from now — well, I'll be bleeding all over the floor by then."

The middle majority of admen are using motivational research in great quantity, but with a good deal of selectivity. None of them feels that the psychologist will ever replace the intuitive copy writer — or that the psychologist is useless. This brings the discussion back to Dichter, Vicary, and the problems of the prune seller.

Both Vicary and Dichter are able practitioners, and both, by chance, have gone thoroughly into national attitudes toward dried fruit. If the reader will use the personification method and put himself in the place of an ad-agency president who has on his desk two neatly packaged but contradictory surveys about prunes, he will learn a great deal about the uses and future of motivational research.

Vicary's study is called "Consumer Attitudes of Importance in Advertising Prunes" and was made for the Long Advertising Service of San Jose, California. His sample comprised two hundred men and women, members of both the primary prune market (those who have eaten prunes in the past week) and the secondary prune market (all others).

His research, done mostly by the free word-association method, convinced Vicary that there was only one major point to be considered in

prune advertising, and he hit it like a rifle shot: "An emotional block about the laxative connotations of prunes is shown to be an important obstacle to more favorable attitudes."

This finding naturally left the advertiser wringing his hands, but Vicary calmed him at once. His second point was: "When the laxative response to PRUNES was experimentally sanctioned by including the word LAXATIVE in the Word Association Test, anxiety of the respondents was measurably reduced and favorable attitudes toward prunes was increased. [Therefore] advertising copy should mention the laxative features of this product."

Vicary then pointed out that euphemisms ("healthful") should be avoided (as should words like "dried"). Also "One of the most favorable associations which can be exploited is the association of prunes to *plums* and *fruit*."

It is a good, interesting study. But the ad-agency president may very well wonder whether it is enough. Can the primary prune market be unblocked simply by printing "laxative" in 24-point Bodoni Boldface?

Dichter's depth-interview study also involved two hundred respondents. It hit no single point like a rifle shot, but it blasted the whole area with pellets. It advanced six reasons why people dislike prunes:

Prunes are symbols of old age (wrinkled like the supposed face of spinsterhood).

Prunes are suspected of being devitalized, denatured.

Prunes are disliked as a symbol of parental authority. (Eat them, Junior, or no movies tonight.)

Prunes are plebeian and without prestige. (Who serves them as a party dessert?)

Prunes are identified with peculiar people, with food faddists.

Prunes are identified with hospitals and other institutions such as the Army and boardinghouses.

These reasons make a great deal of sense. But they are set forth only halfway through the survey. After that, the reader must hang onto his hat. In a section called "Cultural factors . . . a deeper level" Dichter lists some reasons why people *really* don't like prunes.

"The prune is a scape-goat food. Most cultures have certain scape-goat foods. . . . Fresh eggs are unpleasant to some societies, milk and butter to others; fowl is rejected by nearly all Mongols. Why [in our culture] has the prune alone been picked?

"Reason One: the prune is resented as a freak and an intruder . . . the prune is again and again compared and equated with people who are considered to be strange and 'different'; with queer, egotistical and ungiving creatures. . . .

"Reason Two: the prune is a 'witch.' . . . Other fruits appear and disappear in season. . . . The prune defiantly claims to be an all-year-round fruit. . . . The price the prune has to pay for its rebellion against nature is its 'different' character and appearance. . . . It is black, which makes it into

something sinister and dangerous. It needs sulphur for its artificial preservation, and sulphur is associated with poison and with hell. Thus, the ground is prepared. . . . 'Tampering with nature' has, until recently, been felt to be 'sinful' and a defiance of the higher powers. The representation of such sinful defiance of God and the laws of nature ('Black Magic') was the *witch.*

"It is interesting to observe that the witch invariably is visualized as a wrinkled, ugly, sterile old spinster whose witchcraft has to make up, as it were, for her lack of 'normal,' human, giving qualities. The witch, too, is an undesirable freak, whose services we could seek clandestinely, in the dark of night. The implication in regard to the prune is obvious."

To those who are still with him Dichter advances yet a third reason. It is, "The prune is a Puritan. We have seen that a considerable segment of our interviewees sees in the prune something meager, rough and joyless. . . ."

This by no means concludes the survey. Dichter then gives no fewer than forty suggestions as to how advertisers can allay prejudice and sell prunes. Among them are some that verge on brilliance, and some that do not. ("In future advertising we should attempt to compare prunes with those things that are clearly deemed as beautiful in our culture . . . 'prunes, the black diamonds of the fruit family.' . . . Reassure the woman that it is perfectly acceptable to serve prunes . . . that she doesn't have to be ashamed because they are a cathartic.")

If the ad-agency president were to accept all of these findings and recommendations, American culture would be enriched by some remarkable advertisements, but of course he does not accept them all. The value of Vicary's or Dichter's or any psychologist's research is that it crawls with ideas of all sorts. Even their conversation teems with ideas — in a single lunch hour Dichter will give an adman enough new thoughts to mobilize him upward like a jet plane. (He will also slip him a bill for $300.) It is up to the adman to sort these ideas as an umpire sorts balls and strikes. Some will be wild, some down the middle, but at least they will be ideas, which are as scarce along Madison Avenue as they are anywhere else. It is unfair and foolish to say that the psychologist-in-advertising is a loon or a quack, that he has sold out his science to the hucksters, or that he is otherwise irresponsible. The reason it is unfair is that it is simply too early to tell. As for the consumer, all that can be done for him is to warn him. But having survived the era when Nature in the Raw Was Seldom Mild, having managed to stay awake after it was Time to Re-Tire, and having stubbornly gone on living with his wife even though he Underestimated the Power of a Woman, the consumer is a pretty tough cookie. One more blowout probably won't kill him.

The Doubtcaster

Rolfe Humphries • 1894–

Who is this "Doubtcaster"? On a first reading of the poem you will know his type well enough, even if you can't identify him with any one of the "personal commentators" who fill the air at all hours on every subject with disturbing yet reassuring voices of omniscience. But on more careful reading you realize he's more than a generalized portrait of the ubiquitous commentator. As you read on, he becomes less the picture of a broadcaster and more and more the symbolic embodiment of something in ourselves. At the end he becomes identified with each of his listeners, in some strange and destructive way. One meaning of the poem may have to do with the idea presented in each of the essays above, that the mass media thrive by supplying forms and images, for everyone in their mass audience, of every man's deeplying fantasies, and that this process is unhealthy and in the end, too long indulged, destructive. See what you can make of it.

The voice is cultured, almost: above the fashion
Of the slick studio stereotype, not unctuous,
Not quite insidious, or ingratiating;
Intromissive, call it; and imagine
Intercourse conducted without passion,
That kind of undisturbing penetration.

And individual, beyond all question:
You can recognize it at a moment's notice,
Informed, ironical, a little mocking,
But not offensive, not overly shocking,
Disarming by its candor, as if to say,
"We are onto ourselves, we are wise, we know the answers."

And versatile: comes on at any hour,
On any subject, over any station,
With comments on the labor situation,
Science, and politics, and modern art;
Sometimes discusses matters of the heart,
Dissuading lovers; or predicts the weather.

A curious thing — no two describe the voice
In the same terms, and yet they all agree

Reprinted from *Forbid Thy Ravens* by Rolfe Humphries, copyright, 1947, by the author; used by permission of the publishers, Charles Scribner's Sons. Originally published in *The New Yorker.*

That something makes it different, unique,
Original. They wonder. Can it be
Its truly sympathetic character?
— *No man has really heard his own voice speak.*

Oh, very popular in the Crossley rating!
The listeners include the high-class people
Who write to QXR for program booklets,
The followers of "Information, Please!"
And Sunday concerts by the Friends of Music
And weekly book chats. And not only these.

Housewives tune in in the middle of the morning;
The girl who comes to do the heavy cleaning
Tunes in; the weary husband, home again,
Over the second highball before dinner,
Tunes in. They all tune in, their favorite program.
Children, however, treat it with disdain.

Those who can't sleep at night get up to listen,
And it is heard, as well, outside the home.
You can hear it, for example, in a taxi,
When the driver drops the flag to take the fare,
Puts down his tabloid, keeps the radio going;
In bars, in lobbies, you can hear it blare.

You can hear it, now and then, at someone's party,
In a lull amid the general stir and shuffle,
When people, holding glasses, pause a while,
Break off the conversation, crowding closer,
Hushed worshippers, to kneel before the dial,
Or bow their heads above the inner circle.

And, now and then, a heretic is found
Who growls in protest, "Oh, my God!" and goes
Into another room, and shuts the door,
And even so cannot escape the sound,
Its implications coming through the walls,
And wonders if he ought to listen more.

For all the time, wherever people gather,
They talk about this voice, proclaim its praise.
Most of the rest are terrible, they grant you,
But he is different, he's really good,
He makes things clear they never understood,
Gives facts, confers perception on their days.

So much they love him, people quote his phrases
Unconsciously, believing them their own,
Unconsciously appropriate his tone,
Profess, like him, a subtle disillusion,
So fond, so proud, they do not recognize
Their own compulsion as they plagiarize.

So bound to him in spirit, they can never
Be happy till they see him face to face.
His autograph, his signature below
His kind, responsive, intimate personal letter
Is not, alas, enough. They almost falter
At their presumption, but they tell him so.

They must behold him in the holy place,
They must adore their idol at his altar —
Could they have tickets to the studio?
Waiting is nothing when devotion moves
The longest line along to what it loves,
And one by one, rewarded, in they go.

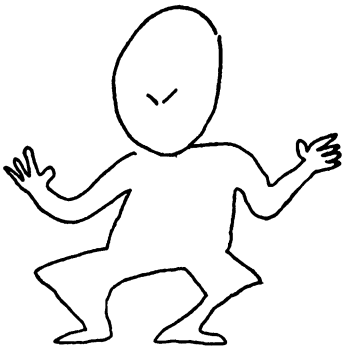
And each one thinks, at first, on entering there,
He is alone and looking in a mirror,
And as the image smiles and waves him nearer,
Is startled, and reflects, "How strange that he
Should look, and dress, and sound, so much like me!"
And realizes, "He is on the air!"

But who is on the air? His own lips move,
His own heart speaks, he knows each word, he hears
His secret apprehension amplified.
Too loud, the voice reverberates and rolls,
Monstrous, immense, a roaring in his ears —
There must be something wrong with the controls.

Dreadfully wrong. The face behind the glass
Comes through the glass but does not break the glass,
Expands, dilates enormously, is drowned,
Dissolving under overwhelming sound,
And sound, become a solid, nullifies
All space, all light. Darkness and panic rise.

Darkness and panic and the voice of doubt
Close in on him, poor little man, who tries
To grope to find the wall, to raise a shout,
But no attendant hears him when he cries,
"Where is the exit?" There is no way out.
He has listened once too often, and he dies.

Toward Democratic Responsibility



"Now, go out and vote!"

The Responsibility of the Newspaper Reader

Frank Luther Mott • 1886–

The mass media irresponsibly exploit and perpetuate immaturity: such is the charge brought by each of the writers in the preceding section. But each also points out that the media are no worse than their audience; they reflect their audience. Only when the audience demands higher standards will the media find it advantageous to adopt them. Responsibility for improvement rests with the individual reader, listener, and viewer. In this essay a distinguished student and historian of journalism shows how a mature and responsible newspaper reader can contribute to raising the standards of the press.

THAT MYTHICAL PERSON, "the average reader," has little to interest us. We may suspect that, on the whole, he is a pretty bad reader; but the questions that really concern us are what bad reading is and what its effects are and, on the other hand, what good reading can do for us.

Mr. Clifton Fadiman is anxious about "the decline of attention in our time," and particularly "the decline in the ability to read." He qualifies his

Reprinted by permission of the publishers from Frank Luther Mott, *The News in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press). Copyright, 1952, by The President and Fellows of Harvard College. Pp. 205–213.

terms, however, when he describes this modern phenomenon which justly disturbs him and so many other observers as a "paralysis" caused by various pressures, and as "a wholesale displacement" of the attention "away from ideas and abstractions toward things and techniques." Probably there is no contemporary decline of the power of attention, which could result only from widespread physiological change among the people, but rather there are shifts in both interests and the manner of satisfying those interests. At any rate, the faults of modern methods of attention, as shown particularly in habits of reading and thinking, are very serious.

Two of these faults are fairly obvious. The first may be called "fragmentation." The modern American, to be sure, can concentrate his attention over a considerable period of time upon a matter which moves him deeply; but when his desires or curiosities are not strongly enlisted, the multiple pulls and lures of this our modern life divide his time and interest into small bits. Moreover, this fragmentation increases, and bits become smaller bits, so small that they tend to become useless and by their very multiplicity to destroy the effects of each other.

The second prominent fault in our reading and thinking is that we have not learned to fix our attention discriminatingly; we do not concentrate on the matters that are actually of the deepest import to our society and ourselves. This, too, is probably due largely to the whirling confusion of modern life, with its multiple pulls at our curiosities and its quick distribution of fads and popular fancies.

Against these great sins of our popular reading and thinking, against the common faults of attention, American media of communication should themselves lead reformatory crusades. They have responsibilities of leadership in such matters and, instead of catering to popular weaknesses and encouraging bad reading, ought of course to engage in a constant struggle to raise standards. But we cannot avoid the fact that, after all, the fundamental responsibility in these desperately important matters rests upon the reader, the hearer, and the viewer.

It is in the news and the way it is presented in America that we are chiefly interested here; and the newspaper is, historically as well as basically today, our main reliance for the presentation of the news. So let us look for a moment at the reader's relationship to his newspaper, keeping in mind that much of what is said about that medium applies also to the magazine, radio, television, the motion picture, and so forth.

The newspaper is primarily dependent on its readers for its very existence. Circulation is fundamental. It is not upon advertising but upon circulation that the life and prosperity of a newspaper depends. If it has readers, it is in a favorable position to get advertising; but it has to get readers first, and to keep them. Up to about 1890, circulation brought more revenue into most newspaper tills than advertising. Then, in a period of business expansion, advertising had an extraordinary growth in America until, by 1914, it provided two-thirds of the income of many dailies, and by

the time of the financial crash of 1929, three-fourths. Thereafter that unreasonable proportion was steadily reduced, until it was back to two-thirds by about 1940. It continues to be reduced, under the influence of increases in subscription rates which are logical and necessary. Today there are many papers, especially outside the metropolitan fields, which receive as much revenue from circulation as from advertising; some receive more. But quite apart from this matter of proportional income, it has always been, and always must be, a fundamental fact that newspaper publication is founded on readership, and that the social, economic, and political functions of a newspaper are performed primarily for the benefit of readers.

That puts a great deal of power over a newspaper into the hands of its readers. They can make or break it. It cannot be said too often that the people as a whole can have very much the kind of newspapers they want. Even in a city with a noncompetitive newspaper situation, editors and publishers are very sensitive to the results when readers begin to turn to the radio or out-of-town papers for their news. They know they are never secure, and that they do not dare to let circulation slip; they know that the paper's prosperity depends on reader acceptance.

This power of the people over their newspapers cannot exist in a dictatorship, in which news as well as editorial policies are controlled by government. Nor is there need in such a state for the people to exercise any control over news policies, since they have no political powers which true information by newspaper would implement.

But in a democracy, the benefits which the people derive from their power over the newspapers are balanced, of course, by responsibilities. That is, the privilege which we enjoy in this country of being informed more fully than any other people in the world about events and situations at home and abroad is balanced by an obligation to maintain and improve our free press.

We take our responsibilities as members of a democratic society rather casually. Our forefathers were stirred by the sense of being part of a great experiment in the history of mankind; we have grown used to our democracy as to an old coat. There is much alarm expressed about the large proportion of qualified voters who do not go to the polls; but perhaps it is just as well that men and women who have failed to inform themselves adequately, and who have little care for the welfare of their information system, do not vote. Both property and literacy qualifications have been used in this country to limit the right to suffrage; but nobody has yet devised an acceptable information test for voters, and of course nobody ever will. We shall have to muddle along, supported by our enduring faith in the intelligence of the people as the best basis for government yet devised.

And we shall be aided and supported also by continuing efforts to make our information system, which is chiefly our news system, more and more effective. In that system — vast, multiform, tireless, efficient — there are many faults, shortcomings, and dangers. . . . For these failures as well as

for the great successes of the system the people have a fundamental responsibility because the system is made and operated for them, and is answerable to them.

What can the people do about their news system? Well, to make a beginning, write letters to newspaper editors. Ask for more full texts of important speeches and documents, for more news behind the news, for more analyses by qualified experts of social and economic conditions in special fields. Ask for more foreign news. Complain of slanted presentations by specific by-liners. Complain of the "play" of news in a set political pattern. Similar complaints may be made to radio stations.

Do not despise this kind of direct action. It is your newspaper, your radio station, and the editors know it is. You would be surprised to find how sensitive editors actually are to such comments from readers and hearers. A dozen letters often seem to them to indicate an avalanche of reader reaction. Of course, they disregard what are patently crank letters, but reasonable remonstrances and suggestions have great weight. In these days of expensive and scarce paper, adding certain kinds of news means crowding something else out; but let the editor worry about that. It is his business. And your letters will not be unwelcome if they show some understanding of the news; intelligent coöperation on the part of readers and hearers is valuable, and is generally so recognized.

This direct action may often be carried a step farther. Especially in the smaller cities, readers may utilize personal contacts with editors. In general, they are the most approachable, most lively minded men in the world. They like to talk about newspapers, or radio, and they like to hear what their readers or hearers think about their product. They are used to criticism, which they may resent if it is malicious or hackneyed; but they are critical themselves, and they usually value constructive suggestions offered in good faith and friendly spirit. Few newspapermen would go as far as the publisher of the *Press Democrat*, of Santa Rosa, California, who set up an advisory panel representing chief elements in the community, with which he meets regularly; but readers' views, when well meant and sensible, are commonly welcomed and heeded in a newspaper office.

