

## Book Reviews

*The smiling spleen* is thus to be seen as a challenge to posterity, for it offers hints and nudges rather than lengthy sustained argument, and at times a certain cloudiness of expression hides the wisdom of the sage. It will stimulate controversy: not all, for example, will be convinced by the attempt, pp. 55–60, to defend Paracelsus against allegations of inconsistency, or, p. 139, to find Shakespeare in Van Helmont. But the necessity to go back to the primary sources, iconographic as well as literary, to provide a refutation of Pagel's suggestions cannot but be salutary. Alas, the book's price is likely to make it one only for the adept.

This is a great pity, for *The smiling spleen* reveals clearly the great strengths of its author, as well as his wit; his deep acquaintance with the vast scientific literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, his shrewd appreciation of scholarly work of lasting value (and his notes show how well he also kept up with recent literature), and, above all, his willingness to take seriously speculations that appeared strange and incomprehensible even to contemporaries. All this was backed by a knowledge of a most practical medical speciality, pathology, and a profound linguistic talent and enthusiasm. European authors of the Renaissance, from Spain to Silesia, became almost his friends, and Greek alchemists, Jewish kabbalists, medieval mystics, and Enlightenment Rosicrucians aided him in his understanding of man and his relationship with the universe. He was conscious too of belonging to a tradition of scholarship that expected great things of a historian, and hence his humility in setting out his own expertises. The error in his transcription of the manuscript of De Mondeville on p. 122 (line 8, read "in reward") is trivial by comparison with its silent injunction to the scholar to read the medieval English text for himself and understand how the surgeon's theories throw light on later developments. The same passage, which is also printed on the dust-jacket, also reminds us that it was Pagel's father, Julius, who first edited the works of De Mondeville, and who inspired his son to love the history of medicine. It was a calling to which, in the highest sense, Walter Pagel was ever true.

Vivian Nutton  
Wellcome Institute

NANCY E. GALLAGHER, *Medicine and power in Tunisia, 1780–1900*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, 8vo, pp. xiv, 145, illus., £19.50.

This is a very ambitious and interesting book. Three major issues in the social history of medicine are discussed. First, the claim that epidemics were major forces or moments of historical change in the nineteenth century and earlier is tested and found wanting with regard to Tunisian development. Second, it is argued that responses to epidemics are a useful means of revealing social and political relations and structures. In developing this approach, Gallagher shows incidentally that medical men, institutions, and beliefs were integral and important parts of Tunisian society at all levels in the nineteenth century. Third, it is suggested that eventual European medical domination derived from the overall imposition of colonial rule rather than from its greater effectiveness or rationality, although the purported supremacy of European medicine had a political role in symbolizing the progressive nature of colonial rule. The history of Third World medicine before and during colonial rule is much neglected, so this is a very welcome book. My only reservation is that while it increases our knowledge of medicine and imperialism, it does not do enough to further our understanding. No systematic theory of the relationship between medicine and power is used or developed, while the focus of epidemic crises tends to produce a disjointed narrative. A more extended account of Tunisian development ought to have been included, especially as the conclusions put the weight of historical explanation on wider economic and political change. One particular disappointment is that French colonial medicine is equated simply with European medicine. This is too simple, because the French, like other European powers, developed special institutions and services for overseas territories. Information on France would have been valuable in helping to build up the comparative picture of colonial or tropical medicine in the various European empires. Nonetheless, this is an important and pioneering work which deserves a larger readership than seems likely with the publishers charging £19.50 for a mere 145 pages.

Michael Worboys  
Sheffield City Polytechnic