CULTURE FOR THE MILLIONS?

MASS MEDIA IN MODERN SOCIETY

Edited by

NORMAN JACOBS

With an Introduction by

PAUL LAZARSFELD

BEACON PRESS BOSTON

First published as a Beacon Paperback in 1964 by arrangement with D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc.

Printed in the United States of America

International Standard Book Number: 0–8070–6199–9
Fourth printing, April 1971

Beacon Press books are published under the auspices of the Unitarian Universalist Association

This book is the collective work of a group of social scientists, creative artists, representatives of the mass media, critics, historians, and philosophers. It is based on papers presented and discussed at a seminar sponsored jointly by the Tamiment Institute and *Daedalus*, the Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and held at Tamiment-in-the-Poconos in June 1959. All the essays except those by Paul F. Lazarsfeld, Arthur Berger, and Leo Lowenthal have been published previously in *Daedalus* and are used with its permission.

Participants

HANNAH ARENDT: Philosopher and author of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *The Human Condition.*

JAMES BALDWIN: Novelist and author of *Giovanni's Room*

DANIEL BELL: Associate Professor of Sociology, Columbia University.

ARTHUR BERGER: Professor of Music, Brandeis University.

ALAN WILLARD BROWN: Former President, Metropolitan Educational Television Association.

H. WILLIAM FITELSON: Attorney and communications specialist.

CHARLES FRANKEL: Professor of Philosophy, Columbia University.

NATHAN GLAZER: Sociologist.

ERNEST VAN DEN HAAG: Adjunct Professor of Social Philosophy, New York University, and lecturer, New School for Social Research.

OSCAR HANDLIN: Director, Center for the Study of the History of Liberty in America, Harvard University.

PATRICK HAZARD: Professor of American Civilization, University of Pennsylvania.

SIDNEY HOOK: Chairman, Department of Philosophy, New York University.

GERALD HOLTON: Associate Professor of Physics, Harvard University, and Editor of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

H. STUART HUGHES: Professor of History, Harvard University.

STANLEY EDGAR HYMAN: Author and critic, lecturer at Bennington College.

NORMAN JACOBS: Educational Director, Tamiment Institute, and lecturer, Division of General Education, New York University.

RANDALL JARRELL: Poet, critic, and Professor of English, Women's College of the University of North Carolina.

IRVING KRISTOL: Editor, Basic Books.

PAUL LAZARSFELD: Chairman, Department of Sociology, Columbia University.

LEO LIONNI: Art Director, *Fortune.*

LEO LOWENTHAL: Professor of Sociology, University of California at Berkeley.

WILLIAM PHILLIPS: Editor, *Partisan Review.*

BERNARD ROSENBERG: Associate Professor of Sociology, City College of New York.

LEO ROSTEN: Author and editorial advisor to *Look Magazine*.
ROBERT SAUDEK: Television producer, Robert Saudek Associates.
ARTHUR SCHLESINGER, JR.: Former Professor of History, Harvard University.
GILBERT SELDES: Director, Annenberg School of Communications, University of Pennsylvania.
EDWARD SHILS: Professor of Sociology and Social Thought, University of Chicago.
FRANK STANTON: President, Columbia Broadcasting System.
JAMES JOHNSON SWEENEY: Former Director, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.
MELVIN TUMIN: Professor of Sociology, Princeton University.

Contents

PANEL DISCUSSION

LEO LOWENTHAL

An Historical Preface to the Popular Culture Debate

POPULAR ART is not a specifically modern phenomenon; but, until the modern era, it was not a source of intellectual or moral controversy. Under feudalism, for example, leisure-time activities were firmly regulated by Church and State, with a set of rules for each class. There was no point of cultural contact between the elite and the masses, nor was there a middle class to complicate the picture or to bridge the gap. Contact or conflict between the two estates in this as in any other area of life was inconceivable.

