

between public and private. Like Thomson, Adrian Wilson complicates notions of "bourgeois publicness" in "The Birmingham General Hospital and its Public, 1765-79" (99). Wilson's assessment of the connection between public action and Birmingham's general hospital in the eighteenth century astutely suggests that Habermas's narrow conception of the public sphere does not adequately account for complexities such as confessional difference and the clash between town and country.

By enriching and expanding Habermas's characterization of the public sphere, each chapter in *Medicine, Health and the Public Sphere in Britain* offers a vital counterpoint to traditional distinctions between civil society and the state and demonstrates that medicine represents a vital force in the construction of the public sphere and collective action. Although limited in chronological scope by its prevailing emphasis on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this volume nonetheless offers an innovative and wide-ranging assessment of the interplay between the state, society, and medical institutions throughout Britain during the past four centuries.

Christopher Baker, ed. *Absolutism and the Scientific Revolution 1600-1720: A Biographical Dictionary*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002. xxxiv + 450 pp. \$99.95. Review by IRVING A. KELTER, UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS, HOUSTON.

Absolutism and the Scientific Revolution 1600-1720: A Biographical Dictionary, edited by Christopher Baker, is one of the volumes being published by Greenwood Press in its "Great Cultural Eras of the Western World" series. Each volume attempts to treat a period of Western history that had its own distinctive cultural physiognomy. Earlier volumes include ones on the Renaissance and Reformation and on the late Middle Ages.

The book begins with a short introduction by Christopher Baker, explaining the layout of the book and the principles of its organization. He argues that by 1600 the Renaissance was losing

“momentum” as a series of cultural forces and new forces were at work. The two he singles out were the rise to prominence of new methods and insights in the natural sciences and of new forms of monarchical government; hence the title of the work. Baker briefly analyzes the major trends in these areas as he sees them, also dealing with another major term used by earlier scholars to define the culture of this period, i.e. baroque. What surprised me about the introduction was its neglect of the major arguments among historians of politics and of science concerning the nature and usefulness of the terms “absolutism” and “scientific revolution” to define this period of European history. What also surprised me was Baker’s use of the term “absolutism” in the title given his statement that “individuals were chosen according to their contribution to the social, artistic, and intellectual milieu of seventeenth-century Europe” (xv). As he goes on to say, political or military figures were treated only if they had a broader impact on the culture of their day. Why then use the political term “absolutism” and possibly mislead readers who will expect to see more political and military figures than they will find in this book?

The book is organized in the classic alphabetic manner, with short, succinct articles on 400 figures. Each article contains a short bibliography appended to it. There is also a useful chronology that precedes the articles and two appendices of entries, arranged by subject and country, a general bibliography and an index of names that follow the articles. Finally, the reader will find the list of contributors and their affiliations. This is a very user-friendly book!

The usual suspects are all here, as well as a number of lesser-known figures. In the arts we find Bernini, the Brueghels, and Rembrandt. In exploration, we discover Hudson and Raleigh. In literature, we can read of Donne and Cyrano de Bergerac. In philosophy and science, my own special areas of research, readers can delve into the thoughts of Bacon, Descartes, Kepler, Galileo, and Newton. In line with recent scholarship, attention is paid to women and their cultural accomplishments in these areas. Consequently, we find articles on Artemisia Gentileschi, the painter, Margaret

Cavendish, the writer, and Nell Gwyn, the actress and royal mistress of Charles II of England. There are numerous other cases of entries on important women in this period and all are examples of a salutary concern for putting European women back into history. Of course, some figures one would want to find, such as the great Catholic astronomer Riccioli, are not present, but no such book can be all-inclusive.

In some cases, I found the bibliographical entries to be either too short or too old in terms of the literature they cite. Surely the author on William Gilbert could have found something to cite besides a very general survey of Tudor science published in 1972? Was there nothing other than a 1970 article to cite in the bibliography at the end of the entry on the major Jesuit astronomer Scheiner? Why weren't the standard, valuable essays in the *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* cited? In the case of political figures, why were the works of the great J. H. Elliot not included in either the article on Philip IV of Spain or in the general bibliography.

I do not want to end on a negative note. This is a very useful volume for students and teachers to have on their shelves. I am sure I will refer to it a lot to help me in my early modern European courses.

Suzanne L. Stratton-Pruitt, ed. *Velázquez's "Las Meninas."* Masterpieces of Western Painting. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. xii + 223 pp. + 25 illus. \$55.00 hardcover, \$20.00 paperback. Review by TANYA J. TIFFANY, SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY.

Velázquez's "Las Meninas," edited by Suzanne L. Stratton-Pruitt, forms part of Cambridge University Press's "Masterpieces of Western Painting," a series aimed to present students and scholars with reconsiderations of canonical works of art through various approaches and methodologies. As Stratton-Pruitt explains, she has pursued this objective not by advancing "new interpretations," but rather by offering "an introduction to the reception history and the critical fortunes" of *Las Meninas* (1656, Madrid, Museo del