

Race and....

Organizer: Dennis Austin Britton, University of New Hampshire

Group #1

Anthony Barthelemy
University of Miami

Race and Appetite

O appetite, from judgment stand aloof!

A Lover's Complaint

The exploration of Africa by Europeans in the sixteenth century increased the information about Africa and Africans but required the creation of a lexicon, a narrative, and an epistemology to process and disseminate those experiences as usable knowledge. One of the constants in these “descriptions” of Africa is the marvel at its plenty: food, heat, sun, nakedness. Richard Eden in *Decades of the New World* (1555) comments that some English mariners died in Africa because of their lack of self control in the face of the foison available to them: “our men partly having no rule of themselves, but eating without measure of the fruits of the country, and drinking the wine of the Palme trees that drop in the night from the cut of the branches.” These new encounters produced new appetites in the English and questions about the differences between themselves and Africans. How does appetite, desire, distinguish the one from the other? Why does Othello need to reject pleasing the palate of [his] “appetite” as Iago and Cassio yield to theirs? Understanding human nature through the control of appetite goes back as far as Aristotle. The Age of exploration mapped onto the paradigms of Aristotle and Aquinas a way of imagining differences the supposed race to be real. Not quite 20 years after *Othello* Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* reaffirms the importance of Aristotle’s schema. My paper will explore Shakespeare’s understanding of race and appetite.

Carol Mejia LaPerle
Wright State University

Race and Affect: Pleasurable Mixing in Ben Jonson’s *The Masque of Blackness*

The critical field of *The Masque of Blackness* often annotates Queen Anne and her ladies’ blackface performance with a courtier’s eye-witness comment that the “lean cheeked moors” were “loathsome” and “ugly.” Yet Ben Jonson’s performance text, when read beside Dudley Carleton’s correspondences, resists the undue influence of the aristocrat’s anecdotal disparagement. I start by refusing to take Carleton’s denigration as fact. Instead, this project profiles the affective potential in the experience offered by the women painted as Niger’s daughters. Excitement at the novelty? Gratification of participation? Delight in beauty? What pleasures, in other words, may be experienced in being, and in being beside, their blackened bodies? In *Touching Feeling: Affect*,

Pedagogy, Performativity, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick urges a reading of “beside” that privileges affective experiences; beside “comprises a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivaling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other relations” (8). The performance text of *The Masque of Blackness* invites an analysis of the ways the black bodies, set beside the opulence of the masque’s materials and technologies, enhance the affective force of pageantry. Rather than a deviation from the performance’s magnificent appeal, blackface is constitutive of the masque’s demonstration of beauty and invention of pleasure. As such, the performance’s allegory of James’s power hinges on a fiction of idealized incorporation that is ideologically powerful precisely because it is primarily an aestheticized, affective experience. Beyond the ostensible trope of racial transformation, Jonson presents pleasure as the precondition for Britannia’s absorption of migrant bodies.

Sydnee Wagner
The Graduate Center, CUNY

“Gypsy Toys”: Wanton Gypsies and the Hypersexualization of Romani Women in Early Modern Literature

From artistic renderings to literary references, the figure of the Gypsy woman is an obsession in early modern English literature and culture. Portrayed as exotic, criminal, and wanton (all stereotypes surrounding Romani women that persist today), these representations were extremely pervasive, even leading to the word “Gypsy” to be used to describe non-Romani women who were seen as too sexually promiscuous. In *The Spanish Gypsy* (1623), written by several playwrights including Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton, the character of Preciosa, a young white woman “playing” Gypsy, embodies all of the characteristics deemed desirable of Gypsy women while still maintaining her “fairness” (3.2.78) and “virgin” (5.1.86) status.

Though the “noble Gypsies” (2.1.11) that populate this play are all white people in costume, I argue that early modern representations of Gypsies and Gypsy sexuality are influenced by conceptions of racial otherness, in particular skin color and exotic clothing and practices. Likewise, I argue that the construction of “counterfeit Gypsy” identity, like the ones performed in the play, is also shaped by the racial otherness of Romani people. In contextualizing these markers of racial otherness that shape early modern notions of the Gypsy women’s sexuality, counterfeit and real, I aim to recover and analyze the textual violence in reconfiguring Romani bodies as “Gypsy,” a container for the desires and anxieties of the English, and to connect that violence to the physical violence endured by Romani women residing in England.

