

new problems such as big industry, and veering between conservatism (sometimes reasoned, sometimes crass) and innovation (sometimes intelligent, sometimes feckless). Like all first-rate scholars, Keller convinces and illuminates. His interpretation of 19th-century America will be plundered by other writers for a long time to come.

—*Marcus Cunliffe*

**THE ULTIMATE
EXPERIMENT: Man-Made
Evolution**

by Nicholas Wade
Walker, 1977
162 pp. \$8.95
L of C 76-52575
ISBN 0-8027-0572-3

Fairly strict regulations and planned back-up legislation have reassured scientists and laymen about the danger of epidemics caused by new microbes escaping from laboratories in the course of recombinant DNA experiments. But worry about the long-run ecological and evolutionary impact of "gene-splicing" continues unabated. Nicholas Wade, senior writer for *Science*, briskly demonstrates that molecular biologists have reason to be proud of their initiative in working out self-restraining rules to guard against epidemics. His neat little essay on the sociology of science also makes it clear, however, that most members of the scientific community have shown the gambler's unconcern for the future and the cabalist's hostility toward the general public. Could a repressed bad conscience be at work here? One thinks of all the times when scientists have claimed credit for the practical benefits of their discoveries while disclaiming responsibility for the harmful side effects.

—*David Joravsky*

**WILLIAM MORRIS:
Romantic to Revolutionary**

by E. P. Thompson
Pantheon reissue, 1977
829 pp. \$17.95
L of C 76-62712
ISBN 0-394-41136-6

William Morris (1834–96) worked with revolutionary zeal to overthrow banal mid-19th-century taste in interior design and architecture. He was also a romantic poet in the tradition of Tennyson, a translator of Icelandic sagas, the author of a utopian novel (*News from Nowhere*, 1890), and organizer of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings. Not last, but least remembered, he became a serious political activist, who served as secretary of the Socialist League and editor of *Commonweal*. Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of Modern Design from William Morris to Wal-*