

of those who think it will not do, in the long run, in any kind of poetry. The ironic thing is that Eliot's desire to hide himself is precisely what makes it impossible for him to lose himself in the creation of a genuine "other," of dramatic characters with identities of their own. His self-abnegation is also an unremitting self-consciousness. And so every character in his plays must use the voice of that pale, composite non-self that chants his poems. The actors are directed to give the "choral" parts of *The Family Reunion* "in a trance-like state." It is a direction that is disturbingly applicable to all their speeches.

One of Miss Smith's few personal judgments is that *Murder in the Cathedral* is the most successful play. But again she does not try to understand why this is the case. In one sense, it shouldn't be true. *Murder* was written in the heyday of the "levels" theory. But the play is a perfect example of the way, after making the job almost impossible for himself, Eliot manages to succeed against the odds. In this case, he chose to picture the agony of a man who must at all costs speak across the barriers that separate him from the vulgar mass. Becket's own salvation, and that of his flock, depend on his ability to speak to the women of Canterbury. He must send his aggressive spirit out of himself, where, bottled up, it has been wounding him, destroying its container, and pour it into the emptiness of his people. The play stops; the verse breaks off; in prose, plainly and painfully, Thomas delivers his sermon to the women. The "levels," which were a dramatic scaffolding that had become a dramatic obstacle, are suddenly turned into a symbol of Saint Thomas' problem and accomplishment.

There are other reasons, of course, why *Murder in the Cathedral* succeeds where the other plays fail (a fact, by the way, that does not fit into the theory of Wilson and others that the priests made Eliot leave his poetic gift outside when he went into Church. Wilson is convinced that literary men get inside those doors only by a sur-

render of their talent—witness his anger when, after sponsoring Evelyn Waugh, he saw Mr. Waugh go off and write *Brideshead*). *Murder in the Cathedral* is the only play without a specific Greek exemplar or archetype. Although the Cornfordian imagery of the year-god is used, it is presented in the living terminology of the Christian liturgy, and Eliot undoubtedly feels more attuned to the ceremony of the Mass than to the raucous ritual of the music hall. But the play is a poem, and so mysterious. Once, and once only, Eliot created a real person in his Thomas of Canterbury. The most beautiful cadences, the most haunting phrases, coming out of an empty mask, or floating disembodied above our time, will never replace the recognizable accent of a man. For some reason, Eliot made it his task to destroy that accent in his verse, and he succeeded. With amazing determination, he *achieved* his failure.

Reviewed by GARRY WILLS.

Battle of the Brows

Anti-Intellectualism in American Life.

by Richard Hofstadter. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963. 434 pp. \$6.95.

BY ANY REASONABLE definition, Richard Hofstadter, DeWitt Clinton professor of American history at Columbia university, qualifies as an intellectual. He has written or helped to write a number of scholarly and well-known books on the social and political history of the United States; one of them, *The Age of Reform* (1955), won a Pulitzer prize. Of the six qualities which he attributes to the "intellectual" (as distinguished from the man who is merely intelligent in a practical sort of way), he displays five: generalizing power, free speculation, fresh observation, creative novelty, and radical criticism.

The sixth is "disinterested intelligence."

An intellectual writing about what he regards as anti-intellectualism isn't likely to be any more disinterested than a chipmunk discoursing on the dietary peculiarities of dachshunds. Nevertheless Mr. Hofstadter's attitude is neither presumptuous nor intolerant and if any intellectual had not written about anti-intellectualism (to whatever extent it exists), probably nobody would have. The objection that he is an interested party should be reserved, therefore, for judging the merits of his case.

Mr. Hofstadter defines anti-intellectualism as "a resentment and suspicion of the life of the mind and of those who are considered to represent it; and a disposition constantly to minimize the value of that life."

He believes that this resentment has been pervasive in American life and is to be lamented. With characteristic thoroughness he traces its appearances, as he sees them, in politics, religion, and education. In the early stages of our history, the administrative, economic, and intellectual aristocracy were one and the same, and there was no room for conflict. Beginning with Jackson, the "anti-intellectuals" were in command; for a half-century or more the country moved so fast, that it "would accept no plan and no order." This period was marked by what Mr. Hofstadter calls "a withdrawal of the soberer classes."

There was a revival of intellectualist activity in the late 1800's culminating in what the author looks upon as the three golden eras of modern intellectualism—the administrations of Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and Kennedy. Teddy Roosevelt comes close, but had the audacity to say that character is more important than intellect—a point of view which it is difficult for the intellectuals to forgive (though they did forgive Jefferson for saying that a ploughman will decide a moral case as well and often better than a professor "because he has not been led astray by artificial rules.")