Group #2

John Michael Archer
New York University

Where Should Othello Go?

Othello's desperate question in the final act of his play seems also to have been posed implicitly by critics. Should he be "put" in the category of race or religion? Once a "stranger in Shakespeare," recently (still?) an "other," doesn't he also belong in Venice? Parallel trends in recent criticism have sent the Othello of Act 5 from separation back to troubled integration, but also carried him from racial difference towards a more fungible religious alterity as the ground of theological syncretism. Both historicist and theoretical approaches have taken the suicide speech as their main text, and "citizenship," often broadly refigured through the marks of religious belonging, as their principal theme. This paper will retrace the link of citizenship and circumcision in criticism by comparing rival critical readings of Othello's final monologue. I'll survey utopian claims for *Othello* in the wake of Julia Reinhard Lupton's influential treatment of this (unfortunately, perhaps) paradigmatic play. The paper will also consider Christopher Pye's recent response to Lupton's assimilation of blackness in the tragedy with paganism as a means of conversion through literal or figurative circumcision, and conversion to posthumous naturalization, or citizen status, in death. Pye's "aesthetic" and vision-centered rewriting of Lupton reopens a provisional pathway toward visible racial difference as key to the tragedy, if only in the attenuated last instance. It's my position (though I won't have space to provide detailed readings as I have elsewhere) that early-modern citizenship depends on exclusion and difference anyway, including both gender (where should circumcision models go here?) and racial or ethnic differences: racial difference should always-already be a factor even for the most forward-thinking of theological readings.

Allison Machlis Meyer
Seattle University

“The Pattern of Princes’ and ‘A Misbelieving Mahometan’: Compiling Almansor in Early Modern *Sammelband*”

This essay takes as its subject an early 17th Century Bodleian *sammelband*, which includes, in addition to epithalamia celebrating the wedding of Elizabeth Stuart, William Vaughan's *New-found Politicke* and Robert Ashley's *Almansor, the Learned and Victorious King that Conquered Spain*. These two texts both include stories about the quasi-historical Muslim king Almansor, and involve four separate translators who repurpose Spanish and Italian texts for English audiences. In this essay, I examine the often contradictory representations of Islam invited by intersections of racial and religious identity and by processes of compiling and translating multi-national texts. I show how the effects of compilation and the organizational frameworks of this *sammelband* include a flexible repurposing of its individual texts that deepen the

complexity of their depictions of Islam and Moorishness within the larger context of England's international conflicts during the Thirty Years' War. In doing so, I suggest that this *sammelband* displays ready evidence of a thoughtful, institutional compilation of politically-minded texts capable of generating meaningful intertextual engagements for early modern readers. By highlight the varied, complicated and at times contradictory "uses" of Muslim and Moorish otherness within one compilation, I hope to reveal the effects of re-contextualization invited by the process of book building. The material structure of institutional compilation and book assembly, which additionally re-contextualizes already repurposed texts, is sometimes seen as apolitical; through this *sammelband* case study, I argue that such processes integrally participate in constructions of early modern identity and otherness.

Jamie Paris
University of British Columbia

"Is Black So Base a Hue?" On the Racialized Confessions of Shakespeare's Aaron in
Titus Andronicus and Marlowe's Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*

This paper will consider the dramatic and religious role(s) of racialized confession in William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* by situating Aaron's and Barabas's confessions alongside Elizabeth's letters arguing for the deportation of all blacks and blackamores, people that she argued would be a threat to English employment and that were incapable of sharing the Christian values of England (a discourse that has sadly re-emerged in contemporary American political rhetoric). I will show that the early modern discourse on race did not view racialized men as persons, but rather as subjects who could not be converted to Christianity and thus posed a danger to the economic and religious order of the realm.¹ Building off the work of scholars like Kim Hall, Ian Smith, Lara Bovilsky, Mary Floyd-Wilson, and Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker,² this paper argues that the relationship between race and religion on the early modern stage is complex, and that it is also not a coincidence that raced characters

