‘Enter Cælia, the Fairy Queen, in her Night Attire’: Shakespeare and the Fairies

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Frida Mond by Anna Dabis (1886)
Plan of Lecture

1. ‘Believing in’ Playhouse Performances
2. Fairies, superstitions, and Reformations
3. *Romeo and Juliet*: Earlier and Later Forms of Queen Mab
4. *A Midsummer’s Night Dream* and its Fairy Progeny
5. Fairies and Romance Plots: Antique and Modern
6. Language and Gender: ‘Nymphs’
In a dream men deceive themselves if they take ‘the signs of things for the natures of things, mere shadows for substance. In a dream are thoughts of things, not the things thought.’ (p. 12).
The Merry Wives of Windsor

MISTRESS PAGE

... And three or four ... we'll dress
Like urchins, ouphes*, and fairies, *green and white*,
With rounds of waxen *tapers* on their heads
And rattles in their hands.

(4.4.46-9 emphasis added)

*Children of elves, changelings*
Inigo Jones Designs Fairies for Ben Jonson’s *Oberon*, 1611
Title Page to *Robin Goodfellow*, 1639
Tim Supple’s Multi-Lingual MND, 2006
MND, Directed Ron Daniels, RSC 1981
The invention was to have a satyr lodged in a little spinet ... who ... advanced his head above the top of the wood ...
Ben Jonson’s Tribute to Shakespeare

... he
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
    ... and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses’ anvil; turn the same,
(And himself with it) that he thinks to frame.

(emphasis added)
‘Believing in’ vs ‘Believing that’

THESEUS

... I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact ...  

HIPPOLYTA

But all the story of the night told over,
And all their minds transfigured so together,
More witnesseth than fancy's images,
And grows to something of great constancy;
But howsoever, strange and admirable.

(MND, 5.1.2-27, emphases added)
Sir Humphry Davy ‘Sees’ Fairy-like Creatures on Saturn

‘... I saw with great surprise that they moved from place to place by six extremely thin membranes, which they used as wings. Their colours were varied and beautiful, but principally azure and rose-colour.’

(‘Dialogue the First: The Vision’, Consolations in Travel, Collected Works, 1840, ix, 241)
A (Papist?) ‘Sacramental’

OBERON
... With this field-dew consecrate
Every fairy take his gait
And each several chamber bless
Through this palace with sweet peace;
And the owner of it blessed
Ever shall in safety rest.
Trip away, make no stay,
Meet me all by break of day.

(MND, 5.1.406-13, Emphasis added)
Max Weber, ‘Science as a Vocation’ (1918-1919)

‘The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the “disenchantment of the world”.’
Johann Heinrich Fuseli (1741-1825), ‘Fairy Mab’
Mab as Supernatural Agent?

This is that very Mab
That plaits the manes of horses in the night,
And bakes the elf-locks in foul sluttish hairs,
Which, once untangled, much misfortune bodes.

(Rom., 1.4.88-91, emphasis added)
Gustave Doré, Illustration for Thomas Hood’s ‘Queen Mab’, 1834
J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851), 'Queen Mab Walking in a Landscape'
Fuseli, ‘Incubus Leaving Two Sleeping Women’, 1794
Cælia
Murder’s black mother, rapine’s midwife,
Lust’s infernal temptress, guide to foulest sin;
Fountain of all enormous actions, night-
Horrid, infernal, dern [evil] and ominous Night,
Run not, oh run not with thy swarfy steeds
Too fast a course; but drive Light far from hence.
What is’t that hates the light, but black offence?
And I abhor it, going now to tempt
Chastest Hippolytus to hell-bred lust,
To thoughts most impious, actions most unjust.

Enter Cælia, the Fairy Queen in her night attire

Thomas Heywood (?), Tom a Lincoln,
c. 1610
And Mab, his merry queen, by night
Bestrides young folks that lie upright*
(In elder times the ‘mare’** that hight***)
Which plagues them out of measure.  
(sig. Q1v)

*on their backs, supine  
** nightmare  
*** was called
Late Version of Fuseli, ‘The Nightmare’, 1790-1
Mercutio’s Mab as Bringer of Dreams

And in this state she gallops night by night
Through lovers’ brains, and then they dream of love;
O’er courtiers’ knees, that dream on curtsies straight;
O’er ladies’ lips, who straight on kisses dream,
Which oft the angry Mab with blisters plagues ...

