

Book reviewed: The Forging of the American Empire, By Sidney Lens. 1972  
462 pp. Crowell

Initially, the book I had chosen was an autobiographical work by Abbie Hoffman, entitled Soon to Be a Major Motion Picture, but I changed my mind because all of the reviews in the general and intellectual elite review media were on microfiche. I chose the work by Lens instead. I read this book a few years back, so I felt that I would be better able to analyze the reviews in terms of their accuracy and overall usefulness.

The reviews in BOOKLIST and CHOICE were both disappointingly short. In the BOOKLIST review, the reviewer states that Lens' work is a piece of sound scholarship, but that it lacks a comprehensive bibliography and footnotes. In CHOICE, the reviewer was a bit more critical of the work, stating that it is a "biased polemic, useful in attacking cultural myths and promoting discussion and debate." The reviewer recommends the book for undergraduates, but criticizes it for its lack of foot-<sup>what the book says, although it was well documented</sup> notes and its sketchy index. In PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY, there were two review citations, of which I could find only one. It was very short. The most important thing that it stated was that Lens' book was one certain to be read and debated. <sup>and therefore, should be purchased.</sup>

The two major reviews of the book were in THE SATURDAY REVIEW and THE PROGRESSIVE. (I took the liberty of classifying the latter publica-<sup>tion as an intellectual review media source</sup>). Both of the reviews offer in-depth analyses of Lens' main thesis. One is favorable and the other attacks it savagely. In the SATURDAY REVIEW piece, Arthur Schlesinger Jr.,

well known author and historian, attacks not only Lens' thesis, but also his style and his politics. Schlesinger goes out of his way to find things that are inaccurate and badly written in the book. It is very clear from reading the review that he neither likes nor agrees with Sidney Lens. He is critical to the point of being nit-picky. In a way this is good, for it provides readers and librarians who are thinking of purchasing the book with information not found in the other reviewing sources. The PROGRESSIVE, however, provides a positive review. In it the historian Stephen E. Ambrose, also criticizes the book, but his criticism, instead of being an outright attack, is constructive. He emphasizes things he would have liked to have seen given more in-depth coverage. Ambrose characterizes Lens' book as popular history, "written for the intelligent reader and not the pages of the American Historical Review." He recommends the book.

In judging the overall usefulness of these reviews I'd say that the review in the PROGRESSIVE was the most enlightening. Then I would pick Schlesinger's review in THE SATURDAY REVIEW as the most critical. Following that, I'd say that the reviews in CHOICE and BOOKLIST were short and not that informative. Finally, the blurb in PUBLISHER'S WEEKLY gave very little information. All of the above reviews, except for the one in THE SATURDAY REVIEW, stated that The Forging of the American Empire would contribute to the debate on American Foreign policy. In this sense, they recommend the book. CHOICE, BOOKLIST, and THE SATURDAY REVIEW are all at varying degrees critical of the level of scholarship employed by Lens. The most important things left out were footnotes and a good index. These criticisms may prevent a librarian from purchasing the book. However, if I were a librarian, I would acquire it. As a librarian I would attempt to research who the author is and what the varying positions in the foreign policy debate are. Judging from the <sup>what</sup> majority of

*do you think this type of criticism was valid? Or, did the reviewer miss the essence of the book?*

these reviews say, this book would be an excellent addition to a collection of materials covering American history and foreign policy.

good comparison  
your case for question of  
the validity or usefulness of  
economic history course - altho  
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addresses, essays, lec-  
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the mines;  
in the United Mine  
Bus. Grossman,

documented expose  
Washington  
the history of the  
ers, particularly un-

der the domination of W. A. (Tony) Boyle, and gives a complete report on the degeneration of the union hierarchy as presently constituted. The graphically described 1968 explosion of the Consolidated coal mine in Farmington, West Virginia serves as one of many situations and problems of mine safety explored by Hume. Another is the scourge of black lung disease to which a thoroughly researched chapter is devoted. The study also explores the union management's practices both in the running of its conventions and in the handling of finances which came under attack directly when Joseph Yablonski challenged Boyle in the 1969 union elections. The murders of Yablonski and his wife and daughter are covered fully with recent legal battles of the union reviewed in conclusion.

331.881'22'0973 United Mine Workers of America  
75-106294

**Lefcourt, Robert, comp.** Law against the people; essays to demystify law, order, and the courts. 1971. 400p. Random, \$10.00; paper, \$2.45.

Lawyers and laymen who represent political philosophies left of moderate charge that law as practiced in the U.S. today is self-serving and unresponsive to the needs and rights of people it is designed to protect. Economic, social, religious, and sexual inequities are exposed by George Jackson, Stanley Aronowitz, Arthur Kinoy, Haywood Burns, William Kunstler, the New York Panther 21, and other protesters in contributions varied in length and quality, but bound by commitment to radical changes in legal institutions. Footnotes appended to Lefcourt's introduction and a selected annotated bibliography and notes on contributors included.

340'.115'0973 Civil rights—U.S.—Addresses, essays, lectures || Practice of law—U.S.—Addresses, essays, lectures 79-143827

**Lens, Sidney.** The forging of the American empire. 1972. 462p. Crowell, \$10.

A comprehensive historical inquiry into U.S. imperialism indicts a country whose ideological commitment to peace is belied by aggression on several shores from the beginning of nationhood to the present. Economic policies of Taft, Wilson, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, and other American Presidents are presented as intrinsically entwined with foreign and domestic relations. Lens, whose prolific studies on U.S. government from a liberal viewpoint include *The futile crusade; anti-communism as American credo* (BOOKLIST 61:70 S 15 64), evidences sound scholarship in a text which contains source material but neglects substantiation in the form of

footnotes. A distinctive selected bibliography makes no reference to original sources such as state papers and limits magazine entries to those considered to be most significant.

327.73 U.S.—Foreign relations || U.S.—Territorial expansion 74-158710

**Lipset, Seymour Martin and Schaflander, Gerald M.** Passion and politics: student activism in America. 1971. 440p. illus. Little, paper-covered boards with cloth binding, \$8.95.

Observations in *Students in revolt* (BOOKLIST 66:942 Ap 1 70), which was edited by Lipset, offer useful but not necessary background for comprehension of this analysis by two sociologists of the history and future of U.S. student involvement. Lipset places university unrest in historical and sociological perspective and differentiates between student radicals and other youthful abjurors of current educational standards. Schaflander in part bases a prediction of politically liberated leadership on interviews with students, excerpts of which are included in the text. Acute, encompassing, and stimulating in contrast between conclusions reached by the two writers. Chapter footnotes more than adequate. Parts of the text which were previously published have been revised.

