

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

to assassinate President Lincoln. Cabinet members, senators, congressmen, financiers, cotton speculators, confederates, secret service agents, and bureaucrats conspired; John Wilkes Booth was an unwitting pawn.

*The Lincoln Conspiracy* utilizes the vast existing literature of sensationalism—Otto Eisenschiml, Vaughan Shelton, Theodore Roscoe—for many of its allegations, laying the by now customary stress on the absurd canard that Edwin M. Stanton masterminded a conspiracy to kill Lincoln. It enlarges upon these somewhat by the use of manuscript collections in the possession of Ray Neff, a professor at Indiana State University and a consultant for the film company. Two superbly researched editorials by William C. Davis prove what a tissue of forgeries, fabrications, and fantasies the Sunn Classic argument is based on (*Civil War Times Illustrated*, XVI [August, 1977], 33-37; XVI [November, 1977], 47-49).

There is nothing to be learned about the Lincoln assassination from this book, but there is something to be learned about America from it. Cynics will see in it America's debt to "Sloanism": like General Motors under Alfred Sloan, Sunn Classic is in business to make money, not a good product. Others will see clearly what Naomi Bliven saw when she reviewed some recent books on Adolf Hitler for *The New Yorker* ([August 29, 1977], 86): "I do not see Hitler as a Prince of Darkness; I do not see him as a prince of anything. Historically the agents of destruction have rarely been epic figures. . . . Perhaps the human attraction to symmetry makes us unwitting Manichaeans—because we have had great good men, we invent great bad men." Well, Napoleon was no invention, but her insight seems applicable to assassins.

Americans resist the idea that such obscure figures as the Lincoln conspirators, Lee Harvey Oswald, and Arthur Bremer can alter history; it makes history seem a purposeless chaos. Instead, they look beyond the hapless killers for truly great villains who manipulated them. In this way, history shows some pattern of struggle between good and evil, even though the evil sometimes triumphs.

Louis A. Warren  
*Lincoln Library and Museum,  
Fort Wayne*

Mark E. Neely, Jr.