It is assumed that in such direct action, whether by letters to the editor or personal contacts with him, you are interested in the actual betterment of news service. Pulling wires for selfish ends, trying to get something into the paper for personal reasons, is a type of scheming against which newspapermen are always on guard. Only when it is on the high ground of public service can such direct action as is suggested be effective.

But after all, the chief contribution which readers can make to the cause of maintaining and improving our news system is to do a better job of reading. The "good reading" which was suggested at the beginning of this chapter is bound to have a double effect: it not only improves the general information of the reader, but in the long run it raises the level of the gathering and editing of the news. The former objective should furnish us

with a compelling motive for good reading, but the latter is also an important consideration if we have the general welfare at heart. The more general result is a little like the "work of supererogation" of the old theologians — something not necessary to personal salvation, but a praiseworthy performance and not to be forgotten. It works after this fashion. Newspapers, dependent as they are upon readers for their prosperity, watch habits of reading through reader-interest studies and in other ways; then they adapt their offerings to what their audience seems to want. A change in the reading preferences of a single individual would, of course, have no effect, but any considerable shift would soon make itself felt. The individual who adopts a good reading pattern has the benefit of it himself, and the satisfaction of knowing that his weight is counting for the general good. In other words, he is voting right.

What is this "good reading" about which we have been talking?

In the first place, it is systematic. How much time do you devote each day to newspaper reading? Available studies show differences according to the age of the reader, but indicate that at forty years of age he spends forty minutes or more with his weekday paper, and more on Sunday. Certainly forty minutes a day is little enough time for the newspaper; but whatever it is, it should be allocated regularly. It may be spent on a suburban train or a streetcar or bus, or in the living room after dinner, in an office or in a club or (Lord help us!) at the breakfast or luncheon table; but it should be as regular as sleeping or eating. Twenty minutes *every* day is better than an hour or two every second or third day, hit or miss, because without regularity the reader loses the connection and the sense of running events. Casual and cursory methods of "picking up the paper" lead to that fragmentation which is one of the great curses of newspaper reading.

This leads to the suggestion of a technique which is used, consciously or unconsciously, by all good readers — the "follow through" practice. Every series of events in the papers, from a campaign for a public swimming pool to a great war, is a serial story; and it is far more interesting and understandable if it is followed regularly. A young woman will sometimes complain: "Politics! Oh, I can't get interested in politics. It's just too confusing!" It is confusing, of course — until one gets into the current of the story. It is like a mystery novel in which a dozen characters are introduced in the first few pages: you have to read two or three chapters before you get them sorted out. But persistent reading day after day makes the figures of the great statesmen and political leaders emerge as personalities and as the spokesmen for ideologies which are very important to us.

One of the chief principles of good newspaper reading is that it should be comprehensive. What is your own habit on picking up your paper? Do you glance first at the top headlines on page one, and then turn quickly to the financial section? Or the sports pages? Or the women's pages? Or the comics? We shall always follow our special interests, to be sure; but to stop with such an interest or interests is a narrow and short-sighted policy.

Explore the inside pages. Theodore M. Bernstein, an editor on the *New York Times,* remarked not long ago that "One of our national maladies might be described as a page-one fixation . . . the fallacious notion that all one need read to be well informed is the front page." Try reading in some field in which you do not now have an interest. Travel is broadening, even when made through the columns of a good newspaper.

Readers of the smaller papers often go through them from beginning to end, but many dwellers in large cities never have read a paper through. Large papers are made to be read much more thoroughly than many of us appreciate. The *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* printed its issue for June 4, 1928, in the form of a cloth-bound book. It made 307 pages of highly diversified, entertaining, and instructive reading. This did not include the advertising, though readers certainly should not neglect that part of their newspapers.

But the Philadelphia reader of June 4, 1928, was by no means limited to the *Evening Bulletin,* nor is he today. He can easily pick up New York or Washington papers if he prefers them to the local *Bulletin, Inquirer,* or *News.* The point is that a good news reader should choose his newspapers with discrimination, and should get some variety into his news fare. It is true that many cities are now provided with only one paper, but it is an exceptional situation in which out-of-town papers are not easily available. Most good readers receive the local paper for local news and supplement it with news from other sources.

The other sources ought by no means to be neglected. Shop around among the various radio offerings and find the best. Read the news-magazines. Try the Sunday *New York Times* or *Herald Tribune.* Watch the news programs of your television station. In these United States there is a rich and varied service of news and information, it is inexpensive, and it is necessary for intelligent living and citizenship.

And yet, with all these riches, it is easily possible to read in such a casual and haphazard fashion that one may get very little real information of any great importance from it all. This brings us to the crux of the "good reading" problem.

A large part of our newspaper reading is done in situations of relaxation. Father comes home from work tired. He washes up, has a good dinner with his family, feels better. In the living room, the children have turned on the radio, or perhaps the television set. Father settles into his easy chair, takes off his shoes, lights his pipe, picks up his paper. Who can begrudge him *enjoyment* of his paper? He needs enjoyment, relaxation, escape from his daylong worries. That is what comics, sports, and amusing features are for; that is why picture pages, comics, and sports pages (in that order) rank next to front pages in reader-notice surveys.

But good reading of newspapers does not stop with such diverting matters. A mind which is awake to the crucial problems on which the fate of the world depends today wants far more than the answer to such questions

as what Stanley Musial's batting average is at the moment, or how Alley Oop is faring in the Roman amphitheater. A lively minded reader looks over the latest dispatches from European and Asiatic capitals; he reads the correspondence from Washington; he must gather the views of the columnists and editorial writers. In other words, a hard-headed reader will always spend a considerable amount of time on "hard" news, leaving concentration on "soft" news to soft heads.

The serious reader will also want enough of a given story to get his teeth into. If the President of the United States or a returned General of the Army or a Nobel prize winner makes a major pronouncement, he will read, if not the whole of it, at least a sizable portion. The newspaper serves all classes of readers and must always be a highly composite miscellany, with thousands of brevities; but a good reader wants significant events, situations, and pronouncements set forth with fullness and detail, and he is willing to give time and effort to reading and studying such stories.

In these days when there is more leisure than ever before, there should be more time for serious reading. If our people will not read seriously, they will not deserve a mature press and radio.

Schools and colleges can do something about it. High school courses in current events which emphasize techniques of newspaper reading and radio-news listening (and now television viewing) are now part of the curricula of all good modern high schools and preparatory schools. In colleges and universities, specialized training of this kind, outside schools of journalism, is likely to be neglected on the theory that the student will keep abreast of the news anyway — perhaps in connection with courses in the social sciences. But neither schools nor colleges should dare to neglect this essential training.

Schools may help, and the press and radio may do much toward the end of the proper reception and appreciation of the news — an important patriotic duty — but we must remember that, after all, the final verdict on good reading and therefore on a good news system rests with us, the people — the readers, hearers, and viewers themselves.

It's Hideously True

Al Capp • 1909–

Everybody follows the daily comic strips. They are perhaps the most popular and revealing of the mass arts; and Al Capp, creator of "Li'l Abner," is one of the most original and intelligent of the comic-strip artists. Most of you will remember the nation-shaking event he explains in this essay, the long-avoided marriage of Daisy Mae and Li'l Abner. Besides the inside story of that event, Capp gives us his own analysis of his art, and shows how even his irrepressible spirit of mature humor has been cramped by the immaturity of his audience.

YOU MAY, unless you had something better to do, have been reading my comic strip *Li'l Abner* this week. If so, you are probably startled to see that my hero is apparently being married to one Daisy Mae Scragg. This time it's the real thing. Yes, after 18 years the poor lout is finally, hopelessly married, and in one of Marryin' Sam's cheapest, most humiliating weddings.

I never intended to do this. My comic-strip characters are not the kind who grow through boyhood and adolescence, get married and raise their own kids. The Yokums of Dogpatch are the same sweet and brainless characters they always were. And the fact that Abner always managed somehow to escape Daisy Mae's warm, eager arms provided me with a story that I could tell whenever I couldn't think of anything better. Frankly I intended to go through life happily and heartlessly betraying you decent, hopeful people who want to see things come out right. I never intended to have Li'l Abner marry Daisy Mae because your pathetic hope that I would was one of the main reasons you 50 million romance lovers read my strip.

For the first few years it was easy to fool you; you didn't know me well then. You followed developments eagerly, trustfully. When I met any of you, I was asked, "When will Li'l Abner marry Daisy Mae?" in a friendly, hopeful tone. Later, as I betrayed your hopes in more and more outrageous ways, your tone became a little bitter. One year I had Daisy Mae marry a tree trunk, thinking that Abner was hiding inside it. Next day, naturally, it turned out that the contents were an old pair of socks, but that Daisy's marriage to them was irrevocably legal. That was a pretty problem. Your tone became threatening. Later on I poisoned her, and Abner consented to marry her because it was her dying wish (Why not? She would be safely dead in a minute anyway.); but just as you thought the wedding had finally taken place, I let her drink some of Dogpatch's sizzling superfluid, "Kickapoo Joy Juice," which instantly restored her to life, so Abner was no longer

From *Life Magazine*, March 31, 1952. By permission of the publishers and the author.
Copyright, 1952, by Time, Inc.

bound by his promise. You still asked me when they would *really* marry, but your tone was a little more threatening. Then I let Daisy ecstatically marry a boy who not only turned out to be merely Abner's double but a bigamist too, so even that marriage didn't count. Now your tone was downright mutinous, and your question went something like: "For God's sake, will Abner EVER marry Daisy Mae?" Just the same, I knew you would still keep watching and waiting. This was the kind of suspense I needed to keep you reading my comic strip, so, no matter how impatient or indignant you got, I never intended to let your foolish, romantic dreams come true.

So why did I do it this week? Why, after all these years of tricking you, did I finally trick myself? Well, the real reason isn't as simple as Abner, Daisy or even suspense. To understand why I have done this awful thing you will have to bear with me while I explain how and why I created them in the first place.

When I was in my early 20s and about to start a comic strip, I found myself in a terrible dilemma. The funny comic strip, the kind I wanted to do, was vanishing from the funny page. A frightening new thing had been discovered: namely, that you could sell more papers by worrying people than by amusing them. Comic strips which had no value except that they were comic were beginning to vanish from the funny papers. Rube Goldberg's dazed *Mike and Ike,* Fred Opper's *Happy Hooligan,* who wore a tomato can on his head, Milt Gross's *Count Screwloose,* who regularly escaped from the booby hatch only to return to it because things were more normal there — this beloved procession of clowns, innocents and cheerful imbeciles — slowly faded. In their place came a sobbing, screaming, shooting parade of the new "comic"-strip characters: an orphan who talked like the Republican platform of 1920; a prizefighter who advised children that brains were better than brawn while beating the brains out of his physically inferior opponents; detectives who explored and explained every sordid and sickening byway of crime and then made it all okay by concluding that these attractively blueprinted crimes didn't really pay; and girl reporters who were daily threatened with rape and mutilation.

Don't get me wrong. I was terrified by the emergence of this new kind of comic strip 18 years ago only because I didn't have the special qualities they required — not because they didn't have quality. *Dick Tracy* is a magnificently drawn, exquisitely written shocker comparable, in its own terms, with Poe. But "suspense" strips, though enormously effective, disdain fun and fantasy. Suspense was what editors wanted when I was ready to create my own comic strip — but all I could do was fun and fantasy.

So I tried to draw straight-faced suspense comic strips. I tried to create smart and superior heroes, and submerged them in blood-curdling tragedies, increasing in complexity, hopelessness and horror and thereby creating reader anxiety, nausea and terror — *i.e.,* suspense. But I couldn't do it. I just couldn't believe in them. The suspense strips require one-dimensional characters: good guys and bad guys, and no fooling around with anything in between. I simply couldn't believe in my one-dimensional good guys and

bad guys — as I drew them. I discovered good things in the bad guys, and vice versa. So my hero turned out to be big and strong like the suspense-strip heroes, but he also turned out to be stupid, as big, strong heroes sometimes are. His mammy, like mine, and possibly yours, turned out to be a miracle of goodness, but at the same time she was kind of bossy, quite self-righteous and sweetly ridiculous. His girl, although wildly beautiful, is vaguely sloppy and, although infinitely virtuous, pursues him like the most unprincipled seductress.

The good people in my hero's town, possibly like those in your town, often are a pain in the neck. And the bad 'uns, like some bad 'uns in real life, are often more attractive than the good 'uns. The Scragg Boys, Lem and Luke, are fiendish when they are snatching milk from whimpering babies or burning down orphan asylums to get some light to read comic books by (only to realize that they can't read, anyway); but even the most horrified reader can't help being touched by their respectfully asking their pappy's permission to commit all this manslaughter and mayhem. Monsters they certainly are, but they are dutiful children too.

The society people in *Li'l Abner* always have impressive names, but there is always something a little wrong with them too — like Henry Cabbage Cod, Daphne Degradingham, Sir Cecil Cesspool (he's deep), Peabody Fleabody and Basil Bassoon. Dumpington Van Lump seemed a harmless, hospitable kid until it developed that his favorite book was *How to Make Lampshades Out of Your Friends.* Colossal McGenius was so brilliant in giving business advice that he seemed to be justified in charging $1,000 a word for talking to worried tycoons; but it turned out that his weakness was telling long, involved jokes (at $1,000 a word) about three Bulgarians, whereupon he remembered, much too late, that they were actually three *Persians,* and so he had to start the story all over again. When he finally got to the advice it was great, but by that time the tycoon had gone bankrupt.

When I introduced a mythical country, Lower Slobbovia, I was as technical as the straightest suspense-strip creator, and gave readers a map. The map was perfectly reasonable except that the names of its parts created some distrust and disrespect for the country. The oceans were the Hotlantic and Pitziffic, and there was another body of water called the Gulf of Pincus. The capital, Ceaser Siddy, home of Good King Nogoodnik, was flanked by the twin cities of Tsh-Tsh and Tch-Tch. Its leading citizens had familiar and famous, but somehow embarrassing, names like Douglas Snowbanks Jr., Harry S. Rasputintruman and Clark Bagle. Everything in *Li'l Abner* was my effort to be as straight as the straight strips, but colored, however, with my conviction that nothing is ever entirely straight, entirely good, entirely bad, and that everything is a little ridiculous. As in the straight suspense strips, I dutifully created the standard, popular suspense situations, but something forced me to carry them so far that terror became absurdity.

For instance, when the Yokums make gigantic sacrifices for what they

are convinced is a noble and beneficial cause, the reader knows they are swindling themselves; even victory will benefit only the enemy. When the Yokums are being heroes they are being not only heroes — they are being damned fools at the same time. When their adversaries are being villainous, they are not only vile, they are also confused and frightened.

Li'l Abner had to come out that way, because that's the way things seem to me. Well, it happened to make a big hit. It was a success because it was something I hadn't thought much about as such. It was a satire. Nobody had done one quite in these terms before. I was delighted that I had. I was exhilarated by the privilege this gave me to kid hell out of everything.

It was wonderful while it lasted; and I had no reason for marrying Abner off to Daisy Mae. But then something happened that threatens to shackle me and my kind of comic strip. It is what I call the gradual loss of our fifth freedom. Without it, the other four freedoms aren't much fun, because the fifth is the freedom to laugh at each other.

My kind of comic strip finds its fun wherever there is lunacy, and American life is rich in lunacy everywhere you look. I created labor-hating labor leaders, money-foolish financiers, and Senator Jack S. ("Good old Jack S.") Phogbound. When highway billboard advertising threatened to create a coast-to-coast iron curtain between the American motorist and the beautiful American countryside, I got some humorous situations out of that too. Race-hate peddlers gave me some of my juiciest comedy characters, and I had the Yokums tell them what I know is true, that all races are God's children, equally beloved by their Father. For the first 14 years I reveled in the freedom to laugh at America. But now America has changed. The humorist feels the change more, perhaps, than anyone. Now there are things about America we can't kid.

I realized it first when four years ago I created the Shmoo. You remember the Shmoo? It was a totally boneless and wildly affectionate little animal which, when broiled, came out steak and, when fried, tasted like chicken. It also laid neatly packaged and bottled eggs and milk, all carefully labeled "Grade A." It multiplied without the slightest effort. It loved to be eaten, and would drop dead, out of sheer joy, when you looked at it hungrily. Having created the animal, I let it run wild in the world of my cartoon strip. It was simply a fairy tale and all I had to say was wouldn't it be wonderful if there were such an animal and, if there were, how idiotically some people might behave. Mainly, the response to the Shmoo was delight. But there were also some disturbing letters. Some writers wanted to know what was the idea of kidding big business, by creating the Shmoo (which had *become* big business). Other writers wanted to know what was the idea of criticising labor, by creating the Shmoo, which made labor unnecessary.

It was disturbing, but I didn't let it bother me too much. Then a year later, I created the Kigmy, an animal that loved to be kicked around, thus making it unnecessary for people to kick each other around. This time a lot

more letters came. Their tone was angrier, more suspicious. They asked the craziest questions, like: Was I, in creating the Kigmy, trying to create pacifism and thus, secretly, nonresistance to Communism? Were the Kigmy kickers secretly the big bosses kicking the workers around? Were the Kigmy kickers secretly the labor unions kicking capital around? And finally, what in hell was the idea of creating the Kigmy anyhow, because it implied some criticism of some kinds of Americans and any criticism of anything American was (now) un-American? I was astounded to find it had become unpopular to laugh at any fellow Americans. In fact, when I looked around, I realized that a new kind of humorist had taken over, the humorist who kidded nothing but himself. That was the only thing left. Hollywood had stopped making ain't-America-wonderful-and-ridiculous movies, and was making ain't-America-wonderful-but-anyone-who-says-it's ridiculous-too-deserves-to-be-picketed movies. Radio, the most instantly obedient to pressure of all media, had sensed the atmosphere, an atmosphere in which Jack Benny is magnificent but in which Will Rogers would have suffocated.