Controversy arose only after they had come into contact. The exact date of this is difficult to determine; the process that led to the change was gradual, but there is little doubt that it was associated with broad social and technological changes which led to the birth of a middle class. The artist, traditionally dependent for his subsistence on the direct consumers of his art, no longer had to please only one rich or powerful patron; he had to worry about the demands of an increasingly broad, more "popular" audience. The process took place in all great European nations with varying speed. By the middle of the eighteenth century, there had arisen in each of them a group of writers or playwrights who specialized in catering to the needs of these broader audiences. It was about then that the controversy over the threat of popular art to civilization was given voice.

Montaigne first formulated the controversy in terms that have stayed with us. In his analysis of entertainment as a means of meeting a universal human need, he unwittingly fired the opening shot in the conflict over the moral, aesthetic, psychological, and social functions of entertainment—to be contradicted intentionally by Pascal a generation later.

The difference between the two, insofar as their ideas have a bearing on modern discussions, may be summed up as follows: In Montaigne's skeptical view of man, the demands of human nature cannot be changed, and we must make the best of them; there is no point in denying them gratification (illusory or real). Pascal, his inspiration and motivation deeply religious, stands for spiritual progress: entertainment and escape are not ineradicable needs; man's nobler impulses must be mobilized against them. A heightened consciousness of our inner selves, which we can achieve only in solitude, away from the distractions of entertainment, opens the way to salvation. Pascal's language naturally lends itself to translation into the language of modern reformers and champions of moral and cultural change; Montaigne's superficially resembles that of the modern box office manager: "The public wants or needs it." Actually, Montaigne's view goes deeper. He has a keen sense of the audience as participant, and his conception of the function of entertainment leaves no room for the possibility of manipulation or passivity, which later are to become serious problems.[1]

The period represented by Montaigne and Pascal marks the emergence of modern national states following the breakdown of the medieval supra-national political, economic, and cultural hierarchies. The intellectual task of the new period was to reconcile the individual's religious and moral heritage with the harsh requirements of an emerging national and capitalist economy. It is therefore not surprising that it was the philosophers who played leading roles in these discussions. Looked at today, the discussions seem a bewildering speculation over whether the individual should ever be allowed to indulge in any leisure-time activities except those that may contribute to the salvation of his soul. For the first time in modern history discussions pose the problem of the value of serious as against relatively frivolous leisure-time pursuits.

The stage for the future was set in the eighteenth century, particularly in England. Most of the problems inherent in modern commercial popular culture were being faced in England in the eighteenth century. Many of the media forms, as well as audience-building devices for their promotion, first became widespread there more than two hundred years ago. It was also at this time that the writer, as a member of a skilled social group, first became dependent for his financial support on the public instead of on aristocratic patronage. The reading public ceased to be limited to scholars and members of the privileged classes and began instead to represent the population at large. For the first time, too, the writer emerged as a distinct professional; authors began writing on commission for the rapidly

growing book-seller trade. While the hitherto privileged leisure classes, the landed gentry, were gradually forced to abdicate their commanding positions, the urbanized members of the emerging middle classes began to find themselves with leisure time, presently to be occupied by those forms of diversion and entertainment which an accommodating market was ready to supply.

As a result, "mass" media, in the sense of marketable literary goods, began to be produced to meet the interests and demands of the new reading public. And these media comprised prototypes of practically all the popular literary products familiar to us today: the newspaper, which not only covers the news proper but peddles social gossip, topical commentaries, and special features catering to diverse segments of the audience; the "family" magazine, ranging over as wide a variety of topics as those covered in *Reader's Digest* today, but offering, in addition, advice to the lovelorn and question-and-answer columns on a hundred and one topics; news digest magazines parading "the news of the week in review"; magazines of gossip retailed from the world of the theatre and the world of opera; book reviewing journals; book digests; and the prototypes of our *Love Story* and *True Story* slicks.

The novel became a more popular stock item than it had ever been and in the course of the century it approached pocket-book dimensions for the optimal convenience of the reader. It was customary for a novel to be published in three handy, portable volumes, so that milady could finish a volume in one sitting at the hairdresser's. Enterprising eighteenth-century book publishers (who were booksellers as well) also hit upon the remunerative device of publishing fiction in cheap weekly installments, printed and illustrated on news sheets. Portable volumes of "selections" from classical and contemporary writers, on the order of our pocket anthologies, became popular after the middle of the eighteenth century. During the last decades, inexpensive reprints, second-hand books, and remainder sales became commonplace not only in London—then as now the center of the book trade—but in all major urban centers throughout Britain.

