A Natural Transformation: Shakespeare's Reimagining of Fairies as a Social Critique and an Observation of Ecological Anxiety

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The figure of the fairy[1] dances through the literary and oral history of the British Isles: goblins writhe around tithes to the Devil, and children battle fairy kings for freedom. Listed in Middle English law alongside witches, fairies took the blame for the inexplicable or unspeakable acts of humans and natures. These dark, demonic fay, not the kindly flower fairies or the petulant pixies popular in current children's media, peppered the tales of rural England into the Early Modern Period, and here William Shakespeare likely first encountered the magical, liminal creatures. As Shakespeare moved from rural life to the urban stage, he brought the fairies with him and turned their devilish deeds to human-like antics, replacing menace with merriment and ill omens with good will. In his works, Shakespeare consistently returns to the folklore and legends of his youth, leaving "hardly a play which does not have allusions to some branch of folklore."[2] In many of his works, Shakespeare employs witches and the occult, as characters metamorphosize and omens shape

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narrative, thus driving action. Fairies themselves feature most prominently in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1595) and *The Tempest* (c. 1610), as Oberon, Titania, Puck, and Ariel all appear on stage. Meanwhile, a colorful description of Queen Mab in *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1591) also provides useful fodder for Shakespeare's transformation of the fairy folk and later interpretations of the fay. In commercializing, shrinking, and then disembodying his fairies, Shakespeare comments on the excess wealth of the nobles and upper-class Elizabethans, as well as the growing disconnect with nature, while opening up the fairy world for future writers and poets.

As Shakespeare began writing, Queen Elizabeth ruled over England, with uncertainty and change following her every step. Elizabeth espoused religious tolerance while persecuting Catholics, aware of the slippage between the national religion and personal beliefs. She spent money quickly, leaving an immense debt upon her death, yet bolstered the economy, fostering a merchant-capitalist society as England explored Asia and the Americas and drifted further from feudalism. Markets expanded, trade flourished, and a new socioeconomic system rose as urban populations thrived. Many rural people sought wealth in the city and hoped to join the burgeoning middle class. The anxieties growing around a swiftly urbanizing and commercializing nation set the stage for Shakespeare's reinterpretation of England's mythology. In strange times, Shakespeare presented even stranger fairies—tiny and ethereal, but driven by mortal consumption and greed.

The country people of Medieval England would have considered fairies fearsome creatures, likely to steal children, tangle hair, rape women, and blight cattle. They were quick to blame fairies for the unexplainable and the unknowable. Townspeople labeled children born with disorders or abnormalities "changelings" and would abuse or even kill these children since authorities considered them fairies without eternal souls. A woman who bore a child out of

wedlock might say she was "taken by the fairies" to avoid charging a fellow townsperson of rape or to avoid penalties for premarital sex.[3] Fairies and dark magic supposedly caused diseases that swept through herds or crops. In most stories, fairies either embraced wickedness or appeared entirely amoral. They did not feel as humans feel, nor care about morality, ethics, or general kindness. These selfish fairies lived only for entertainment and lacked a soul with which to know virtue. Considered powerful, pernicious, and unpredictable, fairies were not invoked lightly, and euphemisms like "The Good Neighbors" or "The Little People" gained popularity.

Not only wicked, fairies also faced charges of popery and demonism; strict English laws prohibited fairies and any contact with them.[4] Oft accused of witchcraft and devilry, those who consorted with fairies faced death and eternal damnation. As Protestantism gained prominence in England, more and more church writings mentioned fairies, casting them as demons and witches' familiars and painting Fairyland as a place of beauteous deception, reflecting popular perceptions of the Catholic Church. A wise person guarded against fairies with crosses, holy water, iron, and salt, although others believed fairies no longer inhabited England, driven out by the coming of Christianity many centuries before. The laws remained, however, just in case.

The scary fairies lacked the diminutive size often associated with fairies now, although texts featuring tiny witches in England have surfaced.[5] The size of a human, the fairy queen of "Thomas the Rhymer" marries a mortal man.[6] Meanwhile, the fairy king in the "Child Rowland" ballads stands and fences with the boy Rowland as an equal. Although the fairies in many tales appear child-sized, they also have the ability to change, growing from about three feet tall into the giant found in Sir Gawain's adventures with the green knight. Tiny fairies would hardly invoke fear. Instead, creatures large enough to kidnap children, steal cows, and take maidens lurked in the superstitions of England.