So that was when I decided to go back to fairy tales until the atmosphere is gone. That is the real reason why Li'l Abner married Daisy Mae. At least for the time being, I can't create any more Shmoos, any more Kigmies; and when Senator Phogbound turns up now, I have to explain carefully that, heavens-to-Betsy, goodness-no, he's not typical; nobody like THAT ever holds public office. After a decade and a half of using my characters as merely reasons to swing my searchlight on America, I began all over again to examine them, as people. Frankly, I was delighted with them. (Frankly, I'm delighted with nearly everything I do. The one in the room who laughs loudest at my own jokes or my own comic strip is me.) I became reacquainted with Li'l Abner as a human being, with Daisy Mae as an agonizingly frustrated girl. I began to wonder myself what it would be like if they were ever married. The more I thought about it, the more complicated and disastrous and, therefore, irresistible, the idea became.

For instance, Li'l Abner has never willingly kissed any female except his mother and a pig. Well — if he got married, he'd *have* to. Even he couldn't avoid it for more than a month or so. What would happen? Would he approve of kissing? Would he say anything good about it? (And thus make it popular with millions of red-blooded young Americans whose "ideel" he is.) Would he do it again? As a bachelor he is frankly a bum. He just sleeps, eats and goes catfishing. As a married man he would have to support his own household. How would he do it? Is there anybody stupid enough to hire someone as stupid as he is? Is there *any* profession that requires as little intelligence as he has? And how about Mammy Yokum? She has always ruled Abner with an iron fist. Would she continue to after he has his own home? And how would Daisy Mae take this? Sure, she's been sweet and docile with Mammy Yokum all these years, but that might only have been because she needed her help in trapping Abner. Now that he's

her'n, will she show her true colors and tangle with Mammy for the lightweight championship of the new Yokum home? How about babies? Married people frequently have babies. Would *they* have a baby? Will he really be born on the Fourth of July? Is it possible that they'd name him Yankee Doodle Yokum? Babies have uncles. Could I freeze the blood of the entire nation by having Mammy Yokum (who can accomplish anything, even singlehanded) produce a baby of her own, five minutes after Li'l Yankee Doodle Yokum was born? Would this child be known as Oncle Yokum?

And how about Sadie Hawkins Day? It has become a national holiday. It's my responsibility. It doesn't happen on any set day in November; it happens on the day I say it happens. I get tens of thousands of letters from colleges, communities and church groups, starting around July, asking me *what* day, so they can make plans. Well, Sadie Hawkins Day has always revolved around Li'l Abner fearing marriage to Daisy Mae. Now that his worst fears have come hideously true, what will he and Daisy Mae do on Sadie Hawkins Day? Will Lower Slobbovia inaugurate its own "Sadie Huckins Day" and import Li'l Abner and Daisy Mae as technical advisers? In short, once Abner and Daisy Mae are married, do they live happily forever after like other people, or is this just the beginning of even more complicated disasters, more unbearable miseries? They are married, all right. But if you think the future is serene for them, you're ("Haw! Haw!") living in a fool's paradise.

It's Different from the Book

A. R. Fulton

What happens when a book or a play is made into a movie? Seldes told us one thing that happens, in "The Art of Licking." In addition, translation from one art to another requires fundamental changes in the technique of story-telling. If the standard of Hollywood movies is to improve, it will come about partly through an improvement in the critical standards of movie-goers. And intelligent criticism must pay attention not only to the content, but to the techniques of the medium. Most of us probably look at movies as if they were merely photographed plays; we have not learned to be aware of the elements Fulton discusses here which make the cinema an art distinct from the stage play.

Reprinted from *Theatre Arts*, March, 1953, by permission of the publisher and the author.

DISCUSSION of a motion picture based on a novel or a play arrives sooner or later at a comparison of the picture with its source. This kind of criticism may have its advantages. But somehow it leads to the conclusion that the excellence of the picture depends on similarity to the novel or the play from which it was adapted. "It follows the play very well" and "It's just like the book" are terms of approbation. Because the notion that this kind of similarity is a virtue persists among many well-read people and because the success of recent motion pictures such as *Born Yesterday, Cyrano de Bergerac, A Streetcar Named Desire, Death of a Salesman,* and *Detective Story* augurs that more plays will be similarly adapted, there is need for explanation. It should be shown why the excellence of a motion picture adapted from a novel or a play does not depend on similarity to its source — why, on the contrary, it depends on the ways in which it is different.

It is relevant to observe that the method of the motion pictures is more like that of the novel than of the play. This is so because the way a novel tells a story — primarily by description and narration — lends itself naturally to translation into pictures, whereas the dramatic way — primarily by dialogue — does not. It is true that a more literal picture could be made of a play than of a novel, that in fact a play could be so photographed as to be identical to the play produced on the stage. But the more faithfully such a picture "follows the play," the more like the play it becomes and the less like a motion picture. A novel, on the other hand, is faithfully adapted to the screen by translation of the novelistic terms into cinematic ones and thus by being different. For these reasons a motion picture of a play is seldom better than, or even as good as, the original play, whereas a motion picture of a novel is frequently as good as the original novel, and occasionally better. With few exceptions, motion pictures made from novels are better than motion pictures made from plays. They are invariably better than motion pictures made in the manner of those specifically mentioned — and they are better because of the ways in which they are different.

Although a motion picture made from a novel may be praised for being "just like the book," literal likeness is of course impossible. It is ironic, however, that frequently the conspicuous differences between a motion picture and its source, novel or play, are due, not to the cinematic way of telling a story, but to changes arbitrarily imposed. First of all, there is censorship, the screen unfortunately not being allowed the freedom permitted the printed word or even the stage. Then, because the movies are Big Business and a film must therefore appeal to as wide an audience as possible, concessions are made, in the adaption of a work of literary merit, to this great audience, which, it has somehow been determined, has the capacity to understand equivalent to that of a child of fourteen. One of the most obvious changes is a contraction in length, particularly when the adapted work is a novel. A comparison of an average-length novel with an average-length film adaption of it reveals that in the film minor incidents or subplots are usually left out. Again, this is due less to the cinematic

method of story-telling than to the fact that a film is supposed to be ninety minutes long.

There are various other changes, made for a variety of reasons, in the adaption of a novel or a play to the screen. The changes may be as minor, for example, as the one in *Great Expectations* in which the sound of the mice rattling behind the panel of Miss Havisham's dining room in Dickens' novel becomes, in the film, a mouse seen gnawing the wedding cake on the table. Or the change may be as radical as the one in *The Informer* in which the motivation for Gypo's turning informer, that is, a half-realized need of money for a night's lodging, becomes in the film Gypo's wanting money for two steamship tickets to America. Although it might be argued that on the screen a mouse is more effective seen than heard or that the hero's wanting to take his girl to America is a more plausible motive than wanting shelter, such changes are, in a way, arbitrary and not dictated by the necessities of the medium.

These are some of the ways in which a film is different from the book. With only one exception, however, they are not inherent in the cinematic method. Concessions to censorship and immaturity, contraction of scope and other arbitrary changes, minor or otherwise — these are extraneous considerations. A film unmodified by any of them is an artistic possibility. The exception has to do with the way in which the individual pictures, or shots, as they are called, are arranged in relation to one another.

When Sarah Bernhardt was asked to appear in a film called *Queen Elizabeth*, she accepted, saying that it was her one chance for immortality. *Queen Elizabeth* was filmed as though the camera had been set up to represent a spectator in the theatre, and the play was acted out — in a stagelike way and in stagelike sets — in front of it so that posterity might have a record of Divine Sarah's acting. *Queen Elizabeth* is not so much a motion picture as a photographed play. It and other films like it were called photoplays, and they have their place in the history of the films. But a motion picture is an art form of its own, quite independent of the photoplay.

When the silent screen began to talk and signs went up on the marquees of movie theatres all over the country, THIS THEATRE IS WIRED FOR SOUND, audiences were skeptical of the radical innovation. They watched the lips of the actors intently to see how the trick was done. But it was no trick. The "talkies" were fascinating because the actors could be simultaneously seen and heard. The trouble with those early talking films was that they talked too much. It is significant that the term "talkies" did not stick. For, unlike the play, the film tells its story, not primarily by dialogue, but by pictures. It is true that even today some films are afflicted by that logorrhea which characterized the "talkies." Now it is conceivable that a film might have as much dialogue as the play it represents, but a play thus filmed in its entirety would not be so much an adaptation of the play as a talking photograph of it.

How then, it may be asked, should a motion picture tell a story? The answer is, cinematically. The medium of the motion picture is pictures, just as the medium of the novelist is words and the medium of the painter is color. The province of the artist is to arrange. In the motion pictures, this process of arranging is called editing. Willa Cather once said:

> Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there — that, it seems to me, is created. It is the inexplicable presence of the thing not named, of the overtone divined by the ear but not heard by it, the verbal mood, the emotional aura of the fact or the thing or the deed, that gives the high quality to the novel or the drama, as well as to poetry itself.

In the film "the inexplicable presence of the thing not named" is effected by arrangement, that is, editing. Edwin S. Porter discovered the principle of editing and D. W. Griffith established it as the basis of motion-picture art.

Sergei Eisenstein built up his whole film *Potemkin* by skill of editing; in this case, by the use of montage. For example, in the scene of the mutiny aboard ship, Eisenstein, to show that the Church supported the Czarist regime in oppressing the common people, cut from a shot of the officer tapping the hilt of his sword with his fingers to a shot of the chaplain tapping his crucifix against his palm. And to make the implication obvious, Eisenstein brought his camera up close to each of these objects, the sword hilt and the crucifix, in succession.

Motion in this incident, as in others in *Potemkin,* is effected not so much through the objects photographed as in the way in which the pictures of them are arranged. In a play, motion implies movement of the actors; in a motion picture, motion implies something more. Inevitably, for this very reason, the actor is not so important in a film as in a play. It is even conceivable that a film might be made without actors at all. Robert Flaherty's film *The Titan — Story of Michelangelo,* which has been described as pure cinema, was made in this very way.

At a certain point in the wedding scene in his novel *McTeague,* Frank Norris wishes to express, to use Willa Cather's phrase, "the inexplicable presence of the thing not named." Here is that part of the scene as Norris describes it:

> Then Trina and the dentist were married. The guests stood in constrained attitudes, looking furtively out of the corners of their eyes. Mr. Sieppe never moved a muscle; Mrs. Sieppe cried into her handkerchief all the time. At the melodeon Selina played "Call Me Thine Own," very softly, the tremulo stop pulled out. She looked over her shoulder from time to time. Between the pauses of the music one could hear the low tones of the minister, the responses of the participants and the suppressed sounds of Mrs. Sieppe's weeping. Outside the noises of the street rose to the windows in muffled undertones, a cable car rumbled past, a newsboy went by chanting the evening papers; from somewhere in the building itself came the persistent noise of sawing.

Now the predominant image in that passage is sound: the sounds in the room itself, the sounds from the street outside and, finally, a sound from somewhere in the building — "a persistent sound of sawing." Without specifically naming it, Norris is implying that in spite of the immediate concern of the characters with a momentous event, the everyday world is going on just the same, and in "the persistent sound of sawing" he is implying a premonition of discord in this marriage.

Eric von Stroheim attempted, as he said, to put *McTeague* "*completely* on the screen just as it was originally written." But when von Stroheim made his film *Greed,* adapted from *McTeague,* sound was not yet an adjunct of the screen. How then would he express in pictures the montage Norris expresses in the passage quoted? He does it in this way: he points his camera over the shoulder of the minister and past the faces of the bridal couple, to the window. Through the window is seen, passing in the street outside, a funeral procession. If von Stroheim had not made *Greed* before the days of the sound track, he could have used the same montage that Norris does.

The addition of sound to the motion pictures has of course increased the possibilities of montage. It is not merely the use of sound to record literal dialogue that has made the screen the rival of the stage but the use of sound, together with pictures, to create "the inexplicable presence of the thing not named." The statement that a film tells its story primarily by pictures should therefore be modified to include in "pictures" sound used cinematically; that is, montage. Furthermore, "sound" should be taken to mean not only inarticulate sounds but speech used in any nonrepresentational way.

A film then is "different from the book" in the way in which the story is told. The significant changes are not arbitrarily imposed, but rise through translation into cinematic terms. This difference is strikingly illustrated by the two films which had been most prominently mentioned as the probable choice for the award of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as the best motion picture of the year — *A Streetcar Named Desire* is recognized as a faithful representation of Tennessee Williams's play and *A Place in the Sun,* an excellent adaptation of Theodore Dreiser's novel *An American Tragedy.* It is primarily because the film version of *A Streetcar Named Desire* does not tell its story cinematically, whereas *A Place in the Sun* does, that the latter is a better motion picture.

The critics rightly praised *A Streetcar Named Desire* for its acting, its direction, its camera work and the elements inherent in Tennessee Williams's writing. Only in a few short sequences does it deviate even in its background from the play, in which all of the scenes take place in the same setting. Except for these brief excursions away from the corner building where the Kowalskis live and for the deletion of a few lines to satisfy the censors, the film is so much like the play that its chief virtues are those of the play itself. As a film, it is of course better than *Queen Elizabeth* of the

"silent" days, but it is better, not because of the sound track, but because of the camera.

At the time *Queen Elizabeth* was filmed, motion-picture cameras were comparatively rigid. A space for the action was marked out on the floor, and actors had to be careful to stay within this space or they would be out of focus. Consequently, in those early films, most of the shots were what the motion people call "long shots"; that is, shots in which the camera is remote enough from the object being photographed to include, for example, a full-length view of fifteen or twenty actors with room enough to move about and with space in the foreground. Since then, the camera has become more flexible — so flexible, in fact, that the action in a film may consist as much in the movement of the camera as in that of the actors. In *A Streetcar Named Desire,* the camera moves about easily, now taking in the whole scene, now moving in for a close-up, now photographing one detail, now another. It is as though the spectator, no longer confined to his seat in the theatre, were privileged to come closer to the scene whenever he can see better by doing so, to come up onto the stage even and view the action from all sides, even from above and below. But this advantage does not make *A Streetcar Named Desire* essentially different from the play. In fact, it is even more like a play than *Queen Elizabeth* because it talks.

Whereas Dreiser devotes the first part of *An American Tragedy* to the early life of the hero, the film picks up the story at the time George Eastman arrives in the upstate New York town for a job in his uncle's factory. The incidents which constitute the opening chapters of the novel are consequently among those deleted. But the substance of the deleted material is effectively suggested. It is revealed in a conversation early in the film that George is the son of an evangelist. Shortly thereafter, as he is walking along the street, he comes upon a gospel team holding a religious service on a corner. One of the group, a little boy, is singing. George stops, and as the camera cuts from George's face to the singer's and back again, the implication is clear that George sees himself in the boy. Again the contrast between George's social background and his present surroundings is pointed up in a brief sequence in which George talks to his mother by long-distance telephone. It is not so much what is said over the telephone, as would be the method of the drama, but what is revealed by the camera as the scene alternates between George in the luxurious billiard room of his uncle's house and his mother, at the other end of the wire, in her drab little gospel hall. In the few seconds of this sequence, the film not only condenses the early chapters of the novel but vividly contrasts George's former life with the kind of life to which he aspires.

Many of the sequences in *A Place in the Sun* are narrated with little or no dialogue. George's encounter with the gospel team is an example. That of the telephone conversation is also in this category, the actual conversation, as pointed out, being the least important element in the sequence. One of the particularly effective scenes is that in which George and Alice, the

girl with whom he becomes tragically involved, spend the night in Alice's room. In a film, this kind of scene is always difficult because of censorship. In *A Streetcar Named Desire,* a comparable problem is solved by deletion, for here censorship would not allow the film to follow the play. Since the method of *A Streetcar Named Desire* is to tell the story as the play does, the only solution was cutting. In *A Place in the Sun,* on the other hand, the cinematic method solves the problem. The sequence is presented almost entirely by montage. Beginning at the window, where a small radio on the sill is playing softly, the camera pans slowly across the dark room, taking in briefly as it passes the figures of the couple in dim profile, and then slowly back again to the window, the room becoming lighter now and through the window the sky showing streaks of dawn. A rooster crows in the distance. The radio has stopped playing and is emitting only a faint crackling sound. There is a sound of the door being opened and then closed, and there is a brief glimpse of George as he slips past the window outside. Then comes an instantaneous cut to a screen-filling shot of a factory whistle stridently blowing. Here is the film creating, not only by implying without specifically naming, but giving the sequence of meaning. While a natural part of the scene, the whistle is also a symbol of the workaday world soon to interfere in the private lives of this ill-fated couple. It is like the sound of the saw in *McTeague* or the funeral procession in *Greed.*

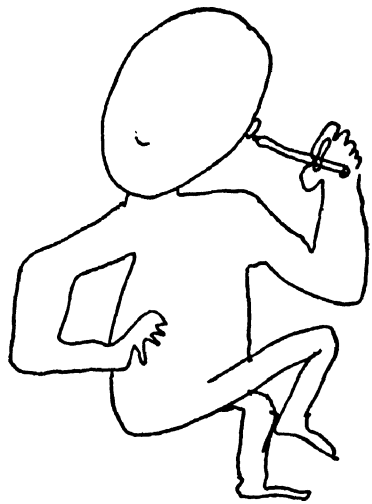
A Place in the Sun is a study in sound itself. Now sound is, of course, realistic. Combined with the object photographed, it is still realistic. But combined with images in certain ways, it becomes something more. In the scene just described, the music from the radio is one image; the crackling sound indicating that the station is off the air is another. Arranged as they are in the sequence, they create a third image: passage of time.

The radio, like the telephone, is an overworked instrument both on the stage and on the screen. In *A Place in the Sun,* it is used in a variety of ways, all of them more than mere devices to convey information. Even the news broadcast about Labor Day drownings has a far more macabre meaning than the news itself because it is combined with another image: George's wish to rid himself of Alice. The radio is used to link two of the sequences, that of the party at the home of George's rich relatives and the pathetic birthday supper Alice has prepared for George. As the scene cuts from the Eastman mansion to Alice's room — from the champagne to the melted ice cream, from the vivacious crowd at the dance to the slovenly Alice lying on her bed asleep — the dance music continues, but now it is coming from the radio on Alice's window sill. Then there is the scene in which George, temporarily freed from his plight, is leaving the dock in a speedboat with a group of his prosperous friends. As the boat roars off, the camera remains focused on a portable radio on the dock. The only sound is that of the departing boat. But as this sound dies away, the radio can be heard: it is broadcasting news of Alice's murder.