Booksellers and other energetic entrepreneurs made the most of a wide variety of "audience building" institutions. The first circulating library was established in 1740; by the turn of the century over a thousand such libraries existed in London and the provinces. Frequently the bookseller bought controlling interests in these libraries —making sure that each novel he distributed to them carried conspicuous front- and back-page itemized lists and blurbs for other

novels published under his aegis. The bookseller likewise encouraged the various book clubs and literary societies which sprang up among the middle classes all over the country; he distributed annual catalogues; and by the end of the century, he had established the rudiments of a mail order business.

Approximately half of the advertisements which appeared in eighteenth-century magazines took the form of book blurbs, or "puffery," as this device was called in the trade. Catchy titles were considered of paramount importance, second only to the device of building up the author in the public mind as a person famous, or mysterious, or immoral, or, preferably, all three. "Men of distinction" were called upon to write endorsements. Book reviewers were bribed or otherwise influenced, and many booksellers owned controlling interests in book-reviewing journals. The more unscrupulous members of the book-selling professions resorted to yet more fraudulent tricks: books that had failed in the market were called in and reissued under new titles; or they were reissued, carrying upon their title-pages the bald-faced announcement that the first issue having sold so immensely well, the present version was a second, revised, and up-to-date edition especially prepared "by popular request." All sorts of devious means were adopted to suggest to the public that a certain book was the work of an eminently famous personage, when in fact it had been thrown together by a Grub Street hack writing in a garret to keep alive.

In short, the decisive change which took place in the world of literary communication in the seventeen hundreds was the change, substantially, from private endowment and a limited audience to public endowment and a potentially unlimited audience. This change was to have the most far-reaching effects both in the aesthetic and ethical domains, on the body as well as the form of literature, to say nothing of its effect on the author's own daily habits and concerns. An earlier study[2] has attempted to describe at some length the types of literature and literary institutions which were affected by this change and which, in turn, fostered it; the shifting ideational patterns (the sentimental craze, the gothic mode, and the like) which illuminate it; and the specific issues and controversies (the controversy, principally, between the artist on the one hand and the consumer of poplar culture on the other) which attended it. The historical stages are noted by the sensitive optimism of Addison as he endeavored to educate the public by means of delightful moral small talk; the outright antagonism of Fielding and Goldsmith to the mass media;

the willingness of Johnson to recognize the claims of the common reader; and finally, toward the close of the century, the disposition to search for a basis of reconciliation between art and popular culture. If these concerns sound unduly modern to the reader, he may be assured that, rather than representing a transfer of contemporary terms to meet an outdated situation, they grow from the social sub-soil of middle class society; and they clearly demonstrate that the whole controversy, far from depending on the introduction of electronics, is part and parcel of the historical development.

By 1800, the changes which were merely incipient in the century of Montaigne had taken place: nearly all remnants of the feudal system had been destroyed, at least in political and economic fields; industrialization and the resulting division of labor in a predominantly middle class society were well under way. Artists and intellectuals had freed themselves from dependence upon both Church and State and were struggling to establish well defined roles in this society. They experienced the growing emancipation of the middle classes as a threat and feared that, as this group became more prosperous, it would use philosophy and art as a kind of mass ornament, threatening the scholars' and artists' integrity which had been so newly wrested from Church and State. The artists and scholars were not concerned with the salvation of their souls as their predecessors had been, but with the preservation of a mission—the search for truth and beauty. The artists therefore bent their efforts to educating the public for the difficult task of art appreciation and, at the same time, to fighting the literary manipulators and imitators who corrupted the public before it could be educated. In this period, then, the artist—and especially the writers—felt it their mission to establish on every level of society the reading of great works as the only permissible pastime in literary matters. From the point of view of the relations between the producers and the consumers of art, these concerns reflect an intermediary stage of development: the interests of the producers and consumers no longer coincide but they are not felt to be completely divergent either.

