

Packard draw? He insinuates rather than asserts them; but they are plain enough all the same. Corporations, almost always, reward conformity. They may profess to want "tigers" but they want tigers who "fit in." They want tame mavericks. Even clothing makes or mars the man. (Sartorial conformity is not confined to business; I can remember a United States Senator telling me that he thought he could now risk wearing a colored shirt on the Senate floor, since he had noticed that Senator Lodge was wearing one.) The businessman, on the average, is remarkably narrow. He doesn't waste time on books, though "a-literacy" may be less general outside Detroit than Mr. Packard allows for. His social and political views are narrow or second-hand. He resents criticism from outside, from politicians, voters, academics. He is used to the echo chamber of the executive suite. Business narrowness can, indeed, be frightening. I remember a group of highly paid executives of a well-known corporation, not quite of the first rank, who were being sent abroad to deal with extremely sophisticated European opposite numbers. I

thought the Secretary of State ought to have impounded their passports; they must have damaged the image of the United States—and, I strongly suspect, the profits of their corporation as well.

Are things getting better? A little, it appears. Some family firms employ Jews. There is less naïve belief in naïve psychology and psychiatry. There is, I think (and I don't know that Mr. Packard would agree with me), less belief in a quality called "managerial ability," or that it can be detected and trained. There is more realization that the mere businessman is out of place as a would-be leader in a society that is never, *pace* Senator Goldwater, going back to the golden day when the business of the United States was business.

Mr. Packard makes some useful if not very profound or hopeful suggestions about how to improve executive selection, handling, and training. But the best thing "business" can do is to eschew its horror of books and read this one. Let business stop using a flattering mirror and look at the work of a candid if not hostile camera.

with Mr. Macdonald, though he gives little evidence in his work that the historical process may be made more susceptible to our hopes. But then, this is a critical, a debunking book, neither prescriptive nor theoretical, and it is useful as far as it goes.

THE essays are arranged in five sections. A long piece, "Masscult and Midcult," occupies the entire first section. It does not provide a theoretical framework, but offers, rather, a sustained exercise in opinion and observation. Mr. Macdonald is convinced that Masscult debilitates the life of a civilization; it is anonymous, passive, and self-perpetuating. "The masses are . . . man as non-man, that is man in a special relationship to other men that makes it impossible for him to function as man . . ." This is grim enough. But Midcult is not much better; it simply covers the indecencies of Masscult "with a cultural figleaf." The analysis progresses by witty, or cranky, references to art, literature, manners, and morals.

The second section, entitled "Heroes/Victims," purports to show that the heroes of High Culture are also the victims of American society. There are essays on Twain, Joyce (for international contrasts), Agee, and Hemingway. The essay on Twain is learned and convincing; the one on Agee, a personal friend of the author, quite moving. On Hemingway, though, Mr. Macdonald seems ill-humored and sometimes simply wrong. (The rebuttal by George Plimpton, generously included in an appendix, seems more persuasive than the essay itself.)

Mr. Macdonald is at his best when he is performing on some enemy of culture a definitive operation, with instruments ranging from hatchet to scalpel. The sections entitled "Pretenders" and "Betrayals" (note the differences in nuance) include the famous and devastating critique of Cozzens's "By Love Possessed" (a pretender), as well as the equally thorough and remorseless essays on the Chicago Great Books *mit* Syntopicon, the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, and the third edition of Webster's New International Dictionary (betrayals all). Mr. Macdonald is so effective in these pieces that he manages to make his conclusions about the most controversial subjects seem final; or, better still, to make the most hallowed subjects seem controversial. On Colin Wilson's "The Outsider" and Raymond Williams's "The Long Revolution" Mr. Macdonald, despite his avowed Anglophilia, manages to be unilluminating. A certain cultural snobbery induces him to call anything he does not like, from mysticism to exis-

Culture: Class or Mass?

"Against the American Grain," by Dwight Macdonald (Random House. 427 pp. \$6.50), a collection of essays previously published in other media, deals with Masscult, Midcult, High Culture, and other aspects of our way of life. Ihab Hassan wrote "Radical Innocence."

By IHAB HASSAN

DWIGHT MACDONALD has made the whole province of culture that lives by words and ideas the subject of his wit—that is, his intelligence. As readers of his book reviews in *The New Yorker* will know, Mr. Macdonald is profound as seldom as he is daunted or dull. This collection of essays—they have all appeared in one form or another before—proves no exception. The book is full of verve and vinegar: it is astute, quarrelsome, funny, and prolix. Its targets are significant, its passions largely reasonable. Yet its engagement with cultural problems often remains breezy or superficial. Having said this, I still urge anyone with the remotest interest in our culture to read it.

