

in another language. The latter situation is not liable to come up very often, however, and this is a pity. The quality of figures and tables and the standard of the appraisal and discussion of the literature on the plant peroxisome actually deserve a general readership.

The book, unfortunately marketed at a prohibitive

price, contains a useful list of references in alphabetical order according to authors' names, carrying full titles of the papers published until mid-1976 and, for a few selected papers, until 1977.

Helmut Sies

### *Cellular Degradative Processes*

by R. T. Dean  
Chapman and Hall; London, 1978  
80 pages. £1.75

The 'outline studies in biology' series of monographs were designed to provide short but authoritative introductions to certain areas of modern biological research for final year under-graduates and fresh post-graduates. This volume which attempts to collate information on the degradation of all types of macromolecules, from extracellular as well as intracellular locations, is a thoroughly marvellous idea, certainly the first of its kind. However, it is totally spoiled by an inattention to detail that is alarming. Material presented for consumption by anyone, but particularly by students of tender years, must be wholly accurate and it would appear that the author (editor?) has paid little attention to proof-reading his manuscript, particularly in chapter 3, which covers the chemistry of the biological macromolecules. Lipidologists will be surprised to learn that stearic acid really has 19 carbon atoms while guanosine tetraphosphate is a very high energy compound and a few polysaccharides appear to have evolved new types of glycosidic linkages. The author's uncertainty is even reflected on the front cover — his initials are given incorrectly! However, the factual and typographical errors are outweighed by the deficiencies in the presentation. It is considered necessary to define (for honours students) the conventional  $R_1 \text{ CONH } R_2$  peptide but yet Dip-f and Pms-f are introduced without comment and umbelliferone appears totally unannounced during assay of exoglycosides (not exoglycosidases). Many of the illustrations (plus legends) have been taken from other articles and while the legends were probably adequate in their original context, there are

numerous examples where the figures are not explained, either by the text or by the legend and where the abbreviations used are not defined. For example during intravascular lipoprotein metabolism, the terms apo C peptide, VLD and HD lipoproteins (both nascent) appear in the figure, unexplained. Of course, if you know what it is all about, everything is understandable but the book is supposedly designed specifically for the uninitiated. Overall, far too much material has been crammed into too short a space with the result that explanations, definitions and justification of the illustrations have had to be skimmed.

However, with the material that is considered, the author does present a very fair balance, sharing his attention among nucleic acids, proteins, lipids, carbohydrates, glycoproteins and stating right from the outset that he intends to examine the breakdown of biological macromolecules, leaving the interconversions of the monomers to the standard textbooks. Indeed, laudable efforts are made to compare and contrast the catabolism of extracellular and intracellular components. Chapters are presented on the lysosomes, on characteristics of degradation in cells and on the mechanisms of control of catabolism. It is sad to reflect what might have been achieved with more care and attention. This text, as has already happened to most of its predecessors in the series, could have been attractive to virtually every Honours school and could have been adopted onto recommended book lists.

J. Kay