Despite the fears they created, the fairies also carried mystical commercial value. While few records of the actual stories remain, fairies known as brownies, similar to Shakespeare's Puck, appear in stories and gossip throughout the Middle English periods, later collected in folklore studies and diaries. In these incarnations, in addition to helping with chores, fairies might bring fortune to a serf doing well in his or her allotted role in life. Good housekeepers, clean dairymaids, and kindly farmers could find a hidden gold piece or have a particularly fertile year. On the other side of the coin, slatternly girls and lazy men could find their hair tied in knots, wake with black and blue bruises from pinches in the night, or face a blight on cows or crops. In rewarding good workers and punishing the bad, fairies mystified commercial exchange: rather than seeking a new lot in life, wise serfs should continue to do their jobs well—excellently—in hopes of gaining supernatural reward.[7] Pre-Shakespearean fairies left coins out of an enigmatic reservoir, but these fairies had nothing to do with actual economic transactions. For the Medieval listener, fairy stories gave reason to mysteries unexplained by religion and to keep serfs content in their social strata.

In addition to oral tradition, ballads, and references in regional texts, fairies existed in literature primarily as allegorical, courtly creatures, surfacing largely in Arthurian romances.[8] These stories existed in lore and oral tradition long before reaching the written record, and they likely influenced Shakespeare's concept of fairy. However, these courtly fairies did little more than direct quests, befuddle knights, and provide a backdrop to adventures far removed from the mortal coil. Roger Lancelyn Green, claims in his article "Shakespeare and the Fairies," that "there was not great fairy literature" before Shakespeare,[9] and while fairies do appear in literature prior to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare metamorphosed the fairies of lore with his own fertile imagination to create a new kind of fairy, one

recognizable to modern audiences and free from the taint of witchcraft and demons.

We can trace Puck's lineage to Robin Goodfellow, a famous retainer of the fairy monarchs featured in his own ballad, "The Mad Merry Pranks of Robin Good-Fellow." In this text, Robin engages in many of Puck's own favorite activities, including listening to gossip, knocking over stools, and causing general mayhem.[10] This ballad also mentions Oberon as the king of fairies, establishing Robin in the role taken by Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Meanwhile, Shakespeare's version of Oberon and the fairy queen Titania come "partly from medieval romance, partly from classical mythology, and partly from the theory that [fairies] were pagan deities who had survived the Christian era."[11] Prior to Shakespeare, the Queen of Fairy bore various names; Shakespeare chose his own names with new significance.[12] Queen Mab first entered literature riding her miniature coach into Mercutio's dream, and Titania, whose name comes from Greek mythology, debuted in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Shakespeare shrank the fay as well, using names and descriptions to convey their trifling size: Mustardseed, Peaseblossom, and Mote, who dance with Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, drip dew on flowers, build coats of bat wings, and fight away threatening bugs and beetles.[13] Meanwhile, Ariel, the airy sprite from *The Tempest*, functions more like the sylphs of Paracelsus, who were themselves drawn from the nymphs of Greek mythology. Ariel is more air than matter, and while apparently more powerful than many of Shakespeare's earlier fairies, is also bound to the whims and wants of a man. While these fairies may not seem terribly different from the lore and ballads from which Shakespeare drew them, shrinking the fairies allowed Shakespeare to critique the new social and economic norms of the Elizabethan world, using the doubly liminal fairies on stage to embody concerns regarding conspicuous consumption and humanity's divorce from natural cycles. Furthermore, by ensuring their general

benevolence and inability to harm men, Shakespeare opened the door to Faerie for later comic and romantic writers.

As people moved from the countryside to newly-burgeoning cities in droves, beliefs about fairies moved and shifted with them. The social and economic purpose of fairies "extended outwards to take on new and unfamiliar purposes."[14] No longer would a cosmopolitan city-dweller blame fairies for knotted hair or stolen children, but he or she might just look to the fairies for monetary gain. As fairy beliefs faded, the fay lost their places in households and wild glens, but found a new home in the poems and plays of the Early Modern period.

