



“An art that nature makes?”: Nature and Shakespeare’s Greece

Alison Findlay¹, Vassiliki Markidou²

¹Lancaster University, United Kingdom; ²National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

a.g.findlay@lancaster.ac.uk; vmarkidou@enl.uoa.gr

Shakespeare’s drama bespeaks its influence by and reflections of how the English conceived their relationship to the natural world, resulting from social and theological changes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While it is easy to identify elements of the English natural landscape in many of Shakespeare’s texts, this seminar asks how does nature feature in Shakespeare’s representations of Greece? In which ways is nature as creation and death, moderation and monstrosity, feelings and reason, fleshed out in this hybrid, complex, and highly contested (geographical and imaginative) space? How does Shakespeare’s use of antiquity and Greek myth intersect with his fertile conceptualization of nature? By reading a variety of relevant Shakespearean plays that cuts across genres (comedy-tragedy-history-romance) in conjunction with philosophical, political, theological and medical treatises, conduct books, handbooks, and travel reports, we will investigate how Shakespeare’s Greece plays a crucial role in the dramatist’s evocation of and imaginative engagement with nature as a means of addressing early modern economic, national, social, gendered, racial, and environmental exigencies.

Keywords: Nature, Shakespeare, Greece, myth, national, social, gendered, racial, environmental