387.1'98'10973 College students—U.S.—Political activity 70-149459

**Manners, Ande.** Poor cousins. 1972. 318p. illus. Coward, McCann, paper-covered boards with cloth backbone, \$8.95.

A compassionate, authoritative, and humorous portrayal of almost three million Jewish immigrants whose arrival in the U.S. at the turn of the century provoked and embarrassed the German Jewish establishment described in Birmingham's "Our crowd"; the great Jewish families of New York (BOOKLIST 63:924 My 1 67). Manners encompasses the culture, impact, failures, and achievements of the new citizens in a history filled with rich characterizations and stories of acclimatization of some fascinatingly resourceful individuals. Fourteen pages of representative photographs and reproductions and a distinguished selected bibliography.

1301.4529607 Jews in the United States 74-166595

**Medvedev, Zhores Aleksandrovich and Medvedev, Roi Aleksandrovich.** A question of madness. Tr. from the Russian by Ellen de Kadt. 1971. 223p. Knopf, \$5.95.

Related in alternate chapters by Roy and Zhores Medvedev the straightforward narrative tells with a mixture of humor and courageous frankness the

events surrounding Zhores' incarceration for 19 days in a mental hospital in Kaluga, U.S.S.R. a highly respected geneticist of scientific papers, is the son of Roy Medvedev whose study *Let history judge; the consequences of Stalinism* in BOOKLIST 68:548 Mr 1 72 account describes the Medvedev family and various and international scientists, novelist Alexander Solzhenitsyn's letter to the author quoted in full. In addition to Zhores' case, the Medvedevs the general practice of Soviet placing dissidents in mental hospitals. 364.13'1 Political prisoners—Russian narratives || Psychiatric hospitals—F

**Moeller, Beverley Bowen.** Ph.D. Boulder Dam. 1971. 199p. illus. California, \$8.50.

Complexities involved in a major federal legislation described in readable style in a chronicle of the Boulder Canyon Project conflict between public and private interests and federal control of public lands. The well-researched study examines efforts by California Congressman Swing dispels assumptions of support for Hoover for the dam which name through details of objection and delay shown to characterize Hoover role. Extensive footnotes and bibliography appended to a history of development along the River.

328.73'077 Hoover Dam || U.S. government—1919-1933 || Swing, P

**National Geographic Society.** Washington, D.C. Special Publication Division. Nomads of the world by Leonard Carmichael. 1971. illus. 10 1/4 in. National Geographic Society, Dept. 100, Washington 20036, \$4.65 postpaid.

Distinguished scholars, some lived for many months with nomadic people they describe. Lives and customs of eight nomads of India, Al Murr of Arabia, Bajau of the Qashqa'i of Iran, Tuareg of Bambuti of Africa's Ituri forests of Colombia, and Bororo—who wander over long search of food and water for nomads or animals. Each author's times were changing for each often the government cont

Booklist April 1, 1972 P 640-641

role played by the Hessian soldier in that complicated event. The book is based upon source material gathered from archives on both sides of the Atlantic. The author explains why many of the German accounts were written: why some contain jumbled syntax and others are characterized by carefully written passages. The text is particularly valuable in explaining the recruiting process of and the morale among the Hessian troops. The reader is also able to discern the changing ideas about the colonies as they moved into statehood and merged into a new nation. The German accounts also include informative descriptions of Indians, Negroes, German-American communities, etc. It is not difficult to understand why approximately 6,000 of the 30,000 who crossed the Atlantic elected to settle in the country they had earlier fought against. This volume is of value to readers of all ages. High school students will profit from it, anyone with a penchant for history will find it interesting, and college students will find the appendices and source material suggestive for further study.

**LAWSON, R. Alan.** *The failure of independent liberalism, 1930-1941.* Putnam, 1971. 322p bibl 69-18186. 7.95

Can be profitably compared with C. Forcey's *The crossroads of liberalism* (1961), as describing the relationship of intellectuals to social developments. Forcey dealt with the group around the *New republic* in the 1910's; Lawson copes with such collectivist thinkers as Stuart Chase and George Soule, among others. The longest shadows are cast by John Dewey and Lewis Mumford, men who avoided both New Deal opportunism and Communist excesses. Their "failure" is said to have been their incapacity to take power, but, by the evidence, the author lays this more to their times than to their own inadequacies: they were the least compromised of 1930's partisans and could survive them. This sharply etched thesis notes our current "malaise," but does not spell out the applicability of "pragmatic rationalism" to it. An essay in "intellectual history," the book should prove stimulating to students of 20th-century history. For general and graduate libraries. Bibliographic note; index.

**LENS, Sidney.** *The forging of the American empire.* Thomas Y. Crowell, 1971. 462p bibl 74-158710. 10.00. ISBN 0-690-31309-8

A sweeping account of American imperialism that is a popularized synthesis of New Left revisionism. Drawing upon the scholarship of Fleming, Lynd, Alperovitz, Horowitz, Kolko, Zinn, Williams, and others, Lens, cochairman of the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, presents an indictment of American imperialism, and the moralizing myths used to sustain it. The major thesis is that imperialism is an inevitable by-product of the nation's economic system, and that it has been portrayed as a benevolent, progressive policy to silence critics. Although a biased polemic, the book serves a useful function in attacking cultural myths and promoting discussion and debate. Unfortunately, Lens tends to see too many conspiracies. Also his present-minded bias is a hindrance in interpreting the distant past. The book can be useful to undergraduates, but should not be used in place of scholarly revisionist works of more limited scope but stronger documentation. There are no footnotes, although references to some sources appear in the text. A good selected revisionist bibliography is included. Sketchy index.

**LOGSDON, Joseph.** *Horace White, nineteenth century liberal.* Greenwood, 1971. 418p bibl (Contributions in American history, 10) 77-105982. 13.50. ISBN 0-8371-3309-2

A good, solid biography of the 19th-century liberal editor of the *Chicago tribune* and later the *New York evening post*. This work is based on sound scholarly research in the primary sources and provides a sharp picture of White and the dilemma faced by reformist Republicans in the closing years of the 19th century and early part of the 20th century, as their party lost the reforming, humanitarian zeal with which it was born in the 1850's. Extensive bibliography, critical notes, and index. Should prove most useful for undergraduates and graduate students as well as the general reader.

