

At a time when the Manhattan Project was synonymous with large-scale science, physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904–67) represented the new sociocultural power of the American intellectual. Catapulted to fame as director of the Los Alamos atomic weapons laboratory, Oppenheimer occupied a key position in the compact between science and the state that developed out of World War II. By tracing the making—and unmaking—of Oppenheimer’s wartime and postwar scientific identity, Charles Thorpe illustrates the struggles over the role of the scientist in relation to nuclear weapons, the state, and culture. A stylish intellectual biography, Oppenheimer maps out changes in the roles of scientists and intellectuals in twentieth-century America, ultimately revealing transformations in Oppenheimer’s persona that coincided with changing attitudes toward science in society. “This is an outstandingly well-researched book, a pleasure to read and distinguished by the high quality of its observations and judgments. It will be of special interest to scholars of modern history, but non-specialist readers will enjoy the clarity that Thorpe brings to common misunderstandings about his subject.”—Graham Farmelo, *Times Higher Education Supplement* “A fascinating new perspective. . . . Thorpe’s book provides the best perspective yet for understanding Oppenheimer’s Los Alamos years, which were critical, after all, not only to his life but, for better or worse, the history of mankind.”—Catherine Westfall, *Nature*

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