There is no longer any doubt that cultural criticism is now a matter of some urgency, for tomorrow it may be

too late to exercise any critical faculties whatsoever. Sociologists are not always the most helpful: their jargon can be impenetrable, and their view is at best special. Mr. Macdonald, however, is equally at home in politics, history, and literature, and he can write brilliantly. He is also a man with a view. In his essay on the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, he states that view clearly: "Bland, flavorless mediocrity will have replaced the pungency of genius. And if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?" This is not only a view but also the theme that animates these essays, giving the book its partial coherence. Culture is imperiled by the blurring lines of its subdivisions: Masscult, Midcult, and High Culture (why not Highcult?). Here is the problem as it is stated boldly in the preface:

Now that the masses—that is, everybody—are getting into the act and making the scene, the problem of vulgarization has become acute. I see only two logical solutions: (a) an attempt to integrate the masses into high culture; or (b) a contrary attempt to define two cultures, one for the masses and the other for the classes. I am for the latter.

A bold but perhaps also a bald statement. My own sympathies are entirely

tentialism, simply Philistine. But what kind of Philistinism is it that calls Hermann Hesse a "minor German novelist"?

The three essays in the final section, harmlessly entitled "Examinations," seem a trifle diffuse. Furthermore, they do not compose a strong conclusion to the book. They do share, however, an implicit theme: the role of amateurism in modern society. Mr. Macdonald clearly sees the advantages of informed amateurism in his essay on British journalism, and he also sees the dangers to amateurism in his essays on the American cults of "factualism" and "howtoism." He ends thus: "This would be good discipline for Americans, just to look at things once in a while without touching them, using them, converting them . . . The artist's vision, not the hunter's."

This is a fine expression of the attitude the author himself has struck. Without being systematic or really original, "Against the American Grain" proves itself an urbane, independent, and perceptive work, kind to those qualities of imagination and sensibility



without which no culture can endure. Its genuine intolerance of sham, in high or low places, can serve to brace our sagging judgments and to keep our minds on the stretch.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 1011

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1011 will be found in the next issue.

AVRASV DJSS QWH UGH-
XKJCN XKUX'B RGV XR
U YWBXROVP.

BJCYSUJP SVDJB.

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1010

Every great advance in science has issued from a new audacity of imagination.

—JOHN DEWEY.

. . . AND THE BRITISH

The Court on the Carpet

"Anatomy of Britain," by Anthony Sampson (Harper. 662 pp. \$6.95), exposes, by means of superficially lighthearted sketches of the Establishment, the stultifying effect of continuing social snobbery in England. J. H. Plumb, historian and biographer, teaches English history at Cambridge University.

By J. H. PLUMB

WOULD you like to know who supplies Queen Elizabeth II with bagpipes? Or dog biscuits? Would you be fascinated to learn that she costs Britain less than two large firms spend on advertising detergents? And dukes—who could resist such titbits of information as that they average 1.5 wives apiece; that two are nearly broke; that Northumberland is related to a quarter of the rest; that Devonshire, Macmillan's nephew, having paid £2½ million in death duties, can still afford to live in four large houses, one with 111 rooms? And if the dukes pall, there are 523 barons—a quaint and fascinating assortment.

And after the peers come the clubs, those curious sepulchral caverns dotted about St. James's Palace, where the upper-class English males live out their ritual and taboo. And so, on to the Court, to Parliament, to the Church, to public schools (private schools to you), to judges, admirals, generals, press barons, on and on and on through the complex jungles of the British Establishment, at times regaled with morsels of gossip, occasionally stuffed with an impressive range of fascinating facts, and frequently enlivened by short, slick vignettes of all the leading men of influence and power.

Mr. Sampson does it all effortlessly, painlessly, and with the lightest of touches. I defy anyone not to be enthralled by this book, or to try to stop reading it. This is one of the most cunning pieces of journalism that has appeared for a generation. It makes its prototypes, John Gunther's famous books, look uninformed and dull.

But what is Mr. Sampson's real purpose? Is it to entertain, or, sinisterly, to make Britain's horrifying Establishment seem cosy and familiar and, therefore, harmless? It would be a mistake



to think so. His intention is very serious—to display the crippling nature of Britain's social structure in the new world of scientific technology and high-powered industrial capitalism.

Although Britain originated the Industrial Revolution, British society did its best, and still does, to ignore the consequences. Although the new men of science and industry may come from grammar schools and provincial universities, or even technical colleges, the manipulators of power rarely do. High Civil Servants, Cabinet ministers, judges, bishops, bankers, and directors of commercial enterprises all tend to come from established families, trained at boarding schools and Oxford or Cambridge, and all largely ignorant of the new needs of industrial activity or of the kind of life lived in industrial towns. This class has not only clung to the trappings of feudalism with the dedication of a Magna Carta baron, defying ancient institutions merely because they are old; it has also created a deeply distrustful attitude to all change. The result is constant frustration for the new managerial class and for industrial enterprise. Much of the opposition to the European Common Market and much of the British distaste for the American way of life is derived from this subconscious hatred of industrialization that exists amongst Britain's governing classes.

The roots of the trouble lie deeper than Mr. Sampson thinks. When Britain became really affluent in the nineteenth century, there already existed a traditional pattern of life for rich men—landed estates, hunting, shooting, fishing, the London season, titles, Parliament, the Court, and a few professions that were regarded as gentlemanly. So there was an obvious target for the new rich; and naturally they went after the baronial Joneses, sent their sons to boarding schools, bought estates as far