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Loughnane, Rory, and Andrew J. Power, eds. Early Shakespeare, 1588–1594

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1948); nor does anyone even mention his more accessible *Création poétique…
de Maurice Scève à Agrippa d'Aubigné* (Paris, 1955). At best, many of the
problems broached and conclusions reached in this present volume had already
been explored and confirmed—albeit concisely—by Weber.

These reservations aside, *Maurice Scève, le poète en quête d'un langage* is
an essential book for all *seiziémistes* in the way it illuminates one of the century's
most troubling authors: a book that can be consulted as well as read, and a
tableau of the literary culture of France in which Scève is less of an outsider
than he has too often seemed.

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Rory Loughnane and Andrew Power have edited another substantial collection
of essays on Shakespeare, a companion volume to their earlier collection, *Late
Shakespeare, 1608–1613* (2013). Like the previous volume, this collection
will be of great interest to all readers of Shakespeare; it is required reading
for Shakespeare scholars. Yet *Early Shakespeare* comes with a twist: while the
playwright is thought to have actively collaborated both at the beginning and
end of his career, the present volume takes up the question of collaboration more
emphatically and, in the present critical climate, likely more controversially. The
controversy will arise partly from the assumption or substantiation of recent
claims of Marlowe's co-authorship of the *Henry VI* plays, and especially from
the acceptance of the partial attribution of *Arden of Faversham* to Shakespeare,
which underwrites several of the essays in the volume.

The collection both begins and ends—with the editors' introduction
and a conclusion by Gary Taylor—by addressing what "dedicated readers of
Shakespeare" *want* to believe about the playwright's early (and indeed later)
working life; this structure in effect allows readers of the collection to "play out"

their own potential resistances. The early canon in its striking variability and textual instability resists easy generic or stylistic categorization, but the terminal date of 1594 at least has the advantage of establishing the subsequent transition to the clearer periodization and (arguably) less experimental production of the later canon. Nevertheless, the critical challenges and uncertainties posed by the earlier works, which this collection bravely faces, do lead to a high degree of speculation in the arguments, which contain frequent admission of scholarly work yet to be performed. Unsurprisingly, as the essays consciously foster a critical revolution, they do not always offer a strong sense of critical closure.

Loughnane in the opening essay contests the idea of Shakespeare's early works as "juvenilia," a point that applies to many of the contemporary dramatists; in spite of some significant variations, playwriting in the period appears to be generally "the province of men in their late twenties and thirties" (37). Early Shakespeare is here singled out, convincingly, not as timid or tentative but as remarkably assertive and ambitious. Will Sharpe summarizes recent reconsiderations of canon and chronology in light of scholarly speculation about collaborative playwriting, and adds two new possible alternatives; the argument, careful and detailed, threatens to overwhelm the reader through its very intricacy of detail. In one of the volume's strongest and most compelling discussions, Goran Stanivukovic explores the paradox of achieving originality by imitation. Through a focus on bombast and repetition, Stanivukovic explores a "dramatic culture in which homage, parody, and competition defined the manner of writing plays as much as any definite sense of collaboration" (78). According to this reading, the apprentice Shakespeare develops a unique and identifiable style that quickly outdoes Greene and Marlowe in subtlety and richness of meaning—a method of composition that eventually lends his rhetoric what could be described as an existential power to create character.

Four subsequent essays take up the cause, or assume the fact, of Shakespeare's contribution to *Arden*. MacDonald Jackson argues that similar descriptions of a hunting scene in *Titus*, *Venus and Adonis,* and *Arden* link the three works. This is a powerful argument insofar as those readers unpersuaded by the more clinical kind of computerized textual analysis, and not personally interested in pursuing such research, are given more "concrete," at least more accessible, evidence on which to reflect. For me, the parallels strengthen the possibility of Shakespeare's authorship of *Arden*. However, I note that Darren Freebury-Jones has recently used the same hunting-dream passage from *Arden*

to consolidate the claim for Kyd's authorship ("'Fearful Dreams' in Thomas Kyd's Restored Canon," *Digital Studies* 9 [2019]), a persuasive argument for an opposing view. I make this observation reluctantly, not wishing to get caught in the crossfire between the Gary Taylor and the Brian Vickers sides of an increasingly acrimonious attribution debate. I naively regret that no one has argued for *Arden* as a Kyd-Shakespeare collaboration; this volume makes several implicit Kyd-Shakespeare connections, such as Terri Bourus's "newly confident identification" (200) of Shakespeare's authorship of the Painter's scene in the printed additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*. For the same reason offered above, I find refreshing and interesting Bourus's perspective, not as an "expert in digital investigations" but as a director of *Arden* on stage. Another major treatment of *Arden*, Laurie Maguire's comparison of Shakespeare and Chaucer, explores the ambiguity of truth and justice in the play, but problematically sets up Franklin as narrator, only belatedly admitting that this character resides more "inside" than "outside" the story, and for reasons (sexual ones, I think) that surpass an interest in land acquisition.

Other interesting discussions include Harriet Archer's treatment of the ambiguities of humanist counsel and didactic historiography in *Edward III* (somewhat less persuasively extended to *Arden* and *Richard III*), Andrew Power's discussion of the assignment of boy parts in the early Shakespeare, and Willy Maley's review of possible links between Shakespeare and Spenser. Andy Kesson proves Loughnane's earlier claim concerning the importance of Lyly in the development of early Shakespeare. John Jowett, a critic I deeply respect, loses me in a complex discussion of the textual history of *Richard Duke of York* in relation to *3 Henry VI*. John Nance suggests Marlowe's hand in *The Taming of the Shrew* (all the attributions to Marlowe in this volume, it seems, make him awfully busy before his death). Gary Taylor's conclusion may confirm many readers' inklings of just how far this evident anxiety and concern to designate authorship has removed us from death-of-the-author speculation. No one should miss his potentially controversial discussion of the connections between a "commitment to empiricism" and various tendencies in postmodern criticism.

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