Reviews Comptes rendus

William J. Bouwsma. *The Waning of the Renaissance, 1550–1640*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000. Pp. xi, 288.

The title of this third volume of *The Yale Intellectual History of the West* seems to promise a threnody, but it is a much more nuanced and ambitious discussion of the intellectual life of its era than the evocation of the (mistranslated) title of Huizinga's classic suggests. Nor is it a study of the "autumn" of the Renaissance. Indeed the virtue of this magisterial work is its refusal to accommodate any easy or formulaic characterization of the thought and culture of a diverse and complicated age.

Although Bouwsma identifies, at least in passing, most of the people he discusses, the book does not seem best suited for a beginning student; it is, rather, a careful but impressionistic and evocative reconsideration of the major intellectual and cultural developments of a post-Reformation world, faced with the social and political consequences of strong and deep disagreements which could not easily be compromised. The gradual addition of Stoic elements to putatively Christian moralizing tracts, a classicising tendency in the arts, which privileged the established order, and an increasing willingness to accept authoritarian political and religious leadership all seem to Bouwsma implicitly to have denied or rejected the liberating traditions of early Renaissance thinkers and writers.

Many will find themselves questioning some of Bouwsma's assessments, for example, when he oddly privileges Sperone Speroni's *Dialogue on Language* over Bembo's *Prose delle volgar lingua*; but on such occasions his judgements provoke more thought than disagreement. More often he underlines conclusions that have been inchoate or tentative in one's own mind and places them in a convincing and evocative context.

The book is conceptually divided in two: the first section discusses those elements that might be said to have continued the work of the humanists and artists of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, while the second assesses the tensions and problems this work engendered. Many individuals figure in both sections; the analysis is far from simple or constraining. At times one might ask for greater

concern with explanation: Bouwsma cites Eisenstein but does not ask whether typography might have fostered the greater concern with literal meaning in texts and with orderly, straightforward unrhetorical presentation of arguments that he sees as increasingly normative among the elite.

While essays of this sort should not be tied by all the requirements of a scholarly monograph, Bouwsma's willingness to eschew citations for many of his quotations (and in many instances even to leave their authors anonymous) left this reader wanting a firmer documentary base. Some of the endnotes refer in a shorthand form to books not previously cited, and a number of the primary sources referred to can be found in neither the notes nor the "Bibliographical Note" which substitutes for a full bibliography. Most readers will encounter material here with which they are not familiar and find less help than would be ideal in order rapidly to follow up on the author's comments.

This book will find a valued place in the library of all scholars of the era and in the studies of all advanced undergraduate students interested in early modern cultural history. Thanks to Yale's sensible pricing (US \$29.95), its acquisition in hardcover can be recommended to all.

A misdating of the Edict of Nantes to 1585 is the only substantive error in this carefully edited book.

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J. H. Elliott and L. W. B. Brockliss, eds. *The World of the Favourite*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999. Pp. xv, 320.

A great mantra of gender and cultural studies has been "the personal is the political." The volume at hand, which deals with the place in early modern political culture of the figure variously known as the *valido*, *privado*, favorite, *premier ministre*, or minister-favorite, might be expected to offer an ideal assay of both that maxim and its presumed converse, "The political is [or at least can be] the personal." The introduction, concluding remarks, and seventeen essays in this volume, initially derived from a conference held in 1996 at Magdalen College, Oxford, probe the conjunctions and disjunctions in the private and public worlds of the early modern monarchies through the *valido*, who, in I. A. A. Thompson's formulation, "emerged in the window of transition between a private and a public bureaucracy . . . between the *Respublica Christiana* and *raison d'état*" (p. 23).

With the single exception of the management of patronage, there was no precise common ground in the "world of the favourite." Clearly, close personal ties to the monarch might matter, and proximity and frequent access might be both favor's cause and its effect. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Elizabeth's several creatures (even though none monopolized favor), who are discussed by Paul E. J. Hammer, certainly operated within that framework, as did Concino Concini and his wife Leonora, a team, treated in the brief contribution of