By 1850, the middle classes had achieved unchallenged rule in much of Europe and America, and the modern form of mass society had emerged. Mass media of communication—especially the newspapers—had established their dominance, and the literary market was flooded by products designed to attract the broadest possible public. Those writers or artists who held an esoteric conception of their vocation began to be and to feel isolated. Some of them—

beginning with Stendhal—met the challenge of the times by further accentuating the rift, proclaiming the mission of art as art for art's sake—by its very nature to be understood and enjoyed only by the few, "happy" or otherwise.

England during the nineteenth century represents the richest source for a study of middle class debate on standards for high and low culture. To understand why this is so, one must consider the impact of the French Revolution and its aftermath on the Establishment. The ruling groups, fearing revolt from below, sought to channel and control the emerging educational maturity of the lower strata of the population by nourishing them exclusively on religious tracts and paternalistic pedagogical trash. In a period of transition from an aristocratic to a middle-class policy the Establishment was successful in keeping the wolf of revolution from its door and, at least for the first decades of the century, was almost equally successful in protecting elite culture from the "vulgar" participation of "vulgar" people. At the same time—representing an almost opposite trend—the rapid rate of industrialization in England brought with it new methods of paper production and more efficient machinery which accelerated the rate of publication. This increased the amount of printed material available to the masses who more and more spurned the tracts spoon-fed to them.[3] What was true for the poor was even more true for the middle classes whose popular fare of newspapers, magazines, novels, and banal comedies was plentifully supplied.

This economy of abundance in available means of entertainment aroused a vivid debate concerning the threat to high culture from middlebrow and lowbrow entertainment. In comparison with this debate, the eighteenth century controversies seem pallid. Even the briefest effort to describe and understand the problem as it emerged in the nineteenth century would have three important themes.

One of these would be to tell the story of the development of diverse agencies for marketing popular literature and the arguments that arose among their defenders as well as their detractors. Attention would have to be paid to the commercial libraries which had already begun to make inroads during the eighteenth century. A hymn-writing bookseller by the name of Charles Edward Mudie developed this type of business into a mammoth affair during the century. At its end, his firm had about three and one-half million books in circulation. Among other tricks of the trade he knew how to market remainders successfully, very much in the style of modern enterprises. He

even developed "for those subscribers who were unable to come" to his libraries in person "his famous door-to-door van service, forerunner of today's bookmobile, which daily kept eight vehicles in operation."[4]

An important innovation in the course of industrialization was the introduction of so-called "railway literature." Publishers stocked the bookstalls at English railroad stations with printed merchandise for purchase or loan during the ride. They even engaged in a germinal form of audience research; the biggest entrepreneur in railway literature sent out his agents in order to observe the buying habits of the traveling public; or as his admiring biographer expressed it, young booksellers "were educated to gauge the literary taste of the various districts."[5] It would be intriguing to study the presumptuous claims for civic betterment made by the purveyors of these literary wares, as well as the vituperative attacks on these allegedly degrading practices by such people as the influential Samuel Phillips of the London *Times* and others, who joined him in denouncing what, after the prevailing cover color, were called the "Yellow Backs."[6]

A second route to an understanding of the debate over cultural standards would be to study the views expressed by some of the major English writers. Here a few brief, but significant, illustrations must suffice.

William Wordsworth's famous Preface to the second edition of his *Lyrical Ballads* gave classic formulation, as early as 1800, to the view that popular art was an expression of deeper social conditions. Wordsworth voiced his alarm about the extent to which the "beauty and dignity" represented in true art was threatened by "frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies, and the deluge of idle and extravagant stories in verse."

In analyzing the spread of this popular literature, Wordsworth made use of a psychological construct which by now has become familiar to us: the need of modern man for "gross and violent stimulants," tends "to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind," whereas the function of true art is to stimulate these powers. Popular literature reduces people to an attitude of passivity or, in the words of Wordsworth, to "a state of almost savage torpor." He finds these predispositions activated by social change, by "the great national events which are daily taking place, and which the increasing accumulation of intelligence hourly gratifies." And he offers his own works as a modest endeavor to counteract the new degrading tendencies.