¹ Queen Elizabeth I of England, "An Open letter to the Lord Maiour of London and th' Aldermen his brethren" (1596), in *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion*, eds. Ania Loomba and Jonathan Burton (New York: Palgrave, 2007). See also Queen Elizabeth I of England, "Licensing Caspar van Senden to Deport Negroes" (1601), in *Race in Early Modern England: A Documentary Companion*, eds. Ania Loomba and Jonathan Burton (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

² Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Ian Smith, *Race and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: Barbarian Errors*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Lara Bovilsky, *Barbarous Play: Race on the English Renaissance Stage*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Mary Floyd-Wilson, *English Ethnicity and Race in Early Modern Drama*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker, eds. *Women, Race, and Writing in the Early Modern Period*. (New York and London: Routledge, 2013).

in tragedies find themselves cast as villains, or scapegoats, that the play needs to expunge from an implicitly Christian community. In these plays, Marlowe and Shakespeare ask the audience to be not just to witness these confessions, but to participate in the actions of these racialized villains. Shakespeare and Marlowe use these dramatic confessions by raced villains to enable the audience to see them as characters that deserve their attention.

Methodologically, this paper will add to the “race and...” conversation by bringing together two plays that are rarely discussed together and by bringing together scholarship from an emerging critical historical engagement with race in the early modern period and a discussion historical engagement with religion in early modern literature, or what Jackson and Marotti have called the turn to religion in early modern studies.³ If critics insist on arguing that religion was secondary to race in early modern thought, then what kind of a place is there for the discussion of race within the turn to religion?

Group #3

Lynn Maxwell
Spelman College

Waxing Poet or Poetically Waxing about Race in Early Modern Literature

This paper takes its departure from my work on the way wax is used in the early modern period to negotiate questions of relationality and the nature of humanity. In my current book project, I survey a wide variety of contexts and applications of wax metaphors in the period, but my work does not adequately consider the extent to which metaphors of impression and mutability engage with questions of racial and ethnic difference. In this paper, I highlight those previously unexplored threads. Starting with a consideration of the African role in the global trade of wax, and the ways the wax trade was regulated to ensure that only uncontaminated wax was sold, I continue by thinking about particular literary and cultural uses of metaphors of impression around racial and cultural mixing. In particular, I examine the engagement of Shakespeare and others with the theory of maternal impression. Texts considered include Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus*, Thomas Lupton’s *A thousand notable things, of sundry sortes* (1579), and Reginald Scott’s *A Discoverie of Witchcraft*, among others. Ultimately, I argue that paying attention to the wax trade, and to these waxy metaphors reveals the instability of racial categories in the period, as well as cultural anxieties about whiteness, purity, and the female body. Further the link between the wax trade and these metaphors starts to suggest some of the ways in which race already attaches to the circulation of commodities in the period.

³ Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti, “The Turn to Religion in Early Modern English Studies,” *Criticism* 46.1 (2004), 167; Ken Jackson and Arthur F. Marotti “Introduction” in *Shakespeare and Religion: Early Modern and Postmodern Perspectives* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2011), 1-21.

Carmen M. Meza
The Ohio State University

“Borderlands, Religious-Washing, and Racial Turning:
Daborne’s *A Christian Turned Turk* and Tunis”

The foundation for my dissertation stems from the Chicana feminist notion of “Borderlands” established by Gloria Anzaldua in her groundbreaking hybrid text called *Borderlands: The New Mestiza* which argues that sexual and racial identities are shaped and complicated by living in-between two places. Generally, I apply this concept to early modern texts and argue that early modern dramatic characters experience a sense of being in ‘border worlds’ as well. My essay for this conference identifies how Daborne’s Tunis connects to contemporary Chicana feminist notions of race and early modern maps and ballads. Given that Anzaldua argues for an intersectional geographical understanding of race and that early modern evidence shows that people were often associated with specific places, I reconsider what it means at the racial level to convert religiously. Building chiefly on the views of Anzaldua and early modern cartographers, I reconsider the way in which the play’s geographical context relates to our understanding of the English pirate John Ward and why Daborne saw Tunis as an appropriate location for exploring religious conversion. Moreover, I consider the following question as a starting point: How is conversion layered with notions of race and understood differently in Tunis?

