proposed). Rashes are socially unacceptable, have an adverse effect on self-image,^{5 6} and might therefore be expected to have a similarly adverse effect on evolutionary selection.⁴ We must therefore consider the possibility that psoriasis has persisted because it offers a genetic advantage—namely, the decreased AHH activity of psoriatic skin—which reduces the incidence of cancer of the skin and perhaps of other organs.

A hypothesis which explains known facts is good, but one which suggests further experiments is better. Our proposal that the incidence of skin tumours is likely to be low in psoriasis because of a reduced activity of skin AHH in that disease, opens the question rather than closes it.

References

- ¹ Shabab, L M, *et al*, *International Journal of Cancer*, 1970, **6**, 314.
- ² Shuster, S, *Symposium on Psoriasis*. University of Newcastle upon Tyne 1964.
- ³ Kocsard, E, *Australian Journal of Dermatology*, 1976, **17**, 65.
- ⁴ Shuster, S, *Lancet*, 1976, **1**, 1329.

- ⁵ Shuster, S, *et al*, *British Journal of Dermatology*, 1978, **99**, suppl No 16, p 8.
- ⁶ Shuster, S, in *Dermatology in General Medicine*, p 78. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979.
- ⁷ Miller, J A, and Miller, E C, in *Origins of Human Cancer, Book B, Mechanisms of Carcinogenesis*, ed H H Hiatt, J D Watson, and J A Winsten, p 615. Cold Spring Harbor, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, 1977.
- ⁸ Thorgeirsson, S S, and Nebert, D W, *Advances in Cancer Research*, 1976, **25**, 149.
- ⁹ Pelkonen, O, in *Polynuclear Aromatic Hydrocarbons: Chemistry, Metabolism and Carcinogenesis*, ed R L Freudenthal and P W Jones, p 9. New York, Raven Press, 1976.
- ¹⁰ Chapman, P H, Rawlins, M D, and Shuster, S, *British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology*. In press.
- ¹¹ Glover, P L, *et al*, *International Journal of Cancer*, 1976, **18**, 1.
- ¹² Kinoshita, N, and Gelboin, H V, *Cancer Research*, 1972, **32**, 1329.
- ¹³ Buty, S G, Thompson, S, and Slaga, T J, *Biochemical and Biophysical Research Communications*. 1976, **70**, 1102.
- ¹⁴ Santamaria, L, and Glordano, G G, in *The Biologic Effects of Ultraviolet Radiation (with Emphasis on the Skin)*, ed F Urbach, p 569. Oxford, Pergamon Press, 1969.
- ¹⁵ Chapman, P H, Rawlins, M D, and Shuster, S, *Lancet*, 1979, **1**, 297.

(Accepted 8 February 1979)

Reading for Pleasure

From lecture to reference

DOUGLAS BLACK

I once had the pleasure of treating a direct descendant in the male line of Sir Thomas Gresham, to whom was imputed the "law" which declares that bad money drives out good. I think this principle can be applied more widely than to coin of the realm—for example, in many matters of administration the short-term inescapable drives out the long-term planning, which, in the end, is more important. And when it comes to reading, there is a certain tendency for the turgid essential to encroach on what might otherwise be read for pleasure.

I might well be asked at this point, "Why, then, are you writing this article?" I have two rationalisations to offer. I do, in fact, make time for leisure reading, basing myself on Voltaire's maxim, "Le superflu, chose si necessaire." And also, thank goodness, the dividing line between what one has to read and what one wants to read is far from absolute. If, for example, it is assumed that we ought to read letters sent to us, then many of those which I receive are a pleasure to read, though I am getting a little tired of fluoride (especially when the same letter appears half-a-dozen times from different directions). And again, it would surely be admitted that the editor of a book should read the chapters in it, even though they appear successively as manuscript, as galleys, and finally on pages (and "finally" may be a long time); but I must be an addict, because I still extract pleasure even at the page-proof stage. Finally, the books which come in the way of business often give pleasure as well; indeed, the first two books which I am going to mention both fall in this category.