Sight and sound in *A Place in the Sun* are combined or separated in a variety of ways. The climax of the scene in the doctor's office comes with Alice's confession of her illicit affair with George. A less imaginative director than George Stevens would have had the background music stop suddenly as Alice speaks the meaningful words or, if there were no background music, have the words accompanied by a sharp musical note, such as the ping of a harp string. At this point in the scene, the doctor has gotten up and gone over to his medicine cabinet, from which he has taken a small bottle. When Alice blurts out, "I'm not married," there is hardly more than a second's silence. Then comes the mere sound of the bottle as the doctor puts it down on the shelf. The sound not only punctuates Alice's words but — unlike any extraneous musical sound — is also a realistic part of the scene. Or the sound may be separated from the image. On the lonely Adirondack lake, George hears the loons — and sees them — sound and image realistically combined. But later, in the courtroom, when he remembers this sound, it is separated from the image, as the loons are heard on the sound track. One sound is sometimes linked to another. When Alice comes out from the doctor's office and gets into the car, she snarls at George, "We'll go some place out of town and get married, ya understand?" George presses the starter pedal, and the grinding sound of the machinery picks up the snarl in Alice's voice. The bark of a dog links scenes in a way comparable to that of the radio. As George runs through the woods, he surprises some campers, whose dog barks at him. The barking continues as the scene dissolves to a city street in front of the courthouse: the district attorney is getting out of his car, and the barking is coming from his dog in the back seat.

These are some of the ways in which a motion picture tells a story. It is because *A Place in the Sun* tells it in these ways that it is an exciting film to watch. These ways are inherently cinematic. Films like *A Streetcar Named Desire* are not inherently cinematic. They accept the methods of the stage play. In them the motion pictures are not so much an art as a mechanical device whereby the plays are photographed. Only by adaptation to the cinematic method can a novel or a play be made into a motion picture which stands on its own merits.

It should not be concluded that plays faithfully reproduced on the screen do not serve a purpose. They are justified if only because they enable wide audiences to see them. It is encouraging that films are being made of good plays and successfully distributed. Hollywood may even be compelled to revise upward its estimation of the intellectual age of American audiences. The more literally good plays are filmed, the better the theatre is served. But not the motion pictures.



"And would you like the answers to the questions, too?"

Study Questions and Theme Topics

Reading as Pleasure and Work

The Greatest Pleasure in Life 1. You can use this little essay as a pretest of your present ability to recognize the organization of a piece of writing. Can you outline it in detail? Point out uses of parallel construction; of repetition. 2. What problems do you suppose the writer knew he was facing when he set out to induce people to join a book club? How does his way of writing try to meet these problems? Why does he use humor? 3. *Vocabulary:* hedonism; tangible; beatitude; ignominious; retrospect. 4. *For a theme:* See if you can work out a similarly planned, semi-serious argument, with detailed pros and cons, that some preference (or aversion) of yours is better (or worse) than two or three alternatives many people would choose. For example, "Turtles are the best pets — better than dogs, cats, or birds."

How to Read More Efficiently 1. Test your reading of what Leedy says: What three different "purposes" in reading (kinds of reading) does he distinguish? What techniques does he prescribe for each kind? Does he give advice for the third kind (critical reading)? 2. "Efficiency" as he defines it concerns both *rate* and *comprehension*, and he is telling you how to improve in both. What relation do you gather he sees between them? Does he seem to have a good reason for treating techniques for rapid reading along with, and following, those for reading "more comprehensively"? 3. *Vocabulary:* nuance; topography; verbiage; peripheral; regression. 4. *For a theme:* Evaluate your own reading efficiency, according to these standards.

How to Mark a Book 1. Is there any contradiction between Leedy's advice and Adler's? 2. Another way to mark a book is to write on the flyleaf the page numbers for passages you found memorable or significant, together with a note on the subject of each such passage. Evaluate this method in comparison with Adler's. 3. *Vocabulary:* integral; integrated; sequence; relevant. 4. *Exercise:* Show your instructor a sample of the way you mark a serious book or article, or in a theme describe your marking habits.

Of Studies 1. What organization can you discover in this essay? Could you suggest paragraph divisions? 2. What sentence patterns are repeated? 3. After reading the other pieces in this section, come back to this essay and see what major points, if any, made by the other writers are missing from this essay. 4. *Vocabulary:* Do you find words besides those explained in the footnotes that are used in a sense no longer current?

The Art of Reading 1. In what sense does Lin Yutang use the word "reading"? What purposes and results does he recognize? What place does he allow for the kind of reading Leedy is thinking of — and Adler? What place does each of them allow for Lin's kind of reading? Are there real contradictions between their conceptions? Would you have to leave college (or fail) if you adopted Lin Yutang's views? 2. Can you outline a clear sequence of thought in the essay? Examine the repeated use of the word "therefore." To what extent are the author's views supported by reasons? to what extent by example, quotation, and analogy — or simply by assertion? 3. What is the effect of the examples and allusions from Chinese literature? Of comparisons or analogies with familiar matters? 4. *Vocabulary:* insipid; quizzically; affinity; re-incarnation;

preclude. 5. *For themes:* a discussion or extension of any of the ideas that interest you, or a quarrel with one of these ideas; books for certain places; changes in your reading tastes; a first and a second reading of the same book; discovery of a favorite author; your preparations for study.

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO ENJOY A POEM? 1. Ciardi begins by declaring the poem is for delight, to be enjoyed, not to be worked at for its rational "meaning." So far his position is like Lin Yutang's. Does he too extend this to *all* reading? Does he consider any other effects on the reader, as Lin does? Find any points where he admits a possible need to work at understanding. 2. He goes on to ask, "Why don't more people enjoy poetry? What does it take?" The seven answers he enumerates are each divided into two parts. On what basis? Does what he says about reading speed and efficiency apply only to poetry, or is he really contradicting Leedy? 3. On what points would you take issue with his views? 4. *Vocabulary:* esoteric; obsolete; slovenly; rational; invective; pontificate; crass; myopic; impinge; tenacity; stereotyped; amoral; ineffable. 5. *For themes:* your experience with poetry; what you expect of a poem; poems you like or dislike; or some other reading taste — as for detective stories, westerns, or science fiction.

POETRY 1. What is the "it" that the poet dislikes? 2. The poem uses the words "genuine" and "important" twice each. What bearing do they have on Miss Moore's evaluation of poetry? 3. *Vocabulary:* Are there any unfamiliar words here? Comment on the vocabulary of this poem in relation to what you have always thought of as "poetic language."

SOME READERS AT WORK

HERE LIES MISS GROBY 1. What is wrong with Miss Groby's way of reading? What could be said in her defense (after all, Thurber did learn the figures of speech — was that pointless?)? 2. *For a theme:* A teacher whose methods helped or hindered your reading enjoyment. (Why not invent a reason as Thurber does for recalling her, and give details of her appearance, habits, and gestures.)

CLUTTER COUNTERS EVERYWHERE 1. What picture does the author give of himself? What absurdities is he able to see in himself and in a teacher's position? What do his allusions to literature, magazines, and so on, show about him? 2. On the other hand, what sort of person was the letter-writer assuming as his reader, judging from the appeals he uses? (Contrast the assumptions made in "The Greatest Pleasure in Life.") How would you define the qualities Scott objects to in the letter? 3. *Vocabulary:* pensively; portend; unequivocal; tentative; precisionist; snide; devious; façades; *savoir faire.* 4. *For a theme:* a similar analysis of a sales letter or other advertisement. Try to invent a framing situation as Scott does, or show someone getting a letter or sales-talk and reacting to it.

THE IDEALIST 1. How would you state the theme (basic idea or point) of this story? 2. What is the narrator's present attitude toward his earlier, boyhood self? 3. Pick out as many words or idioms as you can that are not in current American usage. 4. *For themes:* a humorous or disastrous episode you know of in which someone's ideas from books or movies led to difficulties; a misunderstanding between pupil and teacher; this story from the teacher's point of view.

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER In the translation of Homer by George Chapman, a contemporary of Shakespeare, Keats made the sort of discovery of a favorite writer and book that Lin Yutang says is a "critical event

in one's intellectual development." In the first eight lines Keats compares his previous readings to travel. Pick out the words and phrases that carry out this comparison. Trace also the way he is using a comparison (of what?) to the feudal system of landholding (see "fealty," "ruled," "demesne"). Look up Apollo to see why in the comparison he is the feudal overlord of bards. In the last six lines, what do the two comparisons have in common with Keats's experience? (His "Cortez" for "Balboa" is a famous slip.)

Readers and College Life

WHAT EVERY FRESHMAN SHOULD KNOW 1. List in order the "few pointers" Holmes gives. What principle determines the order in which he puts them? 2. How workable do you think his suggestions are about study and recreation, grades, note-taking, etc.? Do you question his *facts* at any points? 3. What does he think is the purpose of college education? How does his suggested college program fulfill this purpose? 4. *Vocabulary:* audacity; foibles; seminar; anachronistic; accessory; jargon; Scylla and Charybdis; heterogeneous. 5. *For themes:* your views or practices on any one of Holmes's points; an explanation of the theory behind the program of courses you are taking this year, or of your whole college program. For this you will probably have to study your college catalogue. Also read the piece by Benchley first. You could write this paper as a letter home, perhaps defending or complaining — or a letter to Holmes.

WHAT COLLEGE DID TO ME 1. What serious criticisms of both students and college programs underlie this humorous essay? 2. What is the effect of the jumbled listings? 3. What do you make of the reversals in the last two paragraphs? 4. *Vocabulary:* elective; supplementary; seminar; cynical. 5. *For themes:* a humorous and then a serious list of what you have learned in college so far (maybe in the form of a letter home, or of one letter to a friend and one to your parents); the college student as seen in "the American Credo"; pros and cons of an elective *vs.* a rather closely prescribed program.

HEARTACHE ON THE CAMPUS 1. On controversial topics, our emotions, whether pro or con, make it hard for us to follow an argument carefully. See whether you can put aside your personal convictions and (*a*) outline Mrs. Frank's argument; (*b*) discover her basic values; (*c*) see just what practices conflict with her values; (*d*) examine the techniques of argument she uses — examples, appeals to feeling, etc. 2. After careful analysis of her argument, what points of agreement and disagreement do you have? Distinguish between basic issues and particular points. 3. *Vocabulary:* stringent; bigotry; foment; relegated; Panhellenic; imbued; impressionable; sub rosa; eradicated; matriculate; gratuitously; quota; faction; exponent; concerted. 4. *For themes:* either a full-scale attack on or defense of the fraternity system; or a criticism or defense at a given point; or a personal experience bearing on a single point.

DATING IN AMERICA 1. According to Gorer, what is the purpose of dating? How does it differ for boy and girl? What pattern does the typical date follow? 2. All through, Gorer compares dating to a game. What are the points of similarity? Of difference? 3. Social scientists try to describe human behavior in general patterns. How far can you accept Gorer's generalized description of the pattern of dating — first as a whole, then as to details? Before you criticize his analysis be sure you understand his distinction between *dating* and *courtship*, since his analysis of dating depends on it. 4. *Vocabulary:* anthropology; component; exploitative; satiety; idiosyncratic; overt; enhance; accede; elicit; persiflage; facet; articulately. 5. *For themes:* your own analysis of the motives and patterns of dating, in general or in a particular instance; one good, poor, or

typical date or dater; "lines" you have heard or tried (don't girls have them too?); a similar generalized analysis of the pattern of something else people all do — telephoning, playing some game, having hobbies, driving cars.

A GREAT TEACHER'S METHOD 1. What were the steps in Agassiz's method? What was the purpose of looking at one fish so long? Then of the comparisons with another fish, and so on? What sentence or phrase sums up the point of his method? 2. Would the method work in non-scientific subjects — say, in English or history? 3. *Vocabulary:* antecedents; explicit; aversion; resuscitate; interdicted; rehearsal; piques; disconcerting; injunction. 4. *For themes:* a similar account of a good (or perhaps pointless) method used by one of your teachers; an experience from which you learned something valuable.

THE UNIVERSITY 1. What answers does Conant give to the questions in the headnote, and to those at the end of his own first paragraph? 2. What democratic assumptions does he make, and how do these affect his interpretation of the questions? 3. Study Conant's definition of a university (paragraph 11). Note that he makes "the community of scholars" (faculty) essential and the students non-essential; then recall that President Eliot, quoted in Holmes's essay, took the reverse position. With which do you agree? Note that to answer this you must first define the essential functions of the institution. (Is Eliot speaking of a university or a college? Are their functions the same?) 4. What are the functions (ends) as Conant defines them? 5. The main part of the discussion turns on the "four sources of strength" of the university. In these terms, how does Conant account for the historical changes that have brought about the typical American university? And how does he think they should shape its future? 6. *Vocabulary:* crux; hierarchical; premise; thesis; mutation; heterogeneous; diversified; catholic; proliferate; assimilated; schizophrenic; nepotism; latent; atrophy. 7. *For themes:* definition of a university; the differences between a college and a university; the organization of your own college or university; discussion of any one of Conant's points.

[THREE POEMS] 1. Here are three views of college by three poets. Shapiro and Gray both find something to lament; Holmes and Gray both find much that is good in retrospect. Would you say that one view is "truer" than the others? 2. Which poem expresses the most complex ideas? Which the simplest? 3. Comment on the way in which Shapiro and Gray personify abstractions.

THE WRITER'S JOB

ANYBODY CAN LEARN TO WRITE 1. Summarize Leacock's points. 2. His purpose is to make writing seem easy; find the passages where he recognizes difficulties, and see how he disposes of them. 3. Try to analyze the differences between the first and the second versions in each of the two italicized specimens he quotes. 4. *Vocabulary:* aptitude; harrowing; bent; initiative; debarred; conceit; annotate; apprehend. 5. *For themes:* your own difficulties in writing; a survey of topics you might write on; a revision of a previous paper, applying some of Leacock's advice.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF EFFECTIVE WRITING 1. To be sure you understand each of the seven qualities Overstreet lists, try putting them into your own words. 2. Show how he describes each quality in psychological terms of stimulus and response. 3. *Vocabulary:* affect; effect; platitude; verbosity; circumlocution; abstractness; requisite; evoke; canon. 4. *For themes:* Analyze and correct examples from your own writing that illustrate some of the seven faults; try restating some other rules of writing in terms of stimulus and response, that is,

of effect on a reader; describe the way Scott deals with the letter in "Clutter Counters Everywhere" in terms of stimulus and response.

A WRITING MACHINE 1. One way of criticizing human follies is to preach seriously and straightforwardly against them. What is Swift's method? 2. What folly or follies is he discussing? 3. *Vocabulary:* superficies; dye; engine; particles; delineate. 4. Comment on Swift's use of capital letters. 5. *For a theme:* Using Swift's method, discuss some modern short cut to knowledge or formula for success.

PLEASANT AGONY 1. Brown says the main cause of his "agony" in writing is his "literary conscience" and the demands it makes on him. What are these demands and in what order does he take them up? Why that order? Can you see how he builds up to his discussion and definition of "style"? 2. How are the demands of Brown's literary conscience related to the kind of demands Overstreet speaks of? 3. What is pleasant about the agony? Is the author being a masochist? Study his uses of examples. 4. *Vocabulary:* singularity; valedictory; delectable; illegible; *mot juste;* veritable; disparage; involutions; affectation; artist *vs.* artisan. 5. *For themes:* an account of your pleasures and agonies in writing; how you write a paper.

HOW TO WRITE AND BE READ 1. Barzun is advising teachers, not students. Jot down in order the topics he covers, and under each summarize his suggestions in a few words. 2. What topic does he take up in the second part of his essay? What sources of jargon does he discuss? Translate some of his examples of jargon into plain English. 3. What is his fundamental criterion of good writing? Is it similar to Overstreet's? To Brown's? 4. *Vocabulary:* plaintiff; decadent; clairvoyance; jargon; embargo; concierge; putative; context; replete; Basic English; elicit; pedantic; fetish; deliquescence; ambiguity; patois. 5. *For themes:* a collection of examples of jargon from your texts or other sources; some advice to your high school teachers of writing; what you have learned this year about writing.

[THREE POEMS] These three poems tell us something about the writer's job which the prose pieces in this section did not quite say. Can you put it in words? Is it a thing peculiar only to poetry?

THE WRITER'S AIMS

TWO LETTERS ON WRITING 1. Try to state what Anderson's aims in writing were. What was his way of looking at people? What part does he think commercialism and money play for a creative writer? To what extent are his aims as a creative writer applicable to ordinary writing? 2. *Vocabulary:* Anderson's vocabulary here is very simple. Why is such simplicity appropriate? Do you find any words new to you? 3. *For a theme:* an experience like Anderson's in which you were "forced to realize that all sorts of emotions go on in all sorts of people."

WHY I WROTE ABOUT BULLFIGHTS 1. What was Hemingway's reason? How do preconceptions interfere with good writing, as he sees it? Which of the five senses seems most important to him? 2. How much resemblance is there between Hemingway's aims and Anderson's? 3. What seem to be favorite words? 4. Is Hemingway's diction as simple as Anderson's? Find words unfamiliar to you. What do you make of his sentence patterns (note length)? 5. *For a theme:* Write an account of a serious occurrence you have witnessed, and try to state *exactly* what you saw and how you felt.

[THREE POEMS] 1. Fra Lippo Lippi and the speaker in Housman's poem have two quite different notions of the artist's aims. Can you describe the dif-

ference? 2. Does either of these views agree with that expressed in Shakespeare's sonnet? 3. Judging by the pieces you have so far read in this book, what various aims do you find writers to have?

