George Washington University

"Obscured by dreams": Race, Empire, and Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

MARGO HENDRICKS

"There's no such thing as 'England' any more . . . welcome to India brothers!"[1]

IN JULY 1991 I WAS ENGAGED AS A TEXTUAL ADVISOR for a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* performed by the Shakespeare Santa Cruz repertory company (hereafter SSC). In a camp rendering of Shakespeare's text, director Danny Scheie sought to illuminate what he viewed as the sexual politics of the text. Featuring a variety of pop-culture motifs (ranging from 1950s American teenage attire and behavior to Disney's *Snow White*), the production obstructed any possibility of seeing the play as merely a romantic idealization of courtly behavior (though it did reinforce the centrality of marriage as a solution to social discord). While segments of the production were noteworthy for their playful disruption of tradition (particularly in treating the young lovers), the production also exhibited disturbingly unexamined acceptance of some sexual and racial stereotypes in its treatment of Titania and Hippolyta. Knowing that a camp Titania and Hippolyta would prove crowd-pleasers, the director was untroubled by the implications for the construction of race and gender of casting a black male as Titania and costuming him in a pink tutu and pink wig, or presenting Hippolyta as a stereotypic Wagnerian Valkyrie (thick blond braids, horned helmet, spear, etc.).

The director made a more radical and problematic decision with the Indian boy. Whether the Indian boy appears onstage at all is generally of little consequence, since he has no lines and would function as little more than a stage prop, part of the spectacle of Oberon and Titania's first meeting in the play. The director of the SSC production, however, chose to have the Indian boy make an appearance.[2] Normally this choice would

[1] Quoted in Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference," *Cultural Anthropology* 7 (1992): 6–23, esp. 10.

[2] The Indian boy appears in a 1906 film version of the play, in Max Reinhardt's classic 1935 film, in two BBC video productions, and in the New York Shakespeare Festival's video production. In nearly all of these productions, the character's costume signifies ethnicity. Additionally, in

scarcely merit a review note, let alone an entire essay. Yet, like the direc-
torial decisions behind the representations and interpretations of Hip-
polyta, Oberon, Titania, and Theseus, the appearance and casting of the
Indian boy bore ideological significance worth examining. First, the direc-
tor, in a break with both textual and theatrical tradition, cast an adult male
as the changeling: the "boy" was in his early twenties, six feet tall, tanned,
and naked except for a gold lamé loincloth. Second, in both the costume
designer's drawings and on the stage, the Indian boy was culturally and
racially marked: a turban (complete with feather), "Turkish" slippers, and
jewelled dagger (see Figures 1 and 2). The Indian boy appeared on the
Santa Cruz stage as a veritable Sinbad, a rich oriental "trifle" accessible to
the gaze of predominantly white audiences for six weeks.

At the end of its run, this postmodern production of Shakespeare's *A
Midsummer Night's Dream* might have gone the way of other small-repertory-
company productions of Shakespeare's comedy: the "part of the Indian boy
played by" an inscription on the actor's résumé; favorable or unfavorable
reviews; and, after strike, the cast and crew moving on to other endeavors.
But this history was not to be. The following year, while teaching a class on
gender and theater, I was asked by students who knew that I had worked
on the production to arrange a screening of the videotape. The students
had heard that it was a lively, funny, and brilliant interpretation of
Shakespeare's play. As I watched the videotape of SSC's *A Midsummer Night's
Dream*, I meditated on the image of the Indian boy: was anyone other than
me troubled by the oriental fantasy created by the director's political
production? Did any of my students comprehend the unmistakably racist
denotations of the representation? More important, was this particular
representation of the Indian boy a directorial whim, or was the director
constrained by something in a centuries-old playtext which inhibited any
other possible reading of the Indian boy?

The director's attempt to infiltrate Shakespeare's text and subvert the
long history of its theatrical production, as well as his commitment to
challenge audience expectations about casting, I would argue, worked to
engender not a radical rewriting of Shakespeare's text but merely another
supplemental history of it. For in the representation of the Indian boy (and,
in a different way, the figure of Titania), directorial subversion was instru-
mental in reaffirming an aspect of orientalist ideology: like the odalisque
who became a favorite topos of Impressionist painting, the Indian boy of
SSC's production silently conjured the template of eroticism and exoticism
adumbrated in the West's vision of India and the East.[3]

The SSC production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* sought to offer what
Leah Marcus calls a "localized" Shakespeare: an attempt "to create an edge
of defamiliarization about what has become too well known, engineer a set
of encounters between disparate cultural situations in order to open up
ways for audiences to rediscover the plays at the point 'where remoteness

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the New York Shakespeare Festival's production a black actor plays the boy. Illustrations and
paintings of Act 1, scene 2, also are eclectic when it comes to representing the Indian boy; for
example, Fuseli includes the child while Boydell does not.

[3] See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1979). For a cogent engagement
with Said's work, see Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca, NY, and
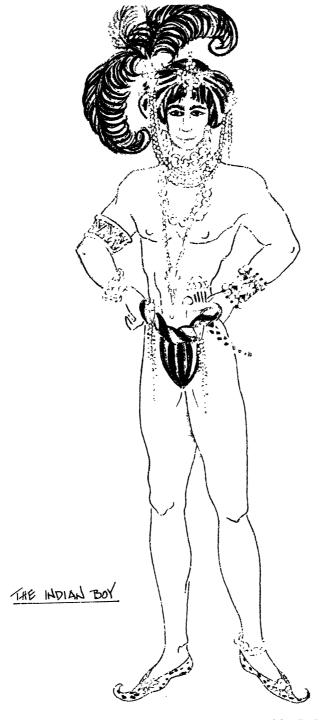London: Cornell UP, 1991).

THE INDIAN BOY

Fig. 1: Costume design for the Indian boy, created by B. Modern for the 1991 Shakespeare Santa Cruz production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*
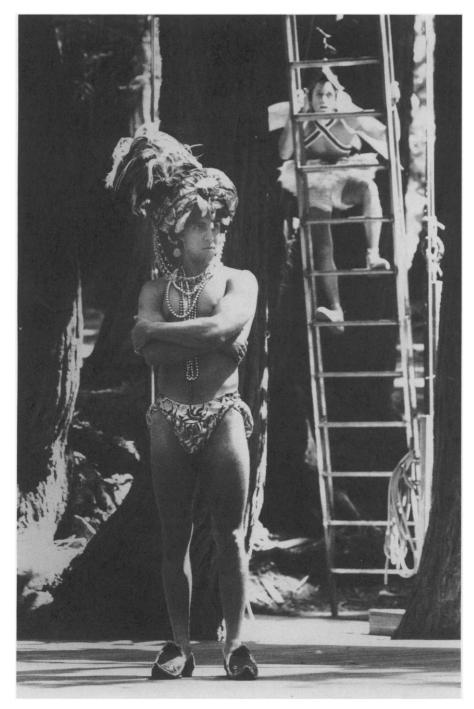
Fig. 2: The Indian boy (Jaime Paglia) in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare Santa Cruz, 1991. Photograph by Ann Parker.

and accessibility meet.' " That is, the production, in part novel and in part familiar, endeavored to reveal "the cultural otherness of what we thought we understood."[4] Yet, with contextualization, I want to offer an explanation as to why, in the SSC production, this "localizing" not only failed to "defamiliarize" but in fact colluded—and arguably could only collude—with an *a priori* racial ideology that imagines the Indian boy and what he signifies in early modern English culture.

The starting point for my reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a rudimentary query: what are we to make of the Indian boy? On the textual level the Indian boy is simply a plot device: he figures as the origin of the conflict between Oberon and Titania (a conflict that presumably begins in India). But why does he have to be Indian? Why not describe the boy as merely a changeling child? Or, if critical tradition is correct that all the fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are taken from English folklore, why not identify the changeling as the English boy? Obviously the dramatic structure and characterizations would not have been affected by such a change and, in fact, would have been made more definitively local. So once again it seems useful to ask: why does Shakespeare initially identify the child as "stol'n" from an "Indian king" and later expand on this identification with an elaborate narrative of the boy's maternal ethnic origins? Furthermore, what are we to make, culturally, of the fairies who fight for possession of him? Finally, what implications about race and early modern England's mercantilist and/or colonialist-imperialist ideology might we draw from Shakespeare's use of India?