Jan Stirm
Univ of Wisconsin - Eau Claire

Roaming and Race in *The Fair Maid of the West*

Starting with past arguments about the constructedness of “race” and “nature/environment” as categories, I seek to bring these two concepts together to understand how Thomas Heywood’s *The Fair Maid of the West* uses race and environment to contribute to a discourse that sees English characters (in plays) and people (historically) as enabled to roam across space, to visit or colonize other spaces, all profitably and fruitfully. Thus, English characters in the play stand in contrast especially to Spanish characters, who are seen as destroying their environment, but surprisingly as more allied with the Moroccan King of Fez in his ability to become more virtuous through contact with the English Bess and to control a profitable area, despite his being played as black.

Olga Valbuena
Wake Forest University

“Purchased by the weight”: The Color of Suits in *The Merchant of Venice*

By the time Bassanio thinks to “hold a rival place” among Portia’s suitors, his Spanish competitors have already established “the first truly worldwide empire,” in no small measure through the sale of *grana fina*, a dyestuff that yielded a deeper, more saturated scarlet than any colorant previously known to artisans of the Old World.⁴ Sixteenth-century Venetians, of course, did not venture to Mexico or the Indies for the cochineal insect, but depended on Spanish trade networks for the raw material that became the “Venetian scarlet” of their famous silk, taffeta, velvet, and satin goods. If Shylock, as has been argued, is a rival merchant to Antonio, he fits among the alien class of Levantine and exiled Sephardic Jews invited to trade in those color-rich luxury textiles that Bassanio would have purchased with money provided by Shylock and secured with Antonio’s flesh.⁵

Second only to silver as the most important Mexican export between 1550 and 1860, cochineal stands as an overdetermined commodity symbolizing the historical tension between Spain and its colonies; more locally, it serves as an index of religious and economic conflicts between Jews and Christians, Spanish Catholics and English Protestants, and between owners and bondsmen, as indicated by Shylock in in Act 4. In this paper, I imagine Antonio’s missing ships filled with cochineal, the creature whose little body yields a deep carmine or *blood red* associated by many peoples, including the Aztecs from whom the Spanish took it, with nobility and religious ritual, group inclusion or exclusion, sacrifice and martyrdom—with the color of life and death itself.

Group #4

Katherine Gillen
Texas A&M-San Antonio

Fashioning English Whiteness in *The Revenger’s Tragedy*

Set in Italy, Middleton’s *The Revenger’s Tragedy* reflects tensions between ideals of English national purity and an emerging vision of racial whiteness, in which people of European descent were imagined to share a common lineage and characteristics. As Mary Floyd-Wilson has demonstrated, the English were invested in revising a geohumoral

⁴ Frederic Chapin Lane, *Venice, A Maritime Republic* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 298–9; 245–9; 293; Thomas F. Madden, *Venice: A New History*, First Edition (New York: Viking, 2012), 301; 293; 296.

⁵ Robert C. Davis and Benjamin Ravid, *The Jews of Early Modern Venice* (JHU Press, 2001), 84–89; Aaron Kitch, “Shylock’s Sacred Nation,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2008): 131–55.

system that took Italy as its center and depicted the English as “impressible, barbaric, and inversely defined by the traits and temperament of dark peoples on the other side of the world” (4). This revision involved “the erasure of Africa from the civilized world” and “the construction of a European race that united a wide range of colors and complexions under an invisible badge of inherited superiority” (Floyd-Wilson 19). *Revenger’s*, I suggest, exposes fissures in this ideological project, refusing to embrace pan-European whiteness and suggesting that doing so might dilute, and even contaminate, English national identity. Whereas many early modern English plays depict Italians as the quintessential white Europeans, *Revenger’s* instead presents them as a potentially corrupting, if perversely appealing, racialized threat to English national identity. The play’s tragic climax, I suggest, results in part from the inability to reconcile provincial English identity with pan-European whiteness; at the same time, however, the omnipresent death’s head of the chaste Castiza points toward the pathology inherent to ideals of national, racial, and sexual purity.

