

or prohibition. He is against the cloning of humans, forseeing the burden of expectation that would be placed on someone endowed with the genome of some uniquely talented, or conceited, predecessor.

He despises eugenics as advocated in the past but seems not to rule it out for ever. At the end of the book *Genes and Politics 1997*, under the sub-heading *The Misuse of Genetics by Hitler should not Deny its Use Today*, he writes that 'if scientists find ways to greatly improve human capabilities, there will be no stopping the public from happily seizing them'. This may seem rather at variance with his earlier (1972) opinion, admittedly expressed in a different context, that 'the belief that surrogate mothers and clonal babies are inevitable because science always moves forward... represents a form of laissez-faire nonsense dimly reminiscent of the creed that American business, if left to itself will solve everybody's problems'. Watson's less than total commitment to laissez-faire capitalism is also expressed in a remark made during a 1975 talk (*Science and the American Scene*) to his nieces' girls' school: 'the concept of economic growth, as measured by consumption of material resources, may no longer make sense, and as a nation we may have to strive for happiness in ways that do not automatically demand the further depletion of our heritage from the earth'. I hope we applaud that sentiment, although we cannot expect it to have any effect.

Watson's moral concerns emerge most strongly in his account (*Five Days in Berlin*) of a visit he made to the city in 1997 to give a keynote address to a German-organized Congress of Molecular Medicine. He used the occasion to confront his audience with the crimes and connivances of some German geneticists of their grand-parents' generation under the Nazi regime, and the arguably insufficient ostracism of the guilty parties in the early post-war period. One admires his nerve, but perhaps he went a little too far, especially as from his own account the 1930s geneticists of his own country might have provided as many collaborators as did their German counterparts for a Nazi-type government, had such a regime come to power in America. However, he evidently felt that to speak as he did was a moral imperative. Watson also seems to hold the opinion that if German geneticists were more openly ashamed of their predecessors, the militant German Greens might be less inclined to attack experimental plots of harmless transgenic plants. However, that I doubt.

Jim Watson's career has been a steady ascent; from precocious undergraduate to somewhat outrageous but uniquely successful young scientist, to Harvard professor and then director of the brilliant Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, and now to scientific elder statesman. Also, of course he collected a Nobel Prize on the way, although he does not dwell on that here. However, as this book makes clear, he has never lost the qualities of the *enfant terrible*, never worried about exciting disagreement or even giving offence. That is what makes his book so readable. One could compile from it a treasury of quotations, any one of which might spark a lively and perhaps useful debate.

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C. elegans: A Practical Approach. Ian A. Hope (ed.). Oxford University Press, Oxford. 1999. Pp. 281. Price £29.95, paperback. ISBN 0 19 963738 5.

In the introduction to this book the editor states that it was intended as an introductory guide aimed at researchers interested in *C. elegans* but currently working outside the field. The editor has admirably fulfilled the remit, producing a book that covers all aspects of this model organism.

The book emphasises what a powerful and important model *C. elegans* is, by illustrating how much is already known about this organism, its natural history, genetics, neurobiology and biochemistry. It covers the latest developments, including the genome project and data available via the web, as well as the conventional genetics, biochemistry and neurobiology of *C. elegans* and some very practical chapters on strain maintenance and electron microscopy. Many methods and protocols are included that describe how to use *C. elegans* in research. The book is written in a readable style with a very useful and detailed index to allow the reader to identify sections of interest quickly.

C. elegans: A Practical Approach consists of twelve chapters in total. Each chapter is written clearly and is suitable for Ph.D. students, those who are interested in moving into this field to exploit the wealth of information available on this organism, and those who want to find out what all the fuss is about! The literature cited is up-to-date and includes many relevant URLs that would lead the reader to the web pages of the *C. elegans* sequencing program and to important groups working in this area. Topics covered include: the genome project; genome sequence data base searching and analysis; transformation of *C. elegans*; reverse genetic techniques such as gene inactivation by RNA mediated interference; analysis of phenotypes by Normarski, 4-dimensional, confocal and electron microscopy; neurobiology; approaches for studying gene expression; gene characterisation; biochemistry; conventional genetics with procedures for selfing and crossing; mutagenesis and mutant screening; characterisation of mutants; gene mapping; temperature-shift experiments and mosaic analysis.

For a small, concise book it has a very wide coverage, although where appropriate the authors of the various chapters point the reader to more detailed texts or web sites which may be of interest if further information is required.

Overall, this book provides a concise, state-of-the-art account of the utility of *C. elegans* for studying a wide range of systems. It shows how the range of knowledge and techniques can be applied to address important biological questions and provides an excellent entry for anyone thinking of moving into this area.

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