PLACE-MAKING IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY PAINTINGS ADAPTED FROM SHAKESPEARE'S *A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*

Claudiu Mihai ARGEŞANU
Ovidius University of Constanta

Abstract: *This essay applies geocritical theories in order to show pictorial techniques of place-making in works by Victorian painter Richard Dadd (*Puck*, 1841) and Scottish artist and illustrator Sir Joseph Noel Paton (*Oberon and the Mermaid*, 1883). While the concept of place-making has been used in modern architecture to show how artists have worked to revitalize certain urban areas, I extrapolate this concept to Victorian art to demonstrate how these particular painters have repurposed Shakespeare's* A Midsummer Night's Dream *for their nineteenth-century viewers. Do the pictorial representations of Puck and Oberon correspond to the theatrical and metaphoric spaces created on stage during the production of this comedy? The answer is no, because paintings create their own place, based on visual representation and the viewers' imagination about the spaces suggested in the play, as well as their personal experience and understanding of the characters represented in the play. While Shakespeare's comedy invites the audience to recreate the imaginary places of the wood and the fairy-world, the two painters make place on canvas by exploiting the viewers' imaginary picture about Shakespeare's play and the existing conventions. Thus, the two paintings show spaces that the audience could only imagine while attending a performance of Shakespeare's comedy.*

Keywords: *place-making; magical space; William Shakespeare; art;*

Geocriticism works on literary texts to evaluate the notions of general space and experiential place, based on a "geocentric" and "interdisciplinary" approach (Westphal 111; 119). Bertrand Westphal writes about the real referent, or "realeme" (117), which is the geographic element proper (cities, islands, archipelagos, mountains, rivers, lakes seas, straits, peninsulas, deserts, continents, poles, etc.), but argues that "the realeme is not always located in the sensory reality of the world, because the world is divided—at least in the reality of fiction—into a plurality of possible worlds in terms of representation" (117). Westphal extrapolates the concept of worlds, from literature to the arts, explaining that "the role of the arts that have a mimetic relationship to the worlds is transformed and achieves greater significance: literature, cinema, painting, photography, music, sculpture, and so on" (3). What happens when, in painting, place is made with the help of colours and perspective? Place-making is about creating a sense of place and evoking the atmosphere and character of a certain location through artistic expression. This can be achieved through various techniques and styles, such as landscape painting, cityscapes, or even abstract representations that capture the essence of a place.

Visual artists often use elements like colour, light, texture, and composition to convey the unique feeling of a place. For example, the warm, golden tones of a sunset can evoke a sense of calm and serenity, while the vibrant, bustling colours of a busy city street can create a feeling of energy and movement. This essay applies geocritical theories in order to show pictorial techniques of place-making in works by Victorian painter Richard Dadd (*Puck*, 1841) and Scottish artist and illustrator Sir Joseph Noel Paton (*Oberon and the Mermaid*, 1883). The purpose is to show that both drama and painting have a certain performative quality embedded in their visual component, and this has the power to create place through techniques of place-making. Just as Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* creates the places of classical Athens and the woods through language, metaphors, and interactions among characters, the two painters discussed apply techniques of place-making to their touches in order to suggest ideas and emotions. Thus, the "realeme" (Westphal 117) in the two paintings (the woods, the sea) is suggested by means of combined possible worlds invoked by Shakespeare's play and the emotional place generated in the viewer's imagination by the painting.

The concept of creative place-making has been used in modern architecture to show how artists have worked to revitalize certain urban areas (Redaelli 401). I extrapolate this concept to Victorian art to demonstrate how these particular painters have repurposed Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for their nineteenth-century viewers. The essential question to be asked is: Do pictorial representations of Puck and Oberon correspond to the theatrical and metaphoric space created on stage during the production of this comedy? The answer is no, because paintings create their own place, based on visual representation and the viewers' imagination about the places suggested in the play, as well as their personal experience and understanding of the characters represented on stage. While Shakespeare's comedy invites audiences to recreate imaginary places of the woods and the fairy-world, the two painters discussed in this essay make emotional landscapes on canvass by exploiting the viewers' imaginary vision about Shakespeare's play, as well as the existing conventions related to the play's plot, suggested by details in the painting. In this way, the two paintings generate places that the audience could only imagine while attending a performance of Shakespeare's comedy. This is why paintings highlight the performative role of the theatre and of the art of painting.