**MERRILL, Horace Samuel and Marion Galbraith.** *The Republican command, 1897-1913.* Kentucky, 1971. 360p il bibl 76-147852. 12.50. ISBN 0-8131-1245-1

The authors chart with scholarly detail the deterioration of effective leadership within the Republican party in the 15 years from McKinley to Taft. The Progressive Age was not very progressive as the

Republican-business alliance flourished under the Congressional guardianship of Aldrich, Allison, Platt, and Spooner only to disintegrate when these "custodians of the status quo" failed to respond to attacks of muckrakers and insurgents with long overdue reform legislation. Like Wiebe, the authors see the period as one of centralizing national control over political parties despite some vigorous state-level leaders and programs. Roosevelt, while no hero, is shown possessing "superb political acumen" as he preserves party unity and exercises Presidential influence to get popular rate regulatory and trust-busting legislation, and sidesteps tariff, currency, and race questions on which the party was divided. Having failed to convince the Senatorial command to modernize the party, he forfeited in 1912 position and power, leaving the party "firmly in the hands of men of great caution" and little vision. First-rate illustrations, footnotes. Recommended for all libraries.

**MORGAN, H. Wayne.** *Unity and culture: the United States, 1870-1900.* Penguin, 1971. 175p il bibl (Pelican history of the United States, vol. 4). 6.95. ISBN 0-7139-0269-8

A sprightly collection of four essays written by a leading authority on late 19th-century America. Individual pieces treat industrialization, national politics, the movement toward a national culture, and national emergence to great power status. Morgan draws liberally on his own writings about the period and on his wide knowledge of the sources. The book was apparently written for general readers or, perhaps, classroom use in introductory courses. The essays begin with analytical introductions, then turn to chronological development of topics. Arguments emphasize the tendency toward a national economic, political, intellectual, and diplomatic culture, and the role of industrialization, communication, and institutionalization of life in that movement. In treating diplomacy, he minimizes the commercial factors stressed by Williams, La Feber, and others. It contains few new insights; most useful as an introductory text/synthesis. Although it is judged to be probably too thin to warrant inclusion in library collections. Twelve pages of well chosen plates; good bibliographical essay; page index.

**ROUSE, Parke, Jr.** *James Blair of Virginia.* North Carolina. 336p il tab bibl 70-159559. 10.00. ISBN 0-8078-1175-4

Rouse is both executive director of the Jamestown Foundation and author of several popular histories of the South. While the biography of the Virginia Commissary abounds in antiquities and genealogy, it has to be regarded as a serious study and one which has been meticulously researched. The subject was difficult, for as Rouse writes, "the human side of James Blair will never be fully known for lack of family papers." Yet even the public side of the Virginia and councilor was rather enigmatic as the extremely varied testimony dredged chiefly from church and public archives will show. That so few biographies of persons in the middle period of colonial history that it belongs in even the most modest collections.

**TISHLER, Haze Sorel.** *Self-reliance and social security, 1870-1920.* Kennikat, 1971. 220p bibl (National University Public series in American studies) 79-139361. 10.95. ISBN 0-8041-9012-X

Conventional wisdom dates the genesis of the idea of social security in the 1920's and its first fruition under the New Deal. Tishler (Pennsylvania) places the beginnings of the social insurance concept in the late 19th century and its first implementation during the Progressive Era. Tishler first shows how the philanthropic activities of the period between 1870-93 and the impact of the depression of the 1890's led to the revision of traditional ideas about self-reliance and the general acceptance of the notion of collective responsibility. Even more important, those who continued after the turn of the century to oppose compulsory public programs favored private voluntary cooperative efforts to promote individual welfare. The first triumphs of the collective approach came during the Progressive Era with the adoption of men's compensation laws and state mothers' pension acts. This provocative study is a major contribution to our knowledge of the growth of the welfare state in the U.S., supplementing and correcting such works as R. Bremner's *From the depths* (1956), C. A. Beard's *Seedtime of reform* (1963), and Lubove's *The struggle for social security, 1900-1935* (CHOICE, Apr. 1969).

**DANCERS AND LOVERS.**

*Robert Wolfson.* Warner, \$1.50

A powerful young Russian ballet dancer defects to the West—for love, it says here—and becomes the celebrated partner of a much older, very famous ballerina first in London, then in New York. There is even an incident where the two are picked up in the police raid on a sordid dive. Sound familiar? The plot outline must have given the Warner lawyers some uncomfortable moments, but this novel of the ballet world, and also, incidentally, of homosexuality, is fun for ballet fans who will enjoy playing the "guess who?" game. [June]

**A RABBINIC ANTHOLOGY.**

*Edited by C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe. Foreword by Raphael Loewe.* Schocken, \$7.50; cloth \$20

For this hefty price, one gets a truly weighty volume, 971 pages of rabbinic lore and Jewish philosophy. This book was first published 30 years ago, and as Raphael Loewe says in his new introduction, some of it may have been superseded by the Encyclopaedia Judaica of 1972. Nevertheless, this volume is essential to the library of the reader "be he professional student or interested layman, who is prepared to take Judaism seriously and is willing to attune his ear to its own natural categories of thought and expression." [June]

**THE DEVIL AND MR. SMITH.**

*Hershel Smith with David Hunt.* Fleming H. Revell, \$2.95

Tying in with this year's fascination with Satan-worship, exorcism and the occult, here is the memoir of a fundamentalist Christian who, through his adolescent rebellion, became involved with Satanist cults, first in a rather haphazard teenage way, then through Anton LaVey's First Church of Satan. Though the book tries to milk sensationalism for all it's worth, it seems a bit unconvincing: one never understands why, at the height of Smith's traffic with Satan, he tries to "save" a homosexual buddy via Christ, though he himself doesn't return to the fold till a pretty girl shepherds him there. One thing is clear—the basically fanatic personality is pretty similar whether in service of God or Satan. Only the methods of worship vary. [July]

**SERIES**

**THE SAVAGE REPORT:**

*Jack Anderson Against Doctor Tek. Howard Rheingold.* Freeway Press, \$1.25

No, not our Jack Anderson, although this Jack is an investigative reporter, too. He lives in the year 1994, works for Eve Savage, a broadcast journalist, and he's terrific with the ladies, karate and his antique Magnum 357. The extrapolation is often quite good, and the novel's climax

is imaginative, but the plot is familiar—it concerns a right-wing group's plans for world domination—and the gimmicks will be routine to anyone even remotely acquainted with recent science fiction, particularly Norman Spinrad's "Bug Jack Barron." And the author is capable of absolutely egregious writing. Example: "A piercing poised ocular interlock occurred." [May]