Until recently explorations of early modern thinking about race meant recognizing early modern social discourse "to be about race . . . when it employs a category which [we are] able to identify as having a referent corresponding to that designated by [our] own understanding of the term 'race.' "[5] In other words, such works as *Othello*, *Titus Andronicus*, or *The White Devil*, with their inclusion of a "black" character as a pivotal figure in the dramatic narratives of white European societies, have been taken as definitive signposts of early modern representations of race and racist ideologies. But what if our inferences, our understandings, are inaccurate? What if, in attempting to sort out the significance of early modern English literature to a post-World War II global political economy, we have misread, or not read at all, some of the signs of racial thinking present in that literature? Is it possible that a too narrow definition misrepresents and engenders an under-reading of the complexity and ambiguity of the word *race* and of its social and cultural articulation in sixteenth-century England? To ask these

[4] Leah S. Marcus, *Puzzling Shakespeare: Local Reading and Its Discontents* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: U of California P, 1988), 40.

[5] Frank Reeves, *British racial discourse: A study of British political discourse about race and race-related matters* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983), 8. Much work has been done, from a cultural-studies perspective, on theorizing race. Some of the best studies include: Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992); David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); *The "Racial" Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future*, Sandra Harding, ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1993); Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989); and the introduction to *The Bounds of Race: Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance*, Dominick LaCapra, ed. (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell UP, 1991).

and other critically imperative questions about the ideological implications of any Renaissance text is also to be concerned with how audiences (then and now) might construe the concept of race and its linguistic inflections.

In the whole of Shakespeare's dramatic canon the word *race* is employed only seventeen times, and generally it signifies genealogy. For example, in *2 Henry VI*, Suffolk tells Warwick

> Thy mother took into her blameful bed
> Some stern untutored churl, and noble stock
> Was graft with crab-tree slip—whose fruit thou art
> And never of the Nevilles' noble race.
>   (3.2.212–15)[6]

We find the same signification when the word is used in *Richard III* ("Live, and beget a happy race of kings" [5.3.157]), *Antony and Cleopatra* ("Have I my pillow left unpressed in Rome, / Forborne the getting of a lawful race" [3.13.107–8]), and *Cymbeline* ("a valiant race" [5.4.83]). There are only three instances when *race* seems to connote something different. The first occurs in *Measure for Measure* when Angelo remarks "And now I give my sensual race the rein" (2.4.161), where he is clearly referring to his personality. The second takes place in *The Tempest* when Miranda says of Caliban "But thy vile race . . . had that in't which good natures / Could not abide to be with" (1.2.361–63), where *race* suggests type. And the third instance, somewhat ambiguous in its meaning, takes place in *Macbeth*, where Duncan's horses are called "the minions of their race, / Turned wild in nature" (2.4.15–16).[7]

In every usage there is a locus, an axis of determinism attendant upon a preconceived notion of fundamental distinctions, whether that locus is in a class-based concept of genealogy, in an essential nature, or in the ambiguity of ethnic typology. Race is envisioned as something fundamental, something immutable, knowable, and recognizable yet visible only when its boundaries are violated; thus race is also, paradoxically, mutable, illusory, and mysterious. Race is material (Duncan's horses) and immaterial (Angelo's nature). Race is language more than it is biology; yet without biology the language of race could not (and would not) exist.[8] Race is transmitted yet is viewed as essence. Race is ideology; race is ontology. Race is all this and nothing: a shaping fantasy.

It is this "shaping fantasy" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, a vision of race, which I intend to trace in my reading of Shakespeare's playtext. To begin

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[6] Quotations of Shakespeare plays other than *A Midsummer Night's Dream* follow *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, ed. David Bevington, 4th ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1992). Quotations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* follow R. A. Foakes's New Cambridge edition (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984).

[7] This usage points to the ambiguity of the term, as in a few early modern dictionaries "horse" is one of the definitions given for *race*. The word *race* was also used to describe the quality of wine. This type of lexical ambiguity about nature and appearance, as David Scott Kastan reminded me, is also at play in the Prince of Morocco's use of the word *complexion*—"mislike me not for my complexion, / The shadowed livery of the burnished sun" (2.2.1–2)—in *The Merchant of Venice*.

[8] See Donna Haraway's stunning essay "Universal Donors in a Vampire Culture—It's All in the Family: Biological Kinship Categories in the Twentieth-Century United States" in *Reinventing Nature*, William Cronon, ed., forthcoming.

with, I want to argue that literally and figuratively the playtext denotes cultural and temporal spaces that I shall refer to as "borderlands," spaces that are clearly marked for recognition. According to Gloria Anzaldúa, "Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy."[9] While the most obvious instances of this phenomenon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* occur in the social interactions between humans and fairies, male and female, Athenian and Amazon, I believe a borderland also coalesces on an ideological level in the concept of race. This concept is neither wholly the older (and more feudal) idea based on class and lineage nor wholly the more modern idea based only on physical appearance (i.e., skin color, physiognomy). Rather, the idea of race in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is an uneasy mixture—the miscegenation, if you will—of these two views. My argument is that the figurative evocation of India localizes Shakespeare's characterization of the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and marks the play's complicity in the racialist ideologies being created by early modern England's participation in imperialism. Moreover, it is my contention that this racialist ideology is not unique to Shakespeare's playtext but endemic to most textual representations of India contemporary with it.

As a way of situating this hypothesis, I begin with the literary tradition behind Shakespeare's use of Oberon and this character's link with India, in particular the medieval romance *Huon of Bordeaux*, Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, and Robert Greene's *Scottish Historie of James the fourth*. I then examine two sixteenth-century travel narratives about India. Both the medieval romance and the two travel narratives, I argue, ideologically and lexically imagine a geographic region that becomes such a commonplace that the mere mention of the word "India" is enough to conjure a particular image, one figured in terms of skin color, geography, sexuality, and religion, and which instantiates a cultural subtext in Shakespeare's portrayal of fairyland. The final sections of this essay explore the ideological significance of these images, Shakespeare's use of India, and the lexicon both presuppose. In ways similar to yet different from descriptions of the New World, early modern accounts of India are marked by an emerging taxonomy of gender and linguistic difference. It is not unusual for the writer of an English Renaissance narrative to digress from topographical, mercantile, or political description in order to address a culture's sexual practices and behavior, especially the actions of women. Furthermore, what is striking in such digressions is the intrusive presence of an emerging racial lexicon tied to physical appearance and hybridity. By drawing a link between this lexicon, travel narratives, and Shakespeare's Oberon/Titania/Indian boy/Bottom scenario, I want to highlight how dramatic invention intersects with lexical formulation in the reconceptualization of race. My argument, heuristically and philologically, endeavors to expand our understanding of the politics of race in early modern England. As Kim Hall suggests, modern

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[9] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco, CA: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987), preface [n.p.].

concepts of "race are in large part the result of lingering notions of 'difference' that resided at the intersections of English travel and trade, plantation, empire, and science in the early modern period."[10]

I

Steven Mullaney has argued that a "map in the modern sense of the term is a guide to the present: a graphic index to the location of things in space, a traveler's aid which makes the passage from here to there less difficult."[11] *A Midsummer Night's Dream* might very well be considered a map of the sort Mullaney has described; in a number of its verbal and metaphoric expressions, the playtext offers a rather precise geographic index for identifying the location of spaces in the play. The comedy's action begins in Athens, moves to a wood outside the city (traditionally termed fairyland), and returns to Athens. One critic has argued, in a fine discussion of the anamorphic perspectives in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, that the play compels us first to look straight on at Athens, then "shifts our perspective by obliging us to consider the forest, then brings Athens back in the third [perspective] and says, 'Look again'."[12] Yet the playtext's spatial layout is not so much a bipolar (Athens and Forest) as a tripolar configuration, with India sitting as the symbolic and ideological hub of departure and convergence for all the business of fairyland. That is, whatever exchange occurs, regardless of origin, is mediated through the discursive space that is India. Furthermore, "the routes of access" are "cultural and temporal as well as spatial."[13] It seems safe to assume that early modern audiences for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* came to the theater with a map for reading these local details of Shakespeare's dramatic world. The modern critic's dilemma is (and has been) how to reproduce that map so that its demarcations can be known more precisely.