Arthur Little

University of California, Los Angeles

Miranda’s “Vile Race”: Blackness and the Nature of Theory in *The Tempest*

John Dryden argued that in creating Caliban Shakespeare “created a person which was not in Nature, a boldness which at first *sight* would *appear* intolerable: for he makes him a Species of himself” (*The Works of John Dryden*, 13: 239, italics added). When Harold Bloom of Shakespeare’s-invention-of-the-human fame agrees with Dryden, saying, “A character who is half-human cannot be a natural man, whether black, Indian, or Berber (the likely people of Caliban’s mother, the Algerian witch Sycorax)” (Bloom, 664), he of course elides a long tradition of apprehending non-whites in just such “half” terms; and when he decries (in a very deprecating allusion to Aime Césaire’s *A Tempest* [1969]) that Caliban “has become an African-Caribbean heroic Freedom Fighter” proving that “Marxists, multiculturalists, feminists, *nouveau* historicists—the usual suspects—know their causes but not Shakespeare’s plays” (662), he misses how Shakespeare’s play maps an aporia in the interdependency of race and nature in a play that is perhaps Shakespeare’s most skeptical dramatization of such a relationship; he misses, too, I am proposing, the play’s critique of the relationship between race and nature, especially as these terms were being tested as England faced a “global world” and the end of its own reliance on the superiority the racialized “noble blood” of its own crumbling aristocracy. I am interested here especially in Miranda’s diatribe against the “abhorred slave” Caliban (Montaigne’s anagrammatic cannibal): “But thy vile race, / Though thou didst learn, had that in’t which good natures / Could not abide to be with” (1.2. 350, 357-59), and the ways *The Tempest* interrogates the racializing of nature and, concomitantly, the naturalizing of race. From such a vantage, Miranda and her phrase (one that has historically set uneasily on her white-female tongue), threaten to unveil the highly visible and barely-hidden fiction/theory of a *natural* racial whiteness. I carry out this inquiry by examining how early modern ecocritics write about the relationship between nature and race. Studying early modern ecocriticism’s attentiveness to race, I want to interrogate the

“vile” theories of race (or racial theories of vileness) that try to pressure, shape, and *fix* blackness in the nature-scape and the social and political world of Shakespeare’s play.

Ian Smith
Lafayette College

White Gold

Religious conversion has attracted a good deal of attention in early modern studies, typically introduced within the framework of a global Renaissance, in ways that challenge narrowly conceived European perceptions of national and cultural identity. *The Merchant of Venice* and *The White Devil* are preoccupied with racial conversion—that is, *turning white*—as it relates to Jessica and Zanche, the Moor. As outsider figures, both suffer from the anxiety of acceptance and tolerance, and the possibility of becoming white emerges as a crucial racial fantasy. Applied broadly to describe mobile social identities, blackface offers a frame of analysis and registers a heightened awareness of racial position and the struggle engaged by social agents in accepting or resisting perceived limitations within a hierarchy. As in any study of blackface performance, the identification of the materials of reinvention is important; this essay considers the role of gold’s instrumental role in white conversion.

Group #5

Ambereen Dadabhoy
Harvey Mudd College

Why Black Lives Matter in Shakespeare

Literary criticism of Shakespeare often eschew overt displays of bardolotry, yet it is seemingly impossible to escape the notion that Shakespeare’s work endures not only because of its hermeneutic complexity but also because of its timeless universality. Shakespeare continues to tower over his contemporaries and literary descendants because his work uncovers what it means to be human. What happens to that universal notion of humanity when we circumscribe our notion of the human to the white, European, and male? Early modern and Shakespeare studies’ fraught critical relationship with questions of race in the period seem to do just that. As a category of critical investigation, race has a contentious history, one that is most often discounted through the charge of anachronism, as an invention that post dates the early modern period. Nonetheless, we encounter not just race-based forms of thinking in the period but also characters whose social position and symbolic function is attached to their race. The unwillingness to explore race through anachronism, to use a modern optics in order to expose the foundations of racial thinking in Shakespeare, can be a way to erase the black presence that we find in his work. To be sure, “Othello was a white man,” yet his blackness is central to his history, his circulation within Venice, and other characters’ perception of his apparent degeneracy. Perhaps the critical reluctance stems from the potential

