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Rory Loughnane and Andrew Power's *Early Shakespeare 1588-1594* is an engaging and far-reaching volume that instructively reappraises Shakespeare's early dramatic texts. While something of a sequel (prequel?) to their well-received 2012 book *Late Shakespeare 1608-1613*, *Early Shakespeare* is distinguished by its motivation to address a commonly held critical bias that Shakespeare's early plays are somehow inferior to his 'mature' or 'late' works. In their nuanced introduction, the editors seek to 'challenge those who begin in the middle [of Shakespeare's canon] and judge everything else by that standard' (12). Here, Loughnane and Power acknowledge that while 'it is tempting to assume that with maturity in terms of age comes maturity in terms of style and content', under these conditions, 'earliness also carries an evaluative valance that is hard to dismiss' (12). By highlighting that a foreknowledge of Shakespeare's later works forces us to encounter the early ones differently, *Early Shakespeare* 'sets out to reassess the value of the early canon on its own merits rather than by genre clusters (eg, first or second tetralogies of histories), style clusters (eg, the lyric phase), or canonical clusters (eg, the great tragedies)' (12). The result is a thought-provoking study that 'offers a plurality of opinion about the composition, transmission, and significance of the early works' (17) and forwards an innovative reading of 'earliness' (12) that traverses features of genre, style, and tone in Shakespeare's early plays.

To achieve this plurality, the editors bring together thirteen chapters from scholars across the field of Shakespeare studies. The essays are grouped into six broad sections with each focusing on a distinctive feature of 'earliness' (12). The first three contributions outline the temporal parameters for the study and explore issues of canon and chronology in the early plays. In 'Shakespeare and the Idea of Early Authorship', Rory Loughnane frames this discussion in terms of 'Shakespeare and loss' (21). Noting the comparative silence from Shakespeare and his contemporaries in the 1580s, Loughnane grapples with the paucity of circumstantial and supporting evidence for the early canon by focussing on moments 'when that silence is broken' (26). By placing Shakespeare's earliest surviving texts in conversation with his contemporaries, most notably Christopher Marlowe and John Lyly, Loughnane argues that Shakespeare's career is distinguished both by

its length and his 'willingness to experiment' (46). Will Sharpe's chapter picks up on this claim, leveraging the *Groats-worth* allusion to early Shakespeare as an 'upstart crow' (55) as evidence 'that being beautified with the feathers of others ... might also refer to the reflected glory got from co- or collaborative authorship' (58). Sharpe concludes by arguing that collaborative authorship played an important role in Shakespeare's 'development as a literary and dramaturgical craftsman' (70), and that our inability to agree on who wrote what and when has hindered engagement with the temporally distinctive features of the early canon.

Having established a broad foundation for addressing questions of canon and chronology, the following two chapters distinguish features of Shakespeare's early style. In 'The Language and Style of Early Shakespeare', Goran Stanivukovic makes a powerful case for returning to features of style as the foundation for any future reappraisal of Shakespeare's early plays. His definition of 'style' focuses heavily on 'literary aesthetics' (78) from the period, noting the distinctive ways in which repetition and anaphora are utilized throughout the early works. I found this essay particularly effective, however, when Stanivukovic reached beyond a consideration of literary processes to account for the practicalities of dramatic presentation. For example, he argues that early Shakespeare wrote with a distinctive awareness of the 'rhetorical resources' (92) of the actors available to him. While the chapter retains a close focus on rhetorical features of style, then, it also effectively raises further questions about the relationship between literary process and dramatic performance in Shakespeare's early plays. MacDonald P. Jackson's contribution extends these questions of early style to textual attribution, comparing *Arden of Faversham*, *Titus Andronicus*, and *Venus and Adonis*, to argue that Shakespeare's early poetic style was more consistent across the three works than scholars have previously acknowledged.

The following four chapters trace networks of literary inheritance and peer influences in Shakespeare's early texts. Laurie Maguire presents an intriguing comparison between Chaucer's Franklin and Master Arden in *Arden of Faversham*, teasing out further connections between Chaucer and Shakespeare beyond those found in *Troilus and Cressida*. Harriet Archer explores prose and prosimetric histories such as Holinshed's *Chronicles* to argue that the writing of history, both dramatic and literary, was the product of 'wider collaborative networks' (148) of authorship. Andy Kesson picks up on Loughnane's comparison between Shakespeare and Lyly to argue that Lyly may have offered a model for Shakespeare's own early career (177). Willy Maley's contribution posits that social networks in England and Ireland mutually influenced developments in the literary styles of both Shakespeare and Spenser. All share a distinctive concern with textual

collaboration and its role in the development and expression of Shakespeare's early style.

The collection's penultimate section is perhaps the most entertaining and probably most controversial. It focuses on Shakespeare's early acting personnel and consists of chapters from Terri Bourus and Andrew Power, both of whom consider apprentice roles in early Shakespearean performance texts. Bourus's chapter advances the volume's focus on *Arden of Faversham* by considering the specific staging requirements of the play's text. Bourus forwards a detailed and convincing argument that the peculiarly large speaking part of Alice might reflect a 'very usual combination of an adult professional acting company and an extraordinarily talented boy actor' (208-9), most likely a young Richard Burbage. This line of thinking recalls Stanivukovic's identification of Shakespeare's characteristic use of an actor's 'rhetorical resources' (92) in the development of his early style and raises further questions for research into the reciprocal nature of literary processes and the practicalities of performance. Andrew Power's chapter neatly aligns with Loughnane's consideration of Shakespeare's early career to ask the same question of apprentice players, namely 'how might Ursula grow to be Juliet and how does Juliet grow to be a common player?' (220).

The book's final section turns to issues of attribution, publication, and textual transmission. John Jowett offers a complex new assessment of *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York*, an alternative octavo version of *Henry VI, Part Three* that was first printed in 1595. Jowett challenges contemporary movements away from critiques of memorial reconstruction in the 'bad' quartos with a convincing reading in favour of *The True Tragedy* as a 'degenerative development away from the primary co-authorial text' (255). John V. Nance's chapter charts issues with co-authorship and attribution in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Taming of a Shrew*. In a move that is similar to Jackson's chapter on *Arden of Faversham* earlier in the collection, Nance works with a micro-attribution analysis developed from a 'combination of metrical and lexical markers' (266) to propose Marlowe as a possible co-author of *The Shrew*. Gary Taylor's engaging final chapter 'Who Read What, When?' could feasibly be placed at the start of the book as it articulates a core concern running through a number of chapters, namely how to handle the distance between empirical and anecdotal evidence in discussions of 'early' Shakespeare.

That the collection provokes more questions than it provides answers is perhaps a mark of *Early Shakespeare's* success in reorienting the field. Collectively, the book encourages a number of new discussions of 'earliness' (12) including the importance of authorial collaboration, inter-textual borrowings, and acting

traditions that distinguish Shakespeare's early style. Indeed, with the recent advances in playhouse archaeology at the sites of the Curtain and the Red Lion scholarly attention is being increasingly drawn north of the river, making this book's focus on early Shakespeare both timely and commendable. While the editors acknowledge the productive new research being conducted into 'broader theatrical milieu of the 1580s and 1590s' (17), the collection might have attended to features of textual adaptability, playhouse conditions, stagecraft, and dramatic style more closely. But by presenting a reading of 'earliness' (12) that reaches across style, genre, and form, the collection provides ample critical material for further engagement with this exciting new field.