

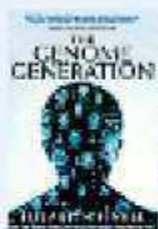


## NON-FICTION Fiona Capp

### PICK OF THE WEEK

#### THE GENOME GENERATION

Elizabeth Finkel  
 Melbourne University Press, \$32.95

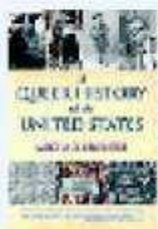


SCIENTISTS, Elizabeth Finkel says, tend to explain biology in terms of the technology of the day. Taking her cue from the scientists she writes about, Finkel compares our genome to the computer code on a hard disk and extends the metaphor to elucidate the complex story of our genetic inheritance. The evolution from single-celled organisms to more sophisticated life forms, for instance, is likened to the shift from

analog to digital technology. What geneticists initially thought of as "junk" on our DNA is now understood as being akin to Microsoft Word: information-dense language that expands and manages our genome. As important as such theories are, the genome-mapping project faced crisis when the search for genes behind common diseases yielded next to nothing. But hope lies in a new generation of "genome jocks" using supercomputers. As well as making sense of the science, Finkel deftly captures the excitement behind all the ferment.

#### A QUEER HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

Michael Bronski  
 Beacon Press, \$49.95



"AMERICA is not one thing or another. America is queer." This statement defines Michael Bronski's approach to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender history of the US, a narrative inseparable from the broad sweep of American history. While popular queer histories focus on famous lesbian or gay people and key moments of resistance or acceptance, Bronski rejects this "family album

approach" in favour of analysing the construction of sexual identity over 500 years, from the arrival of Columbus when Europeans observed cross-dressing in indigenous tribes through to contemporary debates about homosexual marriage. Bronski shows that the idea of America owes as much to the emergence of San Francisco as a sexually enlightened community and the widespread influence of the homoerotic poetry of Walt Whitman as it does to the All-American frontier man and the morally rigid Puritan.