Queen Mab, Titania, and Oberon engage economically in trade and consumerism, new ideas to fairykind. Marjorie Swann explores how fairies, while previously part of "precapitalist economic transactions," now began to venture into the capitalist domain.[15] In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Oberon and Titania's verbal exchanges hinge on physical exchange: Oberon wants Titania's foster child, yet the fairy monarchs arrive at an impasse as Oberon holds nothing Titania desires. The foster child himself represents the world of commercial trade as his mother, once one of Titania's handmaidens, used to sit with Titania to observe the trade and merchant economy of India. Titania describes the scene: "[She,] Marking th'embarked traders on the flood . . . / Would imitate and sail upon the land, / To fetch me trifles, and return again / As from a voyage, rich with merchandise."[16] The traders pay homage to the fairy queen; they also amass plenty of money on their trips. The fairy queen's fascination with commerce and trade will be her downfall, and "[the fairies] suffer by the touch of the earthy and actual" as Titania and Oberon play very human games with commerce.[17] Titania originally rejects capitalistic transaction as she clings to the child. However, Titania cannot escape the exchange, as Oberon soon plays a cruel trick that forces her to capitulate

to the capitalism invading her fairy kingdom, exchanging the foster child to regain her reason and status.

In lore, the fairy kingdom often symbolizes Nature, as fairies live in mounds underground, dance among mushrooms, and inhabit the wild lands beyond human development. The fairies thus embody humanity's fear of Nature and Nature's own agency to fight back against human dominance, as the fairies will kidnap those who venture too far into the wildlands and may reap revenge on overzealous harvesters. Medieval Europeans held little regard for protecting the environment and instead sought to tame and cultivate the wild world through farms, parks, and curated forests. However, slippage between human desires and human abilities ensured people could not completely control the natural world. Farmers and serfs found themselves bound to Nature, working in response to weather, crop cycles, animal needs, and seasons in general. Yet in the city, natural seasons and crop cycles had less bearing on everyday life.[18] And as cities grew and the natural world came more and more under humanity's dominance, Early Modern people looked back on nature with nostalgia (consider the scenes of pastoral bliss in many Shakespearean works).[19] However, in order to feel this nostalgia, the dangers of nature had to cease. In the same way that humans had tamed most of the wild spaces of England by the late 1500s, so fairies gradually came under the taming influence of the urbanized Shakespeare.

Titania and Oberon do engage in natural—traditionally fairy—activities: their squabbles raise storms all over Athens, and they revel and sleep in the forest, surrounded by flowers and on guard against forest creatures. Yet the guard *against* the mice, bats, hedgehogs, and owls marks a separation between the fairies and the natural world. In much of lore, fairies ride animals or keep wild creatures as pets, signifying their place in the wild. Yet in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the fairies war with Nature. They think of natural things in a way humans might: as beds, clothes, and nuisances.

In addition to stepping outside their place in the natural order, the fairy monarchs also display a new benevolence towards humans, beyond the leaving of money or gold, which mirrors new attitudes towards the natural world. Titania and Oberon come to Athens in order to bless the marriage bed of Theseus and Hippolyta. Rather than steal babies, they want to bless the rulers with children. Furthermore, Titania befriends a human woman and adopts her child when the woman dies. She did not steal a child and leave a changeling; instead, the human woman entrusts Titania with her son. The fairies do sport with the rustics and Athenian youth, but at the end of the evening, all the mortals find themselves returned to their proper shapes, restored to their proper loves, and on their respective ways to a happy life, their only damage an odd dream dancing in the back of their minds. Titania and Oberon reflect Shakespeare's first, largest change to fairies: mortal benevolence. In the same way, the Early Modern people lost their fear of the natural world and began to look upon the tamed land with a nostalgic eye, thinking only of what they could receive from nature rather than the frightening wilds which once prompted nightmares.