Beginning with Talk

On the Differences Between Writing and Speaking. 1. What does Hazlitt see as the chief basis of the differences between writing and speaking? What kind of speaking, and of writing, does he have in mind? What does he think are the necessary qualities of a good speaker? Of a good writer? 2. What are the advantages of speaking over writing, and vice versa? Which does Hazlitt prefer? How is his preference shown? 3. Try to develop a comparison more favorable to the one he disparages. 4. *Vocabulary:* vivacity; collateral; faculties; apposite; requisite; stipulate; tenacious; demagogue; legerdemain; hackneyed; Shibboleth; felicitous; truism. Certain words Hazlitt uses are no longer current in the senses in which he uses them: slowness of *parts;* curious; closet; dumb show; truth and *nature;* the *character* of an author. 5. *For themes:* a comparison of your own abilities in speaking and in writing, giving some analysis of the reasons; a defense of speaking, with Hazlitt's objections in mind.

Everybody's Listening! 1. Consider the questions in the headnote. 2. What sort of listener is the author aiming at? Point out specific things in the writing that help answer this question. 3. The author's distinction between *fact* and *opinion* leads to some interesting questions: In what sense is "every man entitled to his own opinion"? Is he, even if it has no basis in fact? Is "one man's opinion as good as another's"? 4. *Vocabulary:* why does this piece have so few words you may need to look up? Are there any at all you can't define? How about: depreciate; skepticism; dogmatic; affiliation? 5. *For themes:* ways in which techniques of listening differ from those of reading; how you take notes on lectures; how different types of lecturers make different types of listening necessary; how the eye helps in listening — the importance of non-verbal cues to the speaker's meaning.

[Three Views of Conversing and Disputing] 1. *Boswell.* How do Goldsmith's qualities illustrate Hazlitt's distinctions between writing and speaking? What virtues does Dr. Johnson's conversation have? What faults? What do you make of his principle of striking out passages that are "particularly fine" in your writing? 2. *Franklin.* What is the Socratic method? What is the advantage of Franklin's method? 3. *Lardner.* What formulas does Lardner find in ordinary conversation? 4. *For themes:* Report on a good or poor conversation (or conversationalist); explain a piece of conversational wisdom, like Franklin's, that you have discovered; faults or virtues in conversation; types of conversational offenders.

Writing Letters

Two Letters 1. What do you think are the qualities of a good personal letter? What ones do you find in the two letters of Melville? How does he adapt each letter to the person he is writing to? 2. What about "egotism" in a personal letter? What about petty details? 3. *For themes:* Write two personal letters to two quite different types of correspondent; write a self-examination of your letter-writing habits; an analysis of a good or a poor letter you have received; letters you love or hate to read.

Miss Emily's Maggie 1. What picture of Emily do we get from the perspective of Maggie's letters, and the information Leyda gives us about Maggie? 2. Leyda points out how the New Englanders treated the Irish; does he suggest

by any remarks or details that the poet Emily Dickinson was equally a foreigner? 3. Can you distinguish between lack of intelligence and lack of education? What indications of intelligence are there in Maggie's letters? Do any of them manage to say more in her few words than could be conveyed otherwise? Give examples. 4. Find phonetic spellings that indicate Maggie's Irish dialect — that she was spelling as she pronounced. 5. What qualities do you find in Emily's letters? Are they as unorthodox in their way as Maggie's? 6. *For a theme:* Use one or several letters you have received to tell something about the person who wrote them.

THE LETTER 1. In your own words describe Holmes's experience and feelings in going for mail. 2. *For a theme:* college students getting letters; how letters are treated in a dormitory.

SHAPING IDEAS

THE SHAPE OF IDEAS 1. How does Flesch shape his own ideas in this piece? What devices does he suggest for getting ideas into shape? How many? For what kind of material is each device suitable? What is his chief method of explaining each device? What are some similar devices? 2. Analyze the difference between the pieces by Smith and McLellan. 3. *Vocabulary:* Flesch is best known for his advocacy of "plain talk" and "readable writing," in his two books on those subjects. What devices can you find him using to make this piece "plain" and "readable"? Does he seem to be talking down to his readers, or oversimplifying his language, at any points? 4. *For themes:* a paper employing any one of the devices Flesch suggests; outline two or three approaches to the same subject through such devices; an analysis of the devices used in one or two pieces in this book; a revision of one of your earlier themes.

NOTES FOR A PORTRAIT OF DUMMY FLAGG 1. What device, in Flesch's sense, did the student decide to use (on his sixth page) to organize many of the details he remembered about the old man? 2. How could he have continued after this opening to bring in other materials on his list? 3. *For a theme:* Write a paper, perhaps a portrait, using the method of assembling material by jotting down remembered details; hand in these jottings with the finished paper.

REVISING A THEME 1. What points in this discussion do you find most suggestive? 2. The question may be dangerous — but could you offer any suggestions to your own instructor for making his comments on your papers more helpful to you? 3. See what Barzun says in "How to Write and Be Read" on the subject of revising. 4. *For themes:* Why not revise your next paper at least twice, and pass in all three versions? Or revise a paper already submitted?

THOUGHTS ON COMPOSITION 1. What useful suggestions do you find among these journal entries? 2. Compare the passages where Thoreau was revising. 3. *Exercise:* Keep a notebook, for a week or two, of your observations on and for writing; then show some of it to your instructor.

TALK 1. Make a list of the details that might be jottings from which Holmes assembled this poem, in the manner of "Notes for a Portrait of Dummy Flagg." 2. What device (see Flesch) does Holmes use to shape the memories? 3. *For a theme:* a similar piece, in prose, on an early memory of your own, with a point.

GIVING THE FACTS

THE LANGUAGE OF REPORTS 1. Distinguish between "report," "inference," and "judgment." Give examples of each. 2. Select a news item in today's

paper and see how much inference and judgment you can detect in it in addition to straight report. 3. How much pure report would you estimate there is in your daily talk, as compared with inference and judgment? Would 100 per cent report be ideal? 4. *Vocabulary:* verifiable; biased; propaganda; evolve; reprehensible; sect; nomenclature; infer. 5. *For themes:* See the headnote.

How Propaganda Finds Its Way into the Press 1. This piece is included for study with the preceding selection by Hayakawa. Apply the distinctions Hayakawa makes to the analysis of these reports. 2. *For a theme:* Select a news story in today's paper and rewrite it, slanting it in at least two directions. Compare reports of the same event printed in several newspapers; compare several editorials on the same topic.

World's Best Directions Writer 1. Which of the devices suggested by Flesch in "The Shape of Ideas" is Macrorie using in this piece? 2. What is the directions writer's basic problem? List the series of usable suggestions or principles Zybowski gives. How many are applicable to writing in general? 3. Find out the standard names for the two kinds of adjectives he distinguishes. 4. How do you account for his way of talking? 5. *For themes:* Give clear and fool-proof directions for a simple process; write some very brief directions, as for labels; collect and analyze a number from labels; interview an expert of some sort — a cook, an athlete, a mason, a soda-jerk — on the basic principles of some operation he performs.

Giving Significance

The Literary Use of Language 1. What three possible stages in a description or account does Daiches distinguish? To what extent do these correspond to Hayakawa's "report," "inference," and "judgment"? Does Daiches' emphasis seem to value them in the same way? 2. At the end, what difference does he imply between journalism and art? What qualities does he mention that make an artistic account more than a biased judgment of events? 3. Why, in the third stage, is it "irrelevant whether what is described exists in the real world or not"? (Does it matter whether Holmes's old model-maker was a real person or not?) 4. *Vocabulary:* casual; tractable; unique; plethora; static; authenticity; multifarious; intuitive. 5. *For themes:* Describe a street or other scene, attempting any one of the three possible stages defined by Daiches.

Melville Writes of the Whale-Line 1. In Bennett's account of the whale-line, is there anything more than verifiable report? Which of Daiches' stages does it illustrate? 2. Melville's account illustrates "the literary use of language." Compare the two accounts carefully to see just what Melville adds; first, as report — what additional facts; then, as literary use of language — what added meanings. In what particulars is his account more effective simply as a report? What is the effect of the comparisons he introduces? What words or phrases are particularly vivid? 3. *For a theme:* an explanation of a technical operation or apparatus, to convey its human meaning and feeling (see "Riveters," page 266).

A Sum in Addition 1. What general label would you give to the temperament of each of the men? How does Menefee differ from the others? 2. Is there any indication in the *facts* of the story which man is right? Which do you think is right? Does your opinion show anything about your own temperament? 3. *For a theme:* a similar instance in your experience where several people interpreted some "facts" differently.

On a Photo of Sgt. Ciardi a Year Later 1. The first two stanzas describe the photograph of Ciardi in uniform. What impression does the picture give

of him? 2. As he looks at the picture a year later, what does his "civil memory" tell him was really true under the visible surface? 3. The poem illustrates the deceptiveness of what the eye or the camera sees; it opposes *surface* to *depth.* Find the words and phrases that designate *surface;* then those that designate *depth;* then those that identify *surface* with *sight,* and with *illusion.* Explain the last line. 4. *For themes:* Explain a picture you know in which the camera "lied" or "photographed the camera man"; an episode where what you saw with your own eyes turned out to have a different meaning from what it seemed to have on the surface.

In and Beyond the Family

THE FAMILY CONSTELLATION 1. What does Adler mean by the "family constellation"? 2. What are the general patterns he outlines for the youngest child; the oldest; the second; the only child? 3. Examine each to see just how hard and fast Adler's patterns are. How much possibility for variation does he allow in each case? In which are directly opposite patterns possible? Which child does he think most likely to follow a single pattern? 4. Adler begins and ends with the question of "judging" a human being. For him, what is the effect of *understanding* on *moral judgment?* How far do you agree? Consider also what you think of his attitude toward "being first" *vs.* "social feeling." 5. If you have studied the selections in the section preceding ("Giving Significance"), consider what light Adler's conceptions throw on the question of why different people will interpret "facts" differently. 6. *Vocabulary:* constellation; peculiar (paragraph 2); chronic; nuance; élan; evince; evanescent; inordinate; concomitant. 7. *For themes:* your agreement or disagreement with Adler's propositions at any one point, with examples; or a single person as an example to illustrate or contradict one of his types; or an attempt to see whether you yourself fit into his pattern.

AT GRANDMOTHER'S 1. In the first paragraph Masters states the qualities that charmed him in Grandmother's house. See how far he designs his detailed description to bring out these qualities. Does the last paragraph sum up the same qualities? 2. Beginning with paragraph 2, what determines the order in which he takes up the rooms? Try sketching a floor plan as you read, to see how consistent his approach is and how exactly his description can be followed. 3. See if you can find any principles governing the order in which he lists details within each room. What sorts of details does he include? 4. *Vocabulary:* indulgent; ubiquitous; daguerreotype; delectable. 5. *For themes:* description of a remembered place, with a dominant impression, an orderly plan of presentation, and plenty of supporting details; descriptions of a pair of contrasting places to bring out opposite feelings or to characterize different occupants.

FATHER TRIES TO MAKE MOTHER LIKE FIGURES 1. How many opposing traits of Father and of Mother can you find brought out in their conflict over figures? 2. How does Day manage to keep Father from seeming just a brute, and Mother just a feather-head? Does he take sides at all? 3. Can you find any plan of arrangement in the piece? 4. *For a theme:* a humorous and objective account of a conflict between two members of your family, on a particular point but revealing various characteristics of the people.

GOOD-BYE, LITTLE SISTER 1. Emily's first big dance ends one phase of her life and opens another, and she changes overnight. What details show what she has been? What now comes out in her? 2. Suppose the story had been told by Emily herself: what would we lose that we get from seeing it through the older sister's eyes? How much older is she? What attitudes does she have that

Emily is still too young for? Is she herself completely "grown-up" yet? (Note her difference from the father and mother; and consider why the first paragraph is included.) 3. *For themes:* an experience, perhaps of a quite different sort, by which you or someone you know passed from one "age" to another. You might decide to write it as if told by someone not the main character, in order to get the tone and perspective you want.

BROTHER DEATH 1. There are a number of groupings among the characters in this story. Who teams with whom? against whom? Do these relationships remain constant or shift about? 2. Reread the two paragraphs on the oldest child in Adler's "The Family Constellation." How well does Don fit this pattern? Why does Don abandon, temporarily, his role as a "conservative" oldest son? Are we prepared for his return? 3. At the end of the story, two kinds of death are contrasted. Why does Mary feel that Ted's was the less "subtle and terrible"? 4. What does the material about the Aspinwahls add to the story? 5. *For a theme:* an incident or series of related incidents showing the alliances and conflicts within a group (a family is an obvious suggestion, but any group living in continuous, close relationship can develop such alliances and conflicts — a fraternity, a dormitory, an army or navy unit, etc.).

THERE WAS A CHILD WENT FORTH 1. What groupings do you find among Whitman's details? Do the groups seem to come in any logical order? to lead anywhere? 2. What does the last line indicate about the child? How is it related to the beginning of the poem? 3. *Vocabulary:* esculent, façades, aureola, strata.

[FOUR POEMS] *Peter at Fourteen.* Most of the references are to what kind of activity? How are they appropriate to a fourteen-year-old boy? To what book is the poem referring? Whom do the Belgians and the Romans stand for in the poem? What do the last two stanzas predict for the boy? *The Secret Heart.* This poem contains many terms having to do with warmth and light. How do they help to indicate the boy's feeling about his father? *Returning.* Compare the attitude toward the past in this poem with that in Whitman's "There Was a Child Went Forth." *Spring and Fall.* What is the significance of the title? How does this poem explain Margaret's grief? What words emphasize the feeling of grief?

SELF AND OTHERS

ON A CERTAIN BLINDNESS IN HUMAN BEINGS 1. What does James feel is responsible for our "blindness" to the feelings of others? Does his experience with the mountaineers help indicate a partial solution to the problem of "blindness"? Where else does he use examples to clarify his points? 2. In his last paragraph James lists four general areas of eagerness. Think of an interest or occupation to illustrate each one. 3. *Vocabulary:* egocentric, radically, denudation, redolent, paean. 4. *For a theme:* a description of someone whose interests or feelings seem strange to you — try to account for them in his terms; perhaps you suddenly "saw" another person as a result of some remark or incident.

JOHN AND THOMAS 1. Notice how helpful a diagram can be in making clear rather complex material. 2. *For a theme:* a description of yourself as it might be written by someone else quite different from you. Remember that he will have a good deal of what James called "blindness." His "ideal" *you* will not be yours.

THE SECRET EVANGEL OF OTTO MCFEELY 1. How many different examples of McFeely's technique does Lewis give? What emotions does McFeely try to

call forth? What do all the incidents have in common? 2. How does Lewis want us to react to McFeely? Point out some phrases which help to shape our attitude toward him. 3. *Vocabulary:* evangel, benefaction, manifold, obtuse, gratuitous. 4. *For themes:* an account of a "character" you have known, concentrating on one particular oddity; or some oddity of your own.

A DILL PICKLE 1. Which of the two people do we get to know better? How does the author accomplish this? How does it help the story? 2. What details early in the story point out the former relationship of the man and woman? 3. What about his character did she find attractive? what annoyed her? How does he hurt her during the conversation? Why does she leave so abruptly? What is the significance of his final speech? 4. *For a theme:* an apparently casual incident or meeting that had emotional significance for you — try to distinguish between what you said or did and how you really felt.

[THREE POEMS] *Richard Cory.* What was there about Richard Cory that misled the people — "we people"? What is the social and economic status of Cory? of those who watch him? How does the author build up the surprise of the last line? (Or did you expect it?) *My Last Duchess.* Who is talking about the Duchess? Who is his audience? How does this add to the poem? Pick out several good indications of the speaker's character. What points show his attitude toward the Duchess? How valid is his judgment of her? *For Anne Gregory.* How many speakers are there in this poem? Who are they? How much does understanding the poem depend on our answering these questions?

A NUMBER OF THINGS

MIDWESTERN WEATHER. 1. After he has introduced his topic, how does Hutton organize his article? Pick out some of the words, particularly at the beginning of paragraphs, which help the reader follow the organization. 2. Pick out several places where Hutton's choice of words helps to emphasize the rigors of the Midwestern weather. 3. What is Hutton's attitude toward the Midwest and its people? Is he merely informing us about weather? 4. Pick out some allusions which indicate the type of audience for whom Hutton is writing. 5. *Vocabulary:* facetious, ambit, paterfamilias, zephyr, ozone, ablution, suffused. 6. *For themes:* a defense of the Midwest; the weather of your region; a nomination for a worse climate; a treatment of some other rather everyday topic in a fresh and interesting manner.

RIVETERS 1. On the basis of the first sentence, we expect the four members of the gang to be discussed. Are they? in this order? where does each new discussion begin? How does the author accomplish the transition from one member of the gang to the next? 2. How does the author feel about riveting as a profession? Pick out some statements which show his attitude. 3. *Vocabulary:* parabola, averse. 4. *For a theme:* the "know-how" involved in some operation with which you are personally familiar, perhaps something you do yourself.

THE FEEL 1. Make a list of the various experiences Gallico describes. Do they fall into groups or follow one another at random? How do the first and last experiences fit together? 2. Pick the description which best gives you the "feel" of a sport. How has Gallico gotten this across? 3. Are you a participant in any of the sports he mentions? How accurate is his "feel"? Are there any details you would add? 4. *Vocabulary:* ascertain, funked, didoes. 5. *For themes:* the "feel" of some sport or activity in which you have participated; your first attempt at something; why you will never try some activity again, or why you love it.

SHOOTING AN ELEPHANT 1. What is Orwell's original plan for dealing with the elephant? When does he change his mind? Why? 2. What is Orwell's attitude toward the elephant? How is this brought out? How does it help the point of the story? 3. What are the various reactions to the killing of the elephant? How do they help to condemn imperialism? 4. Pick out some of the details which help to convey the "flavor" or "scene" of Burma. 5. *Vocabulary:* imperialism, despotic, labyrinth, sahib, pretext. 6. *For themes:* a change of plans to conform with social pressure — this may imply an attitude toward society, but don't turn it into a lecture; an incident which points out a social problem.