Like a number of recent scholars, I have found extradramatic texts, travel narratives and medieval romances, useful in reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as Shakespeare's contribution to the literary invention of racial mapping.[14] I am not arguing that the play's audiences would have con-

[10] Kim F. Hall, "Reading What Isn't There: 'Black' Studies in Early Modern England," *Stanford Humanities Review* 3 (1993): 23–33, esp. 25. The parameters for engagement with the notion of race have been redefined by other recent work on the early modern period, including Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, "Dismantling Irena: The Sexualizing of Ireland in Early Modern England" in *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, Andrew Parker, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger, eds. (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 157–71; *Women, "Race," and Writing in the Early Modern Period*, Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker, eds. (New York and London: Routledge, 1994); Emily C. Bartels, "Making More of the Moor: Aaron, Othello, and Renaissance Refashionings of Race," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 41 (1990): 433–54; and Margo Hendricks, "Managing the Barbarian: *The Tragedy of Dido, Queen of Carthage*," *Renaissance Drama* n.s. 23 (1992): 165–88.

[11] Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1988), 6.

[12] James L. Calderwood, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Anamorphism and Theseus' Dream," *SQ* 42 (1991): 409–30, esp. 410.

[13] Mullaney, 6.

[14] See, for example, Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (London and New York: Methuen, 1986); and John Gillies, *Shakespeare and the geography of difference* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994). Though not directly exploring questions of race, Stephen Greenblatt's *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World*

nected it directly to these texts. Rather, these works provide a means of recapturing a set of assumptions about India which were circulating in London at the time of the play's inscription, and with which Shakespeare's audiences could have been familiar. This familiarity did not necessarily require that all members of the audiences had read these narratives or even possessed the same degree of literacy.[15] For many Londoners knowledge of India (and Africa and the Americas) would have come orally, from seamen who served on the merchant and fighting ships traversing the Atlantic and Indian oceans.[16] These seamen were the most likely conduits for an image of India among those who could not read or, perhaps, afford to purchase the printed texts but who could afford to go to the theater.[17] In this manner the play's audiences might have been comprised not only of individuals acquainted with the medieval romance *Huon of Bordeaux*, Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Robert Greene's *The Scottish Historie of James the fourth* (the literary sources for Shakespeare's depiction of Oberon), as well as manuscript and printed travel narratives, but also of people for whom India may have been the stuff of a sailor's tavern tale, a map made in the human imagination.

Let us begin to read our map of fairyland by turning to an index Shakespeare could have created for the lost traveler. Under the subject heading "Oberon," we might find the following citation: see Lord Berners, *Huon of Bordeaux*.[18] One of a number of medieval romances glorifying a culture no longer possible in late-sixteenth-century England, *Huon of Bordeaux* recounts the history of a young duke who unknowingly slays the son of Charlemagne and, for his crime, is sent to Babylon on a quest that Charlemagne believes will ensure Huon's death. Huon is told to return to Paris with a thousand bears, a thousand hawks, a thousand young men, and a thousand of Babylon's fairest maidens. He is also to bring Charlemagne a handful of the hairs and four of the teeth of Admiral Gaudys, Babylon's ruler. Huon's quest leads him to the East, where he meets Oberon, king of the fairies. Oberon, it turns out, is no ordinary fairy king, first, because he is mortal and, second, because his genealogy is notable. Oberon says that his

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(Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1991) and Richard Helgerson's *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1992) are thoughtful contributions to the discussion.

[15] Yet I think we can, as Andrew Gurr suggests, assume that audiences of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, comprised of nobles, artisans, apprentices, clerks, citizens, and day laborers, literate and illiterate Londoners, would represent a range of knowledge or awareness of what events, people, texts, and ideologies were being alluded to in the plays; see *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), esp. 80–85.

[16] For example, Richard Hakluyt writes that in his "publike lectures [he] was the first, that produced and shewed both the olde imperfectly composed, and the new lately reformed Mappes, Globes, Spheares, and other instruments of this Art for demonstration in the common schooles, to the singular pleasure, and generall contentment of my auditory" (*The Principal Navigations Voyages Traffiques & Discoveries of the English Nation*, 12 vols. [Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1904], 1:xviii). While there is, of course, no empirical means of verifying the direct influence of orality in the circulation of these images, I consider Hakluyt's words to be convincing evidence of the validity of my point. On the relationship between oral and literary knowledge, see Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Methuen, 1982).

[17] See Gurr, 82–86.

[18] John Bourchier, Lord Berners, *The Boke of Duke Huon of Burdeux*, ed. S. L. Lee (London: Early English Text Society, 1887). I have modernized the spelling of quotations from this text.

father was Caesar (who was on his way to Thessally to wage war with Pompey when Oberon was begotten) and his mother "the lady of the privey Isle." Oberon, chronology notwithstanding, also claims as an older brother Neptanabus, king of Egypt, who is said to have "engendered Alexander the Great."[19]

Oberon explains that one fairy who was not invited along with the "many a prince and barons of the fair / and many a noble lady" to attend Oberon's birth delivered the following curse: though Oberon would be the "fairest creature that ever nature formed," at three years of age he would cease to grow.[20] After recounting his genealogy, Oberon informs Huon that he is also "king of Momur, the which is [about] .iiii. C. leagues from hence" (that is, from where they stand conversing, which is itself two days' ride from Jerusalem).[21] With Oberon's help, Huon successfully, though at times painfully, completes his quest and, in addition, wins the "fair" Esclarmonde. At the romance's conclusion Huon comes to Momur, where a dying Oberon, having called together all his subjects, including Arthur, Morgan le Fay, and Merlin (who in this narrative is Morgan le Fay's son), transfers the fairy kingship to Huon (despite Arthur's vigorous objections). Not only is Huon made king of the fairies, but he also takes up residence in Momur, which is "in the far-reaching district that was known to mediaeval writers under the generic name of India."[22]

Lord Berners's translation of this thirteenth-century *chanson de geste* went through at least three editions during the sixteenth century and, significantly, provided a source not only for Shakespeare but also for Edmund Spenser and Robert Greene.[23] The romance was also adapted in 1593 by the Earl of Essex's Men and performed, according to Henslowe, as "hewen of burdoche."[24] Though this playtext is lost to us, Spenser's and Greene's texts survive; in their depiction of Oberon, they continue the associations begun in *Huon of Bordeaux* of the fairy king with the East in general and India in particular.

Book 2 of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is the only section of the poem where *Huon of Bordeaux*'s imprint can be easily discerned, for included in the narrative of Sir Guyon's adventure is an account of his genealogy. Toward the end of canto 9, Spenser writes:

> Sir *Guyon* chaunst eke on another booke,
> That hight *Antiquitie* of *Faerie* lond,

[19] Lee, ed., 72–73.

[20] Lee, ed., 73. Oberon's other gifts include a magic horn and cup and the power to acquire whatever he desires merely by wishing for it.

[21] Lee, ed., 74.

[22] Lee, ed., l.

[23] Editor S. L. Lee notes that it is difficult to determine the date of the second edition. He argues for 1570, however, because the colophon to the third edition (which Lee contends is "doubtless a reprint of the first") states "that the book was translated by Lord Berners 'in the year of our Lord God one thousand five hundred three score and ten'." The third edition was printed in 1601 by Thomas Purfoot, "to be sould by *Edward White*" (Lee, ed., lv–lvi).

[24] See *Henslowe's Diary*, ed. Walter W. Greg (London: A. H. Bullen, 1904), 16. Henslowe also lists the play under the titles "hewen of burdockes" and "hewen."

