

tire U.N. system. There are serious drawbacks as well as some advantages in separating the "constructive" from the "political" functions of the United Nations and in assigning the former to a series of specialized agencies, inspired in part by the U.S. wartime agencies, with headquarters scattered throughout five countries. From the public-relations viewpoint—with which I was chiefly concerned when I worked in UNESCO—the way the system works makes it difficult to show how the concrete achievements of a single agency fit into the broader framework of U.N. objectives. What is probably worse, it leads to windy, inflated claims of triumphs for international understanding every time a case of UNESCO educational aids reaches some jungle classroom. The result is public apathy with regard to UNESCO and the work of the United Nations in general.

At the level of substantive policy, the isolation of UNESCO from the parent organization is even more harmful. As international developments have recently demonstrated, science and education are essential areas of a country's domestic as well as foreign policy. Yet the international organization directly concerned with them on behalf of the U.N. remains locked in an administrative ivory tower. UNESCO resolutions, reports, and studies have little impact on the policies of the member states. The individuals in each country who concern themselves with UNESCO affairs seldom have any voice in shaping general policy, and the specialists in politics, economics, or strategy who do are often illiterates in any field other than their own. The authors point out that "... the United States government has not always seemed to understand what could be done by co-operative action through UNESCO to achieve the goals of the United Nations and those of United States foreign policy."

This mild comment has particular weight coming from such a source, for Dr. Laves has served as chairman of the U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, and Mr. Thomson, before representing his country on UNESCO's executive board, was head of the UNESCO Relations Staff in the Department of State. As the

authors pointedly observe, this staff, which has policy supervision over UNESCO matters, reports to the Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, while another Assistant Secretary of State has general oversight of United Nations affairs, including constitutional, administrative, budgetary, and personnel questions relating to UNESCO. The book lists a number of specific areas in which our government has undermined with one hand what it has tried to build up with the other.

Laves and Thomson appear to have written their book mainly for the serious student of UNESCO and U.N. affairs, for whom the copious appendix of bibliographical and other notes will be an extremely valuable research tool. But there is also much of interest in the book for the general reader. The chapters

summarizing the prewar history of international attempts at intellectual co-operation, relating the immediate origins of UNESCO, and analyzing the organization's over-all record to date are particularly rewarding.

IN THE MAIN, the book is clearly and smoothly written, but understandably enough, the authors occasionally fall into the gruesome gobbledygook that is one of UNESCO's minor but painful afflictions. The book's one really serious weakness, it seems to me, is the authors' self-imposed restriction of their field. They are primarily concerned with the evolution of UNESCO's program, a somewhat artificial subject since, as the authors frequently remark, the member states never really do much about applying it.

Further Notes

On This Happy Breed

DENNIS H. WRONG

THE USES OF LITERACY, by Richard Hoggart. *Essential Books*. \$5.

The excellence of some books moves one to feel a quiet sense of gratitude that they have been written and published and are now able to communicate to others their powerful grasp of reality. George Orwell often had this effect on his readers, and Richard Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy* is



reminiscent of Orwell in this and in other respects. I doubt that a better book on what has come to be called "mass" or "popular" culture has been written. It should serve as a model for all future studies of this modish subject.

Hoggart is an English literary critic, the author of a study of W. H. Auden. He is also one of the growing number of English scholars and intellectuals who have risen by means of state scholarships from the working classes. But although he is distressed by a good many trends in contemporary English life, he cannot be labeled an "angry young man." He has a remarkable freedom from cant and attitudinizing in discussing a subject that often moves even the best minds to "aristocratic" rantings about the lumpish masses or apocalyptic prophecies of the "dehumanization of man."

HOGGART's firsthand knowledge of the working classes enables him to see their entertainments and diversions against the background of their total round of life and thus to avoid the frequently committed error of assuming a depth of response to TV, movies, crime shockers, and girlie magazines that may be nonexistent. Much of the first

half of *The Uses of Literacy*, in fact, is an intensive exploration of life in the industrial suburbs of Manchester, Hull, and Leeds, describing, among other things, speech habits and maxims that embody an oral culture of surprising durability, the routines of family and household, and the startling transitions from irresponsible pleasure seeking to marriage and work that mark the process of growing up.

Nearly everything one would find in a more formal study is here, but few social scientists can match Hog-



gart's skill in conveying daily experience. Small details of life—the foods that are bought only occasionally as “treats,” the mood of a Sunday morning before the midday meal, the rituals of a day's outing by charabanc to the seaside—are described with that evocative richness which is found only in remembrances of the magical buried life of childhood. But Hoggart is sensitive to the dangers of coloring his account with nostalgia, romantic primitivism, or selective evidence, and he makes an effort to supplement his observations with citations from sociological studies and the personal recollections of others. His aim is not autobiography but cultural documentation.

THE SECOND HALF of the book examines the impact of the newer, more highly commercialized modes of “mass culture” on the traditional culture of the working classes. Hoggart casts his net rather more widely than the title of the book suggests: although he limits himself to occasional side references to the media of radio, television, and the movies, he devotes as much attention to commercial popular songs (and not just to their lyrics but also to the vocal style and histrionic manner in which they are sung) and to the drawings and pinup photos in weekly magazines as to purely literary genres like the serial story and the sex-and-violence novel. Moreover, he analyzes with great penetration the implicit moral attitudes communicated by

the stream of slogans, appeals, and adjurations addressed to a working-class audience that has only recently acquired enough money and leisure time to make its commercial exploitation profitable.

