

Book Reviews

OWEN HANNAWAY, *The chemists and the word. The didactic origins of chemistry*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1975, 8vo, pp. [xv], 165, illus., £6.50.

The author's objective here is to explain the emergence of chemistry as an integral and distinctive scholarly discipline around 1600. It is clear that during the seventeenth century chemistry grew in strength and independence as a subject of instruction, with the production of an ongoing didactic tradition, even though it is usually held that it did not reach scientific maturity until the end of the eighteenth century. Recent research has identified the Paracelsian movement and Hermeticism as potent etiological factors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but factors other than chemical philosophy are also detectable.

Dr. Hannaway contends that the origins of chemistry as a distinct subject of instruction can be traced back to Andreas Libavius's *Alchemia* of 1597, in which the author sought to rescue chemistry from the alchemical ideology of the Paracelsians and Hermetics. The background to the latter is found in Oswald Kroll's *Basilica chymica* of 1609, which also includes a comprehensive description of Paracelsian remedies, and which is carefully analysed here. Libavius's attack on Kroll in 1615 was based on their differing interpretations of the significance of the word and the role of language in the explication of nature.

This book is, therefore, basically concerned with a parallel discussion of the works of Libavius and Kroll as they illustrate the emergence of chemistry and the relation of this to Paracelsian chemical philosophy; they can be shown to be quite distinct. By studying contrasts and conflicts Dr. Hannaway is able to throw new light on the origin of chemistry as a discipline. He also shows that the Ramist dialectic and method allowed the formation of disciplines compounded of empirical and practical knowledge.

As a deep and scholarly analysis of the emergence of a modern science, this book is an important contribution to the history of science and of the medical sciences. It is also an outstanding example of intellectual history, which can be expected to lead to a much deeper understanding of topics such as the one dealt with here.

FERNAND BRAUDEL, *Capitalism and material life 1400–1800*, translated by Miriam Kothan, London, Fontana, 1974, 8vo, pp. xiii, 462, £1.75 (paperback).

First published in 1967, this book by the editor of *Annales* soon became well known and it now appears in English for the first time. It is a remarkable source of information concerning life in the pre-industrial world, both West and East, and the changes produced by industrialization and by the emergence of capitalist economies. Population, food, towns, houses, recreations, fashion, technologies, money, amongst many more, are dealt with. The book, however, is by no means a catalogue of data, for Braudel is also concerned with general patterns and connexions which he handles skilfully. Moreover his style is vivid and attractive. He must have researched omnivorously for this book, but it is a pity that he provides no clue at all to the sources of his material. A certain amount of documentation would have added greatly to the value of an already treasured work. Nevertheless it should be consulted by all historians of pre-capitalist medicine and science.