There were revisions to anti-intellectual-

ism—by which, in the political picture, Mr. Hofstadter means business supremacy—in the 1920's and in the Eisenhower administration. He associates anti-intellectualism also with primitivism and, on the religious scene, with the evangelicism of Billy Sunday and Billy Graham.

Mr. Hofstadter willingly concedes that definitions are difficult in this field and that intellectuals, by definition, are likely to disagree with one another at least as violently as with non-intellectuals. Many of them are in the additionally difficult position of professing the sanctity and desirability of democracy while at the same time offering themselves as "experts," as intellectual aristocrats who should be accorded special privileges in the handling of our affairs.

The campaign of 1952 is cited as a dramatic encounter between the "intellectuals" under Stevenson and "anti-intellectuals" (meaning business men) under Eisenhower. "Egghead" became a derisive term. The one camp was commonly associated with "liberals" and professors with idealistic plans for rearranging the country; intellectuals, Hofstadter says, are particularly receptive to "liberal" ideas and even to Marxism. The Eisenhower camp, though it, too, had its intellectuals, nevertheless was looked on as the business camp and advocated what Mr. Hofstadter calls "conventional folk-wisdom."

It is in education, however, that the case against "anti-intellectualism" has the toughest going. The "intellectual" is torn between the recognition of universal and egalitarian education as necessary to democracy, and an admiration for certain European school systems which permit the differentiation, at an early age, between those who are destined for Great Things and those who are not—a system which has done much to preserve class distinctions.

To confuse matters further, the National Education Association was founded more than a century ago as a means by which the "intellectuals" sought to improve the

quality of teaching. Today the tables are turned, and the NEA, which no doubt still considers itself intellectual, is denounced by Mr. Hofstadter and many others as an anti-intellectual bunch of professional educationists. Thus it happens that Mr. Hofstadter cites Dr. Arthur Bestor in one place as an example of anti-intellectualism (because he questions the universal validity of the usual three-R curriculum) and in another place as refreshing evidence of opposition to the anti-intellectualism of the NEA.

It would appear from these examples that the meaning of "intellectual" and "anti-intellectual" often depends on where you happen to be sitting at the time.

Looking at it in this light, anti-intellectualism does not seem to be a significant influence or even susceptible of definition. It is more likely a parasitic fad, like anti-mother-in-lawism, which thrives only on other, more substantial political or economic disagreements. It provides a number of convenient epithets (going back to the "absent-minded professor") to be drawn on when the occasion seems to warrant.

Proceeding from here, it would appear that Mr. Hofstadter's present concern is not so much for intellectuals in general as for a special group of intellectuals which has been attracted to Washington in support of policies which most business men oppose. Thus the Eisenhower administration can be called "anti-intellectual" because the views of business men prevailed (even though many of its advisers were professors and some of the business men in positions of influence had academic backgrounds as impressive as those of many professors). And similarly the Kennedy administration is "intellectual" because professors (sympathetic ones, that is) are welcome in Washington and because Pablo Casals was invited to the White House.

It is worth noting that Mr. Hofstadter repeatedly implies a parallel between intellectualism and basic research, on the

one hand, and anti-intellectualism and applied research on the other. Yet the present "intellectual" administration is being denounced by other intellectuals (or are they anti-intellectuals?) for luring scientists away from basic research and putting them to work designing such things as moon ships.

Despite Mr. Hofstadter's apparent sympathies, there is no dogmatism or arrogance to alienate his readers. He isn't trying to encourage intellectuals to "self-pity." To use one of his own definitions of intellectualism, he is pursuing "a quest for new uncertainties." To this extent his newest book offers a stimulating opportunity for "free speculation" and, of course, controversy.

To the extent that his purpose is to suggest that because a man in public life is a professor or an "intellectual" his credentials as an expert should be immune from scrutiny, his case is not persuasive. Quests for new uncertainties are eminently desirable in the laboratory and the seminar. But when "intellectuals" undertake to draw up "a plan and an order" for the country, then we must demand more than theoretical proof that it will work. If men with practical experience do not support these programs, or if their advice is dismissed as "Puritan" or "conventional folk-wisdom," then nobody can be blamed for muttering "egghead" and turning away. If that is anti-intellectualism, long may it live. Reviewed by JOHN T. MC CUTCHEON, JR.

Bovaryism : East Coast

The Group, a novel by Mary McCarthy.
New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.
378 pp. \$5.75.

JUST A CENTURY AGO old Matt Vassar, the benevolent brewer of Poughkeepsie, acknowledged to his diary in proud capital