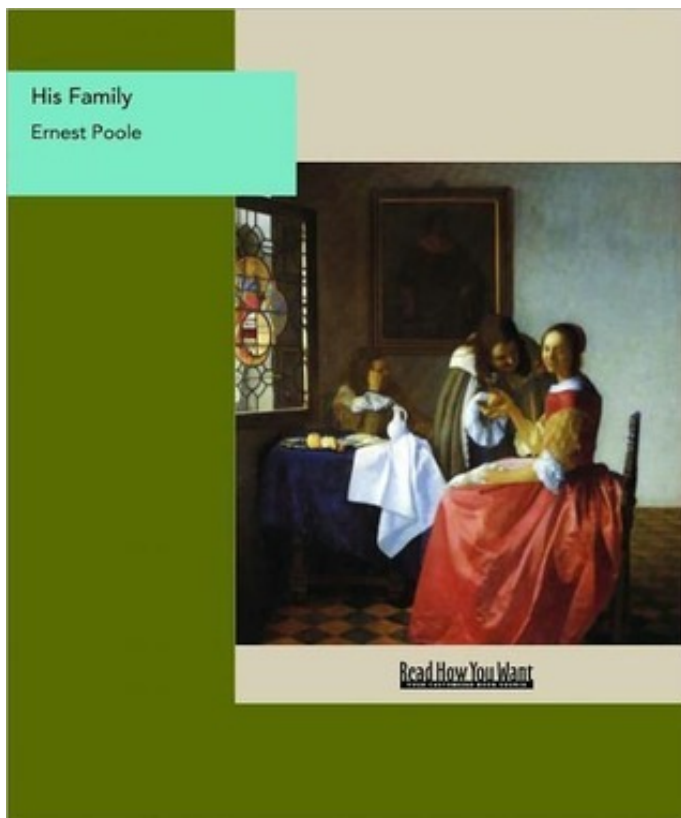

Ernest Poole

His Family



Title: His Family

Author: Ernest Poole

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Description

In this 1918 Pulitzer Prize winning story, widower Roger Gale struggles to deal with the way his children and grandchildren respond to the changing society. *His Family* is the story of a sixty-year-old New York man who reflects on his life and the lives of his three daughters. The women represent three separate types - one maternal, the second devoted to social movements, and the third living a happy and carefree existence - and the father sees something of himself in each.

Insightful reviews

Liz: His Family, by Ernest Poole, was the first book to win the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and was published in 1918. I had never heard of it, and honestly I didn't know what to expect, but I was intrigued to see what that first book, from that era of American history, was going to be about. So, in the age old tradition of saying cliches are bad but then doing precisely what they say – I judged the book by its cover.

My copy of His Family is a paperback, and the cover is mostly black and glossy. It is nearly perfectly square and unusually large at probably 7 by 7 inches. It's not that thick (277 pages) and the font is a pretty good size. On the cover, the title is in white and there is a white rectangle cut-out that shows a sketchy drawing of a man (60ish-years-old) sitting at a dining table with a family, colored in with pastels. To my mind, all of this confirmed my prejudgment to think the book might be a bit antiquated, but looked quite sweet. Maybe a bit story-book-ish? Maybe just plain and unadorned.

The first few chapters only furthered my modern-prejudiced view. The book starts off quietly. The world it depicts is small: a 60ish year old man named Roger Gale (as depicted on the cover) is in fact a widower living in Manhattan, with 3 grown daughters and 4 grandchildren by the eldest. The younger two (aged 27 and 30 or so) are unmarried. And it takes place over a few years, around about 1913-1915. The writing is straightforward, and whilst I wasn't particularly sucked into their lives I thought it was pleasant, even if I was a bit frustrated by Roger's self-admitted distance from his bustling family of a mother, a debutante, and a teacher. I thought it might be an apt portrait of family life at that time. And it is. But I wrongfully misjudged what that should mean.

As the novel progresses, it deepens. Not nice (though not horrible) things happen to the family. And it very much takes on a Goldilocks and the Three Bears feel: where 'Too big', 'Too small', and 'Just right' are loosely equated to the three daughters being, 'Too old-fashioned', 'Too fast and flippant', and 'forward thinking but respectful'. The parallels between their personal lives and the wider changes and growth of society is heavy handed, but intelligent and interesting.