RICK DISCOVERS JAZZ 1. It is clear that these are some of the early experiences of a potentially great jazz musician. What signs do we have of Rick's musical talent, even though he does not really play any instrument? Are we given any indication about what instrument he will play? 2. How does the author go about describing musical effects? Why doesn't she use more musical terms? Does she convey the "feel" of jazz? 3. What are some of Jeff's characteristics which make him very different from the usual stereotype of the Negro jazz musician? 4. *Vocabulary:* connoisseur, virtuosity, unobtrusive, deferentially, counterpoint, abject, toxin. 5. *For a theme:* your first real encounter with an art or interest toward which you feel a powerful attraction — perhaps someone encourages this interest, or discourages it.

THE MIND'S WAYS

LANGUAGE AND THE TRAINING OF THOUGHT This is the most difficult selection in the book. To master it, you will have, in Lin Yutang's phrase, "to study bitterly"; but as Adler warns, "You don't absorb the ideas of John Dewey the way you absorb crooning . . . ; you have to reach for them." Make your way of reading this essay a test of your reading maturity. Several hours, and probably more than one assignment, will be required. 1. Read the essay through once, not stopping to puzzle over particular passages; this first reading is exploratory. 2. Begin your second reading by outlining the essay. (*a*) On three separate sheets of paper, write the titles of the three main divisions labeled by Roman numerals. (*b*) Under each of these major divisions write the topical subheadings, leaving space enough between them to outline their contents; (*c*) Then, reading the essay the second time, outline the general ideas and topics under each subhead as you finish reading the section (Dewey has numbered his points). Leave for a third reading the points you do not grasp — don't bog down, but keep to the main line of thought. 3. On the third reading, return to the points that still baffle you; if you can't solve them, mark them and question your instructor before he has a chance to question you. 4. Now see whether you grasp the whole essay well enough to state its main ideas in a few sentences. 5. When you can do this, you are ready to discuss the ideas and to write a theme on any aspect that particularly interests you.

FOUR KINDS OF THINKING 1. Define and give examples of each of the four kinds of thinking. 2. What determines the order in which Robinson arranges them? What element is common to the first three kinds? Robinson excludes this element from the fourth kind of thinking, but do you agree that it must always be absent? 3. If rationalization is so strong an influence on our thought, how can we distinguish our "good reasons" from our "real reasons"? 4. *Vocabulary:* compromise (first paragraph); spontaneous; potent, omnipotent; imputation; onus; exculpation; Providence; gratuitous; pristine; isochronous. 5. *For themes:*

an example of rationalizing; an examination of the sources of one of your "opinions" which you do not like to have challenged, and of your "good reasons" and "real reasons" for holding it; an episode involving the two kinds of reasons.

THE SECRET LIFE OF WALTER MITTY 1. The scenes alternate between Mitty's actual world and his fantasy world. What is the relation between the two worlds? What main elements of his real world appear reversed in his dream world? What objects carry over? Consider *machinery* as it appears in each world. Also *authority*. See what cues in his real world set off his fantasy each time. 2. Are all the fantasies exactly the same in content, or do they show a progression of some sort? 3. Describe Mitty's "thinking" in Robinson's terms. 4. *For a theme:* the secret life of Mrs. Mitty — or anyone else.

EXPERIMENTAL NEUROSES 1. Distinguish three phases in the evolution of psychology, and try to point out analogous phases in another science. 2. In what way do Masserman's "principles of biodynamics" differ from those of earlier phases of psychology? 3. Show how each of the principles was demonstrated experimentally. What application to human behavior is made in each case? 4. What was the purpose of the various experimental "cures"? 5. Do any criticisms of either the experimental methods or of the conclusions occur to you? 6. Does Masserman provide or imply any definition of sanity? 7. *Vocabulary:* use your dictionary freely for all new words, especially technical ones — the concepts are valuable for the reasons Dewey points out in his discussion of vocabulary. 8. *For themes:* your introspections on some psychological reaction of your own; your experience in training an animal or observing its behavior.

THE DOOR 1. Like one of Masserman's cats (or the Professor's rats), this man is "frustrated" to the point of "insanity." Does his pattern of frustration follow Masserman's formulation? 2. In literal terms of house and doors, what has produced his acute frustration? What general patterns of satisfying behavior are represented by the series of "old doors" that have been changed? What is represented by the deceptive doors that have been substituted? Who or what is represented by "they" — the professors? Who do you think the woman ("she," "her") is? How does White make this individual man's frustration symbolic of the widespread frustration in contemporary society? 3. Removal of the prefrontal lobes of the brain is a "cure" not mentioned among Masserman's experiments. What is White getting at in this passage? What does he imply about those who can be sane or normal under such frustrating circumstances? Do Masserman's implications differ? 4. *Vocabulary:* Use your dictionary freely. 5. *For themes:* an analysis of a case in terms suggested by Masserman or White; a definition of "sanity."

[POEMS BY EMILY DICKINSON] 1. How do the poet's comments on madness in these poems fit with Masserman's and White's conceptions of it? 2. Read Leyda's "Miss Emily's Maggie" to see what kinds of "frustration" the poet may have experienced, and what disagreement with the majority.

SOME LOGICIANS AT WORK

LOGIC AND LOGICAL FALLACIES 1. To test your understanding of the topics, invent — or if possible find — at least one example to illustrate each. 2. Memorize the technical labels. 3. *Vocabulary:* Look up unfamiliar words.

WE ARE ALL SCIENTISTS 1. Into what two main parts does this explanation of scientific method fall? 2. What fallacy is most likely in induction? How does Huxley provide for this in his example? Why can an inductive generalization

never be entirely certain? 3. What fallacies in deductive reasoning did Davis point out? What ones do the skeptical friends suggest in the robbery victim's hypothesis? Do his answers involve complete certainty that he is not wrong? (Couldn't there really have been two men involved?) What step was necessary to prove his hypothesis? 4. How does a hypothesis differ from a scientific law? How does a scientific law differ from a legislative law? 5. Summarize the steps in scientific method as defined by Huxley. What might Robinson's comment be? 6. *Vocabulary:* induction; deduction; hypothesis; verification; syllogism; dialectically. 7. *For themes:* an interesting instance of reasoning, perhaps your own; analysis of one of Masserman's experiments in Huxley's manner; analysis of logic in a game situation — a bridge hand for example, or a football play.

A Modest Proposal 1. Do not confuse Swift, the author, with the character he invents to make this modest proposal for dealing with the poor of Ireland, and do not suppose his own attitudes are those of the character who is the vehicle of his bitter satire. What motives does the proponent declare? What attitudes and habits of mind does he show? 2. His proposal is completely logical, granted one major assumption. What is that assumption? 3. No reader, of course, can grant that assumption, and therein lies the inescapable trap of the satire. What reaction is his proposal bound to provoke? But does any reader have a right to accuse the proponent of inhumanity while he himself complacently accepts, or is in any way responsible for, the appalling condition of the Irish people? Which, after all, is the more inhumane — their present treatment or that proposed? 4. Swift's own "savage indignation" shows through the proponent's language at several points. At whom is it directed? Note references to landlords, England, and people of quality. How does he clearly indicate the proposals he really favors? 5. *Vocabulary:* What archaic words do you notice? 6. *For themes:* your own modest proposal for dealing with some abuse; an ironic and satiric piece of any sort.

Inflexible Logic 1. Make sure you understand the principle of probability on which the story is based. Do you accept it? 2. Does the story conform to the terms of the principle? Can you find any grounds, if you accept the principle, for rejecting the possibility of the chimps' turning out the books? What breaks the professor's nerve? What is the "catch" in the story, if any? What do you take to be the point of the story? 3. *For themes:* Analyze this situation; or show how a story could be based on some other logical or mathematical principle (an example might be the probabilities in flipping heads or tails); or write about some logical conundrum or brain-twister.

To His Coy Mistress 1. What is the situation in the poem — who is trying to convince whom of what? 2. What is the line of argument? Note the three main divisions. Try to reduce the argument to its logical bases. 3. What is the tone of the poem? Is it the same all through?

Beyond Logic

The Role of Hunches 1. How does the scientist's hunch differ from "woman's intuition"? Why does Cannon object to the concept of the "subconscious mind"? 2. He gives detailed examples of some scientific problems and their solutions. How do these help to define the hunch? How does the scientist treat the hunch after he gets it? 3. Do you think the experience Cannon describes could happen to a historian, a housewife, a writer? 4. *Vocabulary:* clairvoyance; incongruous; assayed; intermediary; pertinent. 5. *For a theme:* a "hunch" of yours that worked or didn't.

IMAGINATION CREATRIX 1. What kind of facts does the creative imagination deal with? 2. Compare with Huxley's account of scientific investigation; with Cannon's account of hunches. 3. Tell in as specific terms as possible what Lowes means by: the well; the vision; the will. 4. *Vocabulary:* vortex; transmuted; nebulous; subliminal; architectonic; chaos.

HOW A POEM IS MADE 1. What metaphor does the author use for the poet's creation of a poem? 2. How does his account compare with that of Lowes? 3. How much of what he says could be discovered by a good reader of the poem? Is what he says relevant to a good reading? 4. *For a theme:* an account of how you got the idea for a piece of writing you have done, or got the idea for anything you have done that was creative or out of your ordinary routine.

DIALOGUE Relate the basic contrast of this poem to the essays in this section. Is the opposition a necessary one? See what each of the authors above seems to think on this point.

PITFALLS OF THOUGHT

SYMBOLS 1. One good way of checking your understanding of an article which introduces you to new terms is to think of examples which illustrate them. List some *symbols* which are used in your college or home town. List some places, people, and events which are part of your *verbal world* — of your *extensional world.* Try to remember an incident in which someone mistook the *map* for the *territory.* 2. Since misused symbols can get us into so much trouble, why not abandon symbols entirely? In particular, why should we read books, which consist entirely of *words* which are not *things?* (See O'Connor, "The Idealist.") 3. *Vocabulary:* precedence; arbitrarily; inherently; obligatory; posthumously; semantic; extensional; inferences; analogy. 4. *For themes:* Some of the suggestions listed above under (1) could be converted into themes; how to tell a Big Man on Campus; perhaps your preconception (map) of dating or college or the business world was misleading.

WOLF! WOLF! 1. The title of this may well remind you of the fable of the boy who cried "Wolf." How would this help the author's point? 2. What are Evans's main reasons for doubting the authenticity of the account of the wolf children? Who is primarily responsible for the whole tale? In what way do some of the others share in the blame? Why does Evans spend so much time on Dr. Gesell? 3. How does Evans keep his article amusing? Is there a serious point underlying it? 4. *Vocabulary:* credence; auspices; feral; onerous; defalcation; wolverine; untenable; pundit. 5. *For themes:* a popular fallacy or superstition; a superstitious person; a person with an inherited "map."

PREJUDICE 1. The author of this review *does not* merely summarize the books — "tell the story." What are some of the things he *does* do? What is the function of a book review? 2. "Prejudice," the author points out, is a difficult word to define. Does he ever get it defined? 3. What are some of the frequent characteristics of deeply prejudiced persons? How did Allport arrive at his list? How does he help the reader to follow his list point by point? 4. *Vocabulary:* manifestly; palpably; ambiguous; kinetic; ethnic; projection; syndrome. 5. *For a theme:* a review of a non-fiction book or an article in a magazine.

DRY SEPTEMBER 1. This story is divided into five sections. What is the main concern of each section? Why not put Section II first since it really precedes Section I in time? Why isn't there more about Will Mayes himself and the

actual lynching? Why does the story end with Plunkett? 2. The title, the beginning, and the end of the story all deal with the weather. Why is it important? Do you find it being stressed at other places in the story? 3. What are some of the different ways in which we learn about Plunkett's character? Does he have any of the characteristics of the prejudiced man listed by Allport? How can a short story, an account of events that never happened, be a good "map"? 4. *For themes:* an example of the effects of prejudice, or of its absence.

Freedom for Thought

God and Man in the Universities 1. This discussion centers on the question whether academic freedom is a good or a bad thing. Buckley attacks it; Smith and MacDougall defend it. Your first problem is to discover the grounds on which each man holds his view. See how they define the term and whether they agree on a definition. Then find the separate points at issue between them. Consider such matters as their conceptions of the relation between "truth" and "error"; of the proper function of education; of the control of a university; of the relative "rights," in a university, of students, faculty, parents, and alumni. 2. Pick out some examples of logical fallacy, if possible (refer to Davis's topics, pages 334–343). 3. Study McBurney's role as moderator of the discussion. 4. In what ways does the oral language of this discussion differ from what you would expect to find if the participants had prepared their views in writing? Point out specific passages. 5. *Vocabulary:* agnostic; atheistic; secularism; tantamount; supine; theology and religion; indoctrination; arrogate; ascribe; credulity; autonomous; efficacious; anathema; dichotomy. 6. *For a theme:* your views on some aspect of the discussion, or of the topics discussed.

The Life of Language

The Social Functions of Language 1. The first paragraph is difficult. In it Sapir criticizes the idea that the primary function of language is communicative or social. Study the paragraph carefully to see whether you can grasp his proposition. 2. With the last sentence of the first paragraph he goes on to take up the social functions of language. What major ones does he set aside as "obvious"? What functions does he discuss in the successive paragraphs? What contrast is there between the functions discussed in paragraphs 2–4 and those in 5–6? 3. *Vocabulary:* functional; autistic; derivatives; intuitively; pragmatic; maxim; adage. 4. *Exercise:* Test your understanding of each of the functions Sapir points out by seeing whether you can supply illustrations.

What Is Good English? 1. To answer the question "What is good English?" one must have a standard. What two conflicting standards does Marckwardt discuss? On what is each standard based? 2. Which does Marckwardt accept? What are his objections to the one he rejects? What difficulty does he admit in the standard he accepts? How does he propose to meet the difficulty? 3. What misconceptions of the newer view does he clear up? 4. Where do dictionary-makers get the authority to define meanings and indicate pronunciations? (Consult the introductory pages of your dictionary.) 5. *Vocabulary:* diametrically; rational; prescribe; valid; recourse; norm; precluded; millennium. 6. *Exercise:* Compare what is said about some selected usage items in your handbook with what is said about them in your dictionary to see if these authorities agree; or compare them in two dictionaries You might also use Fowler's *Modern English Usage.*

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF WORDS 1. Explain the difference between the conception that "words evolve in masses of forms and meanings" and the standard conception of "straight-line etymologies." 2. In the two main divisions of the essay, Bolinger distinguishes and illustrates two main tendencies in the "organon" of language: "a drift toward similarity and a drive for contrast." Jot down in order the types of examples he gives of each. For how many can you supply illustrations of your own? 3. How does he use these two opposed tendencies to arbitrate the dispute between the purist and the anti-purist? (See "What Is Good English?") How does he equate them with the differences between speaker and hearer? 4. *Vocabulary:* avant-garde; semantics; ontogeny and phylogeny; lexical; organon; dilemma; fetish; thesaurus; penchant.

BUCK FANSHAW'S FUNERAL 1. What is the chief source of the humor in this piece? 2. Is Scotty's language funny *in itself,* that is, apart from the situation in which it occurs and from its difference from our own way of talking? Is Scotty trying to be funny? What sources of his slang can you identify? Are any of these expressions still current? 3. Consider similar questions about the minister's language. 4. What sources of humor are there in the language in which Clemens tells the story, apart from the quotations? 5. *Exercises:* (*a*) Read the discussion of *levels of usage* in your handbook, dictionary, or a source to which your instructor may refer you. Then try to label the language of Scotty, the minister, and Clemens, in those terms. (*b*) Read "American Slang," Chapter 11 in H. L. Mencken's *The American Language.* 6. *For themes:* a report of a similar conversation on two levels of language — between a professor and a student, for example; campus slang; the shop talk of some group.

THE THIRD FLOOR 1. What relation does De Voto establish between class attitudes and linguistic attitudes? Study the way he develops the general ideas from specific cases. (You might look at Flesch's "The Shape of Ideas" at this point.) 2. What relation can you see between the two opposing standards of good English discussed by Marckwardt and those held by De Voto and by his critics? 3. De Voto's rhetoric is worth studying: How does he turn his critics' own arguments against them, and even their own words — such as "vulgarity," "society rotten at the core," and "culture"? Study his use of *irony* (contrast between what he means and what he says), in the third paragraph, for example. What other effective devices do you find? 4. *Vocabulary:* modulates; parsimoniously; neologisms; speciousness; signalizes; apathy; vulgar (note its etymology, and account for its semantic development); vernacular. 5. *For a theme:* a paper on the ideas suggested by reading De Voto's account of the treatment of Irish maids, Leyda's "Miss Emily's Maggie," and Sapir's "Social Functions of Language."

VICES AND VIRTUES OF STYLE

ON FAMILIAR STYLE 1. What is Hazlitt's definition of a familiar style? He develops the definition by stating qualities a familiar style has and qualities it avoids. What are its positive qualities? The ones it avoids? What *level* of English does it use? What levels does it avoid? 2. What other styles does Hazlitt discuss? Why does he reject each? 3. To what extent could he accept Marckwardt's standard of "good English"? Or is he more of a purist? 4. What qualities or specific expressions do you find in Hazlitt's own style that would not occur if he were writing in a familiar style today? 5. *Vocabulary:* colloquial; articulation; nicety; circumlocutions; pedantic; affected; solecism; archaism; obsolete; truism; hyperbole; rodomontade; fustian; bathos.

THE STYLE OF WOODROW WILSON AT TWENTY-TWO 1. Take up the question in the last sentence of the article. 2. Try striking adjectives out of Hale's own writing in this piece — how many can you find that add nothing necessary to the meaning? 3. See what is said about adjectives in Macrorie's "World's Best Directions Writer." 4. *Vocabulary:* impeached; purport; sedulously; eschewing; pleonasm. 5. *Exercise:* Tabulate verbs and adjectives in one or more of your own papers; see what your adjective habits are; then rewrite a passage as Hale does.