Although Queen Mab does not offer the kindness we see in Oberon and Titania, she does not wield the malice of the fairies in lore. Furthermore, miniscule Mab ("no bigger than an agate stone"[20]) cannot physically engage with humans, but is relegated only to their sleeping minds, where she dispenses justice in the form of sweet dreams or nightmares. Mab does not even appear on stage; instead, audiences learn of her existence in Mercutio's speech. Mab softens the traditional fairy lore and also gleefully rides into capitalism, flaunting new ideas about consumerism. Fairy queens traditionally bring economic gain to brave knights, but Queen Mab revels in her own riches. The miniature fairy queen gleefully navigates the Veronan reflection of the "Elizabethan urban Jungle"; as Swann writes, "Mab races through the world of avaricious professionals, not householders for whom a coin

is windfall."[21] He does so in the most luxurious manner available, driving the newly invented vehicle owned only by the richest and most powerful Elizabethans, a coach. A coach's decorations also conveyed status, and in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare spends a good amount of time describing Mab's ride:

> Her wagon-spokes made of long spinners' legs,
> The cover of the wings of grasshoppers,
> The traces of the smallest spider's web,
> The collars of the moonshine's wat'ry beams,
> Her whip of cricket's bone; the lash of film,
>
> * * *
>
> Her chariot is an empty hazelnut.[22]

Mab arrives, a cutting-edge consumer, in a highly-detailed coach. The emphasis Shakespeare places on her smallness highlights her difference from fairies of rural lore; and her coach made of and decorated with natural refuse daintily criticizes Elizabethan socioeconomics. Unable to harm humans, she no longer represents humanity's fear of Nature.

Mab's small size and lack of agency soon carried tiny, essentially harmless fairies into the early modern literary scene. Michael Drayton's "Nymphidia," published in 1627,[23] features Queen Mab and King Oberon as insect-sized fairies caught up with their own jealousies and intrigues as they mimic humans with coaches and jewels made from snail shells and insect pieces. William Browne, in the mid 1620's, published a description of one decadent fairy feast featuring "crammed grasshopper," "two hornets legs," "a batt [sic] . . . serv'd with the petty-toes," "three fleas in souse," and "the udder of a mouse."[24] The grotesque feast mocks the Spanish court, which had tried to impress King Charles just before the composition of the poem, and reiterates the idea that fairies lived in miniaturized versions of English court life. Robert Herrick wrote of miniature fairies in the mid-1600s in his "Oberon" poems, telling-tales of tiny things

which featured consumerist fairies. The stories pay lavish attention to the accessories, furniture, and other possessions of the fairies, echoing those often accumulated by wealthy Elizabethans.[25] Though Early Modern poetry mocked the consumerist lifestyles characteristic of the wealthy, the fairies also reinforced the right to power and riches, deferring to those interested in climbing social ladders. Swann notes that fairies "naturalize[d] the elaborate feasts, clothing, and houses of the genteel," and poets clouded the world of social and economic change which created the glittering opulence of the Stuarts and their court.[26] By the mid-1600s, miniscule and ridiculous fairies no longer held sway over the populace in fear, but rather reinforced society's rules through humor, again normalizing and mystifying the practices of the extremely wealthy, even as they parodied excess. While they returned to immoral, intemperate, and hedonistic ways, the fairies written after Shakespeare seem entirely too mortal to frighten as did the haunting creatures of rural superstition.

In addition to shrinking down to a harmless size and entering mortal commerce, Queen Mab further steps away from the natural world, exchanging commune with nature and living flowers for a coach made of dead bugs, nut hulls, and other detritus. Although created from natural ingredients, Mab's coach represents death and decay, partially to mock the fleetingness of wealth, but also to highlight the English consumers' divide from Nature and natural cycles.[27] The city of London exemplified the disconnect with nature sweeping through England, and Shakespeare, raised in the country, found himself optimally placed to observe changing attitudes. By the time he wrote *The Tempest*, Shakespeare returned fairies to the natural world, but he placed them so under the control of people that they lost their wildness all the same.

Shakespeare drew fairies into the mortal realm, and the fairies could not escape the taint of mortality. As Shakespeare again brings fairies on stage in *The Tempest* in 1610, the

fay can almost feel human emotions—a burden no fairy before ever received. Intrinsically powerful, Ariel wields more power than Titania, Oberon, and Mab combined. He creates storms, dreams, and illusions of feasts and masques on Prospero's island. Yet humans completely bind Ariel. When Prospero arrives on the island, he finds Ariel trapped in a tree, imprisoned by the dead witch Sycorax. Prospero himself enslaves Ariel, augmenting his own magic with that of the slippery sprite.[28] In *The Tempest*, fairies and demons hold little agency, as humans control magic, that control extending to Ariel and the other sprites of the island. This change reflects the growing human dominance over nature as explorers took English interest to new, untamed worlds and returned from those worlds with riches and rich tales. Furthermore, in controlling the representation of folkloric creatures, Shakespeare again ensures his creations feature enough differences from fairy lore to open them up for later writers.

