

manages to give equal weight to variant versions in verse miscellanies without privileging any of them as authorial. For example, he often provides several edited texts of the one poem, printed consecutively with separate apparatus, but a single commentary.

Another impressive feature of Rudick's text is the emphasis on the different contexts in which poems by 'Raleigh' are encountered in verse miscellanies. That is, he does not simply identify 'Raleigh' poems in miscellanies and treat them in isolation, but looks at the company they keep, the headings they are given, and the manner in which they are transcribed. As he justifiably remarks, this material should not be dismissed as evidence of 'decontextualization' (that is, separation from the context within which Raleigh's poems were written), but should be studied in terms of 'recontextualization', revealing how Raleigh was perceived and interpreted by his own and subsequent generations.

How far should such an investigation go? Arguably it might be valuable to study all the contexts within which Raleigh has been read and republished from his own time to the present, but this would be a much more sprawling work than Rudick attempts. Instead, he excludes all copies of Raleigh's poetry datable after 1650. This leaves room for examining the wealth of material in verse miscellanies compiled during Charles I's reign, when the circulation of manuscript verse was at its height.

A less defensible limitation may be Rudick's decision to exclude from consideration all copies of 'Raleigh' poems which are not ascribed to him. That is, if four out of ten copies of a poem are ascribed to Raleigh, and the other six are unascribed, those six are not included in the apparatus or commentary of Rudick's text. Rudick himself recognizes that 'attribution (or lack of it), titles and annotations (where present), and (and often especially) the company in which a poem is found may all be clues to the collector's understanding of a text's status and significance' (p. xxv). If this is so, why exclude copies where attribution is lacking? This query aside, it is clear that Rudick has presented a challenging edition of Raleigh's poetry, which will continue the valuable debate on the way (or, rather, ways) in which early modern poetry should be edited.

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B. J. SOKOL and MARY SOKOL. *Shakespeare's Legal Language: A Dictionary*. Pp. xii+498 (The Athlone Shakespeare Dictionary Series). London: Athlone Press, 2000. £125.

The Athlone Press has been, and is, publishing a number of important reference works in the area of Renaissance studies. Several of us are by now well used to Gordon Williams's learned *A Dictionary of Sexual Language and Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature* (published by Athlone in 1994), which is not always easy to use but by far the most extensive publication (in three weighty tomes) of its kind, and which generally enables one to find fairly quickly all the information one needs. The present volume is one of several planned (and indeed some have already been published) in the Athlone Shakespeare Dictionary series. It contains much valuable material, but it should be said at once—without any disrespect to the authors—that this book is hardly in any conventional sense a dictionary. Someone wanting to know about, for example, the use of the word *bastard* in Shakespeare will certainly find an adequate enough amount of information, but needs to read pp. 23-31, even if not tempted by various further references within this entry for *bastard*—for example, to *pre-contract*, the section on which occupies pp. 289-307.

I add immediately that I have read both sections with considerable enjoyment, and have learned much from this book, but I would expect a dictionary to be a good deal more concise when giving information on specific matters, and to contain far more entries. Indeed, the number of entries is not at all large. The book is really a compilation of quite lengthy articles on important legal terms and concepts. In annotating a text as an editor I would, if I looked up any such word as *bastard*, have to spend some considerable time reading, though I would not consider my time wasted. The general procedure in the book is to supply first an essay on the meaning of a term or concept from a legal point of view, and then, in another essay, to apply the legal information to Shakespeare's text. Invariably, both essays are interesting, but they are not always firmly related, and some of the legal material does not necessarily get examined further from a literary point of view.

I am not an expert on legal matters in the Renaissance, and can only say that, inasmuch as I do know anything about the subject and can check what this dictionary offers against what is available elsewhere, the legal material seems sound. The literary application of it is usually also sensible and valuable, but not always. For example, the book rightly draws attention to the strangeness of Lear's use of the word *dowers* (in the Folio version) when he divides his kingdom ('We have this hour a constant will to publish I Our daughters' several dowers', I. i. 42-3 in the Oxford *Complete Works*): the word makes sense with reference to Cordelia, who is as yet not married, but not the other two daughters, who are. But then the Sokols say: 'A third was the common law proportion of estates reserved to widows as dower. Lear's gift giving hints towards an act of leaving his estate on death to three wives, as in a bizarre version of dower, not giving it in life to three daughters' (p. 99).

