

counter-intuitive prescience to search for Cockpit under P (for Phoenix), or for both of them under W (for Whitehall).

These omissions and misplacings are typical of the indexing of the volume as a whole, and are unfortunate. A work intended for a scholarly audience, as this book clearly is, does that audience a disservice when the useful and important information it contains cannot be re-found except by searching for it page by page. Regrettably, publishers like to encourage terse indexing, on the assumption that only prospective purchasers use the index, to see if a book touches upon the topic they seek. But in truth, indexes are used far more often after purchase, by users trying to re-locate something they know they've read. Users of this book won't find that an easy task. I go on at unseemly length about these matters because they are the pebbles in the shoes that hobble what should be an enjoyable walk with a competent scholar. Professor Astington's book is without question a book worth having. But, like much else in this sublunary world, its final form has been tempted away from a greater perfection, perhaps by that serpent called 'the market'.

WILLIAM INGRAM

W. R. Elton. *Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida and the Inns of Court Revels*. Aldershot, VT: Ashgate, 2000. Pp xi, 201.

The history of the reception of *Troilus and Cressida* reflects its enigmatic and, to many, repellent nature, and until the latter half of the twentieth century the play languished amongst Shakespeare's least popular and least performed. In 1896 Frederick Boas designated it a 'problem play' because of what he perceived as its darkness or bitterness, and the label has stuck as if 'problem play' were a genre in itself. It is, however, an arbitrary category (it has been used, for different reasons, to include a number of plays that have little in common other than that some people have found them puzzling), and in *Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida and the Inns of Court Revels* W.R. Elton rightly dismisses the whole conception of the problem play as 'categorically ill-defined and vague' (3), and argues that if we understand that *Troilus and Cressida* was written as an entertainment for students in the Inns of Court the difficulties surrounding the play can be resolved. The idea that *Troilus and Cressida* might have been performed at the Inns of Court is not, of course, new; it was first suggested by Peter Alexander in 1929, and the majority of scholars appear to have accepted the reasonableness of the proposition. Elton sets out

to provide, through close reading, decisive proof that the play was written as a law-revels entertainment; more radically, he argues that if we are aware of the interests of the audience for which it was written, the play can be seen not as 'bitter', but as a playful burlesque, a witty addition to the Erasmian tradition of learned folly.

Elton approaches the subject by identifying categories related to the professional and intellectual interests of Elizabethan law students, as well as to ways in which they liked to be entertained (as derived from extant law-revels documents such as *Gesta Grayorum* and the *Prince d'Amour*), and by endeavouring to show how various elements of *Troilus and Cressida* fit into these categories. There are eight chapters, each dealing with a different category: 'Burlesque, mock-epic and folly'; 'Misrule, *mundus inversus* and degree'; 'Academic'; 'Rhetoric'; 'Logic'; 'Value'; 'Revels'; 'Law'. In addition, Elton provides three appendices, listing verbal echoes of the *Gesta Grayorum* and the *Prince d'Amour*, legal terms used in *Troilus and Cressida*, and echoes of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. As we might expect of any book by Elton, this one reflects massive erudition in Elizabethan literary and legal materials. Elton's method of paying close attention to the language of the play also provides many stimulating local readings.

There are, however, problems. Some of them arise from the book's schematic structure. Each chapter begins with a list, arranged chronologically, of scenes to be examined in it, each with its own subheading(s). The list is followed by a preview in which the aims of the chapter are briefly digested. Analysis of the play then proceeds under the subheadings (though some of these subjects are very brief and sometimes disconnected), and the chapter ends with a recapitulation of what has been done that is essentially a rephrasing of the preview. This schematic structure is presumably intended to mimic the order of a legal document, but it makes for an experience that the reader might find irritating.

This choice of structure creates other problems. Major scenes in the play are examined under a number of headings. The Trojan debate scene, for example, is discussed in five of the eight chapters. This might seem reasonable enough, since it is clearly possible to discuss the scene in different ways in relation to its burlesque elements, or to conceptions of rhetoric, logic, value, or law. Nevertheless, the approach leads to inevitable repetitions. In 1.3 Aeneas claims to be unable to recognize Agamemnon. This is discussed at some length in the chapter on misrule (49), again in the chapter on logic (93), and yet again in the chapter on revels (137), but nothing different arises from the later discussions. As well as fostering such repetitions, the approach disjoints or

atomizes the play. Perhaps a concluding chapter that wove together the eight 'themes' would have countered this, but in accordance with his schematic method Elton provides only a two-page conclusion that recapitulates what he set out in his introduction.

I do not wish to deny that there is an important argument here about the direction of *Troilus and Cressida* to the interests of law students. The evidence Elton adduces in support of it is overwhelming, but this makes it all the more surprising when he feels the need to hammer into place pieces that do not fit or that have no special significance. He informs us, for example, that the word 'infant' indicated a young law student (149), and then connects this to Troilus describing himself as 'skillless as unpractised infancy' (1.1.12) and Cassandra's address to 'Soft infancy, that nothing canst but cry' (2.2.105). While Troilus' 'infancy' might certainly equate him to a lawyer-in-training, Cassandra surely uses the word with its more general meaning of 'babyhood'. Elsewhere he says that 3.1 'includes a trial or arraignment, recurrent in Inns of Court revels, and suited to a law-student audience' (138). Well, yes, but many of Shakespeare's plays contain trials, *King Lear* most extensively, but no one would take this as evidence that they were intended for law students.

Perhaps the most controversial effect of Elton's work lies in his inversion of the play's 'bitterness' into 'un-"bitter" playfulness' (167). One can, after all, accept his dissatisfaction with the 'problem play' category while still finding this play 'bitter'. A re-reading that finds the play to be 'an academic-classic burlesque' (167) written for a small learned audience has much about it that is persuasive, but it pushes the play into arcane territory even less accessible to a modern audience and denies what they have seen in it. Modern audiences *have* found the play accessible, precisely because of what is perceived as its bitterness: its dark and unillusioned deflation of heroic and romantic myths. *Troilus and Cressida* may not be a problem play, but it remains a problem.

PETER HYLAND

Jody Enders. *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999. Pp xvii, 268.

Whatever the celebrated illustration by Jean Fouquet of *The Martyrdom of Saint Apollonia* may have to tell us about the staging of medieval plays – a topic recently complicated by the sceptical inquiries of Gordon Kipling – it certainly attests to an abiding human fascination with cruelty and torture. Strapped to