

Late Shakespeare, 1608–1613. Andrew J. Power and Rory Loughnane, eds. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. xii + 344 pp. \$99.

The editors of *Late Shakespeare, 1608–1613* challenge the equation of “late Shakespeare” with Shakespearean romance, seeking to “establish a contextually and thematically informed approach to the full range of Shakespeare’s extant work from 1608 until the end of his career” (15). This conception of late Shakespeare is strongly influenced by Gordon McMullan’s *Shakespeare and the Idea of Late Writing*, a connection strengthened by McMullan’s afterword to the collection. Although individual essays offer useful insights, the collection as a whole does not enrich the critical concept of late Shakespeare established by McMullan’s groundbreaking work. This result is due partly to the volume’s construction. Despite the editors’ emphasis on contextually informed approaches to the full range of Shakespeare’s late work, half the collection is devoted to essays on single plays that do not consistently engage with the concept of late Shakespeare. Essays on broader topics comprise the collection’s other half, but even those essays tend to be selective in their choice of plays to consider; and those that seek comprehensiveness are often valuable more as surveys than arguments. The volume’s best essays confirm, however, that engagement with the full range of late Shakespeare can lead to rich and surprising insights into themes and dramaturgical concerns that recur across the plays of this period.

Most notable is Adam Hansen’s “Cities in Late Shakespeare,” which moves through all the 1608–13 plays to discover an abiding set of concerns for urban life overlooked by scholars equating late Shakespeare with romance. Power’s biographical survey of the actors of Shakespeare’s late plays, “Late Shakespeare, Late Players,” offers extensive new evidence about the patterns of actors’ professional lives and the influence of company demographics on Shakespeare’s composition of roles. Grace Ioppolo’s “From Author to Audience to Print,

1608–1613” and Stuart Kurland’s “Shakespeare and James I” cover the better-known grounds of textual history and the politics of James I’s rule competently, though less in their essays is new to scholarship.

The remaining essays fall short of full engagement with late Shakespeare by selecting a set of plays congenial to their concerns. Some offer compelling insights on late Shakespeare tailored to the scope they have selected. Thomas Betteridge’s “Writing Faithfully in a Post-Confessional World” and Ian McAdam’s “Magic and Gender in Late Shakespeare” illuminate Shakespeare’s exploration of religion in some of the late plays to establish important continuities between *Henry VIII* and the late romances. Others, however, fall into the trap of trying to generalize about late Shakespeare without sufficiently surveying the relevant context. David George’s “*Coriolanus*: *Coriolanus* and the Late Romances” reveals points of continuity between Shakespeare’s last tragedy and the romances that follow, but his claim that *Coriolanus* is a necessary launching point for later romances overlooks that few of the protoromantic gestures in *Coriolanus* cannot also be found in *King Lear*. Similarly, Loughnane’s “*Henry VIII (All is True)*: Semi-Choric Devices and the Framework for Playgoer Response in *King Henry VIII*” contextualizes the play in late Shakespeare but not in early Fletcher, compromising its interpretation of choric gentlemen as a distinctive late Shakespearean dramaturgical practice, since this device was also used by Fletcher, most notably in *Philaster*. Both George and Loughnane offer compelling insights into their plays, but they would need to reach outside the boundaries of late Shakespeare in order to establish a sufficient foundation for their larger narratives of authorial development.

The implicit reliance of interpretations of late Shakespeare on such narratives (a tendency McMullan notes in his afterword) is a methodological limitation that those seeking to develop this critical approach would do well to make explicit. The essays in this collection tend to become unconvincing when they fail to acknowledge that their authorial narratives do not account for certain of his plays from this period or for the status of some of these plays as coauthored or for the collaborative process of making meaning in theatrical art. More engagement with the plays as theatrical works would have been particularly valuable. Raphael Lyne’s “*Cymbeline*: Recognition in *Cymbeline*” and Michael Neill’s “*The Tempest*: ‘Hush, and be mute’: Silences in *The Tempest*” are notable exceptions, as they consider with precision the theatrical impact of plays and the creation of meaning in performance, matters that are elided when plays are implicitly identified with their author.

As a whole, then, *Late Shakespeare, 1608–1613* contains some significant contributions to scholarship on the last portion of Shakespeare’s career, but it would have better achieved its goal of establishing an approach to this period by attending more scrupulously to the methodological limits and the methodological requirements of interpreting Shakespeare’s plays through a chronologically defined period in his life.

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