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Petit Point: A Candid Portrait On The Aberrations Of Science



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Synopsis

In this fascinating book, Nobel Prize winner Pierre-Gilles de Gennes wittily captures the lives of personalities from both the academic and the industrial world in delightful bite-size stories. Most of the characters in this collection are like those in Aesop's fables, but in modern-day research settings. The book provides a critical account of aberrations (fortunately rare) of the scientific community. Many lessons can be drawn from the stories. For the young researcher, this book is like a telescope: for seeing other human beings beyond his or her laboratory. For the administrator, this book is like a microscope: for seeing inside the human beings huge and complex structures. However, like Aesop's fables, you would not offer the book as a gift to anyone other than a close and wise friend.Petit Point is not a book to be devoured in a single sitting. It is one to be savored and reflected upon Ã¢â ¬â • it shows what the world may be like and what we ourselves may become. It is like a mirror Ã¢â ¬â • to be visited from time to time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

.," It is an interesting and valuable addition to any science literature collection."

This is collection of very short vignettes, sketching with a somewhat acid pen the life and work of a few scientists, most of them physicists. It does not say whether these characters are real or make-believe, but a few of the portraits come quite close to well known people (so even though I live far, far away from the center of the universe, I think I can identify Benoit Mandelbrot, Brian Josephson and Bernd Matthias. And I am sure other readers can put names on many more

chapters of these ``Enigma Variations'' of science.)The text is wonderfully written, and the descriptions are surgically precise. There are a few heroes, a few scoundrels, and many great but flawed humans. The tale of their struggles and ploys is always told warmly and with respect. They reflect so well the fauna of laboratories and research centers that you can see in every page glimpses of men and women you have known, maybe even of yourself.All in all, the text is so good and the characters so accurate, this book should be compulsory reading for all first-year graduate students in any branch of science.

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