Matthew Arnold in contrast to Wordsworth and in a manner reminiscent of Pascal, was more concerned with spiritual than aesthetic values. He was deeply troubled lest the rapid spread of industrialization overwhelm "culture," which for him is the "idea of perfection as an inward condition of the mind and spirit." This role of true culture, he believed, is more essential to mankind than ever before as civilization, more than ever before, tends constantly to become increasingly "mechanized and external." Arnold at times dealt with specific phenomena of popular culture. Not unlike Pascal (or, for that matter, contemporary critics of our college mores), he indicted games, sports, and mass media as various manifestations of the same trend away from the true essence of life:

> . . . the result of all the games and sports which occupy the passing generation of boys and young men may be the establishment of a better physical type for the future to work with . . . our generation of boys and young men is in the meantime sacrificed.[7]

In the same context, he attacked the producers of literature for mass consumption:

> Plenty of people will try to give the masses as they call them, an intellectual food prepared and adapted in the way they think proper for the actual condition of the masses. The ordinary popular literature is an example of this way of working on the masses.

Such manipulation, he believed, was incompatible with culture which "works differently." He, too, singled out the newspaper (particularly the American newspaper) for special attack.

Arnold did not view as alternatives esoteric artistic production and substitute products seeking the market for popularity. He and other critics of the time formulated a concept of art which makes it neither exclusive nor condescending but which certainly grants no living space to the products of popular culture. They believed that the basic function of art, and particularly literature, is to bring about the universal liberation of mankind; to provide for his emancipation from any sort of social manipulation by teaching truth and freedom.

The crucial question of the role of "public taste," that is to say, the impact of the market place on public opinion in a liberalistic if not democratic society, is a recurrent topic in pre-Victorian and Victorian discussions. One could arrange most of the literati of this era on a continuum, ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement with the following statements of William Hazlitt (1778-1830):

> The highest efforts of genius, in every walk of art, can never be understood by the generality of mankind.[8]
> The public taste hangs like a millstone round the neck of all original genius that does not conform to established and exclusive models.[9]

It is on these premises that Hazlitt became apprehensive about the denigration of art. Popular culture, he said, was bringing about the decay of high culture under the dictates of the buying customers' taste. Hazlitt:

> The public taste is, therefore, necessarily vitiated, in proportion as it is public; it is lowered with every infusion it receives of common opinion. The greater the number of judges, the less capable must they be of judging, for the addition to the number of good ones will always be small, while the multitude of bad ones is endless, and thus the decay of the arts may be said to be the necessary consequence of its progress.[10]

He came very close to using our contemporary categories in describing mass culture and mass leisure by pointing to the social configuration of official pontificators in matters artistic, the role of money, and the eagerness of the general public to keep up appearances whenever they make for social success. To quote from an article in the *Examiner* (1816), in which he took the selection policy of the British Museum to task:

> . . . the Royal Academy are a society of hucksters in the Fine Arts who are more tenacious of their profits as chapmen and dealers, than of the honour of Art. . . . A fashionable artist and a fashionable hair-dresser have the same common principles of theory and practice; the one fits his customers to appear with *eclat* in a ball-room, the other in the Great Room of the Royal Academy.[11]

Hazlitt's contempt for the public culminated in the following statement:

> It reads, it admires, it extols only because it is the fashion, not from any love of the subject or the man.[12]

And Hazlitt summed up: "The diffusion of taste is not the same thing as the improvement of taste."[13]

With Sir Walter Scott we encounter a radically different attitude toward the relation between the artist and the public. First of all, he considered the trade of writing a legitimate business which deserved its monetary rewards: "I care not who knows it—I write for general amusement."[14]

In an intimate journal entry he very frankly confessed that "the public favor is my only lottery" and he proudly added, "I have long enjoyed the foremost praise."[15] We might perhaps say that he formulated the credo of the middlebrow in assuming a pre-stablized harmony between books which sell and the healthy tastes of the reading public:

> . . . it has often happened, that those who have been best received in their own time, have also continued to be acceptable to posterity. I do not think so ill of the present generation, as to suppose that its present favour necessarily infers a future condemnation.[16]