Place-making is related to a certain topography created through art. In the introduction to *Place Matters: Critical Topographies in Word and Image* (2011), Jonathan Bordo and Blake Fitzpatrick coin the term "critical topography" (13) to describe how thought and symbolic forms invent place through text and image. As Bordo and Fitzpatrick observe, "Critical topography aspires to be an approach of discursive elaboration that permits

the assemblage of material conditions with the signifying tokens of words and images. The tasks of critical topography are to mediate and diminish the gap between representation and referent, to be both in the world and about the world at the same time" (Bordo, Fitzpatrick 13). By applying interpretations of place-making techniques in painting to Shakespeare's dramatic text— through the geocritical approach and its correspondent in art (critical topography)—my purpose is to unlock the hidden messages extant in the pictorial representation of scenes from Shakespeare's play, in such a way as to connect the performativity of dramatic art to the visual performativity of painting.

Through place-making, the paintings discussed in this essay generate a kind of critical topography which visualizes social arenas where the past of Shakespeare's plays is memorialized; where space is given visual parameters; and where pictorial representations develop in two-dimensional form— instead of the theatre's three-dimensional perspective. Unlike the spaces of Shakespeare's theatre which are visual and performative, the kind of critical topography generated in these paintings (through the technique of place-making) is visual and colour-oriented, in the sense that pictorial images make the place of action in the scenes depicted. Moreover, perspective, lighting and texture play an important part in the painting's representation of place.

Place-making techniques in art look to the past, present and future at the same time. For instance, Eleonora Redaelli observes that

> In the artworld, several theories have engaged in articulating the relationship between the art practice and place. Theories of art explain, through linguistic constructs, the materials, methods, and meanings chosen by the practice. This process of reflection on art contributes not only to mediating its reception, but to the development of the art itself. (Redaelli 404)

Redaelli also gives a strong point on how the "theoretical accounts of art do not simply describe the general principles of the practice, rather they draw from other cognate discourses, such as philosophy or social theory, directing attention to the value and meaning of the practice" (Redaelli 404). Redaelli sees that place-making has a valuable importance with history, when she observes that "placemaking does not imply disrupting a place, but rather developing its potential while honouring its past" (Redaelli 409). The concept of creative place-making, therefore, has been applied to a spectrum of art forms and it has an impact on human environment, as people celebrate history and culture through art.

The concept of creative place-making has been discussed descriptively by Eleonora Redaelli, but others, like Andrew Zitcer, prefer this concept

through the framework developed by Foucault and Hackling. Starting from Foucault's ideas on discourse, Zitcer notes that "Discourse is thus bounded in time, as is the contemporary practice we have come to know as creative place-making, which collates a set of activities that were known under other names at other times" (Zitcer 281). Zitcer has an interesting point of view for creative place-making achieved with the help of culture, as he states that "Creative placemaking is an increasingly prevalent form of planning practice that invokes arts and culture as tools for revitalization" (Zitcer 278). Revitalization of environment is essential in the process of place-making, so I see place-making in the paintings discussed as a revitalization of Shakespeare's dramatic landscape, based on the dynamism of performance and the dynamism of the visual image of the scene depicted from a play.

Like architecture, painting is inextricably linked with the visual element, and so is the theatre. Mick Lennon discusses the role of the arts in place-making, concluding that "placemaking is thereby the term commonly used in the related fields of architecture, planning and urban design to describe the process of creating spaces that are desirable for people to live, work and visit" (Lennon 449). Lennon (449) and other architects (Wilson, David 1) use the concept of *inclusion* to define how community engagement, or inclusion, operates in place-making. In the introduction to the study entitled *Inscribed Landscapes: Marking and Making Place* (2002), editors Meredith Wilson and Bruno David define another concept, *inscription*, as referring "to a particular individual's or cultural group's understanding of an inscription" (Wilson, David 1). In this sense, inscriptions can be termed as "artistic traditions" (Wilson, David 3), and they are constructed and can be interpreted. They also talk about time and place, how place "can operate through engagement" (Wilson, David 3) as "culturally ordered experiences" (Wilson, David 3). Through place-making techniques, nineteenth-century painters inscribe the cultural codes of their past (Shakespeare's plays) into the actions of their present (the paintings). The result is a form of hybrid place-making, which is related to both the Shakespearean scene or character being illustrated and the (Victorian or modern) viewer's interpretation of that place.