> In which when as he greedily did looke,
> Th'offspring of Elues and Faries there he fond.[25]

Guyon's ancestry is derived from Elfe, the first man, created by Prometheus, and Elfe's union with "a goodly creature . . . whom he deemd in mind / To be no earthly wight" and names "*Fay*."[26]

As Sir Guyon continues to read, he discovers that "of these [Elfe and Fay] a mightie people shortly grew, / And puissaunt kings, which all the world warrayd / And to them selues all Nations did subdew." The first mention of India comes not with Oberon but with Elfin, whom Spenser describes as "him all *India* obayd, / And all that now *America* men call."[27] The genealogy ends with Oberon, son of Elficleos and the younger brother of Elferon. When Elferon dies, Oberon inherits the "scepter" and the "rich spoiles and famous victorie" with which his father had advanced the "crowne of *Faery*." And in his reign Oberon—"doubly supplide, in spousall, and dominion"— surpassed the achievement not only of his father but of his ancestor Elfin in establishing the Faeries' "power and glorie ouer all."[28]

Robert Greene's *The Scottish Historie of James the fourth, slaine at* Flodden. *Entermixed with a pleasant Comedie, presented by* Oboram *King of* Fayeries offers a more three-dimensional portrait of the fairy king and one a bit closer to that presented in *Huon of Bordeaux*. Though in some ways an ancillary figure in the drama (the presenter of "a pleasant Comedie"), Oberon comes to have a significant role in *The Scottish Historie of James the fourth*. He is the first character to appear onstage, and throughout the play he surfaces as Bohan's confidant and (to some degree) protector. Like his romance counterpart, Oberon is a catalyst for change, for transformation in the human world. He appears to Bohan ostensibly as an auditor of Bohan's storytelling, but as the play progresses, we recognize the fairy king as the symbolic intervention of fate in Bohan's affairs, rescuing Bohan from his despair and saving the life of Bohan's son.

Relevant here is not Oberon's role in the action of the play but what his representation signals. At the end of the first act, Oberon says,

> I tell thee Bohan, Oberon is king,
> Of quiet, pleasure, profit, and content,
> Of wealth, of honour, and of all the world,
> Tied to no place, yet all are tied to me.[29]

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[25] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton (London and New York: Longman, 1977), II.ix.60.1–4.

[26] Spenser, II.x.71.5–6.

[27] Spenser, II.x.72.1–3 and 5–6.

[28] Spenser, II.x.75.3–5, 8–9, and II.x.76.1. In Spenser's allegory, Oberon figures for Henry VIII and thus becomes the father of Tanaquill or Glorian (Elizabeth). A. C. Hamilton notes that in Roman history Tanaquill was the wife of the first Tarquin, ancestor of Sextus Tarquinius, whose rape of Lucretia is often figured as the genesis of the Roman Republic. Spenser's link of fairy and Roman through the figure of Oberon mimics the account of Oberon's lineage in *Huon of Bordeaux* and thus continues the mythologizing of England's racial history. For a brilliant discussion of the relationship between Tarquin's rape of Lucretia, republicanism, and Renaissance humanism, see Stephanie H Jed, *Chaste Thinking: The Rape of Lucretia and the Birth of Humanism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989).

[29] Robert Greene, *The Scottish History of James the Fourth*, ed. J. A. Lavin (London: Ernest Benn, 1967), 1.3. [chorus] 4–7.

Despite his claim of being "tied to no place," Oberon does in fact tie himself to a specific locale. The dumb show Oberon paints for Bohan is marked by its Asiatic regionalism: the first scene depicts the defeat of Semiramis, "the proud Assirrian Queene," by Staurobates; the second treats of Cyrus's coronation and his death; and the third scene portrays the murder of Sefostris, a "potentate," by his "servants" (who, after slaying the king, continue to dine) at a banquet.

What is worth noting in these depictions of Oberon—in Spenser's brief genealogy, Greene's "pleasant Comedie," or the detailed narrative of *Huon of Bordeaux*—is the dense geographical umbra that stands at the imaginative center of the fairy king's literary history. Whether he appears in England, Scotland, or the outskirts of Jerusalem, Oberon enters each locale as an already "localized" (thus ethnic) entity. In other words, though all the world may be "tied" to Oberon while he claims to be "tied to no place," early modern writers insist that we recognize his claim as inaccurate, that we see him as clearly linked to the vast, undifferentiated region called India.[30]

By the time Shakespeare comes to write *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, images of an Asiatic or "Indian" Oberon are fairly well established as part of the literary imagining of the fairy king through the auspices of Spenser's and Greene's works. Undergoing something of a shift, however, was the *non*literary imagining of India. With the radical transformation of geographical knowledge produced by early modern mercantilism, Oberon's India gradually began to lose its quasi-mystical, quasi-mythical currency as a generic signifier of a distant imagined place and began to acquire a more precise delineation in terms of cultural and ethnic (or what we would call racial) taxonomies.[31] Though the mere mention of the word *India* still carried with it the figuration of an imaginative site of fabulous wealth, fantastic creatures, and other rarities in the English political consciousness, India also became representable as a real geographic and cultural space, capable of being partitioned, classified, conquered, and exploited. This transformation occurred through the early modern travel narrative.

<div style="text-align:center">II</div>

The publication of travel narratives about India offered something of a corrective to the cultural mythology created by classical and medieval writers.[32] English (and other European) travelers no longer expected to find anthropophagi or Amazons in the East; these species now took up

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[30] See Thomas Hahn, "Indians East and West: primitivism and savagery in English discovery narratives of the sixteenth century," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 8 (1978): 77–114. Hahn argues that *India* variously referred to "all of Asia, as Samuel Purchas declared in the seventeenth century: 'The name of India, is now applied to all farre-distant Countries, not in the extreeme limits of Asia alone; but even to whole America, through the errour . . . in the Westerne world, thought that they had met with Ophir, and the Indian Regions of the East' " (78).

[31] See Hahn, 79–88.

[32] For another useful study of the ethnography of travel writing in pre- and early modern Europe, see Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell UP, 1988).

residence in the unexplored areas of Africa.[33] In addition, with the subdivision of the world into Old and New, and thus also an East and a West Indies, the ideological, literary, and cartographic topos of India had to be rewritten, had to be more precisely localized.[34] The "immense, unimaginable distance" adumbrated in medieval and classical accounts of India needed to be contained; and as ships set sail from England, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, France, and the Italian states, cartographers, soldiers, colonizers, and traders attempted, by producing more accurate demarcations of geographical space, to do just that.[35] Ultimately these inscriptions would set the stage for the modern ideology of race.

One narrative prototype for modern racial taxonomies is Richard Eden's *The History of Travayle in the West and East Indies, and other countreys lying eyther way, towardes the fruitfull and ryche Moluccaes.*[36] Eden's work contains a translation of Lewes Vertomannus's account of his travels in India. The text is meant to provide the reader with knowledge of the politics, customs, social relations, and physical appearance of the peoples of India, along with information about India's topography. Interwoven with Vertomannus's narrative is a familiar (to our way of thinking) polarization of racial differences, with Europe at one end of the spectrum and Africa at the other. Vertomannus begins by declaring his intent to convey an impression of "the fruitfulness and plentifulnesse" of India.[37] His text is replete with descriptions of the regional rulers' wealth and state. "Marvelous rich" becomes a refrain, as does the minute detailing of a ruler's household: the sultan of Cambia "progresses" through all of India, taking with him "four thousand tents and pavillions, also his wife, children, concubines, slaves, four or five of the most courageous horses, monkeys, parrots, leopards, hawks." Of the king of Narsinga, Vertomannus writes that his "horse with the furniture [i.e., trappings] is esteemed to bee worth as muche as one of our cities, by reason of innumerable jewelles of great price."[38] It is, however, in Vertomannus's description of the physical appearances of Indians that he employs the color-coded grid of what I will label modern racial distinctions. For example, he describes the people of Melacha as being of "blackish ashe colour. Their apparell is like to the Mahumetans of the citie Memphis. . . . They have very large foreheads, round eyes, and flatte noses." Of the people of Pego, he writes that the "inhabitants . . . are like unto them of Tarnassari [another Indian city] but of whiter color, as in a colder region, somewhat like unto ours." In general, however, the people he meets are reported to be "of weasel colour, enclining to blacknesse, as are the most part of these Indians, being in manner scorched with heate of the Sunne."[39]

The physical appearance and wealth of the Indians are not the only matters subject to scrutiny. India's inhabitants, like those of Africa and

[33] Here I am referring to Leo Africanus's *Geographical Historie of Africa* (London, 1600) and George Best's *A true discourse of the late voyages of discouerie. . .* (London, 1578).