**BLACK SWAN #1:**

*The Chinese Kiss. J. J. Montague.* Canyon, \$1.50

According to Roget, "Black Swan" is a synonym for "nymphomaniac." It is also the code name for the beautiful female spy, Shauna Bishop, and that should give anyone a pretty fair idea of what this first installment in a new series is all about. The plot concerns Shauna's conversion from a phallus fixation to bisexuality and her use of her new talents to trap a beautiful lesbian Red Chinese agent and their mutual pursuit of a brilliant scientist. Not much story here, but plenty for the author's purpose, which is to provide erotica thinly disguised as espionage fiction. The disguise is thin indeed. [May]

**THE SCORPIO KILLERS.**

*Ray Hogan.* Signet, 75c

Shawn Starbuck, hero of Hogan's recent "The Jenner Guns," continues his endless quest for his long-lost brother, Ben. This time, he joins Mexican nationals pursuing an American who stole \$10,000 from them and who are in turn pursued by agents of a tyrant they assassinated. There are the usual shoot-outs, jailbreaks and fist fights—and that's about all. The reliable Hogan does little, but does it well. [June]

**OPERATION HAMMERLOCK.**

*Dan J. Marlowe.* Fawcett, 95c

With this latest installment in his Earl Drake series, Marlowe again proves that he is among the most consistent and inventive of paperback thriller writers. In it, the not-quite-reformed criminal Drake and his voluptuous Hazel are forced to help a brutal Mexican police detective get revenge on a corrupt politician. Marlowe fuses a lot of disparate plot elements—prison break, smuggling, bank robbery and even computer technology—into a seamless and entertaining whole. The characterizations are believable, the local color authentic, the writing crisp. And although Drake is a tough guy, he relies as much upon brains as on gunfire—rare and refreshing in a series here. [June]

**THE MIND MASTERS #1.**

*John F. Rossman.* Signet, 95c

Brain waves, electromagnetic energy, computerized ESP and the like are the material of this stimulating quasi-SF novel; how they are to be applied is the moral issue. The scientist-cum-racing-driver hero struggles with both his own

psychic powers and those martial connivers who would abuse technology for what they consider "pragmatic" reasons. The surface trappings of Rossman's book are standard for the most part—good adventure—but, the book's real thrills lie in its detailed documentation of the technology, and in its remarkably realistic use of real people and events: Nixon, General Haig, Kosygin and Watergate all appear in correct historical context. All in all, a nifty, thought-provoking genre novel. [July]

**NONFICTION REPRINTS**

**YARBOROUGH: Living in a City That Time Forgot.** *Howard M. Kahn.* Little, Brown, \$3.95

"In this persuasive and imaginative critique of spending as the cure for societal problems, Kahn argues that government programs fail because they don't have to compete." Said *PW*, "Regrettably, the author does not amplify his recommendations for decentralizing services and having social programs 'deliver' in order to merit appropriations." [May]

**THE FACTS ABOUT NIXON.**

*William Costello.* Viking Press, \$2.50

Published in 1960, this book has acquired a classic patina—rumor says that the old copies in newspaper morgues and libraries are frayed with the handling of hundreds of journalists. In no way is this a "pop" book: if anything it is a little dull, but many will welcome the reprint as an addition to their personal libraries of Nixonia and will enjoy rereading it with all the wisdom of the Monday morning quarterback. [Spring]

**THE FORGING OF THE AMERICAN EMPIRE.** *Sidney Lens.* Apollo, \$4.95

"Lens himself has forged a reputation as one of the most tough-minded revisionist historians writing in this country today," said *PW* of this "powerful and absorbing" book which uses historical evidence to support a thesis of aggressive and disputable imperialism. We added, "A book certain to be read and debated." [June]

**CORRECTIONS**

On March 18 the Paperback Forecast ran a review of "Instant Millionaires" to be published in June by Playboy Press. This has been changed. Playboy will instead be publishing "The Young Millionaires" by Lawrence A. Armour. Straight Arrow has changed its plans to publish "Nark!" (reviewed February 14) in paper; the hardcover edition will sell for \$7.95. The Paperback Forecast of November 12, 1973 incorrectly listed the author of NAL's "Woman as Revolutionary" as Frederick G. Griffin. The correct spelling is Frederick C. Giffen.

V205 Apr 74

**LENNON, JOHN**—Continued  
points . . . [and the] relationship of the famous [singers]. (Library J)

"Admirers of the Beatles as a group may be disappointed, but admirers of John Lennon's attempts to understand and explain the phenomenon of which he was a part, or of his efforts to convert frenetic musical prestige into beneficial social influence, will undoubtedly find these interviews . . . absorbing. As a form, the interview is always a bit clumsy in print, but this is a minor fault in a generally informative confession by a remarkable man." Phoebe Adams

Atlantic 228:153 N 1 '71 90w

"The interviews are pithy, irreverent, and revealing. . . . [Lennon shows] considerable resentment toward Paul McCartney before the final disbandment. . . . One thing is certain: the Beatles were a long-lived phenomenon, but so far as John Lennon is concerned, they are over and done with. If you're likely to be hassled about profanity, be forewarned that Lennon's vocabulary is very dependent upon one particular word: fuck. But also be forewarned that this book will be clamored for." Elizabeth Storey

Library J 96:3917 N 15 '71 160w [YA]

Reviewed by James Heckel

Library J 97:200 Ja 15 '72 120w

Reviewed by J. D. O'Hara  
New Repub 166:26 My 20 '72 800w

**LENS, SIDNEY**. The forging of the American empire. 462p \$10 Crowell

327.73 U.S.—Foreign relations, Imperialism  
ISBN 0-690-31809-8 LC 74-158710

The author of *Radicalism in America* (BRD 1966) traces the foreign policy of the American Republic "from the founding of the U.S. to the present dilemmas associated with the Vietnam War. His thesis . . . is compounded of arguments alleging American economic exploitation of foreign countries and aggressive expansion of our resources, holdings, and international influence." (Library J) Bibliography. Index.