The concepts of "space" and "place" are derived from cultural geography and studies of spatiality. In Y-Fu Tuan's *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (2001), the components of environment, space and place, are defined in clear terms. According to Tuan, "Space and place are basic components of the lived world; we take them for granted. When we think about them, however, they may assume unexpected meanings and raise questions we have not thought to ask" (3). Tuan asks the essential question: "in what ways do people attach meanings to and organize space and place?" (Tuan 5). Tuan's invariable answer is "culture" (5), which "strongly influences human behaviour and values" (Tuan 5). With culture comes the organization

of space, which, for Tuan, is more abstract than place (5). As Tuan argues, "if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is a pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place" (Tuan 6). Place, therefore, indicates a range of experience or knowledge, which personalizes space and thereby evokes "a sense of place" (Tuan 3). To sum up, space is objective, while place is subjective. However, these concepts from cultural geography have different understandings in the visual arts, especially in painting.

What is the correlation, therefore, between space and place in painting? In the section concerned with "The Aesthetics of Space and Place," from the collection of essays entitled *Space and Place: Diversity in Reality, Imagination, and 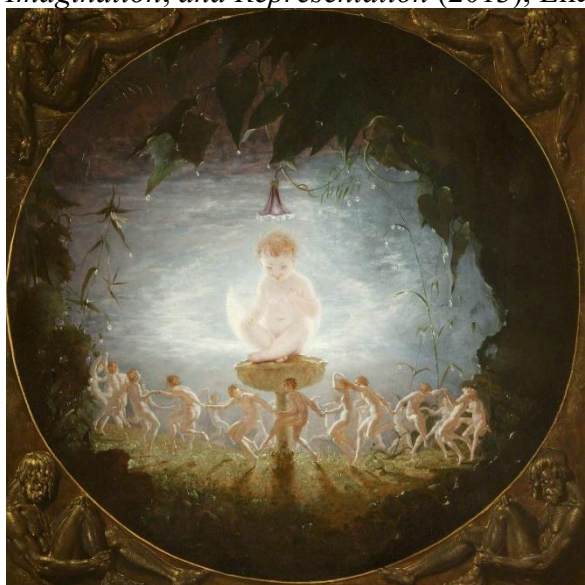Representation* (2013), Ella Whateley examines painting in order to explore how an individual's sense of an inner world directly affects their experience of the outer world in Western art, particularly in painting. As Whateley observes, "The painter's challenge is to influence the viewer's experience of the world and one primary method is to translate three-dimensional space into two-dimensional form. Painters can recreate known physical space in the service of metaphysical space, and paintings can become facilitating metaphors for incorporeal enquiry"

Figure 1. Richard Dadd, *Puck*, oil on canvas, H 52.9 x W 52.9 cm, Harris Museum & Art Gallery

(Whateley 211). Therefore, according to Whateley, space in painting becomes a metaphor, which acquires metaphysical meanings.

I would extend Whateley's argument by saying that symbolic or "metaphysical" space can become experiential place for each viewer, according to their cultural and personal parameters when viewing the painting. In the case of paintings illustrating scenes or characters from Shakespeare's plays, the (Victorian) viewer's expectation is that of seeing a representation of a great work of literature; this expectation makes the space of the painting meaningful, and it turns it into an experiential place for that particular viewer. Thus, the viewer's experience of the world is enriched through the visual artistic representation.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare plays with the themes of love, art, imagination, and dreaming to forge an overall meaning for his work. His play-within-a-play, found in Act V, expands on his themes and portrays the relationship between the audience and the performers on stage. As Natasha L. Richter observes, "Specifically, Quince's disordered prologue to the play mirrors the distorted reality characterizing the dreamy, nighttime woods; overall, the interjected play underscores Shakespeare's larger aim of exhibiting the necessity of imagination and dreaming to the maintenance of loving relationships and to the creation of art" (Richter 1). Therefore, as Richter argues, we can observe that "the audience better understands the interaction between performers and audience during a play, acknowledging the manner in which performers introduce the audience to an alternative world" (Richter 1). Richter's focus on the performative aspect of Shakespeare's play suits my purpose of demonstrating that the Victorian paintings based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream are at once visual representations of a scene (or scenes) and live performances of that scene.*

The concept of dreaming is played by Shakespeare effortlessly in *A Midsummer Night's Dream. This is a concept that is also used by artists such as* Richard Dadd and Sir Joseph Noel Paton in their dream-like worlds, with fairies and elves. Until *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was restored to the stage as Shakespeare wrote it, the painters had little to draw upon besides their imaginations and the richly inventive operatic spectacles, and these dealt primarily with the supernatural aspects of the play. The painters' representations of the play were understandably no less extravagant than their sources, and the canvases teem with activity, peopled as they are with fantastic creatures such as elves, fairies, sprites, goblins and pixies. The Victorian interpretation of Shakespeare's plays in the romantic mode led artists to highlight the magical and dynamic aspect of Shakespeare's play, with a focus on the fairies and elves populating the woods around mythical Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