allegation of modern racism that might be leveled at the play. Yet working through that complaint might be productive because it simultaneously acknowledges the social and symbolic function of blackness and Shakespeare's ambivalent treatment of his black subjects. Indeed, one reason why black lives matter in Shakespeare is that *Othello* circulates in our cultural imaginary as a pre-text undergirding black masculinity and desire. Moreover, *Othello*'s complex social position vis-à-vis the Venetian state and polis further emphasizes the contingent nature of political belonging that coheres around blackness. In this way, *Othello* offers a temporal bridge from the early modern period to our own contemporary moment. The political, cultural, and social meanings and constructions of blackness (and race) are central to *Othello* and to my investigation here. I argue that elisions of race in Shakespeare and early modern studies betray a form of race-based thinking that undermines the black presence in Shakespeare. It not only renders illegitimate some critical studies that would focus on race, but also denies the material, somatic realities of black bodies and their histories. Attending to such concerns, I claim that black lives matter in Shakespeare because they are present, have meaning, and expose the limits of the Anglo-American cultural and political body.

Kyle Grady
University of Michigan

“Skin-Folk and Kinfolk: Afterlives of *Alcazar*”

My paper considers the interplay between race and community. It takes aim at the early modern etymological association between “race” and heredity and the critical approaches that this association engenders. It rethinks the argument that heredity and nobility in early modern England — as opposed to our own modern-day means of group formation— predominate over skin color as a way to delineate community. In particular, I focus on those arguments that see something racially transcendent in this interplay. Because George Peele's *Alcazar* offers us Abdelmelec, a sympathetic Moor who makes claims to his legitimacy through lineage, it gestures towards the immateriality of phenotypic race in communal organization. However, I argue that Abdelmelec's legitimacy is also gained through the defeat of his “black” nephew and a cohort of “negroes,” and that this act demonstrates the circumscribed manner in which Moors attain legitimacy on the early modern stage. In *Alcazar*, blackness must be abjured in order for Abdelmelec to obtain the rights of his heredity. To emphasize how characters that embrace blackness are excluded from de-racialized modes of early modern communal categorization, I contrast *Alcazar*'s paradigm against the musing of Zora Neale Hurston in her autobiographical *Dust Tracks*. Hurston's simultaneous rejection and embrace of black community offers a model in which affiliations exceed racial classification without giving way to anti-blackness. In so much as Hurston's model challenges homogenous racial groupings while still legitimating blackness, it suggests that we reconsider to what extent race is transcended in early modern texts.

Joyce Green MacDonald
University of Kentucky

Race and Shakespearean Adaptation

The popularity of African-American musical adaptations of Shakespeare suggests that nonwhiteness (unwhiteness?) has a powerful role to play in contemporary renewals of Shakespearean performance. In the paper I plan for our session, I want to think about this Shakespeareanized nonwhiteness in a global context, as I discuss Mira Nair's 1991 film *Mississippi Masala*. The film locates its star-crossed lovers, Indian Meena and African-American Demetrius, within a social web that is not only interracial, but spans the globe: Meena's family was among the 50,000 to 70,000 Asians expelled from Uganda in the wake of Idi Amin's seizure of power in 1971 and ends up in Greenwood, Mississippi, where Meena and Demetrius meet. This global scope opens up the scope of *Romeo and Juliet*, focused as that play is on the mores of Verona, as claustrophobic and localized as the tomb where the lovers die. In geographically opening its initiating Shakespearean text, Nair's film also provides a kind of explanation for the forbidden quality of Meena and Demetrius' love, an explanatory context textured enough to focus on Meena's experiences within her own color-conscious community of Indian immigrants as well as on the lovers' encounters with whites and blacks in the wider town. In Nair's globalized reading of *Romeo and Juliet*, race is not enough to keep the lovers apart (as the unexplained family feud functions in the Shakespeare play), much less to demand their deaths. At the end of the film they ride off together in Demetrius' truck to Los Angeles. And yet, the film does insist that, as part of the long history of forced migration that brings Meena and Demetrius together in Greenwood, race has necessarily produced the identities that they join together in the journey toward their own future. In *Mississippi Masala*, race adds dimension to the lovers' meeting, and frames their connection within broad currents of movement, coexistence, and change.