Reviewed by W. F. Kimball  
America 126:210 F 26 '72 900w

Reviewed by F. C. Brown  
Best Sell 31:461 Ja 15 '72 440w

"[This] is an indictment, a prosecutor's brief. Throughout his discussion of the early decades, Lens extends backwards a century, even two, to the totally different attitudes and sensibilities of today. Also, [he] has become so profoundly disillusioned by the Vietnam war that he can see nothing, or almost nothing, good about American foreign policy. . . . Lens's alienation has caused him to examine, even, say U.S. participation in World War II, in a curiously jaundiced, although interesting fashion. . . . yet despite my reservations, this book is a useful and persuasive corrective to the starry-eyed view of American foreign policy that most of us were raised on. I hope it is widely read." R. J. Walton

Book-Word p9 Ja 30 '72 1050w

Choice 9:128 Mr '72 170w

"Some folks may be weary of the battle, but Sidney Lens is untiring. He combines the American pamphleteering tradition of dissent with historical inquiry. . . . He does make one think in fresh ways about the American record. . . . Lens ties together American imperial outreaches with domestic capitalism. More often than the establishment-minded might like, he scores with telling effect."

Christian Century 89:49 Ja 12 '72 70w

"Lens, social critic and foe of 'imperialism,' continues his series of lively and controversial inquiries into the passage of the American Republic in this work emphasizing his often emotional and yet compelling criticism of our imperfect society. . . . [His is] a highly negative view of America's manifest destiny. . . . [He] is a fast-paced, assured, and ideologically oriented writer. He holds firm views; and, while scholars will and should dispute his arguments since the facts he marshals are susceptible to other analyses, this is a book which argues competitively, if not definitively, its left-liberal position." R. F. Delaney

Library J 96:3767 N 15 '71 200w

N Y Times Bk R p24 F 20 '72 130w

"The trouble with Mr. Len's book is that, after putting down one myth, the author

elaborates another to take its place. . . . As a work of scholarship, [the book] is extremely thin. Mr. Len's main research seems to have been in college textbooks and political tracts. He oversimplifies many things and gets many others wrong. He even omits data that could have strengthened his own argument. . . . Moreover, the text is filled with errors. . . . The record is a good deal more mixed than anyone would gather from Mr. Len's book. But [its] worst failing . . . is its systematic and rigid reduction of a multiplicity of motives for expansion to a single one—namely, the quest for 'economic aggrandizement' allegedly required by the inner necessities of the capitalist system." Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

Sat R 55:71 F 5 '72 2050w

**LENZ, SIEGFRIED**. The German lesson; tr. by Ernst Kaiser and Eithne Wilkins. 470p \$8.95 Hill & Wang

ISBN 0-8090-4907-4 LC 77-163557

"The narrator of this . . . novel is Siggi Jepsen, an inmate on a reform-school island in the Elbe. Assigned a short composition on the quintessentially German topic 'The Joys of Duty,' he begins recounting his life, since it has been shaped by that conception. . . . The central event is the conflict between his father, a policeman, and Nansen, an artist friend who, during the war, is banned from further painting by Berlin because of 'decadence.' Herr Jepsen's duty is to enforce the ban, which he does because it's an order. Though he is reluctant at first, his zeal grows." (Library J) First published in German under the title *Deutschstunde*.

Reviewed by Phoebe Adams  
Atlantic 229:110 F '72 60w

Reviewed by A. J. Solomon  
Best Sell 32:145 Je 15 '72 250w

Reviewed by Diane Johnson  
Book World p10 My 7 '72 550w  
Choice 9:820 S '72 140w

Reviewed by Paul Theroux  
Encounter 33:71 My '72 1000w

"The timeless conflict which literature has reflected from Antigone's day to our own—'duty' versus individual conscience and morality—is given bizarre, complex form in Lenz' powerful tale. The novel's bleak vision of how little has been learned in spite of World War II is intensified by Siggi's vivid descriptions of Nansen's haunted landscapes (and of the starkly beautiful North Sea coast. Mordantly witty, despairing, impassioned, this is one of the most deeply imagined and thought-provoking novels from Germany in years. For nearly all fiction collections." J. W. Charles

Library J 96:4030 D 1 '71 300w

Reviewed by R. K. Morris  
Nation 214:439 Ap 3 '72 1200w

Reviewed by D. K. Mano  
Nat R 24:646 Je 9 '72 450w

"The great classic of Schleswig-Holstein, the northernmost part of Germany, which borders upon Denmark, is Theodor Storm's novel *Der Schimmelreiter*—The Rider on the White Horse. Siegfried Lenz's long novel can take its place confidently next to that powerful piece of imaginative writing. . . . In The German Lesson the landscape is as important as the characters, they owe their development, the tensions of everyday life to it. . . . Lenz describes this part of Germany . . . accurately, with power and feeling, and more successfully than any other writer since Storm. But the theme of the novel and its telling match up to the grandeur of the setting." Susan Hill

New Statesman 82:796 D 3 '71 450w

Reviewed by Ernst Pawel  
N Y Times Bk R p5 Ap 9 '72 1150w

"[This] is a tricky, ambiguous book with an awful fake-masterpiece surface: much beautiful landscape writing . . . and hollow, simplistic confrontations. . . . Only when we learn, very late in the book, why Siggi is in jail do we realize the novelist has foreseen our growing exasperation with his story and outfanked us. . . . [The] pathological denouement is a little too schematic. . . . My guess is that 'The German Lesson' was a huge best seller in Germany because it can be read more than one way. A simpler reader can enjoy a wartime adventure, though it ends sadly and rather puzzlingly. But the ending is intended to disarm the more critical: we can read backward into the heroic simplicities of the wartime chapters the

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# BOOKS

## An Empire Is Built

THE FORGING OF THE AMERICAN EMPIRE, by Sidney Lens. Thomas Y. Crowell. 462 pp. \$10.

Reviewed by

Stephen E. Ambrose

The publishers claim that *The Forging of the American Empire* is "the first truly comprehensive history of American imperialism." One must quibble, since it is not quite all that—it is neither the first nor is it comprehensive. Nevertheless, it is a superb piece of work, well written, intelligent, accurate, and engaging. It has shortcomings, for it is episodic, based on secondary sources and thus short on new information or insights, and at times terribly unbalanced. But then Sidney Lens was not writing a textbook or a scholarly monograph. Rather, he tells a story—the story of a nation that has engaged in almost ceaseless warfare since its inception, all the while proclaiming its love of peace; a nation that has directly conquered, through aggressive war against Indians, Mexicans, Spaniards, and others, an enormous sweep of territory, and later forged a world empire while maintaining its innocence of imperialistic designs.