When dealing with Richard Dadd (1817-1886) (see Figure 1), it is impossible to avoid mentioning madness, but it would be a mistake to reduce him to that aspect. Though Dadd's artistic career spanned most of the Victorian age, he actually spent most of his life locked in various lunatic asylums, after he killed his father in a fit of dementia, when he was barely twenty-five. Nicholas Tromans's narrative entitled *Richard Dadd: The Artist and the Asylum* (2011) reads like a biography, but it also includes a serious discussion of the painter's work, focusing on subgenres like fairy painting or Orientalism. Indeed, Tromans seems to have read all the necessary sources, be it on the collecting patterns of Northern industrialists or, more obviously perhaps, Foucault's *History of Madness*.

As I see Dadd's painting entitled *Puck*, the romanticized vision of the fairy scene in the woods, with Puck's oversized image creates a voyeuristic sense of the spectator intruding in the development of secret magic mysteries. The scene might even be connected with the Eleusinian mysteries taking place in the woods near Athens in classical times.[1] The painting's creative place-making is enhanced by the fact that the image is seen as if through a spyglass, from a distance. At the same time, the round image (as if seen through the lens of a glass) has a classical rectangular frame, displaying four images of ancient gods and goddesses, in the manner of the books of classical mythology published in Elizabethan times. Place-making, therefore, in this painting is concerned with the viewer's personal perspective, which is added to the artist's vision of Shakespeare's play.

In the early 1840s, Richard Dadd was still a promising young artist who specialised in Shakespearean scenes. According to Tromans, the works of young Dodd display a "giddying medley of sources" (Tromans 27), capturing "Shakespeare's pivoting between the sublime and the sexual, the natural and the fantastic" (Tromans 34). Richard Dadd's painting shows Puck, a character from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, who causes much mischief. He is shown here as an infant sitting on a toadstool, while naked fairy figures dance round him in the moonlight. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Puck is a classic mischievous character that personifies mischief, change, and unpredictable behaviour. At the same time, Puck is Robin Goodfellow, a character from English folklore. A key component of the trickster archetype, innocence and latent chaos, all these images are symbolized by Dadd's depiction of Puck as a baby on a toadstool. The cyclical movement of mischief and order is suggested by the fairies dancing around Puck, which echoes Shakespeare's themes of turmoil and eventual balance. Moreover, baby Puck is naked, which gives a glimpse into the natural world, where all creatures— fairies, elves, and goblins—are not aware of the social function of clothing. These creatures live in an Edenic state, in total communion with nature. Paradoxically, however, the naked figures do not suggest eroticism and sexuality, which is in total harmony with the scene's spiritual atmosphere.

---

[1]According to the *Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (2014) by Jennifer R. March, the Eleusinian mysteries in ancient Athens were connected with the cult of Persephone, daughter of Zeus and Demeter. Persephone had been abducted by Hades to the Underworld, but mother and daughter were joyfully reunited on the Olympus. But because Persephone had eaten a pomegranate seed, while in the Underworld, she could not leave the place forever and was obliged to spend part of every year with Hades (either four or six months). This was the cold winter period when seed lay dormant below the earth. In spring she came back once more to warmth and light, and the loving company of her mother. Persephone's return to the living world and the growth of the crops in spring were celebrated in many rites shared by mother and daughter, most famously in the Eleusinian Mysteries and the festival of the Thesmophoria (March 388).

Thus, creative place-making in this painting works as a revitalization of Shakespeare's dramatic landscape.

The painting's transitional space—a border between the human and fairy worlds—is created by the natural environment, which includes mushrooms, moonlight, and greenery. This is similar to Shakespeare's play's transformational woodland, where connections and identities are altered. In fairy tales, mushrooms and toadstools are common symbols that stand for magic, the paranormal, and the unearthly. They evoke the Victorian preoccupation with the exotic and the strange, while also serving to ground Puck in the fairy world in Dadd's painting. When looked at from the perspective of critical topography in art (Bordo, Fitzpatrick 13), the painting creates a sense of place based on Shakespeare's play and on the painter's vision of performance space. The way that moonlight and shadow interact in *Puck* highlights concepts of duality, illusion, and imagination. A major motif in both Dadd's artistic vision and Shakespeare's play, moonlight represents dreamlike inspiration and the fuzziness of the lines separating reality from illusion. The painting's dim shadows allude to the fairy world's darker undertones and possibly also to Dadd's own mental health issues.

