

*The New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion.* Gary Taylor and Gabriel Egan, eds.

The New Oxford Shakespeare. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. xxxii + 742 pp. \$190.

This collection of essays on both canon and chronology was designed as a companion volume to *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (2017). It provides the evidence and methodologies for some of the more contentious—and exciting—decisions of this new edition of Shakespeare’s “complete works.” It also serves as an anthology of new work in the field of attribution studies that, though obviously focused on Shakespeare, may become essential reading for any scholars thinking about the grounds on which we might establish authorship and the related issues of the dating of any text.

Authorship has always been a vexed issue for establishing the Shakespeare canon. The early quartos were not always published with his name on the title page (for example, *Romeo and Juliet*, which appeared four times between 1597 and 1622 without Shakespeare’s name on any of the editions), while other plays, almost certainly not written by Shakespeare, were published ambitiously claiming him as their author (e.g., *The London Prodigal* “By William Shakespeare,” in 1605). Still, by 1623 there was a “complete” Shakespeare. The First Folio (not of course the first book to be published in a folio format, but the first edition of Shakespeare to be so) declares that it contains “all his Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies,” and not the least of its accomplishments is the publication of eighteen plays by Shakespeare that had not previously been printed. An inscription on a Victorian monument, still standing in East London, celebrating the achievement of Shakespeare’s long-time friends and fellow actors John Heminges and Henry Condell in compiling these texts, insists that it is “to their disinterested affection the world owes all that it calls Shakespeare.”

But, although we are grateful to them, it isn’t really “all.” Certainly, without their “disinterested affection” we would not have *Macbeth*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, or *The Tempest*, among other plays, but their editorial activities omit *Pericles*, *Two Noble Kinsman*, and the Sonnets and the narrative poems, so it is a manifestly incomplete version of what all the world now calls Shakespeare, and indeed what was called Shakespeare when the monument was built in 1896. There is a long history of trying to complete our Shakespeares. In 1664, seven plays, six of which almost all scholars think are apocryphal, were published in the second issue of the Third Folio, and in 1709 an edition of the poems appeared in a volume designed to supplement Nicholas Rowe’s multivolume edition of the plays.

And now the *New Oxford Shakespeare* tries again. The “all” it calls Shakespeare creates a table of contents with some unfamiliar candidates for inclusion, like *Arden of Faversham* and *The Tragedy of Sejanus*, as well as the 1602 additions to *The Spanish Tragedy*. The *Companion* volume provides the editors’ justifications for these additions to the canon, as well as for rethinking some traditional attributions and dating. The

essays here are uniformly brave in their ambition to escape from traditional thinking about these issues, but they are also meticulous in their procedures and scrupulous about making these clear. There are illustrations showing “Zeta scatterplots” and “Delta scores,” visual realizations of complex data sets that may baffle some readers (and no doubt help persuade some others), but the volume usefully ends with a section, “The Canon and Chronology of Shakespeare’s Work,” by Gary Taylor and Rory Loughnane, that neatly summarizes the evidence for the inclusion or exclusion of “work” by Shakespeare that appears in the *New Oxford Shakespeare*. But the principle of selection of the essays themselves in the *Companion* isn’t always obvious. (Why, for example, are there five essays about *All’s Well* but only one about the collaborations of *Henry VI, Part Three*?) Still, it is valuable to see their procedures in action, and Gabriel Egan’s essay, “A History of Shakespearean Authorship Attribution,” is a remarkably clear account of this often confusing (and confused) area of Shakespeare scholarship and editorial practice.

*The New Oxford Shakespeare* is unlikely to prove any more definitive in its assumptions about the “all” that we call Shakespeare than the now not-so-new *Oxford Shakespeare*, or the newest *Norton Shakespeare*, or the soon to be completed third edition of the Arden Shakespeare’s expanded canon (including fully edited texts of *Edward III*, *Sir Thomas More*, and *Double Falsehood*). The next generation’s complete Shakespeares will have more Shakespeare—or maybe less. But the *New Oxford Shakespeare: Authorship Companion* will become for many of their editors the place from which their own thinking about attribution will begin.

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*The Sonnets: The State of Play*. Hannah Crawforth, Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, and Clare Whitehead, eds.

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This invigorating collection of twelve original essays is dedicated to the memory of a great Shakespearean, Russ McDonald. It is an appropriate tribute. As a group, the essays exemplify many of the critical approaches to which these poems have proven hospitable, all the while attending to the distinctive formal features of a sonnet, and of a sonnet sequence.

The volume begins with a helpful introduction by the editors, explaining the volume’s tripartite organization (essays dedicated to the Sonnets and their past, the Sonnets and their moment, and the Sonnets in our moment). In the first essay, “Promising Eternity in the 1609 Quarto,” Cathy Shrank explores how Shakespeare