
Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme



Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Ed. Grace Ioppolo

Sheena Jary

Volume 42, Number 1, Winter 2019

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1064555ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1064555ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Jary, S. (2019). Review of [Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Ed. Grace Ioppolo]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 42(1), 414–416. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1064555ar>

All Rights Reserved © Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance, Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society, Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium and Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2019

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

social context of the sixteenth century and to consider at least two important problems raised by the edicts of the Council of Trent: first, the question of enclosure (*clausura*) of nuns which, according to the council, needed to be enforced more strongly in order to avoid scandals; second, the church's control over its clergy. Roscioni's book also highlights the way social class and gender expectations played their part in the early modern period. Owing to his social class and gender, a man such as Bishop Cittadini could regain his lost honour and return to active duty, while a woman such as Abbess Elena (murdered or not) was obliged to relinquish her position and agree to a face-saving marriage of convenience.

MATTIA ZANGARI

Università di Firenze

Shakespeare, William.

***A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Ed. Grace Ioppolo.**

Norton Critical Editions. London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2018. Pp. xxvii, 231. ISBN 978-0-393-92357-5 (paperback) £7.99.

A recent addition to the Norton Critical Editions, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, edited by Grace Ioppolo, is a wonderfully accessible resource for teachers and students of Shakespeare. Ioppolo's Introduction provides various frameworks with which readers can approach the play, including the historical context of Shakespeare's England, his literary sources, and the composition and publication history. Its comprehensiveness far exceeds what is found in the average critical edition; it encourages readers to consider how intersections of race, gender, and society figure into the play. Ioppolo even points out the "exciting" possibilities of post-colonial readings and modern adaptations of *AMND*. Ioppolo's experience working on textual transmission, the history of the book, and manuscript studies is evident in the intricacy of details she provides. She also discusses audience reception and later adaptations of the play in an intriguing and straightforward manner.

Appended to the playtext is a collection of critical commentaries that speak to the play's production and reception, cast and characters, and important connections between *AMND* and other Shakespearean plays. Whereas Samuel

Pepys—after seeing *AMND* at the King's Theatre—vowed never to see that “insipid, ridiculous play” again (113), Samuel Johnson refers to Shakespeare's characters as “genuine progeny of common humanity” (115); yet, according to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the female characters were so well acted that they created “too true a picture of the lax hold which principles have on a woman's heart” (121). Ioppolo offers a balanced selection of criticism, including more detailed analyses of *AMND* by modern scholars. The selections also bring Shakespeare's plays into dialogue with other writers, whom readers are likely to recognize, which is in itself a pedagogical bonus because it encourages students to consider larger socio-historical contexts that figure into early modern theatre and literature.

This critical edition is like a neatly-wrapped gift for students and educators alike. Ioppolo includes a number of primary source texts that appear to have influenced Shakespeare's composition of *AMND*. In the introduction, she highlights the role of textual transmission in Shakespeare's plays and takes the additional step of including selections from source texts for *AMND*, which include a well-glossed selection from Chaucer's “The Knight's Tale” and the Pyramus and Thisbe story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. There are also selections from two adaptations of *AMND*, one by Robert Cox in 1661 and the other by Henry Purcell in 1692, both of which exemplify the farcical humour craved by Restoration playgoers. The continuity between supplemental materials and the critical introduction is outstanding, and I am confident that aspiring students would find this edition accessible and useful, if not pertinent to developing a more comprehensive knowledge of Shakespearean drama.

This edition of *AMND* is a conflated text that interpolates parts of the First Folio (F1) into the Quarto 1 (Q1) text; Ioppolo emphasizes the importance of the play's publication history and manuscript revisions to the formation of her edition. Using the Q2 text as an example of unauthorized revisions in contemporaneous reprints of *AMND*, Ioppolo reveals the complex nature of authorship and revision in the early modern period. Readers familiar with book history and manuscript studies would also benefit from the list of textual variations between the F1 and Q1 copytext. Pointing out that the F1 was printed from the unauthorized Q2, Ioppolo notes that the F1 variants are integrated into the conflated text if they were valid revisions or corrections.

The playtext is glossed well, although readers new to Shakespeare might benefit from slightly more detail; however, I do not anticipate this posing

a barrier to less experienced readers. I have commented above that this edition is a wonderfully accessible resource—and it is. What I find especially appealing is how effectively the primary and critical resources reflect the critical introduction, which makes the play “teacher friendly” for graduate student instructors interested in providing their students with relevant, new perspectives that may prompt reflection and close readings of the playtext.

Grace Ioppolo has anticipated and facilitated learning opportunities for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. She succeeds at compiling a critical edition that is both accessible and relevant to instructors and students in contemporary learning environments, which is indeed worthy of commendation.

SHEENA JARY

McMaster University

Summers, Kirk M.

Morality After Calvin: Theodore Beza’s Christian Censor and Reformed Ethics.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. ix, 412. ISBN 978-0-19-028007-9 (hardcover) US\$99.

Theodore Beza is not the household name that John Calvin is, even among non-Christians. Beza, however, consolidated, united, and shaped the Reformed movement. Kirk Summers superbly sets Beza’s ethical thought in its literary, social, and theological contexts, providing sympathetic treatment of Beza’s moral thought while not glazing over Beza’s faults.

Literarily, Beza echoes the ancient *Disticha Catonis*. Protestants and Roman Catholics alike used the classic tome to learn Latin grammar. Beza’s expatiations are more complex linguistically and explicit morally as he reimagined the ancient text in Christian terms. His *Cato* echoes the tongue-lashings sinners received upon judgment by Consistory members. No random assortment of vices, the *Cato* mirrors and advances the Calvinists’ ethical program, seeking the establishment of an Augustinian amillennialist semblance of God’s Kingdom on Earth. Beza blended insights from both secular (e.g., Aristotle and Stoicism) and Christian ancients, emphasizing the “golden mean” and admonishing those not sinning to continue a holy life. Development of an