A delicate harmony in the emotional and natural worlds is reflected in the harmony between light and dark, creating a sense of place connected with magic and mystery. The toadstool's spherical shape and the fairies' circular arrangement refer to natural cycles and cosmic harmony, being a spatial metaphor in which the entire painting is inscribed. Shakespeare's tiny enchanted wood is represented by Dadd in the layout of his composition, where instability elicits equilibrium and repair. Shakespeare's story and the fairy tales' everlasting appeal are further supported, in Dadd, by the use of circularity, which evokes notions of immortality and continuation, as suggested by the crescent moon rising behind Puck's baby figure. Thus, Dadd's painting is an enabling metaphor for intangible explorations of notions of magic and mystery, while the techniques of place-making reveal a circular place of magic harmony and mystical reunion.

A key component of Dadd's composition, the toadstool is a powerful representation of the fairy kingdom. Toadstools were frequently interpreted as gates to other worlds or symbols of fairy rings in Victorian folklore, because their ingestion produced hallucinations. The exaggerated, throne-like representation of the mushroom highlights the fantastical, warped grandeur that characterizes the magical realm, while also hinting at Puck's high position in the fairy hierarchy. Dadd contrasts the bizarre aspects of the fairy characters and the peculiar proportions of Puck's environment with the moonlit forest's majestic beauty. This incongruity mirrors the dual nature of fairies as both good and evil, reflecting the Victorian preoccupation with the cohabitation of beauty and horror.
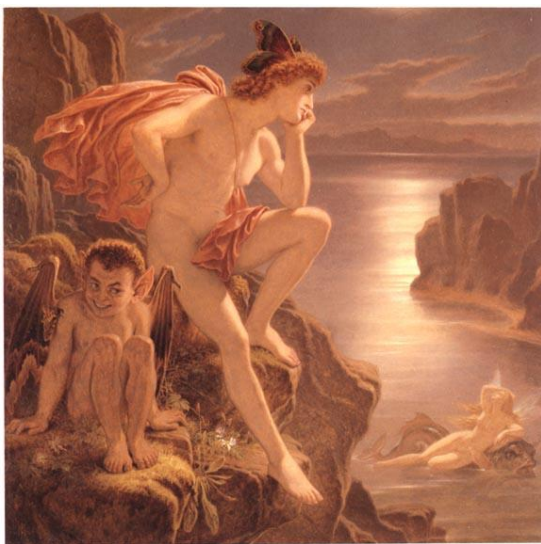
Figure 2. Joseph Noel Paton, *Oberon and the Mermaid*, 1883, oil on canvas, approximately 60.96 x 60.96 cm. Meisei University, Tokyo.

Dadd's *Puck* is a complex work which explores imagination, location, and identity in a personal way, while also paying respect to Shakespeare. Beyond its apparent aesthetic appeal, the scene's symbolic complexity provides deep insights into the psychological and cultural aspects of Victorian art. By applying the concept of critical topography to Dadd's painting technique, it is possible to conclude that the painter makes metaphoric place by suggesting the experience of awe and wonder to the viewers, while making them feel comfortable and at home in this weird magical landscape. Place-making, therefore, is related to what the viewers imagine and feel when confronted with the magical fairy-wood of Shakespeare's play.

The next painting discussed is *Oberon and the Mermaid* (1883) by Victorian artist Joseph Noel Paton (see Figure 2), which was exhibited more than three decades after Paton's prize-winning *The Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania* (1847) and his *Quarrel of Oberon and Titania* (1850). Shakespeare's comedy serves as a direct inspiration for Paton's dreamlike and obsessive style, which represents an interaction between imagination and reality. Moreover, place-making in this painting is connected with the use of colour, lighting, and perspective in order to create an imaginary world of the painting itself, superimposed on the imaginary world of Shakespeare's play.

Shakespeare's literary examination of dreams and imagination is mirrored in paintings based on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The play's themes of metamorphosis and the division between the actual and dream worlds are reflected in the bizarre, otherworldly ambiance of these pieces. The emotional moods of Paton's characters are reflected in the rich, closely spaced plants and animals. For instance, stormy sky or tumultuous vegetation symbolize the tensions between Oberon and Titania, while calm landscapes allude to their final reconciliation. In keeping with Romantic and Victorian ideas of the sublime in nature, the painting's setting functions as a symbolic extension of the individuals' inner worlds. Therefore, Paton's creative place-making is a tool for the revitalization of Shakespeare's emotional landscape,

which is expressed in linguistic metaphors, while the painting offers intense visual representations.

