

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



Shakespeare, William. Hamlet. Ed. Robert S. Miola.

Jonathan Locke Hart

Volume 43, Number 1, Winter 2020

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1070217ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i1.34137>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (print)

2293-7374 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Hart, J. (2020). Review of [Shakespeare, William. Hamlet. Ed. Robert S. Miola.] *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 43(1), 285–287.
<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v43i1.34137>

Shakespeare, William.

***Hamlet*. Ed. Robert S. Miola.**

A Norton Critical Edition. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2019. Pp. xl, 338. ISBN 978-0-393-65010-6 (paperback) US\$17.50.

Robert S. Miola has produced a scholarly and appealing edition of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, something in keeping with Norton's critical editions in the field for decades. Although the heart of this edition is Miola's Introduction (xi–xl) and Shakespeare's text (1–148), including Appendix 1, passages from Quarto 1 in 1603 (138–44), and Appendix 2, passages from the Folio in 1623 (145–48), the edition has other important elements. I note here, before focusing on this core of the edition, the sections that follow. The after matter is diverse and offers much to students, teachers, and scholars. "The Actor's Gallery" ranges from Edwin Booth's notes of 1878 to Abigail Rokison's interview with David Tennant in 2009 (149–90). The next section, "Contexts" (191–230), includes passages from Genesis, Judges, and Romans in the Bible; Greek tragedies like *The Libation-Bearers* by Aeschylus, *Electra* by Sophocles, and *Electra* and *Orestes* by Euripides; *Agamemnon* and *Thyestes* by Seneca; *Historia Danica* by Saxo Grammaticus; *Inferno* by Dante Alighieri, *The Supplication of Souls* by Thomas More, and *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd. "Criticism" (231–93), the following section, goes from John Dryden in 1679 to Tony Howard in 2007, and includes Voltaire, Goethe, Tolstoy, and American Presidents John Quincy Adams and Abraham Lincoln. "Afterlives" (295–328) proceeds from Anonymous to Jasper Fforde in 2004, including texts by Boris Pasternak and Margaret Atwood. The final section, "Resources" (329–38), includes lists of helpful sources online, in print, and on films.

Miola's Introduction begins with "Imagining *Hamlet*." Staging the play is a priority; the first section is "Theatrical Imaginings," and actors take precedence. Miola alludes to Shakespeare's colleague Richard Burbage first, then moves through Thomas Betterton, David Garrick, John Philip Kemble, Sarah Siddons, Edmund Kean, Pavel Mochalov, Charles Fechter, Edwin Booth, Henry Irving, Ellen Terry, Johnston Forbes-Robertson, Tommaso Salvini, Sarah Bernhardt, Asta Nielsen, John Barrymore, Laurence Olivier, Richard Burton, David Warner, Derek Jacobi, Mel Gibson, Paul Scofield to Joko Scott, Ion Caramitru, Teresa Budzisz-Krzyżanowska, Pu Cunxin, Kenneth Branagh,

Robin Williams, Ethan Hawke, Angela Winkler, David Tennant, Jude Law, and Benedict Cumberbatch (xi–xiv). This is an international group of actors, which shows the reach and influence of *Hamlet* globally. In “Contextual Imaginings,” Miola calls attention to the sources of the Hamlet story in texts by Saxo and Belleforest but also maintains there are “contextual origins of the play” in Seneca, the Greek tragic poets, and narratives in the Bible, thus a mixing of the classical and the Christian (xiv–xv). Miola then turns to “Critical Imaginings” and the revenge action of atrocity through the creation of the revenger to atrocity. The first phase of atrocity is the subject of this sub-section (xv–xvii). The next topic is the creation of the revenger (xvii–xx). Miola likens Hamlet to Orestes, as they both disguise true intentions and bide their time, but says that Hamlet is not Atreus, Pyrrhus, or Orestes because he mentions hell and damnation and is not a classical revenger (xvii). Miola also discusses responses to the play, including those by Goethe and Tolstoy (xix–xx). He notes that the action of the play, whatever the character of Hamlet, ends in a final atrocity (xx–xxii). The end intensifies the conflict between the classical and the Christian (xxi).

Everything in the Introduction is under the rubric of *imaginings*. “Editorial Imaginings” discusses the First Folio and the First and Second Quarto (xxii–xxvi). In “Acknowledgments” Miola notes that his edition follows Cyrus Hoy’s Norton Critical Edition of *Hamlet* (1963, 1992) and that Miola’s second edition engages with *The Norton Shakespeare* (3rd ed., 2015) and *The New Oxford Shakespeare* (2017) (ix). For instance, Miola returns to the well-known crux between “sullied” and “solid” and calls attention to how this question is textual and aesthetic; he seems to choose “sallied” in this puzzle (xxvi). In the section “Global Imaginings,” Miola appeals to an international audience, beginning with Africa and moving through Russia, Germany, China, Japan, India, and the Arab countries to other areas and concentrating on performances, adaptations, interpretations, translations and other modes (xxvi–xxxvi). The final section, “Afterlife Imaginings,” looks at later imaginings such as James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966), Keng Sen Ong’s *Search: Hamlet* (2002), Lee Blessing’s *Fortinbras*, Margaret Atwood’s “Gertrude Talks Back” (1992), Gillian Flynn’s rewritten story of *Hamlet* in a novel for Hogarth (due out 2021), and others.

Miola's critical edition provides a considered editorial and critical apparatus with a strong Introduction. Its international scope should appeal to scholars, teachers, students, actors, directors, and others globally.

JONATHAN LOCKE HART

Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies

Victoria College, University of Toronto

Shakespeare, William.

***The Tempest*. Ed. Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman.**

A Norton Critical Edition. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2019. Pp. xii, 375. ISBN 978-0-393-26542-2 (paperback) US\$18.75.

Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman's latest Norton Critical Edition of *The Tempest* has much to recommend it. The Preface is brief and helpful (vii–xii). Here, the editors set out the earliest performance of the play on the night of 1 November 1611 before King James at court and note that the play was also performed before the king on 20 May 1613 in the festivities before the marriage of his daughter. Hulme and Sherman assume that the play was also performed at Blackfriars Theatre or The Globe Theatre under the patronage of James I by the “King’s Men” (vii). The editors also remark that *The Tempest* was one of about half of Shakespeare’s plays to be printed for the first time in the First Folio of 1623 and appeared there as a comedy—not in the other two categories in that volume, history and tragedy (vii). They mention that the play is probably the last Shakespeare wrote alone and that it has been taken as a farewell to his art but also a beginning. Moreover, it is a play about the life-cycles: death, regeneration, “bondage and release” (vii). For Hulme and Sherman, although the First Folio presents the play as a comedy, it has other dimensions; it shares with *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* an “otherworldly setting and romantic playfulness,” and with Shakespeare’s other comedies a movement to marriage and reconciliation (vii). Its serious tone, its themes of morality, enslavement, and exile, and the suffering of the characters have prompted some to deem the play a tragicomedy, romance, or problem play (vii).

The editors state that *The Tempest* has no ready historical or literary source, which makes it less usual in Shakespeare’s oeuvre (viii). References, allusions,