

BOOK REVIEWS*

HPLC, a Practical User's Guide. M.C. McMASTER. VCH Publishers, Inc., 220 East 23rd Street, New York, New York 10010. 1994. xiv+340 pp. 16×23.5 cm. \$55.00. ISBN 1-56081-636-8.

This is an addition to the numerous texts on hplc, but it has the advantage of approaching the technique from the practical side. The book is a useful guide for newcomers to this separation method and includes the following information: choice of a suitable hplc configuration; a brief look at existing columns and their chemistry; instructions on obtaining a chromatogram; sample preparation; and column calibration and choice of separation conditions. In addition, this volume is a valuable handbook for more experienced users of hplc and there are descriptions of the following aspects which are of relevance to the more advanced chromatographer: principles of separation; problems encountered during utilization; diagnosis of breakdowns; detection; optimization of conditions; and automation.

Different examples of applications have been collected and are discussed in a succinct fashion. One drawback is the lack of precise references for this particular section.

Some very helpful appendices have been included. They enable practical and precise information to be obtained both on hplc terminology and also on troubleshooting. A list of solvent systems for different classes of compound and different types of separation is given.

The book is a practical guide for solving the majority of experimental problems which may arise during hplc operation. Theoretical aspects are, however, only briefly mentioned and the same holds for more detailed applications, which are not delineated in any extensive way. Indeed, this criticism can be extended to the whole book. In view of the large number of different aspects treated, the coverage of each theme is, of necessity, somewhat superficial.

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Pharmacothoon: Entbeogenic Drugs, Their Plant Sources, and History. JONATHAN OTT. agAccess, P.O. Box 2008, Davis, CA 95616. 1993. 640 pp. 15×22 cm. Softcover \$40.00; hardcover \$70.00. ISBN 0-9614234-3-9.

Jonathan Ott has written an extremely interesting and comprehensive volume on psychotropic drugs, but its factual content is flawed by the author's personal predilections. Ott openly advocates the legalization and use of psychedelics and is immoderate in his criticism of the United States government, our former president, the CIA, the Secret Service, NIDA, the famous mycologists Alexander H. Smith and Rolf Singer, as well as many others who hold opinions different from his own on this and other subjects. Therefore, in utilizing his vast compilation of pertinent information, the reader must remember that the presentation is steadfastly representative of the author's viewpoint.

The introductory note on the text concludes with the following paean to the virtues of mind-altering chemicals: "With the aid of those wondrous *psychopharmaka*, may we concern ourselves ever more with the evanescent and eternally ephemeral beauty that is the here and now, that is quotidian consciousness; the only and all real wealth in this dimension of the universe!" Ott has utilized and further developed a euphemistic terminology to describe such drugs and their effects. *Entbeogen* (realizing the divine within) substitutes for hallucinogen or psychedelic agent, *ludibund* for non-medical (abusive) drug use, *inebriation* for intoxication; *narcotic* is not used for mind-altering drugs because it is said to be "pejorative" and "etymologically questionable."

Careful directions are provided for those who want to use psychotomimetic drugs. If ingestion of whole ground seeds of morning glories causes side effects, use "filtered, cold-water infusions of ground seeds as the Mexican Indians take them." "...sauté the mushrooms [*Psilocybe* species] in butter, and...eat over toast or crackers." The hazards are minimized: "*Amanita muscaria* and *A. pantherina* are definitely *not* deadly and, when used intelligently, are decidedly *not* dangerous." From personal observation of *A. muscaria* poisoning victims in the Pacific Northwest, I can only conclude that the intelligent use of that mushroom is no use at all.

Ott is both a former collaborator and ardent admirer of R. Gordon Wasson who developed a number of extravagant theories about the significance of fungi. These include identifying soma as the fly agaric and the Eleusinian mysteries as dependent upon ergot. Many question these attributions, but Ott meets such skepticism with disdain, apparently believing that the truth is known only to users of mind-altering drugs.

Aside from the disputatious presentation, there are segments of interest in this extensive volume. The

*Unsigned book reviews are by the Book Review Editor.

listing of 50 known hallucinogens is useful, but in a supposedly scientific work, would have been even more so if the heading "legal status" had been deleted, or at least complemented by one devoted to "side effects." Ott has a good knowledge of the vast literature in the field, and this is reflected in the extensive, and useful, bibliography. This 122-page section alone will prompt interested persons to include the volume in their libraries.

The distributor's press release describes this volume as dealing with the history, sources, and use of *hallucinogenic* drugs. Obviously, even that organization, agAccess, is not convinced by Ott's argument that such nomenclature should be eschewed in favor of his term *entheogen*. A flimsy softcover and glued binding characterize the review copy; both features are inadequate for a thick volume of 639 pages. The hardcover edition is definitely preferable.

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Organic Syntheses, Vol. 72. Edited by DAVID L. COFFEN. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158. 1994. xxxii + 333 pp. 15×23 cm. \$39.95. ISBN 0-471-30727-0.

This latest volume in this series continues the scope and coverage of previous volumes, with 32 synthetic procedures from laboratories in ten different countries. Short obituaries are also provided for Melvin Newman and Peter Yates. The importance of natural products as chiral starting materials is emphasized by the fact that the first nine procedures start from natural products. This volume will be an essential addition to the libraries of practicing synthetic organic chemists.

Ayahuasca Analogues. JONATHAN OTT. agAccess, 603 Fourth Street, Davis, CA 95616. 1994. 128 pp. 15×23 cm. \$15.00. ISBN 0-9614234-5-5.

Ayahuasca (a hallucinatory potion prepared from *Banisteriopsis caapi*) *Analogues* (subtitled *Pangaean Entheogens*) is a book which explores the details of the human pharmacology of this plant. The introductory exordium details this Amazonian drink and the entheogenic reformation in general. Chapter 1 provides the natural history of *Ayahuasca* and its use throughout the Amazon as a magico-religious drink. Chapter 2 details the pharmacognosy (botany, analytical chemistry, and pharmacology) of the *Ayahuasca* plants and potions. Chapter 3 focuses on the various *Ayahuasca* analogues and various personal experiences with its use. Finally, Chapter 4 provides an historical overview of *Ayahuasca* from its pan-Amazonian usage to its pangaean use as an entheogen. The book has nine useful tables which give a quick glance at *Ayahuasca* additive plants, reported analyses of *Ayahuasca* plants, leaf admixtures, potions, reported structures of the major *Ayahuasca* alkaloids, human pharmacology of *Ayahuasca* analogues [*Peganum harmala*/dimethyltryptamine (DMT)], human pharmacology of *Ayahuasca* Capsules (harmine and DMT), plants containing MAO-inhibiting beta-carbolines, and plants containing entheogenic tryptamines. Overall, the book is well written and Ott provides much useful information through his own experimentation with these materials. He describes the preparation of these potions and uses available temperate-zone plants as sources of the enzyme-inhibiting *ayahuasca* beta-carbolines, and the key active principle, DMT. The author contends that at least 4,000 possible combinations of these plant mixtures can be easily prepared and used for studies on their magico-religious significance. The bibliography is extensive (418 references) and the index and footnotes very comprehensive. I can only highly recommend this text as a very useful reference (history, botany, chemistry, pharmacology, pharmacognosy) for those interested in the complex *Ayahuasca* story and the author's interpretation (through self-experimentation) of the effects of the plant and its analogues on the mind.

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