In strict contrast to the esoteric concept of art defended by Hazlitt or the early Hunt—not to speak of Coleridge, Wordsworth and Shelley—Scott advocated a "cultivation" of literature "useful" for the business of society:

> A taste for poetry . . . is apt if too much indulged, to engender a fastidious contempt for the ordinary business of the world, and gradually to unfit us for the exercise of the useful and domestic virtues, which depend greatly on our not exalting our feelings above the temper of well-ordered and well-educated society. . . . Cultivate, then, sir, your taste for poetry and the belles-lettres, as an elegant and most interesting amusement, but combine it with studies of a more serious and solid cast.[17]

What Scott did was to turn art into a residual category of activity, thereby robbing it of aesthetic principle. For Scott there were no critical rules by which to judge the adequacy or beauty of artistic works. He was alarmed when he decided that the standards of his class were being lowered by the popularity of certain types of art—but again he substituted a conventional moral standard for an aesthetic one. For if the standards of society prevail, then the audience to whom it is directed is the legitimate critic.

A study of the leading magazines of the period would provide the third route to understanding the issues of the nineteenth century debate over popular art. *The Edinburgh Review*, founded in 1802, is perhaps the most fruitful periodical source for locating the main themes of the discussion. To its pages, almost all the major figures of English literary life contributed unsigned articles.

A subject which came under frequent scrutiny by the *Review* was the role and influence of the press, as representative of the mass media. Newspapers, as one contributor wrote in a review article, are:

> . . . an essential element and symbol of the peculiar spirit and tendency

which characterize our civilization. There is no place to which they do not penetrate; no object which they may not serve; no description of person to whom they are not welcome.[18]

Perhaps the most interesting facet of this article is its thesis that "the only adequate standard at any given period [namely for the measurement of the moral and intellectual level of a society] is the style of its popular writings and of its domestic buildings." This means:

Under a free and cheap press, newspapers are perhaps the best representative, at any given time, of the real moral and intellectual state of the greater part of a population.[19]

But the crucial dilemma of, a public opinion dependent on newspapers and, writers under pressure to satisfy the reading public is evaded by this writer, who views the growth of the press with optimism:

Books, how cheap soever, and however popularly written, are not likely to be read by the uninformed. To buy, or to get, and to begin reading a volume, indicates a certain progress in improvement to have been already made. But all men will read THE NEWS; and even peasants, farm servants, country-day labourers, will look at, nay pore over the paper that chronicles the occurrences of the neighbouring markettown. Here then is a channel through which, alongst with political intelligence and the occurrences of the day, the friends of human improvement, the judicious promoters of general education, may diffuse the best information, and may easily allure all classes, even the humblest, into the paths of general knowledge.[20]

That this was a controversial issue is borne out by another article which appeared in 1846. It speaks about the "unfortunate effects" produced by "dependence on periodical literature."

The constantly recurring demands of Periodical Literature are fatal to all deliberation of view,—to all care, or study, or selection of materials; in the case of those who engaged in it as a Profession.[21]

The article comments scathingly on the need to offer "novelty," "artificially fretted into foam," which prevents the public from learning to appreciate the

calmness and repose of manner, and to that breadth and evenness of composition which are the distinguishing characteristics of those works which we regard as the classics of our language.[22]

Again, America looms on the horizon as the most telling example of the debasement of culture when the author goes on to say:

We cannot but regard the condition of our own Daily Press, as a morning and evening witness against the moral character of the people; for if this kind of scurrility were as distasteful to the public, as the grosser kinds of licentiousness are, it would at once disappear. That its condition is still worse iu America, we can . . . easily believe. . . . In the meantime, we hope that Mr. Dickens is mistaken as to the degree in which the Press in the United States impresses and influences the general feeling. . . . Does any well-educated man in America read these papers *with respect?* [23]

An interesting article, published in 1848, not only reiterates the thesis that the newspaper is the most appropriate yardstick for the state of culture, but declares that the newspaper is superseding the book:

