

the first half of the twentieth century. Its most appropriate function would seem to be as a replacement for the now virtually unobtainable *Twice 55*.

Indiana University, Bloomington

W. Edson Richmond

The Man Who Would Be Perfect: John Humphrey Noyes and the Utopian Impulse. By Robert David Thomas. ([Philadelphia]: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc., 1977. Pp. xii, 199. Notes, bibliography, index. \$12.95.)

John Humphrey Noyes, one of the most radical religious and social reformers of nineteenth-century America, is the subject of perpetual reinterpretation. Most studies have focused on the communes at Putney, Vermont, and Oneida, New York, where he translated his unorthodox ideas into communistic economies, mutual criticism sessions, group marriage, birth control methods, and eugenics experimentation. Robert David Thomas' work attempts to break new ground by exploring Noyes' psyche and interpreting his career decisions as responses to religious enthusiasm and reform movements during his antebellum youth.

Thomas suggests that the types of perfectionism and religious communalism developed by Noyes helped resolve his own psychological, social, and occupational dilemmas. The youngest student to graduate from Dartmouth in 1831 at age nineteen, Noyes already had acquired the acute insecurity, fear of criticism and failure, uneasiness with women, and growing need for absolute truth and unquestioned personal authority that marked his manhood. Estranged parents, especially an emotionally unstable and domineering mother, were contributing factors. After embarrassment as a lawyer and conversion to Christianity in 1831, Noyes turned to the ministry and was reconciled with his mother. At Andover Theological Seminary and Yale Divinity School he drew strength from identifying himself with St. Paul and began gathering the raw materials for the unique theological structure to satisfy his private needs. His 1834 public declaration of sinlessness alienated his friends and professors, effected his expulsion from Yale, and brought the revocation of his preaching license. Separated from established religious institutions, rejected by recognized perfectionist leaders, and spurned by the woman he loved, Noyes approached insanity in cycles of elevation, contradiction, despair, recovery, and elevation. Not until he assembled his first disciples as the Putney community in 1840 and started to subject his parents to

his righteous will did the young reformer find a microcosmic society in which he could be totally dominant and therefore secure.

Most will find this volume, with its psychological perspective, extensive bibliography, and thorough documentation a useful introduction to John Humphrey Noyes. Thomas carefully explains Noyes' peculiar beliefs in Christ's second coming in 70 A.D., Christian perfection, the dawn of the millennium in 1847, male continence, complex marriage, stirpiculture, mutual criticism, divine healing, just war, and democratic theocracy.

On balance, however, the book is a disappointment. It contributes little new knowledge while pressing hard upon the limitations of psychohistory. The interplay of Noyes with the crusades and crusaders for perfectionism, peace, temperance, abolition, and spiritualism is covered but not integrated well with the text. The psychological analysis rests almost exclusively, sometimes uncritically, upon Noyes' propagandistic reminiscences written long after the events took place and upon his college journal, diary, and letters as edited by George W. Noyes in this century. Thomas falls prey to accepting the appraisal of John Humphrey Noyes' own *Witness* regarding his emotional state and motives for behavior (p. 89). Noyes is used as an unquestioned source for the statements and feelings of others, including arguments of his theological opponent Nathaniel Taylor (pp. 48, 49, 52-54). The analysis strains to make Noyes' symptoms fit preconceived psychological categories (pp. 14, 59). Amid a plodding narrative profuse with Noyes quotations, the main character never emerges as a vital personality.

Indiana State University, Evansville

Donald E. Pitzer

The Lincoln Conspiracy. By David Balsiger and Charles E. Sellier, Jr. (Los Angeles: Schick Sunn Classic Books, 1977. Pp. 320. Illustrations, notes. Paperbound, \$2.25.)

The Lincoln assassination has always been the preserve of the amateur. Of the modern Lincoln scholars, only Reinhard H. Luthin wrote at any length on the subject. To be sure, not all works by amateurs are amateurish, but *The Lincoln Conspiracy* with its footnotes to encyclopedia articles and college textbooks is. David Balsiger and Charles E. Sellier, Jr., who work for Sunn Classic Pictures, wrote this book as a "tie-in" with the motion picture of the same name. In a plot much too complicated to summarize here, they allege various grand conspiracies