In the way of business

By a curious coincidence, they were reviewed in successive issues of the *British Medical Journal* (20 and 27 January), so I may be absolved from attempting to summarise their contents. As Tony Smith points out in his review of Colin Dollery's Rock Carling Lecture on *The End of an Age of Optimism; Medical science in retrospect, and prospect*, the two books adopt the same device, that of a mock trial with medical science (and to a large extent in John Bradshaw's book, medicine in general) in the dock. In *Doctor on Trial* the judge (whom I presume to be in sound physical health) declares "I find Western doctors today are certainly more productive, directly or indirectly, of ill health, in every sense, than of health; and therefore in the terms of the brief of this court I have no hesitation at all in finding doctors 'Guilty.'" Of course, a considerable part of John Bradshaw's case is directed against "high-technology society" in general. But he blames doctors, as responsible members of society, for failing to protest against the ills, as he sees them, of life as we lead it today. He allows that the generality of doctors are "conscientious, hard-working, kind and competent by their standards"; and that, in mitigation, doctors may be "unwittingly guilty." But he clearly thinks that medicine is on the wrong track.

I had the pleasure of hearing the Rock Carling Lecture delivered, as well as of reading the monograph later. Unlike John Bradshaw's book, but like Archie Cochrane's earlier Rock Carling Lecture, the monograph can be read at an enjoyable sitting—it might even be on a train journey, with a bonus of extra time such as is not unknown these days. It would be strange indeed if I did not find the Dollery analysis more appealing than the Bradshaw one; but I have a puritan background which drives me to read books with whose thesis I tend to disagree. Sometimes, I amuse myself by picking out the contention that I find most unacceptable. With Ivan Illich in *Medical Nemesis*, my crux came with his easy, and no doubt

vicarious, tolerance of pain, coupled with the imputation of conspiracy to those who attempt to relieve it. With John Bradshaw, it comes when he says that "high-technology medicine is incompatible to some extent with compassion, which is what is needed most in the face of pain and death, both of which high-technology medicine, significantly enough, seeks not to make bearable but to control completely and even to eliminate." There is, of course, a vagueness in the terms "high-technology medicine," "to some extent," and even "compassion." But I cannot see any essential incompatibility between scientifically based medicine and humane feeling. And just what is wrong with relieving pain, the more completely the better; or with prolonging life of acceptable quality by dialysis or transplantation?

A fresh look

Having been put off by an early and premature encounter with *The Mill on the Floss*, I came late in life to George Eliot. *Middlemarch* must be one of the greatest novels of a great century of novel writing; and it has the medical interest of Tertius Lydgate's conflict between his own professional idealism and the materialism of Rosamund Vincy. There is much matter also in *Daniel Deronda*, and in *Felix Holt the Radical*; and I like her interpolation of comment on the characters and plot. Such interpolations are perhaps carried to excess in a much more recent novel, John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, in which they provide alternative courses of the plot and, finally, even an alternative ending. But he certainly has the gift—obvious to common sense, and explicitly stated and exemplified by Somerset Maugham—of being able to maintain a narrative. My admiration for Leonard Woolf's autobiography is matched only by my inability to derive pleasure from his wife's novels.

Those of us who remember a time when the map of the world was largely red (British, not Communist) have savoured keenly the ambivalence of James Morris's trilogy, taking us through the short span from *At Heaven's Command* to *Farewell the Trumpets*. Our ends were often better than our means, but while it lasted the pax Britannica at least enabled (may even have promoted) a better life for millions throughout the world than many of their descendants are currently experiencing. For

radical healing of the wounded spirit in these difficult times I turn, like so many others, however, to poetry—not only to Shakespeare and the psalms of David, but also to the more intelligible of the moderns like Housman, Robert Graves, and John Betjeman.

A little of my reading is still rereading. *The Open Society and its Enemies*, by Karl Popper, remains a salutary warning against the opposing dangers of the political philosophies of Plato and Marx. I have just reread the first volume, on Plato, and am looking forward to the second, on Marx, which has the blessed merit of being longer, as well as possibly more topical.