'Give me a place to stand on,' said Archimedes, 'and I will move the world.' The modern Archimedes who should be content to use a moral lever, would take his stand upon the press. . . . Let one calmly reflect upon the enormous power, for good or evil, exercised by clever writers who are daily read by thousands. It is a well-known fact, which any leading book-seller will verify with a sigh, that, whenever public events of importance occur, or great changes are under discussion, it is useless to publish books.[24]

One remarkable article anticipated modern categories of social criticism such as those used by Riesman and others, categories which suggest that an individual's values must be neutralized if he is to remain an accepted member of a social team:

A certain social uniformity ensues . . . insensibly destroying men's humours, idiosyncracies, and spontaneous emotions. It does so, by rendering their concealment an habitual necessity, and by allowing them neither food nor sphere. Men are thus, as it were, cast in a mould. Besides—the innumerable influences, intellectual and moral, which, at a period of diffused knowledge like the present, co-exist and cooperate in building up our mental structure, are often completely at variance with each other in origin and tendency: so that they neutralize each other's effects, and leave a man well stored with thoughts and speech, but frequently without aim or purpose.[25]

The article ended with a statement that art can only retain "but a feeble hold on the true and real" in a period which is characterized:

by subserviency to Opinion—that irresponsible life which makes little things great, and shuts great things out from our view.[26]

A magazine with a social purpose, the *Edinburgh Review* again and again permitted its contributors to come back to the deplorable level of popular entertainment. A number of remedial measures were proposed at various times and by various contributors; they included increased and free education, legal measures against trash, a classification of the theaters, and a deliberate effort on the part of intellectuals to raise the standards of the general public so that their "casting vote" would be for works of "good taste." [27]

Throughout the nineteenth century, the writers who viewed the new developments with alarm were seldom contradicted. If the public continued to buy bestsellers, the champions of higher culture seemed to dominate the theoretical discussions. However, some limited oppostion to them did appear, and there were a few who took up the cudgels in defense of an art for and of the people. Their attitude was well expressed in the *Edinburgh Review* of 1896. The question was posed: Is it true that increased moral and material welfare of the masses "can only be obtained by making it more difficult for the man of intellect to make his mark on the age," that "the levelling up of the masses inevitably leads to the levelling down of genuis?" [28] If it be true, "the interests of the many must, we fear, prevail over the requirements of the few . . ." [29] But, it is not true:

> . . . material prosperity has been accompanied by moral progress; the life of our people is, on the whole, more healthy than it was fifty years ago . . . and their opportunities for sensible recreation greater. . . . there is no proof that, in levelling up the masses, we have levelled down genius. We have, on the contrary, argued that . . . there is no evidence of decay in our intellectual growth; and that an age which has done more to dominate nature, and to explain nature, than all the preceeding centuries, cannot rightly be charged with inferiority of intellect.[30]

It is on this note of optimism that the *Edinburgh Review* summarized the achievements of the century, and carried forward with new momentum the growing triumph of science and technology. Here are Arnold's Philistines victorious, relating popular culture to the grand march of Victorian progress in words which might be taken unaltered from the contemporary debate.

REFERENCES

1 See Leo Lowenthal, "Historical Perspectives of Popular Culture," *The American Journal of Sociology*, 1950, 55:324-325.

2 Leo Lowenthal and Marjorie Fiske, "The Debate Over Art and Popular Culture in Eighteenth Century England," *Common Frontiers of the Social Sciences*, ed. by Mirra Komarovsky, (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1957).

3 For details on the spread of reading among the lower classes, see the excellent book of Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader*, University of Chicago Press, 1957.

4 Robert A. Colby. "The Librarian Rules the Roost: The Career of Charles Edward Mudie, (1818-1890)" in *Wilson Library Bulletin*, April, 1952, p. 625.

