Jayne Elisabeth Archer, Elizabeth Goldring, and Sarah M. Knight, eds.
The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court.
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 The editors of *The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of
Court* begin their volume by claiming to explore the "hitherto neglected" topic of
the Inns' influence on early modern culture. "Neglected" is probably too strong:
much good work has been done on the Inns as a social and intellectual training
ground for English writers, and on the role of these institutions in shaping political
and even scientific discourse. Nonetheless, the fifteen articles in the collection ably
demonstrate that the scholarly interest in the Inns thus far pales in comparison to
their influence in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English culture.

 In her introduction to the first section, on various historical topics associated
with the Inns, Archer insists that the Inns, "which inhabited a physical and
conceptual space that was simultaneously central and marginal in early modern
London and the nation more generally, seem to demand an especially rigorous
redefinition of the traditional disciplinary boundaries and methodologies" (27–28).
To the editors' and contributors' credit, the volume really does embrace the type of

interdisciplinarity to which other studies pay only lip service. These chapters offer a broad reading of the Inns' culture as approached through their curricular, social, and spatial organization. Most are linked by an emphasis on rhetoric, whether visual, gestural, or more conventionally oratorical. Following an entry by J. H. Baker outlining the intellectual and professional heterogeneity of the Inns of Chancery and Court, Paul Raffield explores iconography. He argues that residents developed a series of visual signs designed to suggest that humanist values regulated a common lawyer's increasingly commodified skills and practices, and that a sense of virtuous community defended common law against the growing cultural sway of rival forms of governing authority. Emma Rhatigan and Hugh Adlington discuss preaching in the Inns, especially its stylistic strategies and variety, to highlight the complexity of the relationships among law practice, spirituality, and politics. And Damian X. Powell's brief chapter is notable for bringing much of the surrounding scholarship to bear on the career of one individual lawyer, James Whitelocke. The experience of the Middle Temple, Powell ultimately finds, was not reducible to the Inn's privileges, ceremonies, customs, and physical disposition, or to the intellectual and practical content of its curriculum. These surely contributed to Whitelocke's commitment to institutional structure and corporatism; but even so, he worried that they bred factionalism and inhibited ambition. In this particular figure, then, we feel something of the diverse pressures that an institution "simultaneously marginal and central" can exert.

The volume's central section, on the Inns' art, architecture, and gardens, has the least to say about the cultural impact of these institutions. While the surveys here contribute to a fuller picture of the material history of the Inns, and are closely researched, together they don't add much to our sense of the residents' self-conception of their place or purpose. Indeed, in her introduction Elizabeth Goldring concludes that, taken together, the impression of the Inns residents that these visual images create is best summed up as "bookish." While this is hardly astonishing, it does perhaps lend additional weight to Raffield's point about the perceived need to ground the practice of common law in something more than its own customs, such as humanist learning.

If the art and design of the Inns suggest stolidity and a lingering desire for inwardness, their literary productions, explored in the book's third part, outwardly assert the cultural importance of legal concepts and practice. Lorna Hutson argues (much in the vein of her recent book) that in *The Comedy of Errors*, performed at Gray's Christmas revels in 1594, Shakespeare draws heavily from forensic rhetoric — "the rhetoric of proof, probability, conjecture, and circumstance" (247) — to create a complex sense of character depth. Unlike Inns authors, however, who use legal language in pursuit of decisiveness, Shakespeare's rhetoric suggests a mode of psychological inquiry broadly applicable to the common negotiations of ordinary social life. Bradin Cormack, also looking at *The Comedy of Errors*, points out the overlapping issues surrounding jurisdiction similarly at play in the drama, the organization of the Inns, and the multiple political and legal institutions that surround them. And Richard McCoy describes how the Gray's Inn revels afford

a glimpse of the conflicting interests within the Elizabethan world order and highlight the difficulty for the young lawyers of determining how to "use themselves" in the larger political world.

If I have one reservation about the volume, it is the relatively light attention paid to changing economic conditions and opportunities. These men were often unashamedly careerist, but their ambitions were hardly limited to places in political and legal courts. Bound up as they were in so much contract and property law, Inns residents were well prepared for and frequently pursued commercial positions — and their commercial entanglements are frequently represented in city comedy, for instance. An examination of Inns culture, in other words, would seem to afford discussion of how intellectual and social life there influenced London's mercantile climate and the evolving self-conceptions and forms of representation drawn on by men dealing in goods and property. That said, in its otherwise comprehensive treatment of Inns culture, this collection offers a wealth of argument and evidence for those seeking to link London's legal life and England's broader social currents.

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