Oberon and the Mermaid illustrates a scene – in Act II scene 1, just before Oberon sends Puck to fetch the magic flower called "love-in-idleness" (2.1.174)[2] – which we do not actually *see* in the play. In the painting, Paton depicts the memory of that night, or what is supposed to have happened in Oberon's mind. Oberon describes how he once sat on a promontory "And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back / Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath / That the rude sea grew civil at her song / And certain stars shot madly at their spheres / To hear the sea-maid's music" (2.1.155). Shakespeare's metaphor of the mermaid on a dolphin's back symbolizes the power of imagination to create fictions through art—whether poetry, music, theatre or painting. The geocentric and geocritical approach to the play, therefore, suggests a metaphoric place of illusion, represented in a character's mind, which has reverberations in the audience's/viewer's imagination.

Shakespeare creates a specific place of art and imagination in this scene, because Oberon narrates about a moment that he remembers having witnessed, but which Puck is unable to see. This is just as in the painting, where the painter shows a melancholic Oberon—musing in the pose of the meditating artist—looking into the distance at the singing mermaid. In contrast, the impish Puck is sitting with his back to the sea and the mermaid, smiling maliciously at some pranky inner joke he devises on humans. The characters' position in the painting visualizes exactly Shakespeare's description, as captured in what Oberon says: "That very time I saw (but thou couldst not)" (2.1.161). This means that only Oberon in the painting—who looks like Apollo, the god of music and art—could see the magical scene and hear the mermaid's music. The half-naked Oberon is crowned with butterfly wings on his golden curls, symbolising the power of imagination to transport humans to other worlds. This is a representation of the capacity of imaginative art to create fictions. Applying the principle of critical topography in painting, it is possible to say that the outer landscape reflects Oberon's artistic personality and his capacity of having access to possible worlds of imagination, unlike any mortal human being.

The painting depicts a scene which is key to the confrontation between Titania and Oberon, but which is not directly represented on stage. Shakespeare describes it through language, and he uses suggestive metaphors to invoke the force of poetry and art. In their turn, audiences/viewers of the painting are required to use their imagination to recreate this scene. In the painting, Paton visualizes the scene as seen from the perspective of a member

---

[2] All references to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are keyed to the Folger Digital Texts, edited by Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles.

of the audience, who imagines Shakespeare's poetic description. The recurrent motif of Oberon and Titania's argument and eventual reunion represents the equilibrium of conflicting forces: harmony and conflict, order and chaos, masculine and feminine. In addition to reflecting the dynamics of Shakespeare's play, these exchanges also highlight Victorian concerns about marital duties and maintaining harmony in the home.

By reflecting the natural world's oscillations between storms and quiet, Oberon and Titania's interactions might be interpreted as metaphors for life's natural cycles of conflict and reconciliation. However, in Paton's painting, Titania does not appear at all, and the central characters are Oberon and Puck. Shakespeare's dramatic landscape, therefore, is repurposed for the paintings' suggestion of private emotions by using place-making techniques of colour and mythological allusions. Although Titania's female body is not present, she is replaced by the hybrid figure of the mermaid, both woman and fish, whose charming song represents the allure of the arts.

The moral ambiguity and dual nature of the fairy world—beautiful yet dangerous—are suggested by the way light and shadow interact in Paton's painting. Reflective surfaces and glistening water in *Oberon and the Mermaid* represent the subconscious mind, as well as the illusive nature of wishes and dreams. The golden light bathing the scene suggests not only the moment of sunset, but also the golden light of poetry and imagination, which is the central meaning of the painting's spatial metaphor. The naked figures of Oberon and the mermaid are represented with classical sobriety and they are not suggestive of sexuality, but of a dream-like world where imagination can roam freely. However, the viewer of the painting can only imagine the mermaid's song, just like Puck, who cannot hear the magical music and see the mermaid on the waters, although he is present in the scene. This means that the power of imagination can have an impact on poetic-minded people, whose access to the ethereal world of fairies is made smoother through the power of art, in any of its manifestations (poetry, music, painting).

Oberon's semi-clad figure looks similar to the body of Michelangelo's David, thus suggesting the continuity of art from classical times to the Renaissance. This is because Shakespeare's comedy is set in an ambivalent classical Athens, and there is an abundance of mythological references in the play, while Renaissance art (in painting and sculpture) drew on the humanistic admiration of the classical world and the spiritual representation of the human body. Thus, the "realeme" (Westphal 117) supposed to exist in the painting (the "real" seascape) is replaced by an imaginary place of the painting in which the characters' (Oberon's and Puck's) inner emotions and experiences are visualized through various techniques of place-making.