Although they might conceivably be classed with Charles Lamb's *biblia abiblia*, I have derived some of my greatest reading pleasure from works of reference—not so much *Who's Who* and *Whitaker*, as dictionaries, books of quotations, and encyclopaedias. Heavy though they may be, it is much easier to pick them up than to lay them down. One thing leads to another and, unless you write it down at the time, the original purpose of opening, say, an encyclopaedia is all too apt to be forgotten. I have a special fondness for encyclopaedias. I can still remember the non-words on the jacket of a *Chambers Encyclopaedia* which I have not seen for 50 years—A-BEL, BEL-CHI, CHI-ELE, ELE-GON, GOO-LAB, LAB-NUM, NUM-PUE, PUE-SOU, SOU-VIT, VIT-Z. VIT-Z, of course, owed its equal status not to number of words, but to the appendage of maps and tables. Nowadays, I find myself making excuses, no matter how shallow, for referring to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which lives next door to me.

A longer-standing favourite is the *Oxford Illustrated Dictionary*, an eminently browsable book. Not that it is completely illustrated—I remember when one of my daughters at a tender age had stumbled on the word "rape," and asked her mother what it meant. Not receiving a straight answer (for we were unenlightened parents), she said, "Oh, never mind, I'll look it up in the *Illustrated Dictionary*." I have much sympathy with the view expressed in a letter from Josiah Wedgwood to his son Jacky, then aged 8—"I wish you to know a great deal of some things, and not be quite ignorant of anything you may meet with in your journey thro' life. You must therefore begin to learn early." I don't need books to put me to sleep; but when I want to stay awake on planes and trains I read Alistair Maclean or Helen MacInnes.

STRANGE ENCOUNTER

Shared experience

I wanted to illustrate a point in a textbook by reproducing a pair of photomicrographs of a specimen that had turned up in my practice some years before. The best field had been photographed then, and I had used the transparencies that showed it when talking about the case during a visit to a university overseas. My host at that time asked if he might have prints at two magnifications so that he could include them—with the "usual acknowledgment," he said—in a book that he was writing. I was flattered, and agreed gladly.

In due course, his book appeared. It was nice to see that the reproduction of the pair of photographs did justice to the work of the photographer who had made them with me. They were noticeably among the best illustrations. The "usual acknowledgment" was lacking, and had I not known the history I should have assumed that the specimen was from the author's collection. Still, he made the diagnostic point well, and the pictures illustrated it splendidly.

Needing now to use the illustrations myself, I thought it would be respectful to write to my sometime host and present fellow author to tell him I was doing so. He replied at once that I should have written sooner and asked his permission to reproduce the photographs. To avoid delays, however, he was pleased to allow me to reproduce them both, subject to payment of his fee of 600 dollars for their use, and provided I undertook to include in the captions an "appreciation"

of his consent to the publication and a full bibliographical reference to his book. "You probably noticed," he added, "that my secretary forgot to include your name in the list of contributors of illustrations in my book; sorry about that, but I know you will appreciate that the important matter is that I made the apposite point in the text and that the photographs only add an opportune gloss, though I do thank you for making them over to me."

"By the way," the letter ended, "as you will know, the stamp on the back of the prints which you provided names the copyright holder as what I think is the department you are employed by in your university. You will therefore want to know that the copyright has become effectively mine jointly with [his publishers] since priority of publication is in my name over their imprint. Please write to them at once; they will require settlement of their fee for copyright clearance before you are finally cleared to use the pictures." And there was a postscript: "The publishers' clearance fee, of course, is distinct from the 600 dollars that you will pay me. Make sure your remittance is payable to me personally."

I have the specimen still, and the paraffin wax blocks, and the histological sections. So I can still illustrate the best field, at the suitable magnifications, and I shall not have to pay anybody any fee for my own work, and there will be no infringement of the legitimate copyright holder's interests. But there must be a moral in this history, somewhere.—WILL MACREDIE.