(Rom., 1.4.70-5)
Dave McKean, Queen Mab, 2009
Fuseli, ‘Titania Caresses Bottom’, 1793
Howard David Johnson, (born 1954), ‘Mab, the Bringer of Dreams’
Engraving, after Richard Dadd, ‘Puck and the Fairies’, c.1866
Women Destroy Manliness

O sweet Juliet,
Thy beauty hath made me effeminate,
And in my temper softened valour’s steel.

(Rom., 3.1.103-5, emphasis added)
Margaret Cavendish (1623-73)
Cavendish, *(Poems and Fancies, 1653)*

Sir Charles into my chamber coming in,
When I was writing of my Fairy Queen—
‘I pray’, said he, ‘when Queen Mab you do see,
Present my service to Her Majesty:
And tell her I have heard Fame's loud report
Both of her beauty and her stately court.’
When I Queen Mab within my fancy viewed,
My thoughts bowed low, fearing I should be rude.
Kissing her garment thin, which fancy made,
Kneeling upon a thought, like one that prayed,
In whispers soft I did present
His humble service, which in mirth was sent.
Thus by imagination I have been
In Fairy Court, and seen the Fairy Queen.
For why? Imagination runs about
In every place, yet none can trace it out.
In th’olde dayes of the Kyng Arthour ...
Al was this land fulfild of fayere.
The elf-queene, with hir joly compaignye,
Daunced ful ofte in many a grene mede.
'Farewell rewards and fairies',
    Good housewives now may say,
For now foul sluts in dairies
    Do fare as well as they;
And though they sweep their hearths no less
    Than maids were wont to do,
Yet who of late for cleanliness,
    Finds sixpence in her shoe? ...

Witness those rings and roundelays
    Of theirs which yet remain,
Were footed in Queen Mary’s days
    On many a grassy plane;
But since of late Elizabeth
    And later James came in,
They never danced on any heath
    As when the time had been.

By which we note the fairies
    Were of the old profession,
Their songs were Ave Maries,
    Their dances were procession [Romish litanies sung in procession];
But now, alas, they all are dead
    Or gone beyond the seas,
Or further from religion fled –
    Or else they take their ease.
Coleorton Masque, 1618

Puck
0 ho, ho, boy, hold thee there, and I'll bring thee acquainted with my new company.

Bob
Who are they, Puck?

Puck
Why, the black fairies, boy, the dancing spirits of the pits: such as look to Tom’s Egyptians here, and help them hole and drive sharp their picks and mandrels [picks], keep away the damp, and keep in their candles, drain the sough [empty the drain] and hold them out of the hollows.
To the King’s Theatre, where we saw *Midsummer’s Night’s Dream*, which I had never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it is *the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life*. I saw, I confess, some good dancing and some handsome women, which was all my pleasure.

(emphasis added)
Alexander Pope, on *The Rape of the Lock*

The ‘machinery’, Madam, is a term invented by the critics, to signify that part which the deities, angels, or dæmons are made to act in a poem. For the ancient poets are in one respect like many modern ladies: let an action be never so trivial in itself, they always make it appear of the utmost importance. These machines I determined to raise on a very new and odd foundation, the Rosicrucian doctrine of spirits.
MacGuffins

Alfred Hitchcock on *North by Northwest*:
‘the MacGuffin has been boiled down to its purest expression: nothing at all ... The espionage that drives the plot does just that: it drives the plot.’
Hitchcock (exorcising MacGuffins?)
Dame Judi Dench, Titania, 2010
Judi Dench, Titania, RSC, 1962
Peter Brook’s *MND*, 1970
We’re Not Demons

GOODFELLOW
My fairy lord, this must be done with haste,
For night's swift dragons cut the clouds full fast,
And yonder shines Aurora's harbinger,
At whose approach, ghosts wandering here and there,
Troop home to churchyards. Damnèd spirits all,
That in crossways and floods have burial,
Already to their wormy beds are gone,
For fear lest day should look their shames upon,
They willfully themselves exile from light
And must for aye consort with black-browed night.

OBERON
But we are spirits of another sort.
I with the morning's love have oft made sport,
And, like a forester, the groves may tread
Even till the eastern gate, all fiery-red,
Opening on Neptune with fair blessèd beams,
Turns into yellow gold his salt green streams.

(MND, 3.2.376-95)
Climate Change

The seasons alter: hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiems' thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mock'ry, set. The spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazèd world
And this same progeny of evils comes
From our debate, from our dissension –
We are their parents and original.

(MND, 2.1.107-17)
Philip Goodwin, *The Mystery of Dreams*, 1657

... man, as an animal creature, in dreaming sleeps;
And man, as a rational creature, in sleeping dreams.

(p.6.)