Lens does not push ideology, but he does insist—quite rightly, in my view—that the structure of the United States has impelled it to expand. He makes this structural imperative clearest in his discussion of Franklin D. Roosevelt's well-known promise in 1940 to keep American boys out of foreign wars: "But there was an economic and political logic to events that transcended the wishes of mortals—a

logic rooted in industrialism, private profit, and competition, which literally drove the great nations against each other, and all of them against the weaker states. The capitalist system subsists on markets and access to raw materials; and if those should be cut off abroad through political or economic manipulation, the home country is enervated by the social diseases of unemployment and economic stagnation."

Following the path marked out by historian William A. Williams over the past decade, Lens traces the main outlines of American expansion from the conquest of the continental empire to Vietnam. In the process, he shows that only a favored few, rather than the whole of the citizenry, reaped the truly big benefits. All of us got something, one way or another, but corporations and their stockholders obviously did better than, say, the black people of Mississippi. So did the imperial bureaucracy, both formal and informal, which Lens dissects in some detail in one of his best sections.

"At one time in the past it had been the commercial elite that predominated within the ruling class," he writes, "later the industrialists, then the bankers. After World War II, it was a complex of military officials, plus civilian militarists in the legislature, the executive, business and industry, the labor hierarchy, and academia." Lens gives fascinating details on the way each of these groups profit from the creation and maintenance of the American empire.

Not, please note, from the Cold War itself, for as Lens points out, "the quarrel with the Soviet Union—it cannot be affirmed too often—was not the cause of America's imperial policy, but

an effect of it." This because "Washington was determined to organize the world to its ends; Moscow simply refused to be molded and manipulated like Britain or France." The Soviet Union was obviously not a military threat to America, "but it stood in the way of America's thrust to fashion the world in its image, since it sealed off a substantial part of the globe to the open door; and it stood in the way of what is euphemistically called 'international stability,' since it could become a bastion to which revolutionary nationalists in the underdeveloped countries looked to for aid to their revolutions."

The one disappointment in *The Forging of the American Empire* is the brevity of Lens's discussion of Vietnam, a surprising neglect for the co-chairman of the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. Further, his explanation of the war is weak, especially in light of his solid analysis of earlier imperial ventures. Lens sees the explanation of the Vietnam war "in two directions: first, the fear that a successful revolt against Pax Americana in one place would give it wings elsewhere [i.e., those damn dominoes]; and second, the economic potential of the area for the future."

There is something in both explanations, but not enough to satisfy. Lens should have used his own description of the imperial bureaucracy to analyze Vietnam. Since 1945 the United States has built a gigantic machine, composed of separate but related institutions, whose continued growth and prosperity depend absolutely on a continuation of imperial methods. That bureaucracy is like Pavlov's dogs—whenever the bell rings, whether it be in the Dominican Republic or Vietnam or elsewhere, it begins to salivate and soon to bite. This bureaucracy (of which the academic elite is an integral part; it is not enough to point in horror to the Pentagon and the CIA) is supposed to implement policy, but it now contributes to national decision-making and in far too many cases dominates the policy-making process.

Vietnam may well be the bureaucrats' war at least as much as it is the liberals' war, for our imperial bureauc-

March, 1972

The Progressive  
MARCH 1972



racism leads its own existence and is responsible to no one. The capitalist structure of America demanded expansion, to be sure, and the bureaucracy was created as a necessary instrument of that expansion, but that the corporations are the villains is no longer so altogether clear as it once seemed. Certainly many of them would rather use the public's tax money to buy concrete to rebuild our cities than to buy dynamite to destroy Vietnam's villages.

Looked at from another view, there is little difference between the American and the Russian imperial bureaucracies, except for the significant fact that America's is far richer than Russia's and thus more prone to act. Both live in what Hannah Arendt has called a defactualized world and serve no master save themselves, both are expansionist, and both are experts at manipulating not only other people but their own heads of government. An extended discussion by Lens on these matters, especially as they relate to Vietnam, would be most welcome.

To return to what Lens has accomplished, rather than what he did not write about, *The Forging of the American Empire* is an excellent example of what professors sneeringly call popular history, which means it is written for the intelligent reader and not the pages of *The American Historical Review* (where it almost certainly will not even be reviewed). It is, in my view, the most important kind of history, for Lens wants to help all of us understand our own past better so that we will know how we got where we

are, and learn what to do about the mess we are in. For those willing to make the effort to understand, Lens's book will be a splendid aid.

(Mr. Ambrose, a historian at Louisiana State University in New Orleans, has written six books on military history and was associate editor of "The Eisenhower Papers." His most recent book is "Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy since 1938.")

## Maverick Kefauver

KEFAUVER: A POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY, by Joseph Bruce Gorman. Oxford University Press. 434 pp. \$10.

Reviewed by

Russel B. Nye

The name of Estes Kefauver will ring a nostalgic bell with "older" liberals (to use the current distinction) who remember the battles over pre-Vietnam issues of the Truman-Eisenhower era. It will probably elicit, from a generation to whom Ralph Nader is the ultimate crusader, a half-memory out of old newsreels of a man in a coonskin cap. But it is time to be reminded, as Joseph Bruce Gorman's biography does admirably, that Kefauver was there first—or more accurately, that he carried on in his era an honorable American political tradition, reaching back to the Populists and Grangers and Teddy Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot and Robert M. La-Follette Sr., to which Nader, Barry Commoner, and Senator Philip Hart are relative newcomers. The mild-mannered man from Tennessee raised prickly issues of public policy.

A Yale Law School graduate and scion of an old Tennessee family, Estes Kefauver had already established himself as a successful corporation lawyer when he was elected to the House in 1939, at which point this book—accurately called a "political biography"—begins. His career in the House was not notably spectacular, and he voted consistently down the New Deal-Fair Deal line. Elected with the acquiescence of the McKellar-Crump machine in Tennessee, he stayed in the middle of the

ideological road. However, he voted for anti-poll tax legislation (not a hot issue in Tennessee) and, more adventurously, against the House Un-American Activities Committee on key votes as well as against Carroll Reece's loyalty oath bill. Meanwhile, his relationship with Kenneth McKellar, his powerful Tennessee colleague, cooled over McKellar's attempts to control the Tennessee Valley Authority. He eventually broke with McKellar, and in 1946, as member of the House Small Business Committee, began to attract notice as a kind of novice trust-buster.


Kefauver completed the break with the McKellar-Crump organization by running successfully against it for the Senate in 1948. During that campaign he was termed "Crump's pet coon." "I might be a coon, he replied, but he was certainly not Boss Crump's, and he wore a coonskin cap to prove it. The cap became a familiar but unrepresentative trademark, and Kefauver, by no means a rustic log-cabin type, later had it wear it rather self-consciously from time to time.