[34] See Gillies, passim.

[35] Gupta and Ferguson, 10.

[36] Richard Eden, *The History of Travayle in the West and East Indies, and other countreys lying eyther way, towardes the fruitfull and ryche Moluccaes* (London, 1577). Quotations from the narrative of Lewes Vertomannus follow this edition.

[37] Vertomannus in Eden, 354ᵛ.

[38] Vertomannus in Eden, 382ʳ and 386ᵛ.

[39] Vertomannus in Eden, 403ᵛ, 401ᵛ, and 382ʳ.

Europe, profess a variety of religions and include Christians, Jews, and Muslims as well as what Vertomannus and others call "Gentiles," that is, Hindus and Buddhists. And, somewhat surprisingly, given the internecine struggles of early modern Christian Europe over dogma, Vertomannus often discusses these belief systems with considerable detachment. In the course of relating the cultural and religious behavior of India's peoples, the writer reveals a Eurocentric bias when describing those practices that deal specifically with gender relations. It is here, in that most contested of ideological spaces, that the early modern European traveler develops the racial denotations that later become familiar images not only of India but also of Africa and the Americas.

In the account of his visit to Calcutta, Vertomannus describes what he perceives as an extraordinarily peculiar custom: the king's wife is deflowered by the "Archbishop," though Vertomannus claims that "only the king of Calecut keepeth this custom." As we read through Vertomannus's text, however, we discover that this practice occurs in the city of Tarnassarie as well, with one significant difference; instead of the king's wife being given to "the priests to be deflowered," she is given to a "white man, as to the Christians or Mahumetans, for he will not suffer the Idolaters to do this. The inhabitantes likewise have not to do carnally with their wives, before some white man, of what so ever nation, have first the breaking of them."[40]

This deviation from marital norms, as Vertomannus sees it, is not limited to the rulers of Indian cities but, on the contrary, is found at nearly every level of society. Among the gentlemen and merchants, to exchange wives is seen as a matter of courtesy and friendship. Even so, Indian women are judged to have more freedom than their European counterparts. Vertomannus says that it is not uncommon for a woman to be "married to seven husbands, of the which every of them hath his night by course appointed to lye with her: And when she hath brought forth a childe, she may give it or father it to whiche of them she listeth: Who may in no case refuse it."[41] The idea of such sexual freedom among women, of course, violated nearly every ideological code of the European traveler, and the early modern European travel narrative became the space where sexual freedom could be simultaneously presented and condemned. For instance, the Dutch traveler Jan van Linschoten reports that it is common for "the women slaves . . . [to] slip into some shoppe or corner . . . where their lovers meet them, and there in hast they have a sport, which done they leave each other: and if she chance to have a Portingal or a white man to her lover, she is so proud, that she thinketh no woman comparable unto her." Van Linschoten, unlike Vertomannus, elides all religious, ethnic, and class differences among the women of India to generalize that they "are verie luxurious [i.e., lecherous] and unchaste, for there are very few among them, although they bee married, but they have besides their husbands one or two of those that are called souldiers, with whome they take their pleasures."[42]

The narrative and geopolitical mapping produced by early modern travelers to India was not just a cartographic reimagining of the world but

[40] Vertomannus in Eden, 388^v and 399^r.
[41] Vertomannus in Eden, 390^r.
[42] *Iohn Hvighen van Linschoten. his Discours of Voyages into ye Easte & West Indies. Devided into Foure Bookes* (London, 1598), 62 and 60.

an ethnographic interpretation of it. As part of the circulation of ethno-
graphic taxonomies, maps were often reproduced in printed texts. In
creating these maps and narratives, early modern travelers envisioned
themselves as meaningful contributors to a new, global epistemology. More
important, the narratives seemed authentic and accurate because the writ-
ers had visited the place described, had studied the indigenous peoples and
their societies, and had published their findings in a written form that
carried no taint of the "poetic."

Because the observer's status as a reliable informant is reified by this
discursive strategy, even his reiteration of a medieval or classical fable
acquires a veneer of authenticity. Hence, contrary to the writer's expressed
aim, the narratives produce what might be termed a " 'poetics of displace-
ment' "; that is, cultural imagery which simultaneously defines Asia, Africa,
and the Americas in terms an early modern European could comprehend
and offers new metaphorical terrains for the construction of difference.[43] In
effect, the written and oral narratives circulating in sixteenth-century En-
gland reproduced images of India as a region of "such treasure and rich
Merchandize, as none other place of the whole world can afford,"[44] even as
they constituted it ideologically as a site of gender, ethnic, religious, and
political differences.

The India of early modern English narratives is, as Thomas Hahn has
argued, an " 'imaginative reality' ": a place where "explorers . . . and their
field of vision [were] framed by the imaginary [i.e., literary] landscape as
much as by the real."[45] The poetic cartography of *A Midsummer Night's
Dream* is a familiar one if we know how to read it. Like Africa and the
Americas, India is a world where an Amazon and a fairy king can be lovers;
a place where the visible signs of difference between Europeans and Indians
can be remarked and similarities unacknowledged; a site where exoticism
and difference are as conventional as trade and commodities—a place fit for
exploration and exploitation. This is the India of *Huon of Bordeaux* and of
the English Jesuit who, when "tolde that he could not want a living in the
towne, as also that the Jesuites could not keepe him there without he were
willing to stay," chose to reject the "Cloister, and opened shoppe, where he
had good store of worke: and in the end married a Mestizos daughter of the
towne, so that he made his account to stay there while he lived."[46] This is the
India of Shakespeare's changeling boy.

<center>III</center>

At the beginning of Act 2, Puck informs one of the queen's fairies (and
the audience) that Titania has a "lovely boy," allegedly the "stol'n" son of an
"Indian king," whom Oberon desires to be a "Knight of his train, to trace the
forests wild" (2.1.25). On a textual level Puck has little reason to establish the
boy's identity beyond distinguishing him as a source of tension between the

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[43] James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1988), 10.
[44] Van Linschoten, "To the Reader."
[45] Hahn, 91.
[46] "The report of John Huighen van Linschoten concerning M. Newberies and M. Fitches
imprisonment, and of their escape, which happened while he was in Goa" in Hakluyt, 5:512.

fairy queen and king; as I suggested earlier, the play's dramatic structure would not have been violated had this information been omitted or had Shakespeare identified the child as an English boy. Similarly, if the fairies are to be seen as English, there is no obvious reason for Shakespeare to specify India as Oberon's most recent place of resort. Titania demands,

> Why art thou here,
> Come from the farthest step of India,—
> But that, forsooth, the bouncing Amazon,
> Your buskined mistress and your warrior love,
> To Theseus must be wedded. . . .
>
> (2.1.68–72)

Though Titania answers her own question—"Why art thou here"—her words do not entirely explain Shakespeare's invocation of India.

Oberon is, of course, explicitly connected with India in the literary tradition from which Shakespeare draws. However, this explanation does not help us to address the query—why an Indian boy?—posed at the beginning of this essay. Perhaps another way to get at an answer is to examine Shakespeare's characterization in terms of his use of the lexicon engendered by early modern English mercantile activity in India. In this way we can make intelligible India's function as the center of linguistic and ideological exchanges between Athens and fairyland. Like Athens, India is an actual geographic place, and, like fairyland, it is still figured as a place of the imagination. This simultaneity permits the articulation of a racial fantasy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* where Amazons and fairies signify an alien yet domestic paradox in an otherwise stable, homogeneous world.