The fairies that appear on Paton's canvases stand in for the unseen powers of passion, creativity, and nature. Their richness and fine detail illustrate how

the natural and supernatural worlds intertwined. Though the fairies' sheer number creates a sense of chaos and overstimulation, their forms and motions allude to the uncontrollable forces of nature and imagination, while also mirroring Victorian ideals of elegance and refinement. The impish Puck with batwings is reminiscent of Paton's earlier paintings inspired by *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but the scantily clad Oberon reveals a new element in Paton's work. The fairies' delicate wings stand for transcendence, freedom, and the bond between the material and spiritual realms. The mermaid on a dolphin's back has delicate fairy wings, suggesting spirituality. These wings also give the fairies an almost angelic appearance, embodying the Victorian ideal of grace and lightness. The mermaid's wings serve as visual symbols for the potential to transcend reality's limitations and access the infinite realm of imagination.

In Paton's work, Oberon is frequently portrayed as a charismatic, wise, and authoritative figure, who serves as the stabilizing influence of order in the chaotic fairy world. In keeping with Victorian ideas of governance and patriarchal systems, his interactions with Titania and other characters allude to themes of leadership, compromise, and the distribution of power. Thus, the social landscape of Paton's painting reveals Oberon's prominent position in the social world. However, in this particular painting by Paton, Oberon looks rather like an artist isolated in his ivory tower, far from the temptations of the social world, splendid in his god-like inaccessibility. This is because he solely has access to imaginary place represented in the painting. Oberon's distant and melancholy gaze, looking in the distance, contrasts with Puck's mischievous look. Moreover, Oberon's distant look opens a new place of the painting—the place unseen by the viewer. This is the unseen place of metamorphosis through imagination, where each artistic scene can be transformed into a different place of emotion.

Alison Smith suggests, in *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality and Art* (1996), that "by the 1850s, painters such as Joseph Noel Paton and Robert Huskisson had arrived at a softened fairy type, tempering any suggestion of eroticism by a delicate treatment, and enhancing their creations with the addition of gauze wings, flowing hair and wispy robes" (92). On the other hand, Paton's contemporary, a critic publishing in *The Spectator*, approved of Paton's style, remarking that his "sense of the voluptuous . . . carries him to the verge of what modern 'decorum' will tolerate, never beyond it" (qtd. in Smith 92). No such sense of decorum, however, governs Paton's rendering of the nearly naked fairy in *Oberon and the Mermaid*. The mermaid's almost nude portrayal and Oberon's sparse clothing in this painting highlight Victorian anxieties about erotic exposure in art. These individuals' sensuality represents a desire for freedom and the conflict between desire and social expectations, in contrast to the moral restraint that was frequently demanded

at the time. However, the painting's sexuality is subdued by the addition of gauzy, flowing clothing to the fairy forms, which represents Victorian ideals by striking a balance between sensuality and propriety. The feeling of immateriality in Paton's painting, however, is achieved through efficient techniques of place-making, such as the orange colouring of the sunset scene and the transparent fabric of the mermaid's wings and her flowing hair. There is no hint at sensuality, only the mermaid's spiritual singing and Oberon's fascination with it.

Despite not being explicitly visible in the painting, the mermaid's music is inferred throughout *Oberon and the Mermaid* and represents enchantment, temptation, and the transformational and captivating power of art. Shakespeare's frequent subject of art and performance as fundamental powers is reflected in this scene, which is a representation of a representation, for it is described by Oberon in his poetic speech. The mermaid represents a mysterious power that embodies both danger and allure. Her encounter with Oberon suggests the temptation of forbidden or otherworldly impulses, a motif that echoes Victorian concerns about passion and morality. The Victorian preoccupation with hybrid creatures of transition and the unknown was embodied by mermaids, which were also emblems of uncertainty, as they resided between water and air, life and death. At the same time, the mermaid is a fantastic creature, created by an artist's imagination, so there is no "real" correspondent to this implausible being. By extrapolating this idea, it is reasonable to say that there is no "real" space of the painting, just an imaginary one, represented by the figure of the mermaid.

