rounded adulthood. Here is evolution in its highest form. Here is modern man. True, more than one-third of his life span is gone. True also is the fact that Leo was biologically mature some eight to ten years ago, at which time, according to nature, he had completed his apprenticeship in living. True, he now feels that time is growing short and he must drive himself to the apex of a career in a mad dash for fleeting glory; but then, there was no other way. A complex society with complex languages demanded that the development of the mind be given a longer period than nature’s development of the body. So crude a thing as nature can be no authority in marking off the schedule of a person’s life except at both ends.

Statistically speaking, Leo’s battle with languages has now consumed about 26,840 hours of his time plus an incomputable outlay of money for books, fees, tuition, pencils, pens, appropriate clothing, and myriads of miscellaneous items.

Civilization, however, has been satiated. The end product of the educational grind has been realized. Here is a mass of protoplasm of animal origin which has been trained to think in terms of language. It communicates with other masses of protoplasm through language. It loves through language. It hates through language. It praises God by means of language. Languages furnishes it with colorful profanity. The power of words has, indeed, placed Leo in a higher order. He enjoys automatic superiority to the physically mute; he is able to convert his friends into foes by correcting flaws in their grammar; he is capable of sarcasm, satire, hypocrisy, and egotism; and he has the power to create endless boredom for others.

The struggle to gain mastery over language has been demonstrated as long, arduous, nerve-wracking, and expensive. The resulting qualities have been enumerated in part. In view of these facts, the question of whether or not to continue the use of language practically answers itself. Obviously, the value of the product is vastly inferior to the price. Therefore, let us signify the demise of language by the same word with which it was begun. We shall, at the sound of the gong, toss our dictionaries over our left shoulders and say in unison, “Ugh.”

Night Guard at a Mausoleum

Stanley Levine

The ping of God re-echoes on an unpaved road:
The crude tin roof accepts its rival waves:
The spirit of death awakens its challenged song.
In the quaint hut amidst its unborn graves
I harken to the call of life
And lift a rodent from its mother’s nest.