5 Sir Herbert Maxwell, *Life and Times of the Rt. Hon. W. H. Smith*. London: Blackwell, 1893, vol. 1, p. 57.

6 For this whole complex see Sir Herbert Maxwell, *loc. cit.*; Samuel Phillips, *Essays from 'The Times,'* John Murray, 1871, Vol. I, pp. 311-325; "Railway Literature," the *Dublin University Magazines*, Vol. 34, September 1849, pp. 280-291; Michael Sadlair, "Yellow Backs" in John Carter (ed.) *New Paths in Book Collecting*, Constable, 1934, pp. 125-161; Robert A. Colby, "That He Who Rides May Read: W. H. Smith and Sons Railway Library," in *Wilson Library Bulletin*, December, 1952, pp. 300-306.

7 These and the following quotations are from Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (1869).

8 *The Round Table* (1817). *The Complete Works*. London: Dent, 1930, vol. 4, p. 164.

9 *Lectures on the English Poets* (1818). *Loc. cit.*, vol. 5, p. 96.

10 *Loc. cit.*, pp. 45-46.

11 *Loc. cit.*, vol. 18, pp. 105-108.

12 *Table Talk* (1821-1822). *Loc. cit.*, vol. 8, p. 99.

13 *Examiner* (1816). *Loc. cit.*, vol. 18, pp. 102-103.

14 Introductory epistle to *Fortune's of Nigel* (1822), London, 1892, vol. 1, p. xxxviii.

15 *Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, (1826), ed. by J. G. Tait. Edinburgh, 1950, p. 73.

16 Introductory Epistle to *Fortune's of Nigel, loc. cit.*, p. lii.

17 *Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, vol. II, p. 278, London, 1932.

18 *Edinburgh Review*, 65, 1837 (No. CXXXII): 197.—All contributions to the *Edinburgh Review* are anonymous. Wherever possible, the name of the contributor is supplied. The writer of the article quoted above is William Empson. For research on authorship, I am indebted to Ina Lawson of the Department of English, University of California, Berkeley. There is, however, a project now in progress at Wellesley College under the editorship of Walter E. Houghton. Known as *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*, it will eventually give us, among other things, the authors' names.

19 *Loc. cit.*

20 *Loc. cit.*, 61, 1835 (CKXIII):184.

21 *Loc. cit.*, 83, 1846 (No. CLXVIII):383.
22 *Loc. cit.*
23 *Loc. cit.*, 76, 1843 (No. CLIV):520 [James Spaulding, author].
24 *Loc. cit.*, 88, 1848 (No. CLXXVIII):342 [A. Hayward, author].
25 *Loc. cit.*, 89, 1849 (No. CLXXX):360 [Aubrey de Vere, author].
26 *Loc. cit.*
27 *Loc. cit.*, 65, 1837 (No. CXXXII):204 [William Empson, author].
28 *Loc. cit.*, 183, 1896 (No. CCCLXXV):20.
29 *Loc. cit.*
30 *Loc. cit.*

HANNAH ARENDT

Society and Culture

MASS CULTURE and mass society (the very terms were still a sign of reprobation a few years ago, implying that mass society was a depraved form of society and mass culture a contradiction in terms) are considered by almost everybody today as something with which we must come to terms, and in which we must discover some "positive" aspects—if only because mass culture is the culture of a mass society. And mass society, whether we like it or not, is going to stay with us into the foreseeable future. No doubt mass society and mass culture are interrelated phenomena. Mass society comes about when "the mass of the population has become incorporated into society."* Since society originally comprehended those parts of the population which disposed of leisure time and the wealth which goes with it, mass society does indeed indicate a new order in which the masses have been liberated "from the burden of physically exhausting labor."† Historically as well as conceptually, therefore, mass society has been preceded by society, and society is no more a generic term than is mass society; it too can be dated and described historically. It is older, to be sure, than mass society, but not older than the modern age. In fact, all the traits that crowd psychology has meanwhile discovered in mass man: his loneliness (and loneliness is neither isolation nor solitude) regardless of his adaptability; his excitability and lack of standards; his capacity for consumption, accompanied by inability to judge or even to distinguish; above all, his egocentricity and that fateful alienation from the world which, since Rousseau, he mistakes for self-alienation—all these traits first appeared in "good society," where there was no question of masses, numerically speaking. The first mass men, we are tempted to say, quantitatively

*Edward Shils, see page 1.
†*Ibid.*, page 2.