One of the main motifs in *Oberon and the Mermaid* is water, which represents change, fluidity, and the subconscious. The reflective qualities of water allude to introspection and the blending of the past and present, and these themes are prevalent in Paton's portrayals of Shakespearean figures. Water also relates to Victorian fears of the unknowable and the uncontrollable, which is consistent with the metaphorical dualism of the mermaid. The symbol of water is also connected with the moon and imagination, femininity and poetic inspiration, adding layers of meaning to the painting's imaginary landscape. Since the mermaid on a dolphin's back is part of Shakespeare's poetic description of the imaginary scene, the watery seascape suggests the perpetuation of fictions through various art forms (poetry, painting, sculpture, music). The figure of the mermaid is part of the painting's topographical and emotional landscape, as Paton's creative place-making technique reveals the opposition between real and imaginary places in creating landscape in art.

To sum up, each painting inspired by a scene in a Shakespearean play, or a Shakespearean character, is the sum total of at least two directions: the painter's artistic message—intended to electrify the viewer—and the viewer's expectations of high art (as in high theatrical art), when interpreting the spaces

and places represented in the painting. Dadd's portrayal of Puck captures a playful and mischievous spirit, with the main character being a young, inquisitive person surrounded by lively fairy-like characters in a moonlit setting. Dadd's work blends fantasy and realism, emphasizing surreal, dreamlike emotions, expressed through place-making techniques. Paton's depiction of Oberon in *Oberon and the Mermaid* emphasizes sensuality and multi-layered storytelling through a memory-driven tale. In contrast to Dadd, Paton explores a more explicitly symbolic and narratively oriented portrayal of the fairy world, giving it Victorian moral and aesthetic values.

Both artists, however, represent a theatrical world of wonder inspired by Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, through techniques of place-making, which are used to represent the immortal power of art and imagination to create fictions. Whether as performative art and the theatre (in the case of Shakespeare), or in the art of painting (in the case of Dadd and Paton), visualizations of scenes from Shakespeare's plays have the force to transport the audience or the viewer into a mythical world of imagination. Creative place-making techniques, such as colour, transparency, and perspective, are enabling for the viewers, as they recreate a real-and-imaginary landscape that is both the world of Shakespeare's play and the emotional worlds imagined by the painters. Place-making techniques, therefore, work both ways; from the audience of Shakespeare's play to the viewers of a two-dimensional painting. Thus, imagined landscapes speak of emotions summoned by the work of art—whether theatre or painting.

Works Cited

Bordo, Jonathan and Blake Fitzpatrick. "Introduction." *Place Matters: Critical Topographies in Word and Image*. Edited by Jonathan Bordo, Blake Fitzpatrick, and W. J. T. Mitchell. Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022, pp. 3-20.

Dadd, Richard. *Puck*, 1841. Oil on canvas, 529 x 529mm. Harris Museum, Art Gallery & Library, Preston.

David, Bruno and Meredith L. Wilson. "Introduction." *Inscribed Landscapes: Marking and Making Place*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002, pp. 1-9.

Foucault, Michel. *History of Madness*. Edited by Jean Khalfa. Translated by Jonathan Murphy. London: Routledge, 2006.

Lennon, Mick. "The Art of Inclusion: Phenomenology, Placemaking and the Role of the Arts." *Journal of Urban Design*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 449-466.

March, Jennifer R. *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*. Oxford and Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2014.

Paton, Joseph Noel. *Oberon and the Mermaid*, 1883. Oil on canvas, approximately 24 x 24 inches. Meisei University, Tokyo.

Redaelli, Eleonora. "Creative Placemaking and Theories of Art." Analyzing a Place-Based NEA Policy in Portland, OR." *Cities*, no. 72, 2018, pp. 403-410.

Richter, Natasha L. "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Imagination, Romantic Love, and the Creation of Art." *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse* 2.01 (2010). http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/130/a-midsummer-nights-dream-imagination-romantic-love-and-the-creation-of-art.

Shakespeare, William. *William Shakespeare's Works*. Folger Digital Texts. Edited by Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles. Folger Shakespeare Library. Shakespeare's works | Folger Shakespeare Library.

Smith, Alison. *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality and Art.* Manchester University Press, 1996.

Tromans, Nicholas. *Richard Dadd: The Artist and the Asylum*. New York: D.A.P., 2011.

Tuan, Y-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

Westphal, Bertrand. *Geocriticism. Real and Fictional Spaces.* Translated by Robert T. Tally Jr. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Whateley, Ella. "The Metaphysics of Space as Device and Subject in Painting." *Space and Place: Diversity in Reality*, *Imagination*, *and Representation*. Edited by Brooke L. Rogers and Anna Sugiyama. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2013, pp. 211-224.

Zitcer, Andrew. "Making Up Creative Placemaking." *Journal of Planning*, *Education and Research*, vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 278-288.