HOW TO WRITE LIKE A SOCIAL SCIENTIST 1. Which of the faults ironically listed in the six "rules" are the *special* faults of social scientists and which are faults of writers in general? Why is Williamson singling out social scientists? What do you make of Bryson's defense? 2. How many of the faults listed are taken up by Hazlitt in "On Familiar Style"? 3. *Vocabulary:* Do you find any unfamiliar words? Or as many as in most of the essays in this book? 4. *Exercises:* (*a*) Test Williamson's adjectives as Hale does in "The Style of Woodrow Wilson." (*b*) Examine the selection by Sapir, Gorer, Dewey, or Allport, for examples of "social-science" writing; try "translating" any passage that seems to show the faults Williamson lists.

THE CLICHÉ EXPERT TESTIFIES ON THE ATOM Try writing a similar piece with a local "Mr. Arbuthnot" testifying on some other subject with a set of clichés. Do it by listing all the clichés and then working them into a continuous conversation. Any campus topics offer possible subjects — sports, dates, exams, etc.

STORY FOR THE SLICKS 1. The author calls attention parenthetically to many of the narrative clichés she is parodying. How many others do you find in the story? Do you think of any she doesn't illustrate? Does she hit on any of the faults Williamson lists? 2. *For themes:* a parody of some typical kind of writing or of a particular author, columnist, commentator, or TV or radio program; or if not a parody, an analysis of stock traits of matter or manner in one of these.

MY MISTRESS' EYES 1. What do the clichés that Shakespeare is reversing have in common? 2. Notice how the first twelve lines belong together, against the last two. 3. How does he turn the apparent dispraise of his mistress into a compliment? 4. Look up the history of the word "mistress."

SOME NICE DERANGEMENTS OF LANGUAGE

HUMPTY DUMPTY ON WORDS 1. In this seeming twaddle, written to amuse a child, many passages make very good sense. Point out some you like. 2. Pay particular attention to passages that have to do with matters of language and its use. Consider the commentary on conversation; on the philosophy of names; on the intention *vs.* the literal interpretation of statements; on logic; and especially on the meaning of words. 3. In Humpty Dumpty's explication of "Jabberwocky," are the "portmanteau words" built on any of the principles taken up by Bolinger in "The Life and Death of Words"? 4. *Exercise:* Read "The Making of New Words," Chapter 5, Section 2, in H. L. Mencken's *The American Language.*

HENRY JAMES GIVES AND ASKS DIRECTIONS 1. How would you analyze the difficulty caused by James's language — how far is its source a matter of levels of language, as in "Buck Fanshaw's Funeral," and how far of individual personality traits of the sort mentioned by Sapir in the last two paragraphs of "The Social

Functions of Language"? 2. Find the defense of James's literary style in Barzun's "How to Write and Be Read," and see whether the same defense would cover or help explain his spoken language here. 3. *For a theme:* an anecdote illustrating somebody's language peculiarities and linking them to his personality traits.

THE PUN QUESTION 1. Our headnote says Holmes "pretends" to attack puns in this monologue. Could you tell from the piece itself that he is only pretending? Does he raise any objections seriously? 2. Do you agree with the statement in *Webster's New International Dictionary* that a pun is "always for ludicrous effect"? 3. The first quotation the Autocrat reads is from Dr. Johnson, the second from Macaulay. Do you accept their logic? 4. Explain the allusion to Saturn and to the Spartan father and drunken helot. 5. *Exercise:* Try to find all the puns in the selection — at least a dozen. Study your dictionary's definition of "pun," and also that in *Webster's New International,* to see how many types of word-play puns may involve.

MRS. MALAPROP 1. Find as many malapropisms — grotesquely misused words — as you can in Mrs. Malaprop's speeches. There are a dozen or more; you will have to consult your dictionary. Try to figure out what word she is approximating in each instance. 2. What is the derivation of her name? 3. Aside from the malapropisms, pay attention to the views she and Sir Anthony express on filial obedience, reading, and education. 4. With a little encouragement your instructor will give you some examples of student malapropisms from his own collection.

THE GUY IS SITTIN' THERE, SEE 1. Try to classify as many of Benny's linguistic traits as you can. Consider such characteristics as the general *level* of English he speaks; his particular *dialect;* his distortion of *colloquial idioms;* his *malapropisms;* the qualities and sources of his *slang;* his lively and original *figures of speech.* 2. The author shows Benny's pronunciation by phonetic spellings, with humorous effect. But we all pronounce some words just the way he does unless we are enunciating quite precisely; and indeed to pronounce some of them as they are correctly spelled would be incorrect usage. Consider such examples as: "awfice," "fa me," "helluva," "exackly," and decide whether the fun is in the pronounciation or in the spelling. 3. Don't let these linguistic exercises keep you from the fun of the story and other sources of interest, such as Benny's attitude toward creative writers (see Seldes, "The Art of Licking"). What is the "formula" of the story?

JABBERWOCKY 1. Try to analyze the rest of the words in the poem as Humpty Dumpty does in "Humpty Dumpty on Words." 2. "Chortle," coined by Carroll in this poem, has been taken into standard use (check your dictionary). How might Bolinger account for its acceptance?

THE MASS MEDIA AND MATURITY

A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS 1. Which of the inventions seem most important? Can you add any after 1941? 2. Look up one or two you don't understand to find why they are important. 3. Try to classify the items in some way, and write a few paragraphs on the history of mass communications.

WHAT WE READ, SEE, AND HEAR This long chapter is a model of clarity in its organization. The first section assumes the influence of the media and poses the question of their effect on maturity; it weighs their positive and negative

effects; points out their common motivation; and defines and illustrates their general formula. Each of the next four sections (II–V) follows a single plan: it takes up one medium; concedes its positive contributions but finds its negative influence weightier; states its specific formula; and shows wherein the formula rejects maturity and promotes immaturity. The last section (VI) makes three "final observations" that give the audience the responsibility and possibility of maturity in spite of the influence of the mass media. 1. Mark this structure in your book. 2. Consider the ideas it organizes and be ready to discuss your points of agreement and disagreement. 3. Is the clear outline in any way a fault? Is it too obvious — do the bones of the structure stick through the flesh of ideas, suggesting oversimplification? Or is this a piece Williamson ("How to Write Like a Social Scientist") could applaud? What sort of reader does the rhetoric imply? 4. *Vocabulary:* I. empathy; vicariously; discrimination (note the favorable sense); II. moot; atypical; parochialisms; III. ubiquitous; militates; compensatory; V. cumulative; conducive; egocentricity; VI. apathies; latent; propensity; utilitarian. 5. *For themes:* a discussion, agreeing or disagreeing with any point in the essay, or illustrating one; an analysis of the content and appeal of an issue of a newspaper, a radio or TV program, a movie, or several advertisements.

MOONLIGHT AND POISON IVY 1. Wherein do the ideas differ from Overstreet's? What do they add to his? 2. Is the structure of this piece as clear and logical as that of Overstreet's? You would have difficulty outlining it, but do you have difficulty grasping and stating the fundamental proposition? How would you describe its rhetorical method? (Is it repetitious? Purposefully so?) 3. What is the tone? What is the effect of its constant exaggeration? Compare the tone of Overstreet's chapter; does he exaggerate? 4. How do you interpret the phrases: (*a*) "moonlight and poison ivy"? (*b*) a "one-room walk-up Nirvana"? (*c*) "'It must be fate' relationship dreamed up by a bored faun who missed his train at Indianapolis"? What rhetorical trick do all these have in common? (What is juxtaposed with what?) Point out other examples. How is the whole essay based on a similar juxtaposition? 5. *Vocabulary:* replete; transient; anarchy; inception; dynastic; Nirvana; monogamic; tenuous; Cytherea; periphery; lethargic. 6. *For themes:* If you accept Cohn's picture of our mass-media-inculcated views, try a similar account of their effect on some other aspect of our life. You might experiment with some of his rhetorical devices. Or write on your disagreement with him; perhaps account in other ways for our divorce rate.

THE ART OF LICKING 1. The first part of this selection shows what "licking" does to stories; the second, what it does to writers. List the main points in each. 2. What reasons does Seldes give for "licking"? Does his analysis differ much from Overstreet's? So far as this selection indicates, does Seldes seem any more or less hopeful of improvement than Overstreet and Mott? (Seldes's *The Great Audience,* from which this is taken, would give you his views fully.) 3. *Vocabulary:* mythology; salient; incompatible; portent; denouement; enhanced; stereotypes. 4. *For themes:* a comparison of a book or story and the movie version of it; a review of Seldes, *The Great Audience.*

ADMAN'S NIGHTMARE 1. In this essay Graham explains new ways in which psychological techniques are being used to help advertisers, and raises questions as to the social scientist's responsibility and the possible threat to consumers. What are the techniques he takes up? What have their methods in common? How do they all differ from earlier market research techniques? From each other? 2. Graham's attitude toward advertising is conveyed as much by his *tone* throughout as by direct statements. Find places where his attitude is stated directly;

places where tone establishes his attitude. 3. Consider, similarly, his attitude toward the social scientists. 4. Note his answers to the serious questions he raises about the social scientist's responsibility; about the ethics of advertisers; and about effects on the consumer. Are the answers consistent with his general tone? 5. Study the rhetorical devices used to interest the reader of this popular journalistic explanation of a technical subject. Find examples of the following devices: (*a*) colloquial language, slang, and shop talk, with technical terms in quotation marks (definitions supplied in context); (*b*) running topic heads and short paragraphs; (*c*) ideas explained in terms of people acting out or expressing them; (*d*) analogies and figures of speech, usually with humorous or diminishing effect. How do all these devices at once simplify the subject and flatter the reader? 6. *Vocabulary:* apathy; resilient; lacerated; liturgy; projective; epitome; exponent; connotations; esoteric; abjectly; adamantly; euphemisms. 7. *For themes:* Study the full-page ads in a single issue of a national magazine and write a paper classifying and discussing the various basic strategies and appeals they employ.

THE DOUBTCASTER Consider the possibility that the poem is not about a broadcaster or the mass media and their audience at all — any more than Graham's first paragraph is about motorists and blowouts. May it be using the relation of audience and broadcaster as a metaphor of some other relationship? We leave you this last poem in the book as a teaser.

TOWARD DEMOCRATIC RESPONSIBILITY

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE NEWSPAPER READER 1. Use this essay for an honest self-examination of your newspaper-reading habits. Mott sets forth the faults of the bad reader — how many of them do you have? Then he lists traits of the good reader — how many of these are yours? 2. One of the "responsibilities" of the newspaper reader in a democracy is the improvement of the press. How? Are Mott's three suggestions here equally practical? Is it realistic for him to talk as though one or any likely number of discriminating readers could affect newspaper policy noticeably, when he at the same time points out how the newspaper depends on circulation and uses the formula of the least common denominator of interests? 3. Another responsibility is for the reader to keep himself informed as a good citizen. Give serious thought to the question: should there be an information test for voters? What "right" do people have to vote if they don't know the issues? 4. *Vocabulary:* mythical; hackneyed; supererogation; cursory; comprehensive; crux. 5. *For themes:* a candid report of your own newspaper reading habits, based on Mott's points; the "information test" for voters, pro and/or con; Holmes's statement in "The Bells Rang Every Hour" that "college is a place where no one reads the papers"; a letter to an editor.

IT'S HIDEOUSLY TRUE 1. How does the usual "suspense" comic strip, as Capp analyzes it, fit in with the national outlook as described by Cohn? Wherein is Capp's view of people and life mature? 2. How many of the older style "funny comic strips" are there in your newspaper? 3. Capp says he discovered that his method is *satire.* What is the method and purpose of a satirist? (See Fowler, *Modern English Usage,* on "Humour.") What aspects of American life or of people in general does he mention satirizing? How do you account for the growth of resentment against his satire? 4. Considering Mott's statement that readers' letters can be effective, and his recommendation that good readers should write to editors — do you think it was the good readers who wrote to

Capp? Might there be as many or more readers who liked Capp's satire but never bothered to write him? Would you call such readers "irresponsible," in Mott's terms? Have you ever written such letters of blame or commendation? Which kind are people more likely to write? Think out the implications of this line of thought for the probable effect of public pressure on the mass media. 5. *For themes:* Analyze the formulas of another comic strip you like or dislike. If you are a regular reader of "Li'l Abner," analyze some recent sequences to see whether Capp has carried out his intention to drop satire. (A book of the earlier strips has been published: *The World of Li'l Abner.*)

IT'S DIFFERENT FROM THE BOOK 1. How many of the cinematic techniques Fulton discusses were you already aware of? Do you habitually notice others? 2. How does this piece fit with Seldes's "The Art of Licking"? Do they conflict in their views of "A Place in the Sun"? Are they talking about the same thing? 3. Would Fulton call a movie good if it is technically good and ignore its content, and Seldes the reverse? 4. *For a theme:* See a movie at least twice and report on its narrative techniques.

Table of Contents by Kinds of Writing

This grouping of the selections in this book is for the convenience of students and instructors who may wish to study them from the point of view of various purposes in writing. The categories are by no means mutually exclusive, and some selections, which can be used as models for several kinds of writing, are listed more than once.

Description

Outside of letters, reminiscences, travel books, and catalogues, little modern writing is mainly descriptive. Yet the technique remains an important way of adding vividness to every kind of writing.

Notes for a Portrait of Dummy Flagg, *Student Paper*
At Grandmother's, *Edgar Lee Masters*
Two Letters, *Herman Melville*

Definition

It is all too easy to use terms loosely, and even to get into violent arguments because of failure to understand how others use them. Definition is essential to clear thinking, effective communication, good reading — and many kinds of writing.

The University, *James Bryant Conant*
Pleasant Agony, *John Mason Brown*
The Literary Use of Language, *David Daiches*
We Are All Scientists, *T. H. Huxley*
On Familiar Style, *William Hazlitt*
What Is Good English? *Albert H. Marckwardt*
The Cliché Expert Testifies on the Atom, *Frank Sullivan*
The Language of Reports, *S. I. Hayakawa*
Imagination Creatrix, *John Livingston Lowes*
Symbols, *S. I. Hayakawa*

Comparison and Contrast

One easy way to describe, define, or explain things is to compare or contrast them to something else. Skillful comparison raises problems of organization and of selecting material.

On the Differences between Writing and Speaking, *William Hazlitt*
Melville Writes of the Whale-Line, *Howard P. Vincent*

Reports and Explanations

Much of our writing is to convey information, to explain the "what" of a subject. Here the main problems are to select the most pertinent details, organize them clearly, and express them in language which our readers will understand.

The Language of Reports, *S. I. Hayakawa*
How Propaganda Finds Its Way into the Press, *Chicago Daily News*

The Family Constellation, *Alfred Adler*
Midwestern Weather, *Graham Hutton*
Riveters, *The Editors of* Fortune
Experimental Neuroses, *Jules H. Masserman*
Logic and the Logical Fallacies, *Robert Gorham Davis*
The Role of Hunches, *Walter B. Cannon*
Symbols, *S. I. Hayakawa*
The Life and Death of Words, *Dwight L. Bolinger*
The Style of Woodrow Wilson at Twenty-two, *William B. Hale*
A Brief Chronology of Mass Communications, *Wilbur Schramm*

Explanations of Process and Technique

Today there is a large class of writing known as "how to do it" books. Try to explain even so simple an action as tieing a shoelace and you will see how difficult — and important — such writing is.

How to Read More Efficiently, *Paul D. Leedy*
How to Mark a Book, *Mortimer J. Adler*
What Does It Take to Enjoy a Poem? *John Ciardi*
Anybody Can Learn to Write, *Stephen Leacock*
The Psychology of Effective Writing, *H. A. Overstreet*
How to Write and Be Read, *Jacques Barzun*
Everybody's Listening! *Bess Sondel*
The Shape of Ideas, *Rudolf Flesch*
Revising a Theme, *Richard C. Blakeslee*
World's Best Directions Writer, *Ken Macrorie*
The One-Egg Cake, *Grace Brown*
How to Write Like a Social Scientist, *Samuel T. Williamson*

Explanations Using Various Literary and Journalistic Devices

Not all explanation is purely utilitarian. There are subjects which require persuasion and critical evaluation, and call on every device of style and interest which the journalist or literary man can command.

A Great Teacher's Method, *Samuel H. Scudder*
Why I Wrote about Bullfights, *Ernest Hemingway*
John and Thomas, *Oliver Wendell Holmes*
The Feel, *Paul Gallico*
Imagination Creatrix, *John Livingston Lowes*
How a Poem Is Made, *C. Day Lewis*
The Art of Licking, *Gilbert Seldes*
Adman's Nightmare: Is the Prune a Witch? *Robert Graham*
It's Hideously True, *Al Capp*
It's Different from the Book, *A. R. Fulton*

Expressions of Opinion

On many subjects, what a writer thinks — and why he thinks it — assumes larger importance than the information he presents. Every opinion of value is

soundly based on fact, but in presentation the thought may loom much larger than the knowledge behind it.

The Art of Reading, *Lin Yutang*
What College Did to Me, *Robert Benchley*
Here Lies Miss Groby, *James Thurber*
Dr. Johnson Converses on Composition, *James Boswell*
On Disputing, *Benjamin Franklin*
Wolf! Wolf! *Bergen Evans*
Humpty Dumpty on Words, *Lewis Carroll*
The Pun Question, *Oliver Wendell Holmes*

Persuasion

When opinions are strong and issues urgent, it is not always enough merely to express our views; we may be impelled to convince others to share our convictions or to take action. Persuasion calls into play all we know about how to win doubters and influence inertia.