I cannot persuade myself that either Lear or Shakespeare should be seen as associated with this peculiar scenario. Surely it is more probable that Lear primarily has Cordelia in mind but uses the word *dowers* more loosely with reference to the other daughters. The gift is made 'in life', unquestionably, and presumably is felt by Lear to be something *akin* to a dowry in the case of Goneril and Regan. One of the problems he creates is that it is never altogether clear whether we are to see his two evil daughters as recipients of his *inter vivos* gift, or, rather, Cornwall and Burgundy, about whom Kent and Gloucester speak, in the opening lines, as though *they* are the beneficiaries. Either way, I see no hint at all of Lear 'leaving his estate on death to three wives'. Another oddity which is confusing rather than helpful is that Claudio's 'pre-contract' with Hero is (correctly) seen as an unconditional marriage contract by *verba de praesenti* on pp. 297-8, while on p. 300 we are told that 'if Hero had had sexual relations with Claudio, there would not have been any impediment. For then the *de futuro* contract would have been converted to a *de praesenti* contract equivalent to full marriage.' The contract simply cannot be *de praesenti* and *de futuro* at the same time; it is either the one or the other.

This book may well, because it raises our awareness of legal issues in Shakespeare, lead us to reappraise some of the things he does. However, we need to adopt a cautious stance. For example, from an Elizabethan viewpoint Goneril would have been the legal heir of Lear's estate (see pp. 56 and 78); but Shakespeare does not draw attention to this. Also, though in Elizabethan law a father like Egeus did not have the powers assigned to him in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, it is clearly Athenian law as presented in the play which we are asked to accept as 'real'.

There are several errors of presentation (misprints, mistaken references, etc.) which are surprising in so scholarly and expensive a work. The following list is indicative, not exhaustive; in each instance I list the error first, and offer after the square bracket what

I believe to be intended: parents] parents' (p. 26); unsolemnized] unsolemnized (p. 292); were were not] were not (p. 296); arise relation to] arise in relation to (p. 305); Bertram and Helena in ADO] Bertram and Helena in AWW (p. 306); on the its] on its (p. 407); Bertram in ADO] Bertram in AWW (p. 407); fabulation] fabulation (p. 415). While, obviously, an error like 'unsolemnized' is comparatively trivial, confusion between *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Much Ado*, in a reference work, is not.

It will be clear that I see the book as having a number of not insignificant shortcomings. Even so, I would stress that it brings together, in one volume, important factual knowledge, and many helpful explanations of legal matters in Shakespeare. It will be of definite use both to scholars (for example, editors, like myself) and to teachers who want to find fuller information on concepts such as 'pre-contract', 'primogeniture', 'co-heirs', and so on. The virtues of the volume clearly outstrip its defects, most of which could be successfully removed in a second, revised, and one hopes cheaper edition.

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ANTHONY MORTIMER. *Variable Passions: A Reading of Shakespeare's Venus and Adonis*. Pp. xvi+214. New York: AMS Press, 2000. \$62.50.

Venus and Adonis has not had the best of presses and, as Anthony Mortimer rather wistfully admits on the first page of his study, it is hard to imagine 'anyone making their acquaintance with Shakespeare through the narrative poems' (p. 1). Yet it was one of Shakespeare's most popular works in his lifetime and enjoyed rather more reprints than works much better known today. The poem has probably been ignored by readers precisely because it is by Shakespeare and is therefore judged to be either a minor work not worth reading, or a bad work which wouldn't be known at all if it had been written by the likes of Thomas Bastard, Joseph Hall, or Thomas Churchyard. *Variable Passions* is the first monograph study of the poem and Mortimer sees it as his task to rescue the poem from (relative) obscurity and neglect, although he does acknowledge that recent studies by critics of varying intellectual persuasions such as Jonathan Bate, Heather Dubrow, Katherine Duncan-Jones, and Catherine Belsey have placed *Venus and Adonis* a little nearer canonical status.

Variable Passions consists of five substantial chapters, the first and last of which attempt to contextualize the poem, while the middle three provide an extended commentary. Mortimer writes well on Shakespeare's use of rhetoric which he sees as the key to the poem. Despite C. S. Lewis's famous injunction that an ability to use rhetoric is what separates early modern readers and writers from present-day ones, far too many modern commentators have missed the point. Some have tried to read the poem as an example of the 'Ovid *moralise*' tradition, but are unable to explain how Adonis can be an example of the sin of lust as he is, for example, in Arthur Golding's translation of *The Metamorphoses*—when Shakespeare's hero refuses Venus's advances, but gets killed by the boar anyway. Rhetoric, as Mortimer explains, was paradoxically an 'instrument of social control' and 'potentially subversive', training people 'to regard arguments in terms of their immediate effectiveness rather than their abstract validity', so encouraging 'a relativist outlook that would place any orthodoxy at risk' (p. 18). *Venus and Adonis* sets out to explore the implications of this paradox. The very fact that rhetoric is used by a powerful woman—and for not terribly noble