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READER'S GUIDE

Roman citizenry" (p. vii). Is not a strain of gross chuckle or harsh and creaky cackle what we have too often found unattractive in such laughter? It is not inevitable that access of historical knowledge about a given literature should enhance its artistic stature—though this is indeed a usual assumption with literary scholars.

SCIENTISTS IN POLITICS: THE ATOMIC SCIENTISTS MOVEMENT, 1945-46, by DONALD A. STRICKLAND, *Purdue University Press*.

Not very many people find institutions more interesting than people. While a person can grow indignant or discouraged, an institution can only expand or contract; while two people can trust one another or grow suspicious, institutions merge or break apart. And most of all, an institution cannot change its mind.

Scientists in Politics had a splendid story to tell: the story of the wrath of the atomic scientists at what became of their efforts at Hiroshima and in the

months immediately following. But Mr. Strickland does not tell it. Instead he chronicles the myriad organizations which these scientists formed at their laboratories and in Washington, and charts the life cycles of these organizations. Strickland explains in his preface that, as a practicing social scientist, he must deliberately avoid any sympathetic (or unsympathetic) discussion of personalities. *Scientists in Politics* thus becomes yet another burnt offering of wooden history and dead prose to the God of Objectivity.

The tale we are shielded from has the makings of a modern epic. Its tragic hero, at least as one considerable body of opinion would have it, is Oppenheimer, sacrificing control of domestic atomic energy to the military men in order to concentrate his efforts on the international scene. By lacking passion for the domestic issues, Oppenheimer forfeits his leadership of the American scientists, be-

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cause civilian control of domestic research and development becomes the primary rallying point of the politically active scientists. Their efforts are successful: with the passage of the McMahon Act in the summer of 1946, an Atomic Energy Commission for domestic nuclear science is established under civilian control. Oppenheimer's own efforts end in failure, as plans for the internationalization of atomic energy perish in a collision between Bernard Baruch and Andrei Gromyko that same summer.

The scientists who rebelled from Oppenheimer and concentrated on the domestic issues were not faceless men, and their story would fill out the epic and give it texture. But the poet who seeks to tell that story will get little help from Strickland. Although the poet would probably choose to make Willy Higinbotham of Los Alamos and John Simpson of Chicago leading characters, and although Strickland has focused his attention on the activities of both of those men, all that the poet can get from Strickland are morsels like: "the Washington office was gravitating into the hands of Higinbotham; there was no one there to check his expansionist program except Simpson, who withdrew when he felt that the organization was becoming more important than the cause." And, alas, our poet will not even find the basic legislative background elucidated by Strickland: the Vandenberg

Amendment to the McMahon Act is alluded to time and again, but nowhere explained clearly.

Strickland apparently searched the back files of no less than twenty-three associations; a glossary catalogues them, and the text refers to them invariably by their initials. Strickland's other raw materials are interviews with over two hundred "participants." By using the interviews to shed light on the back files, instead of the other way around, we end up with a story packaged the way some supermarkets package meat: "worst side up."

WYNDHAM LEWIS, by WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD,
Twayne Publishers.

THERE is a special and engaging sanity in William Pritchard's new book on this wrongly obscured modern author whom T. S. Eliot once described as perhaps "the greatest prose master of style of my generation." The book is frankly an introduction, an unabashed survey; Pritchard assumes that a case needs to be made for Lewis's relevance as a critic of modern literature and culture and, more importantly, for his distinction as a novelist, and he gets his job done with grace and unobtrusive forcefulness. Since Pritchard assumes (sensibly) that his audience is unlikely to be familiar with Lewis's work, his study includes a fair amount of summary as well as passages of extensive quotation. Yet despite such necessities, Lewis's crotchety brilliant vigor is never obscured.

Pritchard ignores Lewis the painter and propagandist for Vorticism, and he treats Lewis's unsavory politics only very briefly and by the way. This last decision may trouble some readers who are acquainted even superficially with Lewis's seamy apologetics for Hitler or with his frequently arrogant snobbism in political and other matters. But Pritchard's interest is in Lewis's strengths as a writer and commentator on modern society, and

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