The Greatest Pleasure in Life
What Every Freshman Should Know, *Roger W. Holmes*
Heartache on the Campus, *Mrs. Glenn Frank*
The Third Floor, *Bernard De Voto*
Moonlight and Poison Ivy, *David L. Cohn*

Deliberation, or Solving a Problem

The persuader is a partisan: he seeks to win allies. Sometimes we approach issues not with an urge to convince, but with an honest desire to reach meaningful and true conclusions. Naturally we wish others to share our views, but are most concerned with seeking the truth. Writing of this kind may be called "deliberative."

Of Studies, *Francis Bacon*
Clutter Counters Everywhere, *W. B. Scott*
Dating in America, *Geoffrey Gorer*
Thoughts on Composition, *Henry David Thoreau*
On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings, *William James*
Language and the Training of Thought, *John Dewey*
The Social Functions of Language, *Edward Sapir*
Four Kinds of Thinking, *James Harvey Robinson*
Shooting an Elephant, *George Orwell*
Prejudice: A Sickness of Individuals and Society, *Gordon W. Allport*
God and Man in the Universities, *Northwestern University Reviewing Stand*
What Is Good English? *Albert H. Marckwardt*
What We Read, See, and Hear, *H. A. Overstreet*
The Responsibilities of the Newspaper Reader, *Frank Luther Mott*

Satire

Often our moral indignation at evils and follies takes the form of solemn preachment. But often the sharper weapon is ridicule. Good satire is in deadly earnest, but it smiles and controls its anger.

A Writing Machine, *Jonathan Swift*
A Modest Proposal, *Jonathan Swift*
Story for the Slicks, *Elinor Goulding Smith*
Inflexible Logic, *Russell Maloney*
Mrs. Malaprop's Diabolical Instruments of Knowledge, *R. B. Sheridan*
The Guy Is Sittin' There, See, Hangin' with His Tongue Out, *Arthur Kober*

Letters

All writing is addressed to more or less known readers, but our most carefully guided missiles are our letters, written to those we intimately know. In letters we therefore have the rare luxury of knowing how our audience will react, and of writing accordingly.

Two Letters on Writing, *Sherwood Anderson*
Sam Weller's Valentine, *Charles Dickens*
Two Letters, *Herman Melville*
Miss Emily's Maggie, *Jay Leyda*

Narratives of Varied Purpose

Many an idea, argument, or comment on life is couched in the form of narrative, though not necessarily quite a story. The pieces below are narrative in form, and in each the story elements are clear, but the emphasis is less on what happens than on something the author has to say.

On Conversation, *Ring Lardner*
A Sum in Addition, *William March*
The Secret Evangel of Otto McFeely, *Lloyd Lewis*
Father Tries to Make Mother Like Figures, *Clarence Day*
Shooting an Elephant, *George Orwell*
Rick Discovers Jazz, *Dorothy Baker*
The Secret Life of Walter Mitty, *James Thurber*
The Door, *E. B. White*
Inflexible Logic, *Russell Maloney*
Buck Fanshaw's Funeral, *Samuel Clemens*
Story for the Slicks, *Elinor Goulding Smith*
Henry James Gives and Asks Directions, *Edith Wharton*

Short Stories

As distinct from the narratives above, the ones which follow focus on story elements — character, setting, event, "what happens." They have implications — express meanings and ideas — but while these things are important, they are secondary.

The Idealist, *Frank O'Connor*
Good-bye, Little Sister, *Crary Moore*
Brother Death, *Sherwood Anderson*
A Dill Pickle, *Katherine Mansfield*
Dry September, *William Faulkner*
The Guy Is Sittin' There, See, Hangin' with His Tongue Out, *Arthur Kober*

Poems

It is hardly possible to say in a sentence what poems "do," except perhaps this: each one *communicates experience* in a way all its own.

Poetry, *Marianne Moore*
On First Looking into Chapman's Homer, *John Keats*
A Student at His Book, *Sir Bernard Mosher*
The Bells Rang Every Hour, *John Holmes*
University, *Karl Shapiro*
Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College, *Thomas Gray*
Art, *Herman Melville*
Adam's Curse, *William Butler Yeats*
Look in Thy Heart and Write, *Sir Philip Sidney*
"To Find Its Meaning," *Robert Browning*
"Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff," *A. E. Housman*
Sonnet 55, *William Shakespeare*
The Letter, *John Holmes*
Talk, *John Holmes*
Winter Salad, *Sydney Smith*
On a Photo of Sgt. Ciardi a Year Later, *John Ciardi*
There Was a Child Went Forth, *Walt Whitman*
The Secret Heart, *Robert P. Tristram Coffin*
Peter at Fourteen, *Constance Carrier*
Returning, *Emily Dickinson*
Spring and Fall, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*
Richard Cory, *Edwin Arlington Robinson*
My Last Duchess, *Robert Browning*
For Anne Gregory, *William Butler Yeats*
from Song of Myself, *Walt Whitman*
Much Madness is Divinest Sense, *Emily Dickinson*
The Brain Within Its Groove, *Emily Dickinson*
To His Coy Mistress, *Andrew Marvell*
Kubla Khan, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
Dialogue, *May Sarton*
The Blind Men and the Elephant, *John Godfrey Saxe*
The Umpire, *Walker Gibson*
My Mistress' Eyes, *William Shakespeare*
Jabberwocky, *Lewis Carroll*
The Doubtcaster, *Rolfe Humphries*

A Supplementary Check List of Titles Particularly Useful for the Study of Important Rhetorical Principles

Organization

The Greatest Pleasure in Life
Of Studies, *Francis Bacon*
What Every Freshman Should Know, *Roger W. Holmes*
Heartache on the Campus, *Mrs. Glenn Frank*
Pleasant Agony, *John Mason Brown*
Midwestern Weather, *Graham Hutton*
Riveters, *The Editors of* Fortune
Language and the Training of Thought, *John Dewey*

Paragraph Structure

The Greatest Pleasure in Life
How to Read More Efficiently, *Paul D. Leedy*
The University, *James Bryant Conant*
How to Write and Be Read, *Jacques Barzun*
What We Read, See, and Hear, *H. A. Overstreet*
The Literary Use of Language, *David Daiches*
Logic and Logical Fallacies, *Robert Gorham Davis*
We Are All Scientists, *T. H. Huxley*

Transition

What Does It Take to Enjoy a Poem? *John Ciardi*
Riveters, *The Editors of* Fortune
Language and the Training of Thought, *John Dewey*
Four Kinds of Thinking, *James Harvey Robinson*
The Role of Hunches, *Walter B. Cannon*
Imagination Creatrix, *John Livingston Lowes*
How a Poem Is Made, *C. Day Lewis*

Use of Example

Anybody Can Learn to Write, *Stephen Leacock*
Experimental Neuroses, *Jules H. Masserman*
A Great Teacher's Method, *Samuel H. Scudder*
How Propaganda Finds Its Way Into the Press, *Chicago Daily News*
World's Best Directions Writer, *Ken Macrorie*
Shooting an Elephant, *George Orwell*
The Secret Evangel of Otto McFeely, *Lloyd Lewis*
Wolf! Wolf! *Bergen Evans*

Concrete Detail

The Language of Reports, *S. I. Hayakawa*
The Secret Life of Walter Mitty, *James Thurber*
At Grandmother's, *Edgar Lee Masters*
The Door, *E. B. White*
Midwestern Weather, *Graham Hutton*
Adman's Nightmare: Is the Prune a Witch? *Robert Graham*
The Feel, *Paul Gallico*
A Dill Pickle, *Katherine Mansfield*

Levels of Language

The Social Functions of Language, *Edward Sapir*
Four Kinds of Thinking, *James Harvey Robinson*
Experimental Neuroses, *Jules H. Masserman*
What We Read, See, and Hear, *H. A. Overstreet*
The Art of Reading, *Lin Yutang*
Everybody's Listening! *Bess Sondel*
God and Man in the Universities, *Northwestern University Reviewing Stand*
The Guy Is Sittin' There, See, Hangin' with his Tongue Out, *Arthur Kober*

Sentence Structure

The Literary Use of Language, *David Daiches*
Henry James Gives and Asks Directions, *Edith Wharton*
The Art of Reading, *Lin Yutang*
Spring and Fall, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*
The Door, *E. B. White*
There Was a Child Went Forth, *Walt Whitman*

Rhetorical Devices

The Greatest Pleasure in Life
What Does It Take to Enjoy a Poem? *John Ciardi*
The Third Floor, *Bernard De Voto*
Moonlight and Poison Ivy, *David L. Cohn*
World's Best Directions Writer, *Ken Macrorie*
Buck Fanshaw's Funeral, *Samuel Clemens*
A Modest Proposal, *Jonathan Swift*
To His Coy Mistress, *Andrew Marvell*

Index of Titles and Authors

Adam's Curse (Yeats), 111
Adler, Alfred, 209
Adler, Mortimer J., 10
Adman's Nightmare: Is the Prune a Witch? (Graham), 532
Allport, Gordon W., 395
Anderson, Sherwood, 114, 227
Anybody Can Learn to Write (Leacock) 89
Art (Melville), 111
Art of Licking, The (Seldes), 527
Art of Reading, The (Lin Yutang), 15
At Grandmother's (Masters), 215

Bacon, Francis, 14
Baker, Dorothy, 281
Barzun, Jacques, 101
Bells Rang Every Hour, The (Holmes), 80
Benchley, Robert, 51
Blakeslee, Richard C., 173
Blind Men and the Elephant, The (Saxe), 410
Bolinger, Dwight L., 435
Boswell, James, 135
Brain Within Its Groove, The (Dickinson), 333
Brief Chronology of Mass Communications, A (Scramm), 507
Brother Death (Anderson), 227
Brown, Grace, 195
Brown, John Mason, 97
Browning, Robert, 121, 257
Buck Fanshaw's Funeral (Clemens), 445

Cannon, Walter B., 364
Capp, Al, 551
Carrier, Constance, 241
Carroll, Lewis, 483, 504
Ciardi, John, 20, 205
Clemens, Samuel L., 445
Cliché Expert Testifies on the Atom, The (Sullivan), 472
Clutter Counters Everywhere (Scott), 33
Coffin, Robert P. Tristram, 242
Cohn, David L., 523
Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 375
Conant, James Bryant, 70

Daiches, David, 197
Dating in America (Gorer), 62
Davis, Robert Gorham, 334
Day, Clarence, 218
De Voto, Bernard, 451
Dewey, John, 297
Dialogue (Sarton), 382
Dickens, Charles, 140
Dickinson, Emily, 243, 333
Dill Pickle, A (Mansfield), 251
Door, The (White), 329
Doubtcaster, The (Humphries), 541
Dr. Johnson Converses on Composition (Boswell), 135
Dry September (Faulkner), 401

Evans, Bergen, 390
Everybody's Listening! (Sondel), 131
Experimental Neuroses (Masserman), 320

Family Constellation, The (Adler), 209
Father Tries to Make Mother Like Figures (Day), 218
Faulkner, William, 401
Feel, The (Gallico), 267
Flesch, Rudolf, 162
For Anne Gregory (Yeats), 259
Four Kinds of Thinking (Robinson), 308
Frank, Mrs. Glenn, 55
Franklin, Benjamin, 137
Fulton, A. R., 556

Gallico, Paul, 267
Gibson, Walker, 411
God and Man in the Universities (Northwestern University Reviewing Stand), 413
Good-bye, Little Sister (Moore), 222
Gorer, Geoffrey, 62
Graham, Robert, 532
Gray, Thomas, 84
Great Teacher's Method, A (Scudder), 67
Greatest Pleasure in Life, The, 3

Hale, William B., 464
Hayakawa, S. I., 181, 383
Hazlitt, William, 126, 458
Heartache on the Campus (Frank), 55

Hemingway, Ernest, 119
Henry James Gives and Asks Directions (Wharton), 491
Here Lies Miss Groby (Thurber), 30
Holmes, John, 80, 161, 178
Holmes, Oliver Wendell, 248, 493
Holmes, Roger W., 44
Hopkins, Gerard Manley, 244
Housman, A. E., 123
How a Poem Is Made (Lewis), 377
How Propaganda Finds Its Way Into the Press (Chicago Daily News), 185
How to Mark a Book (Adler), 10
How to Read More Efficiently (Leedy), 5
How to Write and Be Read (Barzun), 101
How to Write Like a Social Scientist (Williamson), 468
Humphries, Rolfe, 541
Humpty Dumpty on Words (Carroll), 483
Hutton, Graham, 260
Huxley, T. H., 343

Idealist, The (O'Connor), 36
Imagination Creatrix (Lowes), 371
Inflexible Logic (Maloney), 356
It's Different from the Book (Fulton), 556
It's Hideously True (Capp), 551

Jabberwocky (Carroll), 504
James, William, 245
John and Thomas (Holmes), 248

Keats, John, 43
Kober, Arthur, 498
Kubla Khan (Coleridge), 375

Language and the Training of Thought (Dewey), 297
Language of Reports, The (Hayakawa), 181
Lardner, Ring, 138
Leacock, Stephen, 89
Leedy, Paul D., 5
Letter, The (Holmes), 161
Lewis, C. Day, 377
Lewis, Lloyd, 249
Leyda, Jay, 150
Life and Death of Words, The (Bolinger), 435
Lin Yutang, 15
Literary Use of Language, The (Daiches), 197
Logic and Logical Fallacies (Davis), 334
Look in Thy Heart and Write (Sidney), 113
Lowes, John Livingston, 371

Macrorie, Ken, 190
Maloney, Russell, 356
Mansfield, Katherine, 251
March, William, 203
Marckwardt, Albert H., 430
Marvell, Andrew, 362
Masserman, Jules H., 320
Masters, Edgar Lee, 215
Melville, Herman, 111, 145
Melville Writes of the Whale-Line (Vincent), 200
Midwestern Weather (Hutton), 260
Miss Emily's Maggie (Leyda), 150
Modest Proposal, A (Swift), 349
Moonlight and Poison Ivy (Cohn), 523
Moore, Crary, 222
Moore, Marianne, 28
Mosher, Sir Bernard, 66
Mott, Frank Luther, 544
Mrs. Malaprop's Diabolical Instruments of Knowledge (Sheridan), 495
Much Madness Is Divinest Sense (Dickinson), 333
My Last Duchess (Browning), 257
My Mistress' Eyes (Shakespeare), 482

Notes for a Portrait of Dummy Flagg (student paper), 170

O'Connor, Frank, 36
Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College (Gray), 84
Of Studies (Bacon), 14
On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings (James), 245
On a Photo of Sgt. Ciardi a Year Later (Ciardi), 205
On Conversation (Lardner), 138
On Disputing (Franklin), 137
On Familiar Style (Hazlitt), 458
On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer (Keats), 43
On the Differences Between Writing and Speaking (Hazlitt), 126
One-Egg Cake, The (Brown), 195
Orwell, George, 275
Overstreet, H. A., 93, 509

Peter at Fourteen (Carrier), 241
Pleasant Agony (Brown), 97
Poetry (Moore), 28
Prejudice: A Sickness of Individuals and Society (Allport), 395
Psychology of Effective Writing, The (Overstreet), 93
Pun Question, The (Holmes), 493

Responsibilities of the Newspaper Reader, The (Mott), 544

Returning (Dickinson), 243
Revising a Theme (Blakeslee), 173
Richard Cory (Robinson), 257
Rick Discovers Jazz (Baker), 281
Riveters (editors of Fortune Magazine), 266
Robinson, Edwin Arlington, 257
Robinson, James Harvey, 308
Role of Hunches, The (Cannon), 364

Sam Weller's Valentine (Dickens), 140
Sapir, Edward, 427
Sarton, May, 382
Saxe, John Godfrey, 410
Schramm, Wilbur, 507
Scott, W. B., 33
Scudder, Samuel H., 67
Secret Evangel of Otto McFeely, The (Lewis), 249
Secret Heart, The (Coffin), 242
Secret Life of Walter Mitty, The (Thurber), 316
Seldes, Gilbert, 527
Shakespeare, William, 125, 482
Shape of Ideas, The (Flesch), 162
Shapiro, Karl, 82
Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, 495
Shooting an Elephant (Orwell), 275
Sidney, Sir Philip, 113
Smith, Elinor Goulding, 478
Smith, Sydney, 196
Social Functions of Language, The (Sapir), 427
Sondel, Bess, 131
Song of Myself, excerpt (Whitman), 291
Sonnet 55 (Shakespeare), 125
Sonnet 130 (Shakespeare), 482
Spring and Fall (Hopkins), 244
Story for the Slicks (Smith), 478
Student at His Book, A (Mosher), 66
Style of Woodrow Wilson at Twenty-two, The (Hale), 464
Sullivan, Frank, 472
Sum in Addition, A (March), 203
Swift, Jonathan, 95, 349
Symbols (Hayakawa), 383

Talk (Holmes), 178
"Terence, This Is Stupid Stuff" (Housman), 123
The Guy Is Sittin' There, See, Hangin' With His Tongue Out (Kober), 498
There Was a Child Went Forth (Whitman), 239
Third Floor, The (De Voto), 451
Thoreau, Henry David, 176
Thoughts on Composition (Thoreau), 176
Thurber, James, 30, 316
"To Find Its Meaning" (Browning), 121
To His Coy Mistress (Marvell), 362
Two Letters (Melville), 145
Two Letters on Writing (Anderson), 114

Umpire, The (Gibson), 411
University, The (Conant), 70
University (Shapiro), 82

Vincent, Howard P., 200

We Are All Scientists (Huxley), 343
Wharton, Edith, 491
What College Did to Me (Benchley), 51
What Does It Take to Enjoy a Poem? (Ciardi), 20
What Every Freshman Should Know (Holmes), 44
What Is Good English? (Marckwardt), 430
What We Read, See, and Hear (Overstreet), 509
White, E. B., 329
Whitman, Walt, 239, 291
Why I Wrote About Bullfights (Hemingway), 119
Williamson, Samuel T., 468
Winter Salad (Smith), 196
Wolf! Wolf! (Evans), 390
World's Best Directions Writer (Macrorie), 190
Writing Machine, A (Swift), 95

Yeats, William Butler, 111, 259