

Jones is to be thanked for opening the eyes of a wider public to matters in which we may have been blissfully yet culpably ignorant.

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MOLECULAR ASPECTS OF EARLY DEVELOPMENT. Edited by George M. Malacinski and William B. Klein. Plenum Press, New York and London. 1984. Pp. viii + 324. Price: \$(US) 47.50

The last ten years has seen a revolution in the technology available to study problems in genetics and developmental biology. Where we could only dream in 1974 we can act in 1984. This book, the outcome of a meeting held in December 1982 by the American Society of Zoologists, illustrates both the benefits of this revolution and, to paraphrase Mr Heath (speaking in different circumstances), its unacceptable side.

Quite properly (given its subject matter) this book includes three papers on *Drosophila*. In one Dr Judith Lengyel (and eight colleagues) describes the isolation and characterisation of genes expressed in the early embryo. After a long theoretical justification a laborious screen results in two cDNA clones, one of a sequence more abundant in the blastoderm than oocytes and one more abundant in oocytes than in the blastoderm. The former turns out to be a cDNA of a transcript of a repetitive sequence. The other is analysed in very considerable detail, using the armoury of modern molecular biology, including DNA sequencing and chromosome walking. Possible functions of this "maternal" transcript are considered. But how extraordinary that this clone's *in situ* mapping to 67B did not alert these molecular biologists—it is the well known heat shock protein gene *hsp 26*! (as inspection of the sequence shows, given a single "frame shift mutation" in the authors' translation).

By way of contrast is the previous chapter – Kaufman and Abbot's review of the genetic and developmental analysis of the Antennapedia complex. What richness this analysis has uncovered! As I write I have before me this week's *Nature* (July 5, 1984) with Scott's molecular study of *fushi tarazu*, a member of this complex. A region of this gene, coding for some 60 amino acids, shows strong homology with other homoeotic loci in *Drosophila*. Moreover, this "homoeobox" sequence is found in segmented animals from worms to man.

It is, perhaps, a bit unfair to pick on these two contributions. But they do illustrate, I hope, both the power and the weakness of the molecular approach to developmental problems.

They also illustrate the weakness of publishing symposia volumes. Too often they serve only to bolster the egos of their editors and as vehicles to publish the ephemeral and/or best forgotten. Too rarely do they include substantive reviews such as Kaufman and Abbot's.

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ISOZYMES IN PLANT GENETICS AND BREEDING. S. D. Tanksley and T. J. Orton. Elsevier Science Publishers, 1983. Part A, 516 Pp. Part B, 472 Pp. Price: \$105 per part

Some twenty-five years have elapsed since the word isozyme entered the language of plant genetics and thus it is an appropriate time to review the