Nature and fairies no longer held sway over the Early Modern English imagination by 1610. In fact, in *The Tempest*, the role of "monstrous other" has moved from the fairy Ariel to the native man, the unfortunate Caliban. Beyond the liminal space of the theater, European explorers and merchants established colonies, solidified trade routes, and pushed forward with exploration of "new worlds." Europeans now nursed little fear of nature, and for the most part, found nature conquerable. The new danger lay in the Natives, brown-skinned folk who may offer food to the explorers or attempt to kill the pale Europeans. Shakespeare likely read various travel logs and journals, and readers find a reflection of those exotic texts in *The Tempest*. In this play, nature no longer influences the characters; Prospero can control storms and rain on the island via Ariel. While the storm Ariel creates sinks a ship and washes men ashore, Prospero guides every breeze. Instead of Nature, Prospero feels anxiety about Caliban, who represents the barbaric natives found in many

Early Modern travel tales, as fairies lost their hold over the European imagination in the face of new worlds and strange exploits.

Ariel's lack of body also indicates humanity's rise over nature. The fairies prior to Ariel shrank and lost the ability to harm humans; Ariel cannot even touch humans and only influences them through storms, songs, and visions. In *The Tempest*, fairies lost the ability to directly interact with the physical world and found themselves shunted to the in-between dream space of imagination and lost islands, where later writers discovered them, added wings, and set them to bedazzling flowers and simpering for children. Ariel, completely under Prospero's control and without weight or heft, represents the perfect fairy creature for literature: magical and enchanting, but non-threatening to mortals. Ariel also represents humankind's idealized version of nature: again, magical but thornless, existing for people to use and set aside, admire and retire at will.

Shakespeare both changed and standardized fairies more than any writer before him. Though Shakespeare first wrote about small fairies, the tradition of miniature and benevolent fey had grown so ingrained by the eighteenth century that Samuel Johnson in his notes on Shakespeare remarks "[Ariel] and his companions are of the fairy kind, an order of Beings to which tradition has always ascribed a sort of diminutive agency, powerful but ludicrous, a humorous and frolick controlment of nature."[29] These fairies, once too frightening to speak of, were laid out for writers, ready for allegory, satire, pedantry, and kitsch. Later Renaissance writers used Shakespeare's mini, decadent fairies to satirize the new social order as they competed to create the tiniest metaphors. In these tiny tales, the fairies represented humanity's undying longing for a life of fun, filled with belongings and endless entertainment. From the Restoration period and into the Victorian period, fairies entered nurseries and children's stories, gaining wings through William Blake's etchings for

A Midsummer Night's Dream. Fairies lost their connection to the wildness of nature, instead posturing as the sweet spirits of domestic gardens, reflecting the Restoration and Victorian fascination with cultivated wildness, gardens designed to look "natural." Meanwhile fairy stories no longer explained the darker side of Nature, but took on didactic purposes in the school room. In the Romantic period, poets began to restore fairies to roles found in traditional lore with poems like Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Merci," just as the Romantic poets sought a return to nature. Yet the fairies, like the poets, could never return to the full wildness of a world before domestication as Industrialism pulled society into a steam and smoke-filled future.

J.M. Barrie found fairies in Kensington Garden in *The Little White Bird*, and he gave fairies an origin in *Peter Pan.* Born from babies' laughs, Barrie's fairies prove far too small to hurt humans, even when they try.[30] Barrie's fairies first reflect the tameness of nature in the public gardens of London, and then inhabit the wild jungle of Neverland. However, Neverland proves less wild than it appears, as Peter controls the island, bending it to his whim and imagination. Barrie relies heavily on Victorian ideas of fairies and nature, continuing to show a natural world subservient to humans, similar to the magical island of *The Tempest*. Furthermore, as fairies continued to fascinate popular culture, in 1917 Elsie and Polly Write claimed to have encountered fairies while wandering the glen in Cottingley, England. The girls did not run as sensible medieval girls would have done when encountering the fay, but instead they took photos of the creatures. People flocked to the area, determined to acquire their own fairies, and invading the glen in Cottingley to do so. By the turn of the century, the role of fairies in culture had irrevocably shifted; no longer fearsome or mystical, they only existed to delight and enchant.