When Titania offers Oberon the reason for her resistance to his wishes, in a poignant (and poetic) vision of female and mercantile fecundity, this vision is, in effect, a mapping of this reality:

> His mother was a votress of my order,
> And in the spicèd Indian air by night
> Full often hath she gossiped by my side . . .
> Marking th'embarkèd traders on the flood,
> When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
> And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
> Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait
> Following (her womb then rich with my young squire),
> Would imitate, and sail upon the land
> To fetch me trifles, and return again
> As from a voyage, rich with merchandise.
> But she, being mortal, of that boy did die,
> And for her sake do I rear up her boy;
> And for her sake I will not part with him.
>
> (2.1.123–37)

Titania's words in this scene vividly reproduce the idealized imagery in the writings of travelers to India. The votaress embodies what India could (and would) represent to Europe as, like the merchant ships, she returns "from

a voyage, rich with merchandise," to bring Titania the exotic "trifles" of an unfamiliar world.[47]

Her speech "rich" with the language of English mercantilism, Titania evokes not only the exotic presence of the Indian woman's native land but also the power of the "traders" to invade and domesticate India and, aided by the "wanton wind," return to Europe "rich with merchandise." In Shakespeare's "poetic geography," India becomes the commodified space of a racialized feminine eroticism that (to judge by the written accounts of such men as Vertomannus and van Linschoten) paradoxically excited and threatened the masculinity of European travelers. This racial subtext, which complicates the "shaping fantasy" of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is not obvious when Titania and Oberon first appear onstage. Their initial exchange is accusatory and fraught with erotic tension that masks their far greater conflict.

In response to Titania calling Hippolyta his "buskined mistress and warrior love," Oberon retorts: "How canst thou thus, for shame, Titania, / Glance at my credit with Hippolyta, / Knowing I know thy love to Theseus?" (2.1.74–76). Oberon then lists the women Theseus has seduced and abandoned, apparently with Titania's aid.[48] Titania casually dismisses Oberon's accusation: "these are the forgeries of jealousy" (l. 81). The audience soon discovers what is really at the core of Titania's and Oberon's estrangement: she has refused to give him the child of her votaress, the "little changeling boy." As the text presents it, Titania's interest in the boy is sentimental, linked to her relationship with his mother and the promise the fairy queen made. Oberon's interest, on the other hand, is textually much more ambiguous. In fact, if both he and Puck are to be taken at their word, Oberon's interest in the Indian boy is primarily one of dominion: possession is linked to Oberon's political authority.

From the beginning both Oberon and Puck make clear that Oberon desires to have the boy as a "henchman" or "Knight of his train." Furthermore, Oberon's desire for the boy seems very much connected to desire for dominion over Titania. Hence I am inclined to view Oberon's quest for the boy less as the embodiment of fatherly love or pride than as the manifestation of a perceived prerogative to claim possession—to have "all . . . tied to" him. The paternal interest that many critics argue lies at the heart of Oberon's desire is not evident in his words.[49] One finds in his exercise of

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[47] In an unpublished essay, Joan Pong Linton has noted that, within the early modern English lexicon, *trifles* was generally used to describe the type of exchanges between Native Americans and English sailors. For a different analysis of relations of exchange between the English and Native Americans, see Pong Linton, *"Jack of Newbery* and Drake in California: Domestic and Colonial Narratives of English Cloth and Manhood," *ELH* 59 (1992): 23–51.

[48] One wonders whether this accusation might also imply that Titania is the real object of Theseus's love, that it is for love of her that he left the other women.

[49] In this I diverge from Louis A. Montrose, who reads this conflict in terms of the psychology of the nuclear family, where Oberon's efforts are seen as an "attempt to take the boy from an infantilizing mother and to make a man of him" ("*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Shaping Fantasies of Elizabethan Culture: Gender, Power, Form" in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers, eds. [Chicago and London: U of Chicago P, 1986], 65–87, esp. 74). Allan Dunn also sees the play in terms of this psychology, though he reads this familial conflict from the changeling's point of view, in his "The Indian Boy's Dream Wherein Every Mother's Son Rehearses His Part: Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare*

paternalism the very ideology that made it "the smart thing for titled and propertied families in England to have a black slave or two among the household servants."[50] Like the growing number of non-European (particularly African) children who were imported into England to serve as badges of status for England's aristocracy, the "changeling boy" is desired as an exotic emblem of Oberon's worldly authority. Oberon's desire to claim the Indian boy as his servant should not be trivialized; in another century or so Asian Indians would become the household fashion.

But why the insistence on possession of the Indian boy? Dramatically, both Oberon's and Titania's obduracy is crucial to the plot structure but not dependent on the changeling's being Indian. The answer is to be found in Shakespeare's rewriting of the figure of Oberon and in the larger problem that *A Midsummer Night's Dream* explores in some detail: gender relations. And, as we shall see, a changeling is not always a mere changeling.

The idea of change (or transformation) is central to the dramatic plot and to the specific resolution of the dissension between Oberon and Titania. In order to dissolve the stalemate, Oberon must produce willingness in Titania to "amend" their "debate"; that is, he must persuade her to change her mind about giving up the Indian boy. The flower, "love-in-idleness," itself a product of change, enables Oberon to achieve his desire—the changeling child. The curious thing about this situation, and one worth exploring, is why Oberon feels it necessary to provide Nick Bottom as a substitute for the Indian boy.[51] Luce Irigaray suggests that men "make commerce *of* [women] . . . , but they do not enter into any exchanges *with* them," largely because "the economy of exchange—of desire—is man's business."[52] Because there is no other male of equal rank and power with whom Oberon can negotiate an exchange, and because the object he desires is not a wife but a page, he is forced to rewrite the rules governing this "economy of exchange" so that a direct transaction with Titania can take place. Importantly, the objects of exchange must be equivalents, and thus Oberon must provide a changeling for a changeling.

When Nick Bottom reappears from the brake, his head transformed into that of an ass, Snout declares, "O Bottom, thou art changed. What do I see on thee?" (3.1.96). Peter Quince considers Bottom "monstrous" and later declares that Bottom has been "translated" (ll. 86, 98). Puck's alteration of

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Studies 20 (1988): 15–32. It seems to me that both monarchs operate within a feudal ideology about social responsibilities and status. Thus the Indian boy elicits from the monarchs very different interpretations of their social roles.

[50] Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1984), 9. See also Folarin Shyllon, *Black People in Britain 1555–1833*, published for The Institute of Race Relations (London: Oxford UP, 1977); and James Walvin, *The Black Presence in Britain* (London: Orbach and Chambers, 1971).

[51] The substitution of Nick Bottom as the object of Titania's affections, his regression to an infantile state, and the sexual significance of this new relationship have long received critical attention. For an insightful examination of sexuality, bodily functions, and shame in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, see Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell UP, 1993), esp. 125–43.

[52] Luce Irigaray, "Women on the Market" in *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell UP, 1985), 172 and 177.

Bottom enacts a familiar literary emblem.[53] Bottom, intriguingly, is "translated" into neither centaur nor satyr; it is not his body that is altered but his head: "An ass's nole I fixèd on his head" (3.2.17). The alien(ness) Bottom represents is a mixture of the familiar and the foreign; with the exception of his head, Nick Bottom remains distinctly human. What is striking about Puck's trick and Oberon's exploitation of it is not only that it violates the sociocultural endogamy—the commerce that upholds patriarchal traffic in women—but that, in the substitution of the "translated" Nick Bottom for the Indian boy as the other male in the triangular relationship of desire, it irrevocably redefines both sexual and racial parameters in fairyland.

While the boy changeling may be viewed as the object of maternal affection, the adult changeling clearly invokes a different response in the fairy queen. In Titania's bower, Bottom, though subject to the fairy queen, clearly is not perceived as a mere child. On the contrary, as Titania's behavior indicates, Bottom becomes a substitute for Oberon as well. By employing Bottom as the erotic trap that permits him to "steal the boy," Oberon finds himself ensnared by the "hateful imperfection" of monstrous humanity that he has engendered: "For, meeting her of late behind the wood / Seeking sweet favours for this hateful fool, / I did upbraid her and fall out with her" (4.1.60, 45–47). For Oberon, who is initially pleased with Puck's prank, the "sweet sight" (l. 43) of Titania embracing a "translated" Bottom in her bower eventually loses its charm. Once central to Titania's erotic desires, Oberon finds himself displaced twice: first by a changeling and then, in Bottom, by a monstrous "changeling" to boot. And while Oberon may now possess the Indian boy, it appears that the new changeling has become for the fairy king more than the "fierce vexation of a dream" (l. 66).