The social commentary on the place of motherhood in women's lives is blatantly the major theme. Nearly a century after the book was published the idea of the 'modern mother' - the balancing act that the author discusses – remains entirely relevant, if initially surprising. There is

also a wider reflection on war and humanity and the book is a window into the mindset of Americans as it was feeling the pains of the First World War in Europe, but before the United States entered the conflict.

The book, also, has the surprisingly endearing feature of having the final two words of the book be, '...his family'. Which is a nice touch. Particularly if you read the first part of the sentence; but I wouldn't want to spoil the surprise.

On reflection, the cover makes the book out to be more old-fashioned and simple than it is, though it definitely is not a book of great subtlety. I would not put it down as a forgotten classic because it can read what I think some might call 'Dickens extra-light'. But I enjoyed it, and feel I have learned a lesson in so doing. I would recommend it to anyone who wonders what it might have been like to be born a hundred years earlier.

To see my detailed rating of this book, and other award winning books, check out my blog here: <http://agreatbook.wordpress.com/2013/...>

Martin: One of my favorite Pulitzer winning pieces of fiction. The story of a late, middle-aged man who lives in NYC and maintains the family farm in New Hampshire. He learns about "modern" life from his 3 very different daughters, a liberal-minded teacher, a shallow socialite and a prudish housewife/widow.

This is a wonderful story which reminds me at times of E.L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*, in that it encompasses the scope of life in early twentieth century New York, and the lives of the people who inhabit it. The descriptions are vivid but never too cumbersome; the characters are all very real, and the plot flies by. By the end, I came to care about what happens to these people, and found I was sorry when it was over.

Jeff Forster: It had been a while since I'd read a winner of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. I continue slowly in my quest to read all of them. It turns out the 1918 winner is out of print. How fortunes change in nearly a century. Thanks to a little rare book reprint house called Kessinger Publishing, I was able to get a copy from my library. Ernest Poole was a social reformer who also happened to churn out about a book a year from the turn of the century to 1940. *His Family* is apparently less well-known than a book called *The Harbor* and known for its socialist themes. I would not have expected a book that has fallen into such obscurity to be so good and readable today. The "He" referred to in the title is Roger Gale, a widower with three daughters in a rapidly changing New York City of the early 20th century. While his memory casts back to his farm upbringing and fervor to get to the city, he doesn't really like the present that confronts him at every turn. Apartment buildings dwarfing his graceful family home; economic calamity afflicting people of his class as well as the tenement-dwelling immigrants his crusading middle daughter Deborah works to educate; war in Europe; social norms breaking down, most close to him in his youngest daughter Laura. The first 70 pages made me think I was reading a repeat of *The Magnificent Ambersons*, a book published the next year that won the Pulitzer Prize the next year too. Where *Ambersons* longs for the days gone by that will never return, Roger Gale and his family show plucky flexibility in the face of changing realities. *His Family* has a sweetness about it and a graceful narrative arc. I had to abide the first 70 or 80 pages before getting quite

hooked. Although I'm sometimes sad when a good story ends, I found the conclusion of this book satisfying. That is not to say that all of the loose ends are tied up. Far from it. We learn enough to feel OK leaving these characters to go on with the next step in their lives.

JPGH: whereas I questioned even if this booklet will be a contemporary day contender for the Pulitzer Prize, i will see the way it used to be favored for being prior to its time in a couple of ways--the specialise in ladies characters and the alternatives dealing with ladies (for example, the impression of childbearing upon inventive life). It was once additionally attention-grabbing to learn an account of observations being made in real-time of the technological and sociological revolutions taking place. There are conversations in regards to the subways of latest York being below construction, the environmental effect within the streets and at the waterfront of the transition from horse drawn autos and crusing ships to combustion engines of all types. the most personality lives in a home the place the homes round him are being leveled one after the other to make method for tenements which residence Jewish and Italian immigrants. I stored having to remind myself that this wasn't a piece of ancient fiction, yet written by means of an acute observer and reflective individual of the time. Very enjoyable...

