

vators and ignoramus were rearranging all metaphysics to suit themselves and their pragmatism—Ben Franklin adjusted Time Itself, urging people to move their clocks forward in summertime for a brighter workday—and it does seem characteristically American to remove the superstition of value from barbaric yellow metal and print value instead on worthless paper.

“This knack for substitution came as second nature to men dealing with novelties every day,” writes Goodwin, “but the concept of ‘lawful money’ was a smoking fuse laid against the ancient right of kings to regulate the currency, a small but ultimately significant declaration of colonial America’s aims and purposes.” Once the game was in motion, control over the symbol was sovereignty itself. Thomas Jefferson tended to be afraid of money, both in principle and in practice at home on his farm. Franklin printed it up in bales to pay the soldiers. (To foil counterfeiters, he stepped out the back door of his press room and picked up a leaf to slip into the press’s platen; the print of its veins could never be duplicated.) Quickly the shell game of banking grew up, in which notes were backed by only a 20 percent gold reserve. During the 19th century, tiny regional banks flourished everywhere in the business of, virtually, counterfeiting. Nicholas Biddle tried to enshrine a federal note in a central bank, which Andrew Jackson tried to destroy, seeing everything but gold as phony.

But then, it’s all counterfeit in a sense. Maybe if we paused at the cash register and reflected on the situation, all our dollars would turn back to leaves, all our coaches to pumpkins. The design of the bill, its lacy, grimy tattoo and rune, is supposed to back our unexamined faith, and Goodwin gives free rein to the numismatic fetish of the paper idol itself, the art, the wonderful peculiarities of the dollar’s engraving.

This isn’t a comprehensive history. Poor Jefferson may seem a little dotty in these pages, and the colonists are characterized somewhat strictly as slaves of religiosity. But Goodwin is an Englishman whose view of this country is mostly fond. The tawdriness of the American project is an easy thing for Europeans to smirk about. Goodwin, kindly, persists in discerning something intrepid.

—LOUIS B. JONES

NOBODY’S PERFECT:

A New Whig Interpretation of History.

By Annabel Patterson. Yale Univ. Press. 288 pp. \$27.50

The reformist Whigs dominated British politics from the Glorious Revolution of 1688 to the early 1830s, and their political success inspired a historical school. The “Whig historians” believed, in general, that history endlessly repeats the contest between the Whig Party and its opponents, with the forces of progress—the Whig side—invariably prevailing in the long run. The Whig approach predominated until Herbert Butterfield, in *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931), faulted Whig historians for imposing “a certain form upon the whole historical story,” a form that matched their political agenda. Butterfield’s spirited monograph led generations of historians to dismiss the Whig interpretation as a mere mask for political or moral judgments.

Annabel Patterson, a professor of English at Yale University, seeks to refurbish the tarnished reputation of the Whig approach. *Nobody’s Perfect* draws from several disciplines, and the prose is lively and relatively free of academic jargon. But after some early jabs, Patterson does not so much refute Butterfield as ignore him. Like earlier Whig historians, moreover, she uses such terms as “left” and “center right” as if they retained a constant meaning through the centuries, which leads her to group contemporary figures such as Bill Clinton with Whigs such as John Milton and the English radical John Wilkes.

Patterson’s treatment of Edmund Burke is revealing. His early support for American independence, she contends, required that he support the French Revolution, and his failure to do so represents a “slide” into “conservatism,” the abandonment of principle for self-advancement. She barely considers the possibility that he held fast to a conception of progress or democracy that differs from her own, and she offers no argument to the many Burke scholars who see his views as consistent.

We can learn from the Whigs and their rich tradition of political argument. Indeed,

the United States, seeing itself as a “city on a hill,” may be the last Whig nation. But—and this was Butterfield’s point—we must not view the Whigs’ times as mere prelude to

our own. *Nobody’s Perfect* fails to explain how the “new Whig” interpretation of history improves on the old.

—GERALD J. RUSSELLO

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

SCIENCE IN THE SERVICE OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

By Richard Pierre Claude. Univ. of Pennsylvania Press. 267 pp. \$42.50

In this wide-ranging survey, Richard Pierre Claude argues that fighting for human rights falls within the bailiwick of scientists and physicians. A professor emeritus of government at the University of Maryland, Claude also shows how scientific abuses of the past have engendered reforms. The grotesque “experiments” of Nazi scientists, for example, led to adoption of the Nuremberg Code and internationally accepted ethical guidelines. The Holocaust’s lessons also inform what Claude terms “the moral backbone of international human rights law,” the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whose adoption in the late 1940s, amid early Cold War tensions, represented a near-miraculous accomplishment.

Scientific tools have done much to reveal violations of the Declaration and other human rights codes. Genetic markers have been used to identify massacre victims from Argentina to Bosnia, and statistical analysis helped establish the pattern of abuses against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo and against Filipinos under Ferdinand Marcos. Claude calls for human rights groups to undertake more such studies, rather than rely mainly on the weaker evidence of case reports of human rights violations.

Most books on human rights, even highly acclaimed ones, focus single-mindedly on declarations, conventions, codes, and power-brokers. To his credit, Claude also considers non-governmental organizations, which, as he writes, “provide much of the driving force in the global human rights movement.” He discusses, among others, the Southern Center for Human Rights, which forced Georgia’s largest jail to provide treatment to HIV-positive inmates, and the Nobel Prize-winning International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

Claude largely credits the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for the fact that “sectarian definitions of science are widely eschewed, and racist and sexist attempts to slant the work of science are subject to unfettered criticism.” But he faults scientific organizations for not sufficiently educating their members and the broader public: “To use their human rights, people need to know about them.” It’s a cause to which this book will most certainly contribute.

—SHERI FINK

THE TROUBLE WITH NATURE: Sex and Science in Popular Culture.

By Roger N. Lancaster. Univ. of California Press. 442 pp. \$55 cloth, \$21.95 paper

Men are from Mars, women are from Venus. Aggression is an evolutionary survival strategy. Homosexuals are born, not made. Jealousy is nature’s way of promoting pair bonding, which gives offspring a better shot at success. These and other snippets of pseudo-scientific wisdom are dispatched by Roger Lancaster, an anthropology and cultural studies professor at George Mason University, with vigor and appropriate sarcasm.

His target, broadly speaking, is a concoction of sociobiology and “selfish-gene” theorizing that seeks to reduce all human behavior and psychology to brain functions controlled by genes. The eugenics movement of the early 20th century gave this kind of thing a bad name, and by the 1960s right-thinking (i.e., left-thinking) intellectuals embraced a loosely Marxist view in which human behavior was all about “cultural constructs” and had nothing to do with biology. But the Human Genome Project, Lancaster warns, signals the return of that never-vanquished bogeyman, scientific reductionism.

He dissects numerous press accounts of claims for genes that make people heterosexu-