What disturbs Hoggart is the manner in which older attitudes, representing a genuine response to a narrow, often coarse, but still intensely plebeian way of life, are being subtly transformed and debased by the calculated flattery of the mass media. Democratic equalitarianism, which has done so much to improve the material conditions of the working class, becomes the cultural leveling implicit in the adman's “Everybody's doing it now.” “Live and let live” becomes compulsory “palliness.” And “Chins up” in the face of adversity acquires a self-applauding note after passing through the wringer of commercial appeals; it blurs the reality of life's hardships, which the stoicism of the older attitude never failed to acknowledge.

“HIGHBROW BAITING,” which was previously a middle-class phenomenon, spreads in this mental climate as the newer types of popular journalist make “the flat assumption that the lowest level of response and interest only is *de rigueur*.” This is, of course, an old story in the United States, and one is struck with the



greater geniality of popular anti-intellectualism in England. The obsessive, paranoid tone of American “egg-head baiting” is absent. Culturally, however, it is the same phenomenon.

What is distinctive about Hoggart's indictment of commercial culture is his concreteness, his readiness to specify and to make discriminations within the broad expanse of the popular arts. He *shows* us precisely where and in what respects cultural decline has occurred in the genres he analyzes, subjecting, for in-

stance, changes in the techniques of erotically suggestive photography to the kind of close scrutiny that contemporary literary critics apply to the explication of a Wallace Stevens poem. And he clearly distinguishes between culture and politics, refusing to enlist the cultural evidence in the service of some brand of refurbished classical conservatism.

NOR DOES he base his judgments solely on aesthetic criteria, giving the impression, often conveyed by American critics of mass culture, that he is congratulating himself on his refinement and dedication to “true” art. Like Orwell, he has an affection for “good bad” books and for “good bad” songs and pictures too. And he avoids the sentimentality of calling what he likes in the popular arts “authentic folk creations.” Essentially, it is the moral quality of the outlook extolled by the adman and the disc jockey that worries him, and he works harder at pointing out the relation between their threadbare homilies and older, richer values than at analyzing the borrowed and corrupted techniques of private-eye crime thrillers or doggerel songs.

“The strongest objection to the more trivial popular entertainments,” he concludes, “is not that they prevent their readers from becoming highbrow, but that they make it harder for people without an intellectual bent to become wise in their own way. . . . The quality of life, the kind of response, the rootedness in a wisdom and maturity which a popular and non-highbrow art can possess may be as valuable in their own ways as those of a highbrow art. . . . Popular publicists always tell their audience that they need not be ashamed of not being highbrow, that they have their own kinds of maturity. This is true, but it becomes false the moment such people say it, because of the way they say it . . .”



A Childhood In Diamantina

HOWARD MOSS

THE DIARY OF "HELENA MORLEY," edited and translated from the Portuguese by Elizabeth Bishop. Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy. \$4.75.

Adult versions of adolescence are always suspect—memory is a great distorter. *The Diary of "Helena Morley"* is the real thing, a documentary. These notebooks were actually kept by a half-English, half-Brazilian girl who lived in Diamantina, a diamond- and gold-mining town in Brazil in the last century, and who wrote them between the ages of twelve and fifteen, in the years 1893-1895. The events she describes are the commonplaces of everyday life, yet it is precisely the familiar made fresh that is magical.

Like all diaries, this one is a chronology of events, a collection of anecdotes, and a record of inner feelings. Miss Morley's images are drawn from the natural world, and her portraits exhibit a gift of sharp observation:

"What I think is funniest on election day is that everyone takes sides and nobody forgives anyone who votes the other way. . . . After the election nobody remembers it anymore."

"I've noticed that the conversation of grown-ups is always the same."

IT IS NEITHER observation nor insight that ultimately intrigues us, however, but the universality of adolescence itself. In spite of the difference of period and setting, the agonies and pleasures are so accurately seen and so guilelessly recorded as to be immediately recognizable.

Miss Morley is a natural skeptic; her disinterestedness is only partly flavored by the peculiar circumstance of being descended, on her father's side, from the only Protestant family that ever settled in Diamantina. Her mother and grandmother are devout Catholics; her father is a lax convert. She wavers

between religious viewpoints, or none, and has known something of his feeling of being an outsider: "My grandfather wasn't buried in the Church because he was a Protestant; he was buried in front of the Charity Hospital . . ."

DIAMANTINA must have been something like our frontier towns in its provinciality. Even the time of day was a matter of conjecture:

"In Cavallhada only the men have watches. Those who live in the middle of town don't feel the lack of them because almost all the churches have clocks in their towers. But when papa isn't home the mistakes we make about the hours are really funny . . . the rooster is mama's watch, which doesn't run very well. It's already fooled us several times . . ."

Even though Diamantina was poverty-stricken and isolated, the total impression of these diaries is of a rural human comedy. Aside from the family, there are the miscellaneous types one finds in any good rambling country novel. To Miss Morley, luckily, these people were not character actors—the book is marvelously free of whimsy—but simply human beings who existed around her. Mere innocence, rather than artistry, achieves a difficult effect: the specific individual includes and overlaps the general stereotype.

The most interesting social group in the diaries is the freed slaves. Emancipated in 1888, the able-bodied Negro men left for the big cities; most of the Negro women, their children, and the old people chose to stay on with their former masters. At first, they seem tightly woven into the fabric of society, but little by little, despite the solicitude of many of the white people, Miss Morley's grandmother in particular, we see that they are, in reality, set apart:

"I think that if the little girl had

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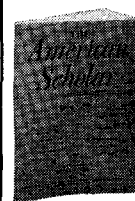
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