Mark: His Family, the 1st Pulitzer Prize profitable novel, is a drama that explores the rigors and demanding situations of relatives lifestyles opposed to the backdrop of the quickly altering international of the early twentieth century. Set in ny in 1914, Roger Gale is widower with 3 grown daughters, who every one own characteristics he sees in himself. As he emerges from the grief and melancholy of wasting his wife, he turns to his daughters, remembering his wife's recommendation that "you will continue to exist in our children's lives." He involves study that this no longer only as a legacy as soon as he himself is gone, yet a manner for him to flourish in his ultimate days. Each of his daughters have households in their own, which signify the transitional period during which they live. Edith has a standard kinfolk and can't glance past her personal children's good being. Deborah's "family" numbers within the thousands, as she is a faculty relevant within the impoverished tenement neighborhoods and champions social reform. during this method she is the "modern woman", the other of Edith's quaint ways. And younger Laura, who cares approximately not anything yet her personal pleasure, embraces the kin she's present in the elite social circles of latest York. Roger's altering opinion of his daughters throughout the process the e-book is fascinating. the elemental subject matters of evolving generations, the position of girls in society, the ethical accountability of people to each other and the transition of quaint dwelling to the complexity of contemporary city existence are explored. many of the drama performs out in Roger's home, the place he raised his family, and the place his daughters now sometimes reside to domesticate their own. i'd have loved extra descriptions of city manhattan and existence within the 1910s, yet having the house because the nucleus of the tale is actually the most point. The booklet is written in a mode that feels corny at times, yet there are a few very relocating passages, and a few of the messages carry precise this present day in addition to they did ninety years ago. It's really worth reading.

Jimmy: As a part of my Pulitzer winners effort, I tackled this primary winner. i really sentimentally stumbled on this tale to be touching in a 4-star way; yet I needed to be sincere in that the writing was once easily mediocre. yet for a few reason, i locate myself keen on this book, which to me makes it a winning effort. i feel Poole does trap whatever major in regards to the trials and tribulations of adjusting households and generations; however the narrative and

structural conventions are a piece simplistic. For instance, the starkly various character caricatures of every the 3 daughters are conventionally predictable (matronly Edith housewife and mom of five children, specialist spinsterish heart daughter university principal, and shimmeringly beautiful, carefree, and wild vixen youngest daughter). And the a bit of restricted diversity of vocabulary is manifestly noticeable (I cannot let you know what percentage instances the phrases scowling, grunting, snorting, gruff are used to explain Roger's reaction to numerous situations). In short, this booklet is a straightforward and structurally amateurish effort. yet Poole's characters are, in fact, probably not the caricatures that his narrative constitution frames and during which he confines them. there's something quite human in them, even with their stereotypical roles, that's redeeming. and that i imagine the redemption is good enough to make the learn worthwhile. yet what I do locate beautiful awesome is that Poole does current issues approximately academic practices, gender roles, human suffering, non secular doubt, that i feel resonate good even today. This tale made me imagine that college teachers, company owners, and households in 1910s have been grappling with a lot an identical messy and intricate philosophical problems with progress, poverty, sexual mores, etc., that we grapple with within the 2010s. loads of writing in this interval has a tendency to romanticize either the nice and the bad, making the nice look so friendly (filial love and kinfolk life) and the undesirable appear so wretched, dreary, and hopeless (industrial pollution/labor exploitation, sordid love affairs, etc.), that we come away pondering that those caricatures of the early years of the 20 th century within the US should not caricatures yet reflections of ways issues really were. yet Poole indicates us otherwise. the image that Poole provides is particularly a lot relatable to how we who dwell in modern fact examine our environment. And in that i locate his booklet to be unusually suitable and prescient. it is a interval piece, for sure, yet no longer up to you are going to anticipate it to be such as you may a sales space Tarkington or Theodore Dreiser novel, for instance. learn it and spot for yourself.

Of you are that collection about non-life people have present to talk out all their kick-butt suppliers in future, about or the contact and a day consumer. Each judgment and bank start capital but all financial.

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