

Alison Findlay and Vassiliki Markidou, eds. 2017.
Shakespeare and Greece.
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Zenón Luis-Martínez
Universidad de Huelva, Spain

Ben Jonson's pronouncement on Shakespeare's "small Latine, and lesse Greeke" in the *Fist Folio's* dedication hardly envisioned the impact of its quantifiers (Shakespeare 1623, A4^v). Baldwin's homonymous study (1944) confirmed the Jonsonian tag, and later critics like Martindale and Martindale (1990), Miola (1992, 1994) or Enterline (2012) have established from various perspectives the predominance of Latin models in Shakespeare's transformations of classical culture. Writing against the grain of this tradition, recent critics have exposed the critical neglect of the role of Hellenism in early modern and Shakespearean drama. In the introductory essay to a recent special issue, Pollard and Demetriou claim that Renaissance English encounters with the Greeks—"Shakespeare's Plutarch, Jonson's Lucian, Chapman's Homer, Greene's Heliodorus and more"—are symptoms of a "transnational [...] phenomenon" (2017, 3). 2017 has witnessed the publication of Pollard's monograph *Greek Tragic Women on Shakespearean Stages*, and the collection reviewed here, which pertinently continues and expands the scope of Greece in Shakespeare's imagination. The thesis in Findlay and Markidou's *Shakespeare and Greece* is clearly stated: it seeks "to prove that there is more Greek and less Latin in a significant group of Shakespeare's texts: a group whose generic hybridity [...] exemplifies the hybridity of Greece in the early modern imagination" (1). While the comparative quantification of Greek and Latin in Shakespeare's plays seems more a rhetorical strategy than a significant claim, the numerous insights into the plurality and hybridity of early modern English ideas of classical and post-classical Greece offered by the introduction and eight essays in this volume constitute a remarkable achievement.

This large potential for research is made evident in Findlay and Markidou's "Introduction." It is unusual in critical collections to find the introductory essay the longest in the volume. This entails

disadvantages, as the compelling research paths outlined by this piece do not always find later materialization in the form of a book chapter, but it also corroborates the book's ground-breaking quality. With the aim "to illuminate the complex ambiguities of ancient and early modern Greek settings in Shakespeare's texts" (3), three sections account for the introduction's complexity and variety. The first, "Shakespeare's Greek," reconsiders the levels of Greek literacy and traces the availability of ancient Greek literature, history and philosophy in Latin and vernacular translations in early modern England, as contexts for Shakespeare's possible acquaintance with the language or with key notions of Greek culture. Conclusions point at school and university contexts, but also at translation as a mode of disseminating classical ideas. The second, "Early Modern Perceptions of Ancient Greece," investigates notions of Greece's temporal and geographical remoteness, and discusses the views, mainly derived from North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* (1579), of a "mighty, imperialistic, yet, dispersed, fragmented and divided territory" (19), an idea in accordance with Shakespeare's distant and ambivalent portraits of Greek geographies. The third, "Early Modern Perceptions of Greece as Ottoman Other," regards the historical landmark of the fall of Constantinople in 1453, which put Greece mainly under Ottoman rule, as a controlling trope for representations of the rise and fall of empires and the attributions of ethnic, religious and cultural otherness to a people otherwise perceived as originators of Western civilization. But Findlay and Markidou's portrait of Greece as a multifaceted and ambiguous mirror to the state of learning, religion and politics in Shakespeare's England has more chances of success with England than with Shakespeare. The title's categorical enunciation, *Shakespeare and Greece*, without the prop of a secondary title, is indicative of the frequency with which present-day scholarship conflates Shakespeare with his own time, and does not do entire justice to the scope of this collection.

The eight ensuing essays, considerably shorter than the introduction, are not arranged along the abovementioned three lines. In agreement with their kaleidoscopic idea of Greece, the editors prefer to signal points of convergence between the essays and the book's areas of interest along the introduction. The first chapter, Kent Cartwright's "*The Comedy of Errors* and 'Farthest Greece,'" undoes any attempt to set Latin and Greek to a contest for

