

immaterial and material at a time of enormous transformation. Let's hope ours is as intellectually and artistically generative a transformation as that experienced by early modern England.

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Early Shakespeare, 1588–1594. Rory Loughnane and Andrew J. Power, eds.
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The German philosopher Hermann Ulrici once wrote that Shakespeare's earliest plays are characterized by "a certain youthful awkwardness, harshness, and immoderation" (*Shakespeare's Dramatic Art*, trans. L. Dora Schmitz, 2 vols. [1876], 1:222). This is the pervasive, centuries-old attitude—shared by such influential Shakespeareans as Edmund Malone and Samuel Taylor Coleridge—that *Early Shakespeare* seeks to redress. In the opening chapter of this stimulating collection of essays, Rory Loughnane, one of the volume's editors, observes that the term "early Shakespeare" has long operated "as a sort of shorthand for works considered qualitatively inferior to those which are written later"; put another way, "the earlier the work, the lesser the value" (43–44). In resisting this correlation, Loughnane and his coeditor, Andrew J. Power, celebrate the variety of the early portion of the canon, which includes plays as seemingly disparate as *Titus Andronicus* and *Love's Labour's Lost*. In the volume's introduction, they argue that this variety does not represent "the sort of failure of focus often associated with youth," but rather that it marks Shakespeare's "ability to write across genre and form" (7).

Not all of Shakespeare's works receive equal attention, however. When Loughnane and Power edited an essay collection in 2012 entitled *Late Shakespeare*, the volume began with a chapter on each of the plays said to comprise the late canon. Of the ten plays that fall within the temporal boundaries of *Early Shakespeare*, by contrast, some barely register on its radar; at times it feels as though the collection as a whole is more interested in the circumstances surrounding the plays' composition than in their substance. *Early Shakespeare* is in several respects an extension of the *The New Oxford Shakespeare*, which included two major additions to the early Shakespeare canon, *Edward III* and *Arden of Faversham*; the latter receives disproportionate attention in the present volume. These authorship claims continue to be highly controversial, and scholarly consensus has in no way been achieved, yet the essays comprising *Early Shakespeare* mostly take these attributions as fact or provide further evidence to bolster those claims using similar attribution methods.

The volume contains many compelling essays, especially those which fully embrace the complexities of early modern authorial collaboration. Laurie Maguire posits and

explores the possibility that Shakespeare's engagement with Chaucer, long recognized in late plays like *Two Noble Kinsmen*, may have begun much earlier in his career. Andy Kesson situates Shakespeare's early works alongside his contemporary John Lyly, arguing for a reconsideration of Lyly's importance to the early modern theatrical scene. Willy Maley is likewise interested in Shakespeare's literary networks, but in showing the significance of Edmund Spenser he affirms that Shakespeare's contemporary interlocutors were not limited to dramatists. And in a chapter exploring the relationship between drama and historical writing, Harriet Archer discusses the "intense interrelation of texts produced collectively" (162).

At times, it can be difficult to reconcile *Early Shakespeare's* goal of celebrating the variability of Shakespeare's early plays with its repeated attempts to prove authorship. In an excellent piece on Shakespeare's early style, Goran Stanivukovic writes that the manner in which Shakespeare imitates his contemporaries is itself a mark of his early innovation; in a similar vein, Will Sharpe suggests that authorial collaboration should be understood "as part of Shakespeare's artistic development" (54). Yet MacDonald P. Jackson's meticulous essay, to take one example, attempts to further prove that *Arden of Faversham* belongs at least in part to Shakespeare by triangulating the play with short, specific passages in *Titus Andronicus* and *Venus and Adonis*. If *Arden* (like *Titus*) is indeed an early Shakespeare play, and his early plays are marked by imitation and collaboration, then how can we be certain that the parallels Jackson identifies are the result of Shakespeare's own hand—especially with such small sample sizes? And, even more pressingly, why do we need to be?

This volume, then, might have been more effective had it shown its readers why it is important that these new plays be attributed to Shakespeare. Critical analysis of *Arden of Faversham*, after all, does not depend on it having been coauthored by Shakespeare, nor has it lacked for modern attention. Insofar as assigning a play like *Arden* to Shakespeare may help us to better understand his early career, perhaps it makes sense—but if understanding his early career is the primary goal, then it is unclear why *Early Shakespeare* contains comparatively less discussion of the plays that can be more firmly attributed to him. Authorial attribution, to my mind, is most valuable when dealing with unknown or lesser-known works; it can be a way of bringing them into the critical conversation, of trying to contextualize them and understand them in more depth, and thus expanding the field. It is difficult to see how subsuming well-known plays like *Arden of Faversham* and *Edward III* under a Shakespearean heading accomplishes this, especially if the London theatrical scene during the earliest years of Shakespeare's career was as collaborative as many of the essays in this volume suggest.

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