In the Senate, Kefauver stayed clear of the Southern bloc, and while he was no farther left than any other mainstream Democrat, he looked like a flaming radical in the company of the Bilbos and Talmadges who made the headlines. (He was accused at home, in fact, of voting the Communist line along with Representative Vito Marcantonio of New York, who quickly disclaimed Kefauver as any friend of his.)

On the other hand, Kefauver's career in the Senate revealed more and more of the independent who tends to follow his own drummer. Unlike Adlai Stevenson, who displaced him as the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, Kefauver could never quite accommodate himself to organization. He lacked the gift of compromise, partly because it was not in his makeup and partly too, perhaps, because he saw the political appeal of the maverick stance.

Kefauver's first introduction to a national audience came with the famed televised hearings on organized crime, held in many of the nation's

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THE FORGING OF THE AMERICAN EMPIRE

by Sidney Lens

Crowell, 462 pp., \$10

Reviewed by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

■ Sidney Lens begins his book with a bracing attack on the myth of American morality in foreign affairs. Americans, he writes, see their nation as benign and selfless, "antiwar, anti-imperialist, anticolonialist," religiously respectful of the rights of other states, always helpful to peoples struggling for independence, driven to war only by considerations of the highest principle. I don't know whether many Americans believe that myth any more; but, if they do, they should certainly be divested of their illusions. The trouble with Mr. Lens's book, though, is that, after putting down one myth, the author elaborates another to take its place.

Or, rather, that is the fundamental trouble. There are a multitude of ancillary flaws that it may be well to dispose of at once. This book purports to be a history of American imperialism. As a work of scholarship, it is extremely thin. Mr. Lens's main research seems to have been in college textbooks and political tracts. He over-plifies many things and gets many things wrong. He even omits data that could have strengthened his own argument. It is astonishing, for example, that an account of American expansionism should not mention the Ostend Manifesto, or the filibustering expeditions of men like William Walker and John A. Quitman, or the later phases of the movement to annex Canada.

Moreover, the text is filled with errors of the sort that Mr. Lens's "four academic friends" who read the manuscript should certainly have caught. "Empire" in the eighteenth century, as Mr. Lens would discover if he would consult an eighteenth-century dictionary, did not carry the connotation of expansion; it meant only "realm" or "domain." Elias Boudinot was not "a white theological graduate"; he was a Cherokee. And, while President Jackson's Indian policy was far from enlightened, it is a gross exaggeration to write that "he would not concede any rights to the Indians." "No one can doubt," Jackson wrote in his seventh annual message, "the moral duty of the Government of the United States to protect and if possible to preserve and perpetuate the scattered remnants of this race." F. P. Prucha, in a careful review of the evidence, concludes in his recent study, *American Indian Policy in the Formative Years*, that it is "unfair" to charge

Jackson with "cynical expediency and complete disregard for Indian rights."

To continue: Thomas Hart Benton was never made commander of the Army in the Mexican War. Mr. Lens's addiction to the formula War Between the States implies an endorsement of the slaveholders' constitutional theory of the Civil War—an odd position for a writer who considers himself a man of the Left. Woodrow Wilson never said, "Morality and expediency is the thing that must guide us," whatever that may mean. Louis D. Brandeis was not "an immigrant boy," unless traveling from Louisville to Boston made him an immigrant.

Nor, may I add with emphasis, did Harry S Truman ever say, as Mr. Lens claims three times that he did, "The American system could survive in America only if it became a world system." Mr. Lens most probably picked up this quotation from Noam Chomsky's *American Power and the New Mandarins* (it is impossible to be sure since he disdains footnotes). When the quotation was exposed as a fake, Professor Chomsky was compelled to delete it from the paperback edition of his book. But Chomsky's original error continues to take in people who evidently believe that this is what Truman ought to have been saying. I notice that Stephen E. Ambrose in his *Rise to Globalism* is also hard at work keeping this invention alive.

Mr. Lens is not only cavalier with his facts—the list could be prolonged almost indefinitely—but he is a slovenly writer. In his book pots are always boiling, heads rearing, ways wended. Pipers call tunes, shivers go down backs, carrots accompany sticks, breath is bated, and people are born with silver spoons. Things are "upgraded" and "finalized"; politics can be "gut-level." There are even patronizing references to "Andy Jackson," "Abe Lincoln," and "Teddy Roosevelt."

But these are, as I say, ancillary flaws. Lens's basic aim is to replace the notion of "America the benevolent" by his own of America the aggressive.

The United States has pilfered large territories from helpless or near-helpless peoples; it has forced its will on scores of nations, against their wishes and against their interests; it has violated hundreds of treaties and understandings; it has committed war crimes as shocking as most; it has wielded a military stick and a dollar carrot to forge an imperialist empire such as man has never known. . . .

(Take a look at the last metaphor: one would like to have seen that blacksmith hammering away at his forge with a stick and a carrot.) These charges are generally true in detail, but they hardly substantiate the idea

of the Americans as red-hot imperialists. That idea remains as mythological as the idea of Americans as gentle saints.

The record of American expansion on this continent, for example, would have gravely disappointed the leaders of the early republic. John Quincy Adams thought it "impossible" that the United States would not acquire Canada. Jefferson considered the acquisition of Cuba equally inevitable and even saw the United States as "the nest, from which all America, North and South" was to be populated. Yet, except for pushing the frontier westward, expansionism has characteristically been a preoccupation of political leaders. Americans have mostly regarded the larger imperial dreams with indifference and resistance.

So we never annexed Canada. Texas waited outside the union as an independent republic for a decade. Polk's campaign slogan may have been "54-40 or Fight," but he settled Oregon at 49° and deeded the northern part to England. The movement to take "all Mexico" flopped. The Ostend Manifesto was repudiated. Seward's expansionist program got nowhere, except for the acquisition of Alaska; and some members of Congress had to be bribed to go along with this. It took half a century of agitation to annex Hawaii, an acquisition that might never have occurred had it not been for the war with Spain. Even so, we did not fulfill Jefferson's dream and take Cuba.

The record is a good deal more mixed than anyone would gather from Mr. Lens's book. But the worst failing of *The Forging of the American Empire* is its systematic and rigid reduction of a multiplicity of motives for expansion to a single one—namely, the quest for "economic aggrandizement" allegedly required by the inner necessities of the capitalist system. The first expansionist motive, Mr. Lens tells us, was land; after 1870, the motive was markets, raw materials, and investment outlets. What was at work was "the inherent expansiveness of a swelling capitalist economy," "a logic rooted in industrialism, private profit, and competition."