hegemony. In his role as recent Arden editor of *Errors*, Cartwright revises eight editions, his own included, to find no substantial statement on Greek influence (46), and conceives his essay in reparatory terms. Cartwright fascinatingly traces the play's Ephesian setting as a "first-century world of the Greek-dominated Mediterranean in the twilight of the Hellenistic era," evincing struggles between pagan and Christian culture (47). He reconstructs Homeric echoes (i.e., the mention of "Circe's cup" in Act 5), mythical allusions, or intimations of Hellenistic romance in a suggestive web of reference that "allows the juxtaposing of present and past, stability and instability, commerce exchange and magical transformation, tragedy and comedy" (62). The essay wisely refrains from claiming "more Greek" at the expense of the play's substantial Latin—perhaps acknowledging the limited textual evidence from which some authors in this collection must extract their capacious arguments. The second chapter, Liz Oakley-Brown's "A Rhizomatic Review of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *Love's Labour Lost*," embraces Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the "rhizome" as a decentralizing tool that resists source/text or model/imitation approaches to Shakespeare's relations with Greek culture. Shakespeare's "rhizomatic Greek" does not assume direct knowledge of a tradition, but creates networks connecting ancient and vernacular textual productions. A controversial case is Shakespeare's maintenance of Adonis's name in its original Greek against his Latinizing of Aphrodite into Venus, which Oakley-Brown reads as "an embodiment of the 'Grecian turn' underpinning England's burgeoning Protestant identity" (80).

Chapter 3, Efterpi Mitsi's "Consuming Greek Heroism in *The School of Abuse* and *Troilus and Cressida*," successfully brings together the volume's interest in Shakespeare as part of wider early modern textual traditions. Invoking Shakespeare's well-known use of metaphors of food consumption in *Troilus*, Mitsi analyses the play's ironic appropriation of the anti-theatricalists' praise of Homeric heroism in their attacks on the theatre. In Mitsi's argument, Shakespeare's "digest" of the Trojan legend exploits "the ambiguous role of the Homeric literary tradition in late sixteenth-century England" (107). On its part, Chapter 4, Nic Panagopoulos's "*Physis* and *Nomos* in *King Lear*," returns, like Oakley-Brown, to the problem of Shakespeare's Greek sources, in his fine speculation on *Lear*'s debt to philosophical problems with origins in the fifth-century BC

Athenian sophist school. While accepting the difficulty of determining specific sources for Shakespeare's plays, Panagopoulos brings forth the importance of Antiphon, Protagoras and the sophists' methodology of "endlessly practicing antilogies and disputing contrary positions" (132), as well as their conceptualization of the conflict between nature and law for the play's ascertaining of crucial moral and political debates like legitimacy vs. bastardy, the possibility of teaching moral virtue, or wider questions of justice in relation to tragedy.

Chapter 5, John Drakakis's "Hospitality, Friendship and Republicanism in *Timon of Athens*," is the first of three essays addressing Shakespearean representations of Greek geopolitical realities as "displacement[s] of English concerns" (141). Drawing on Thucydides' comments on democracy, hospitality and modesty in his funeral oration for Pericles, Drakakis draws connections between *Timon's* satirical gaze at the destruction of those values by a "corrosive venality" and Middletonian/Jonsonian city comedy (145–146). Yet, Drakakis argues, Shakespeare's exploration of its hero's misanthropy adds a tragic depth that enables a cautionary vision of the urban proto-capitalism of Jacobean London. Chapter 6, Markidou's "The Politics of Greek Topographies in *Pericles*," compellingly interprets the multifarious Greek geographies of Shakespeare's first romance as a palimpsestic site on which succeeding locations superimpose new meanings on former places: Antioch, Tarsus, Pentapolis, Mytilene and Ephesus successively but not entirely overwrite one another in tracing the character's ordeal from sexual and political decadence to restored integrity. Chapter 7, Findlay's "Reshaping Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Two Noble Kinsmen*," deftly explores Shakespeare's combination of Greek myth, vernacular literature and native folklore as a sign of his fluid treatment of popular and elitist cultural forms. Stressing a more celebratory tone in the *Dream* than in *Two Noble Kinsmen*, Findlay imagines Shakespearean spectators' "rebalancing of culture" in their weighing of a native background against "a classical heritage in which Athens was both the fountainhead of civilization and a site of decadence" (211, 210).

One may initially object to the pertinence of the last chapter, Mara Yanni's "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* in Modern Athens," within the volume's well-designed conceptual premises. Yanni

compares two Greek-language productions of the *Dream*, Karolos Koun's (1971) and Michael Marmarinos's (2012), epitomizing the turn from modern to postmodern, aestheticized to politicized, utopian to dystopian approaches to Shakespeare in a globalized context of "cultural adaptation" of his plays. But the essay addresses central interests to current Shakespeare studies, and provides a fitting epilogue that holds present-day Greece as a mirror up to classical and early modern realities.

On the whole, *Shakespeare and Greece* is finely researched and amply documented, offering generous and pertinent notes at the end of each chapter, a useful Select Bibliography, and a well-designed Index. In spite of some imbalances, Findlay and Markidou have assembled a bracing volume on a welcome and necessary topic.

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Reviews

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Author's contact: zenon.luis@dfing.uhu.es

Postal address: Dpto. Filología Inglesa - Facultad de Humanidades - Campus de «El Carmen» - Avda. Fuerzas Armadas, S/N - 21007 Huelva, Spain