Change, rather than dreams, is the defining trope of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Whether in the changed story of the lovers Apollo and Daphne or in the "little western flower," in Lysander's drug-induced change or in Hippolyta's weariness with the moon—"Would he would change!" (5.1.238)—change generates not something unintelligible and fundamentally alien but something that, because of its composition, is (paradoxically) differently the same. In effect, what is constituted is the hybrid. Even so, Hippolyta's moon, Hermia's Lysander, and the "little western flower" remain intelligible to all as moon, man, and flower despite their transformation. The change that Bottom and the Indian boy literally and symbolically register, on the other hand, is of a more particularized form—it is an ethnic · (or racial) change that involves the forcible removal of a person from one culture to another and, in the case of Bottom, a change that produces a phenotypical transformation as well. And, not surprisingly, the ease with which change is accommodated, even accepted, produces general anxiety within fairyland.

At the center of this trope of change is a concept linked to the Spanish term *mestizaje*, or mixedness. The *Diccionario de Uso del Español* defines *mestizaje* as the "*cruzamiento de razas*" (crossbreeding of races) or the "*conjunto*

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[53] For a discussion of Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as sources for Shakespeare's representation of Bottom, see Foakes, ed., 9–10.

de mestizos" (group of mestizos) and relates it to the verb *mestizar*, defined as "*adulterar la puerza de una raza por el cruce con otras*" (adulterating the purity of one race by mixing with others).[54] Both Bottom and the changeling child exemplify this hybrid state: in Bottom we see the *cruzamiento* of two species—human and equine (literally, the *mulatto*)—and in the Indian boy the possibility of human and fairy mixedness (the *mestizo*).

It is, of course, critically problematic to label Bottom and the Indian boy in the terms of a racial lexicon that is not employed in Shakespeare's play. Yet I believe such a move is both theoretically and heuristically appropriate given Shakespeare's own framing of fairyland as a borderland between India and Athens. In this space, through his "translation" and incorporation into fairyland, Bottom becomes the figurative and literal instantiation of that newly engendered lexical hybrid, the *mulatto*. Similarly, while the Indian boy's enigmatic textual history must forever occlude the "facts" of his genesis (is Puck right when he declares the boy's father to be an Indian king, or is this merely one more of the mischievous sprite's fabrications?), Titania's narrative of the Indian boy's origins and her own behavior are so symptomatic of the accounts of Indian women by the travelers van Linschoten and Vertomannus that it is worthwhile linking these representations to the emerging linguistic taxonomy of cultural difference. Shakespeare's use of India calls attention to this parallel discourse; and if we look closely at its lexical and taxonomic matrices, we can shed light on the way race works in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As we shall see, the conflicting terrain of fairyland, with its easy violation of borders—both speciegraphical and geographical—adumbrates an ontological engagement with the linguistic complexities of *mestizaje*.

IV

Etymologically, *mestizaje*, *mestizo*, and *mestiço* trace their origins to the Latin *miscere*, as does the word miscegenation (*miscere* = to mix and *genus* = kind, sort, type). *Mulatto*, on the other hand, originates in the Latin word *mulus*, which describes the offspring born of an ass and a mare. Even so, *mulatto*'s semantic genealogy includes *miscere*, for what produces the offspring is the mixing of what are perceived to be two different species or kinds. *Changeling*, unlike *mestizo*, *mestiço*, or *mulatto*, only indirectly traces its lexical and semantic genealogy to the Latin *miscere*.[55] *Changeling*'s etymology originates in the Latin *mutare*, yet its semantic instantiations suggest a closer kinship to *miscere* and *translatio*.[56]

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[54] María Moliner, *Diccionario de Uso del Español*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1967), 2:402.

[55] See, for example, Thomas Middleton's and William Rowley's *The Changeling*. In its common usage in early modern England, *changeling* referred to a person put in place of another and, in particular, to a child secretly substituted for another child by fairies. It was also used to describe dramatic and inexplicable shifts in human behavior.

[56] *Translation*'s etymology originates with the Latin word *translatio*, which is derived from the union of *trans* and *ferre* (away from/across and to carry/to bear, respectively). *Translation* as Shakespeare uses it, however, seems to evoke a signification more akin to the semantics of *miscere*—that is, a mixing of two things to produce one—than to the notion of *translatio*, to carry or bear away. Peter Quince's use of the word *translated* insinuates this connection as it continues the pun created by Snout's use of the word *change*.

The lexicon of *mestizaje* was used politically and culturally to describe the offspring of a union between European males and non-European females (though with different configurations based on geography): the Spanish term *mestizo/a* referred principally to the offspring of Spanish men and American Indian women; *mestiço/a* described the offspring of Portuguese men and African or Asian Indian or American Indian women;[57] and *mulatto/a* identified the offspring of Spanish men and African women.[58] This racializing lexicon entered the English language largely via translations of Spanish and Portuguese travel narratives, though not until Richard Perceval and John Minsheu compiled their bilingual dictionaries was this lexicon codified as part of the English language.[59] Familiar modes of categorizing people (according to class or nationality) were no longer useful in the new world that European imperialism was beginning to create—a world suddenly comprised of hybrids, *mestizos*, and *mulattos*. Hence the appropriation of such words as *race*, *mestizo*, *mestiço*, and *mulatto* allowed the English to fill a cultural and lexical gap opened by the inadequacy of more familiar terms such as *changeling*.[60]

Predictably, what the new hybridity produced was not an orderly taxonomy but rather a state of lexical and cultural instability, mutability, and permeability. The Indian boy and the transformed Nick Bottom signal a new variant on the notion of race, a variant that silently but insistently calls attention to the details of its sociohistorical genesis. And while I would not insist that Shakespeare drew faithfully on the accounts of *mestizaje* in such narratives as those of Vertomannus or van Linschoten, I would point to the parallels between Shakespeare's account of the Indian boy's lineage and, for example, Vertomannus's terse report on the "deflowering" of the king of Calcutta's wife. Similarly, we find an analogy between Titania's refusal to give the Indian boy to Oberon and the obdurate Indian woman, who takes "pleasure in carrying [her *mestiço* child] . . . abroad . . . [and who] by no meanes will give it to the father, unlesse it should be secretly stollen from her, and so conveyed away."[61] Titania's unwillingness to give the boy to Oberon ("Set your heart at rest. / The fairy land buys not the child of me" [2.1.122]) may therefore be more than an example of maternal feelings; it

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[57] The Portuguese racial lexicon also included the term *castiço*: *castiço* referred to a Portuguese born in India, while *mestiço* described any Asian, African, or New World native who had a European ancestor.

[58] The word *mulatto/a*, of course, immediately evokes an image of the animal, something the other two terms do not suggest. But, and this is crucial to our understanding of the link between language and sexual reproduction, the word *mulatto/a* also implies the inability to fix the idea of race, something the other two terms imply as well. I have generalized the gender of these relations not because Spanish and Portuguese women were absolutely uninvolved in the colonial process but because there is little evidence to indicate whether they were involved in miscegenous relations with native men.

[59] In his 1623 *A Dictionary in Spanish and English*, John Minsheu offers his readers an "enlarged and amplified" version of Richard Perceval's 1594 *Biblioteca Hispanica*. Minsheu's aim was to provide "for the further profit and pleasure of the learner or delighted in this tongue." Minsheu's dictionary goes far beyond Perceval's not only in sheer number of words but also in its inclusion of words that mark racial identity.

[60] I give both the Spanish and Portuguese spellings for *mestizo* to resist the totalizing of Spanish and Portuguese cultures as homogeneous. While linguistically the two nations are quite similar, they are distinct entities. In both languages *mulatto* has the same spelling.

[61] Van Linschoten, 62.

may also echo the Indian woman's challenge to Eurocentric, patriarchal assumptions about control of the female body and about that body's ability to destabilize the idea of marking race solely through paternity. Generated in the face of such instability is an anxiety (exemplified in the behavior of both Oberon and the Europeans) about how best to handle such situations.[62] If we accept Nick Bottom in his "translated" state as emblematic of the *mulatto* and the Indian boy as emblematic of the *mestiço* child engendered in the deflowering of the king of Calcutta's wife, Oberon's vexation at the "sweet sight" of the *mulatto* in Titania's bower (and his earlier vexation with Titania's fondness for the *mestizo*) resonates with the European's growing anxiety about the definition of race in the borderlands.