Take away the opportunities to increase foreign investment and trade, or to gain access to raw materials, and the domestic economy can do nothing else but choke. Gorged with unsalable surpluses, which under capitalism are distributed not on the basis of need but only in exchange for money, the system founders. Thus it is the domestic economy itself that is "saved" by imperialism. . . .

Whereas writers like John Atkinson Hobson and Karl Johann Kautsky considered imperialism as a policy that capitalist states would be greatly

tempted to pursue, Lenin, of course, converted the option into an iron necessity; and Mr. Lens is in this sense a simplehearted and simpleminded Leninist dedicated to the thesis that the nature of the American economy has doomed the United States to a course of global aggression.

Yet it may, I think, be convincingly argued that the basic cause of imperialism throughout history lies in the disparity of power between the political and technological dynamism of an advanced country and the weakness of an underdeveloped country—regardless of the system of ownership in the aggressive state. Further, the immediate motives for American adventures in expansion have almost always been strategic or political. In particular, such adventures seem usually to have sprung from the preemptive impulse—the determination to control some bit of foreign land before another power could get to it.

Take Latin America, for example. As Frederick Merk persuasively concludes in his study *The Monroe Doctrine and American Expansionism*, Polk's aggressive reinterpretation of the Doctrine was prompted by considerations not of economics but of defense:

The chief defense problem was the British, whose ambition seemed to be to hem the nation in. On the periphery of the United States, they were the dangerous potential aggressors. The best way to hold them off was to acquire the periphery. This was the meaning of the Monroe Doctrine in the age of Manifest Destiny.

Indeed, from the Louisiana Territory through Texas, Oregon and California, Hawaii, Samoa and the Philippines, to Indochina, American expansion and penetration have been primarily the product of the international power competition. "The great nations," Henry Cabot Lodge wrote in 1895, "are rapidly absorbing for their future expansion and their present defense all the waste places of the earth. . . . As one of the great nations of the world, the United States must not fall out of the line of march."

Does Mr. Lens really think that we moved into Hawaii, Samoa, Guam, the Philippines, Vietnam, or even Latin America in order to open vast markets for American goods? If he would examine the figures he would see that we have always disposed of most of our surplus of goods and capital in Europe and Canada, not in the imperialized world. The talk of foreign markets can be more prudently taken as a bait dangled before public and business opinion in an effort to persuade an unenthusiastic people to accept what politicians deemed essential for *raisons d'état*. Mr. Lens writes, "Diplomats did the bidding of corpora-

tions." Almost the reverse was true. The State Department, for example, had to persuade reluctant bankers to go into the Caribbean in order to keep European interests out and to strengthen the security of the Panama Canal Zone—as Dana G. Munro proved conclusively in *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921*, one of many essential books not in Mr. Lens's bibliography.

Mr. Lens even goes so far as to argue that our participation in the war against Hitler was an "act of aggrandizement . . . camouflaged in the rhetoric of defense." As for the Cold War, this, he writes, was not the cause but the consequence of American postwar expansionism. Presumably, if it had not been for our insensate quest for economic empire, we would have regarded the conquests of Hitler and Stalin with indifference. But might not American leaders have honestly believed that the domination of Europe by Hitler or Stalin would constitute a threat to the security of the United States? Jefferson wrote long ago: "It cannot be to our interest that all Europe should be reduced to a single monarchy," adding that he would rather have war than "see the whole force of Europe wielded by a single hand." Yet Mr. Lens hardly discusses political or strategic motives, at least in the case of the United States.

When it comes to the Soviet Union, however, it is quite another matter. Like other writers of his persuasion, Mr. Lens has no hesitation in invoking security requirements as the primary explanation for Soviet expansionism. But if true in one case, why not in the other? If concern for security explains why the Russians want to dominate Eastern Europe, may it not equally explain why some Americans wish they could dominate the Caribbean? And once the strategic motive is conceded any sort of validity it undermines the Leninist dogma that imperialism is the predestined and unique result of capitalism.

We can test the Lenin-Lens thesis further by speculating what would have happened if the United States had never been a capitalist country at all. Suppose America from the start had been a communist nation, free from the wicked drives of acquisitive capitalism: does Mr. Lens seriously think there would have been no westward expansion, no slaughter of the Indians, no Monroe Doctrine, no advance into Latin America or the Pacific, no expulsion of threatening nuclear missiles from Cuba? And if one were to posit that these resulted from the sheer energies of national expansion, always rationalized in terms of national security and without regard to the system of ownership, what is left of the argu-

ment that all were prompted by capitalism?

History shows that the search for power has been a far more abiding cause of imperial expansion than the search for profits. And other motives, independent of both, have also played their role. Mr. Lens says nothing about the missionary motive, though the American missionary interest in the Middle East, India, and China in the nineteenth century was much greater than the commercial interest. He says nothing about romance, adventure, and the challenge of the unknown, though anyone who reads biographies of empire builders must acknowledge the strength of this motive. And he must therefore leave out, alas, what future centuries will surely regard as the most spectacular achievement of American expansionism in the twentieth century—that is, the penetration of outer space. Or does Mr. Lens attribute the Apollo flights to the determination of American capitalism to carve out vast new markets on the moon and add the solar system to the American economic empire?

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Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., has won a National Book Award, as well as Francis Parkman, Bancroft, and Pulitzer prizes for his biographical and historical works.

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### THE SCORPION GOD: Three Short Novels

by William Golding

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich,  
178 pp., \$5.95

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Reviewed by David J. Gordon

■ In each of the three novellas that make up *The Scorpion God*, William Golding attempts to create an ancient society—Egyptian, prehistoric, Roman—in the spirit of ironic comedy. The tales are clever, and they are carefully crafted. The pacing throughout is admirable, the phrasing is elegant if slightly precious, and the archaic conventions are almost lovingly rendered. But the ironic discrepancies between quaint "them" and knowing "us" are too concocted, too remote from the actual histories of societies and individuals to put any force behind their satiric intention, which is, presumably, to remind us of our own shortsightedness. As a result of this lack of genuine drive, the elaborate development in each tale comes to seem excessive. One senses that the material seemed funnier to the author than it does to the reader—or, perhaps, since much of it is sight and situational comedy, that it would be more amusing on a small stage or screen than it is on the page.