The author has taken material from more than 1000 references but the absence of an author index makes the following of the progress of individual research workers very difficult. As an example, the species index suggests that only one reference to lipids in *Plasmodiophora brassicae* was included but there has been some quite excellent work by P. H. Williams on this species which might well have been included in chapter 10 or 11. Further there is some evidence for the book having been prepared in too much of a hurry, with typographical errors and other evidence of inadequate proof reading. Also the impression is formed that much of the information has been rather ill digested so that, whilst admirable in concept, the value of this book is greatly diminished. Typical examples are the frequent errors of chemical nomenclature (e.g. 17-methyl-octadecanoic acid is not the correct name for $(CH_3)_2CH(CH_2)_{14}COOH$ but rather 16-methyl-heptadecanoic acid), the incorrect formulation of squalene with one double bond having the Z configuration and three having the E configuration (a failing of many other authors and journals in print also) and the very out-dated and often incorrect sterol nomenclature. The reaction mechanism illustrated for *trans*-carboxylation from a biotin derivative to an acyl-CoA receptor molecule is wrong and bears little resemblance to that illustrated in the original article. It is also remarkable to see in chapter 11.4.3 a paragraph dealing with hormonal-regulation processes of the genus *Achlya* a sentence: "It is not known whether these hormones are sterols" and yet the formula for antheridiol, hormone A of the series of compounds referred to in this particular paragraph, is illustrated (incorrectly) in chapter 5.

These various points and others lead me to the belief that the value of this book to a research worker must be limited, as they all tend to destroy confidence in even the factual assertions as well as the more speculative sections. In addition to the destruction of confidence, such a book could give a student commencing research in this field a lot of erroneous information of a quite basic type.

If I were to be asked whether this book should be purchased by the University Library, I would feel obliged to recommend it not being purchased, and I would similarly recommend any intending individual buyer, since the overall quality appears to be well below that of the price tag.

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Phytochemistry, 1975. Vol. 14, pp. 2102–2103. Pergamon Press. Printed in England.

The Organic Constituents of Higher Plants by TREVOR ROBINSON, 3rd edition, 1975, 347 pp. $11.00 or £4.75

To those who have not seen the two earlier editions, let me say that this admirable textbook is the only available guide within a single volume to the enormous range of organic structures encountered in the plant kingdom. The author briefly discusses the chemistry, isolation procedures, methods of characterization and biosynthetic pathways for each of the major classes of natural plant constituents. This large format book (22 × 29 cm) is profusely illustrated with chemical formulae and biosynthetic schemes. To my mind, it is an essential undergraduate text in any university course covering secondary plant constituents. In addition, it is an excellent book to have in the research laboratory since it provides most of the key references to all the major classes of plant compounds. This third edition, which updates the second edition of 1967, contains over 1,600 references and covers the literature up to November 1974. It has thus been extensively revised and many new features have been added. Clearly, no one author can ever hope to be *au fait* with every single new development within the phytochemical field and there are, undoubtedly, a few minor errors and omissions and occasional infelicities in emphasis. One could argue that the author might have made more use of biosynthetic classification in his arrangement of topics but, a degree of arbitrariness is inevitable because so many compounds of mixed biosynthetic origin

are now known. At least the author treats all the isoprenoids together in the same chapter, unlike the unfortunate system used in the recent, very expensive, three volume phytochemistry text edited by L. Miller.

Earlier editions of the book were difficult to obtain in this country because the publishers, the Burgess Company, had no European sales office. This edition is published by the author and is available (post free) by sending a remittance direct to: Cordus Press, Box 587, North Amherst, Massachusetts 01059. U.S. readers need only send $10.00, others—the equivalent to $11.00. At this price it is a considerable bargain and, in a world where textbook prices have gone skyhigh, I do recommend all potential readers to purchase this volume while they can.

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