The displacement of the changeling child and the substitution of the adult changeling foreground the problem of unregulated female sexuality and its effect on the existing concept of race. Nick Bottom might then signify a return to Irigaray's notion of "sociocultural endogamy," the other adult male in the "economy of desire," one who introduces an unexpected dimension into the equation. Just as the sexual relations of the Indian women expose as illusory the European notion of race within the borders of early modern India, so Oberon's knowledge of Titania taking pleasure in the transformed Bottom calls into question the possibility of sustaining absolute categories of difference. Oberon and his European counterpart each discover the general limits of patriarchal power and the specificity of his own fallibility. What we witness in India and fairyland is the fragmentation of patriarchal ideologies denoting race because women's erotic desires can displace and dispel the sexual continuum upon which race is constituted. It is for this reason that I find less than satisfactory the argument that "Fairy Land is an offstage kingdom, geographically and politically independent of any human territory."[63] Because fairyland is linked to India, a space of *mestizaje*, it sounds the discordant notes of shifting racial definitions even as it adumbrates a potential solution to the problems engendered by *mestizaje*. Furthermore, it is precisely because India has become the site where the concept of race (aristocratic genealogy) can easily be destabilized that race must be rewritten in order to posit an ideology capable of handling the superficial differences between Indians and Europeans.

The resolution, therefore, is not the eradication of the concept of race but its reformulation. The "new" idea of race, and its concomitant lexicon, must begin to reflect this possibility (*mestizaje*) and to contain it. Such containment

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[62] In 1510 Affonso de Albuquerque, viceroy of the Portuguese settlement at Goa, instituted a policy prohibiting marriages between Portuguese men and "the 'black women' of Malabar—in other words dark-skinned women of Dravidian origin, who were often termed 'Negresses' by the Portuguese" (C. R. Boxer, *Race Relations in the Portuguese Colonial Empire 1415–1825* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963], 64–65).

[63] Homer Swander, "Editors vs. A Text: The Scripted Geography of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Studies in Philology* 87 (1990): 83–108, esp. 87. Swander's analysis is primarily concerned with the staging of the play rather than its internal geography. In an analogous discussion with different conclusions, Gary Jay Williams looks at a "semi-operatic adaptation" of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* performed in 1816. Williams argues that the "interesting and historically significant text of " this production is its "staging and the new pictorial scenery, whose vocabulary must be read in the light of empire," thus specifically recognizing the play's dependence upon a specific geographical and political "human territory" ("The Scenic Language of Empire: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1816," *Theatre Survey* 34 [1993]: 47–59, esp. 47).

is achieved, however, not by abandoning the imperial project but by redefining its lexical and ideological taxonomies when dealing with indigenous peoples. As we see in the descriptions offered by Vertomannus, van Linschoten, and others, the imperial project necessitates an essentialism (a "nature") that increasingly is linked to external appearance, in particular to skin color. Thus the image of the dark-skinned savage, the licentious and barbarous non-European, became the norm, instilling a sense of revulsion among Europeans for the sexual behavior that produces *mestizaje*. In words different from yet similar to those of the European travelers, Oberon insists that Titania look on the hybrid Bottom and abhor the image and reality of what she has hitherto embraced. Ironically, *this* changeling's genesis (or paternity) derives from Oberon, and Titania's relationship with the changeling therefore potentially violates two social taboos, incest and miscegenation—the former symbolically and the latter literally. Oberon's dilemma is resolved, even if temporarily, by the restoration of Bottom to his human appearance. The fact that Bottom and the Indian boy are the catalysts for a state of *mestizaje* in fairyland cannot be erased.

When viewed in the shifting context of early modern England's discourse of race, Oberon's "pity" may be tinged with a more complex emotion, as, in the moment of his victory, he discovers himself supplanted not only by a racially ambiguous male but by one of his own making. Though Bottom's expulsion from fairyland, as well as the Indian boy's expulsion from Titania's bower, may alleviate Oberon's vexation, it does not dispel the racial quandary their existence engenders. While Nick Bottom's return to both his human state and to Athens enacts the restoration of a class and gender hierarchy, it also leaves behind a new vision of a racial landscape, a "new world" where the image of humanity is not the European but a changeling—the *mestizo/a*, *mestiço/a*, *mulatto/a*. More important, Shakespeare's two changelings in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are haunted by the ghostly presence of the historical condition of *mestizaje* which occasions both Shakespeare's dramatic representation of India and the modern Western notion of race.

V

My analysis has suggested that Shakespeare's comedy continues the racial discourses constituted by travel narratives that represented India as a "territory to be conquered and occupied," displaying its people as "rich trifles" to sate the European appetite for exotic novelty.[64] At the same time, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* constitutes race as an ideological fissure, producing a problematic dichotomy between race as genealogy and race as ethnicity or physical appearance.

It is this fissure, only recently visible to political criticism, that the director of the SSC production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* failed to discern in his interpretation of the playtext.[65] Indeed, productions of the play become

[64] Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987), 131.

[65] Arguing that "the least interesting motivation behind the Indian Boy conflict would be the excuse that Oberon sincerely needs a page or 'henchman'," the director chose to highlight the

trapped in a historical conundrum whenever there is a decision to cast the Indian boy and put him onstage. The director (and, by extension, the play's readers) cannot avoid the culturally predetermined orientalism built into Shakespeare's geographic allusion. Furthermore, given the cultural role played by Shakespeare's canon in modern English imperialism, the SSC director's decision becomes even more problematic precisely because the Indian boy's presence on the modern stage engenders a localized reading where past and present historical discourses occasionally merge but more often collide. Shakespeare's evocation of India marks an ideological space where the colonizing impulse imposes a mode of representation suitable to the dynamics of an imperial project. Until directors, actors, textual advisors, and scholars begin not only to rethink their assumptions about the ideological purpose of Shakespeare's Indian boy but also to acknowledge the complex and varied images of race in Shakespeare's play, productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* may be destined to rehearse endlessly a racial fantasy engendered as part of imperialist ideology: the fantasy of a silent, accepting native who neither speaks nor resists.

The Indian boy is the most silenced of the play's characters, never given words to express his desires, his self-perception. What if he, rather than Puck, had been given the final word: what would the changeling child have said? What if, after four hundred years, his voice were restored to him? What would he say to the hybrid Bottom? Would the Indian boy declare, as a young white reggae fan in Birmingham, England, did, that

> there's no such thing as "England" any more . . . welcome to India brothers! This is the Caribbean! . . . Nigeria! . . . There is no England, man. This is what is coming. Balsall Heath is the center of the melting pot, 'cos all I ever see when I go out is half-Arab, half-Pakistani, half-Jamaican, half-Scottish, half-Irish. I know 'cos I am [half Scottish/half Irish] . . . who am I? . . . Tell me who I belong to? They criticize me, the good old England. Alright, where do I belong? You know, I was brought up with blacks, Pakistanis, Africans, Asians, everything, you name it . . . who do I belong to? . . . I'm just a broad person. The earth is mine . . . you know we was not born in Jamaica . . . we was not born in "England." We were born here, man. It's our right. That's the way I see it. That's the way I deal with it.[66]

Somehow, giving our silent *mestizo* the voice of another *mestizo*, rather than that of an academic like myself, seems fitting. The words of this half-Scottish/half-Irish changeling stand as a vivid reminder that it was in the "antique fables," the "fairy toys" produced in the colonizing dreams of Europeans, that the "shaping fantasies" of modern imperialism began. These words are a reminder that it will be the *mestizos*—the racialized descendants of those who framed the lexicon and practices of modern imperialism—who, dealing with it, will write the final epilogue to the shaping fantasy of race.

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sexual tensions of the play from a different angle (Danny Scheie, "Program Notes on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*" [Santa Cruz, 1991], 32).

[66] Quoted in Gupta and Ferguson, 10.