

I was surprised, too, to find how much of Wright's time during the 1930s and 1940s was taken up analysing Theodosius Dobzhansky's data for his famous series of papers on the "Genetics of Natural Populations", and how dependent Dobzhansky was on Wright's suggestions and analyses. Provine's treatment is extensive and illuminating, and indicates the underlying objectives of many of Dobzhansky's papers. Indeed, Provine's book will be an excellent starting point for a study of Dobzhansky's papers; through it the new student in evolutionary biology may be able to appreciate that genetic variation was once much more difficult to find and measure than it is today.

As the title indicates, *Sewall Wright and Evolutionary Biology* concentrates upon Wright's views and influence on evolutionary biology, and is not a general account of Wright's life or science. Although Wright's work on mathematical genetics is mentioned, Provine devotes little space to it. A symptom of this is the omission of the five essential "systems of mating" papers of 1921 from the collection of papers. On the mathematical theory Provine makes a few false steps. After pointing out that there are three logically distinct versions of Wright's concept of a fitness surface, he argues forcefully that these are logically unconnected, that Wright has spread confusion by using two of the notions interchangeably, and that population geneticists mistakenly assume that the two notions are related. Provine is mistaken in this: you really *can* derive the gene frequency adaptive surface from the genotype adaptive surface by taking a weighted average.

Wright's personal life is treated, but only rather briefly and circumspectly. Many population geneticists have Sewall Wright anecdotes, most of which do not appear in Provine's book. I did not find my favourites: "Sewall Wright And The Coffee Cup", "Sewall Wright Penniless In Berkeley" and "Sewall Wright Lectured On Genetic Drift". To his credit Provine does mention the most famous of all, noting both Wright's denial and the numerous people who claim to have seen him absent-mindedly erase a blackboard with one of his guinea pigs.

Twenty years ago I happened to be the person who first suggested to Provine that he should interview Sewall Wright (Provine was surprised to hear that Wright was still alive). Now I'm glad I did, because the result is a remarkable book. As we face the interesting possibility that Wright will be the keynote speaker at his own centennial celebration, his influence on evolutionary biology is greater than it has ever been. We will be listening to that speech with more than just polite attention. □

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Redouté requiem

Sandra Raphael

Wonders of Creation: Natural History Drawings in the British Library. By Ray Desmond. *The British Library: 1986.* Pp.240. £25.

A Redouté Treasury: 468 Watercolours from Les Liliacées of Pierre-Joseph Redouté. Text by Peter and Frances Mallary. *Dent, London/Vendome Press, New York: 1986.* Pp.228. £40, \$50.

Wonders of Creation contains a selection of illustrations of plants and animals from manuscripts and drawings in various departments of the British Library, with a few pictures from printed books added to demonstrate the changes in style and taste described in the text. The choice seems to have been made almost at random in an attempt to include something for everyone, from flowers and trees, to birds, fishes, snakes, terrapins, rhinoceroses, koala bears, beetles, spiders and Stamford Raffles's "hairy-nosed otter". The sources range from mediaeval manuscripts to nineteenth-century drawings. The coloured plates (nearly 50 of them) are at the back of the book, each with its own short description, while the black-and-white illustrations are used to break up a short text that gives a rather pedestrian survey of the development of illustration as an aid to the descriptive work of naturalists.

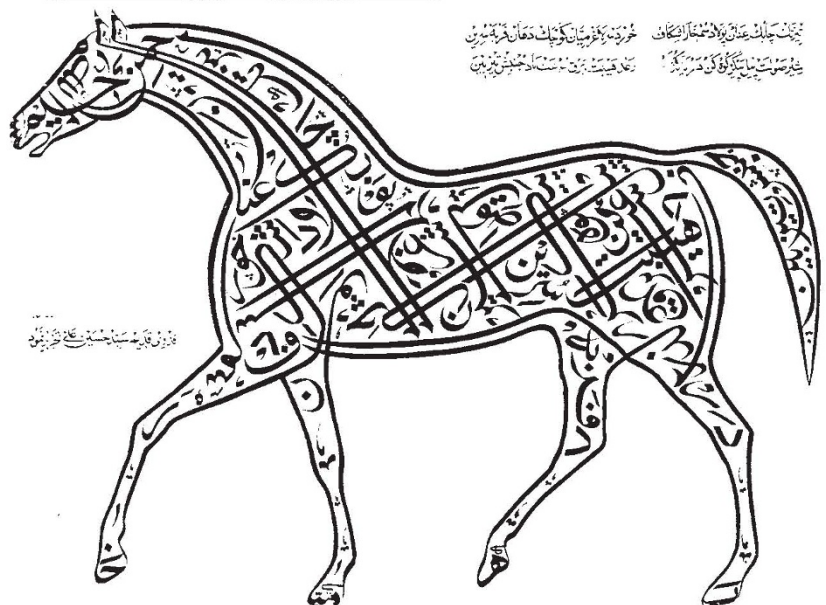
The British Library collections in this field are quite rich, but it seems perverse to isolate them from the complementary and even richer hoards in the Natural History Museum in Kensington and the Print Room of the British Museum, still under the same roof as the British Library. In

spite of the book's restrictions, the beauty of many of the pictures, oriental or European, will surely please browsers.

On 20 November 1985 Sotheby's in New York sold for \$5.5 million the Empress Josephine's copy of Pierre-Joseph Redouté's *Les Liliacées* (1802–1816), 16 volumes containing 468 original watercolours on vellum as well as the printed text. *A Redouté Treasury* is a revised version of the sale catalogue, with colour photographs of the drawings of plants of the lily family and related groups rearranged and supplemented by a longer introductory essay and botanical notes.

Although *Les Liliacées* was sold as a single lot, it has since been dismantled by its buyer, a "breaker" who specializes in taking apart colour-plate books and selling their illustrations piecemeal. This process is sad enough when its subject is a relatively ordinary book, but when it is applied to one that is unique it becomes a bibliographical scandal. Redouté's drawings for *Les Liliacées*, possibly his masterpiece, were bought by his patron Josephine, whose garden at Malmaison provided many models for the artist. The drawings were inherited by Josephine's son, and all but 19 of them were bought by an American dealer, Edward Weyhe, in Zurich in 1935. Now they have been sold again. The drawings have been taken out of their fine bindings, so that this example of a great artist's greatest work has now been scattered and will never again be seen whole. *A Redouté Treasury* may be seen as a requiem for a French national treasure, now ruined. □

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Piety in art — an example of Tughra calligraphy. The opening verses of the Koran start at the horse's mouth, while the rest of the text praises the physical qualities of the animal.