From the enduring plays of Shakespeare to *Peter Pan,* fairies managed to remain in popular culture despite dramatic

shifts in values, norms, and beliefs. Perhaps this phenomenon has something to do with humanity's continuing fascination with and fear of otherness in nature. Although Victorian poets could not return to natural fairies, tides seem to be turning as twenty-first century anxieties about the environment invade cultural consciousness and humans again attempt to restore and preserve wild spaces. Current trends in fiction split fairies between dainty, winged ballerinas in flowers—popular in children's books—and darker, lore-based fairies in young adult and adult literature. Holly Black, in her *Tithe* series, draws heavily on old fairy lore with merciless, selfish fay trafficking with the devil and offering a tithe of blood. In many other recent novels and short stories, fairies lurk below human society—dark fairies preying on the weak, the lonely, and the unfortunate, while "good" fairies either attempt to stop them or at least ignore their chilling antics. These oft-frightening fay reflect the current tension with nature, yet struggle to find a way back to nature through the layers of domestication which humans have spent the last millennium constructing.

William Shakespeare experimented endlessly in his plays, mixing old stories, Early Modern thinking, and new words to create entirely unique ways of considering age-old human questions. His advances in folklore set the stage for a new way to think about fairies and reflected changing attitudes towards the natural world. Rather than let fairy beliefs fade as society modernized, Shakespeare "saw the inherent beauty of the popular mythology, and then presented it to the world with all the gorgeousness and beauty which he alone could give it."[31] By collecting folklore and combining it with a dash of his own inventiveness, Shakespeare drew fairies into the new consumer culture narrative, changing the weft of Fairyland as he disembodied and commercialized its denizens. From Blake to Barrie to Black, readers continue to feel Shakespeare's influence on the world of Faerie. Although many of us stopped looking for fairies in the garden long

ago, we cannot help but be enchanted by the delightful and sometimes dangerous fairies who fly across screens, nudge into our nightmares, and dance across pages today.

Notes

1. This paper uses the terms "fairies" and "fay" interchangeably, as Early Modern texts use a variety of spellings on the word. Spellings to denote otherworldly, fantastic beings include "fayry," "fairy," "faery," "faerie," "fey," "fae," and "fay." Modern fiction writers have not selected one spelling as standard, many preferring more creative or archaic spellings as current fairy stories twist back to lore. Furthermore, the term "fairy" will be lowercase to refer to the beings, while the uppercase refer to Fairyland, sometimes called Faerie.

2. Kenneth Muir, "Folklore and Shakespeare," *Folklore* 92, no. 2 (1981), 231, http://www.jstor.org.library.collin.edu/stable/1259478.

3. Mary Ellen Lamb, "Taken by the Fairies: Fairy Practices and the Production of Popular Culture in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,*" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 15, no. 3, (2000), 286, doi:10.2307/2902152.

4. Dale M. Blount, "Modification in Occult Folklore as a Comic Device in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Fifteenth Century Studies* 9 (1984): 1.

5. While tales from Wales, discovered in the early 2000s, include fairies small enough to live in flowers, these fairies likely did not influence Shakespeare. First, no written record of these inches-tall fay exists prior to Shakespeare. Second, in a time when many people did not read and most people did not travel far from their birthplace, local legends often did not move far beyond local boundaries. If he did hear of these miniscule fay, Shakespeare aptly used them in his writing to create a new political statement.

6. Arthur Quiller-Couch, ed., "Thomas the Rhymer," *The Oxford Book of English Verse: 1250–1900*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1919), http://www.bartleby.com/101/367.html.

7. Fairies also received blame for local theft.

8. Mentions of fairies and Fairyland in Arthurian legends include Sir Gawain's bright green adversary in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* Arthur's sometime-sister Morgan le Fay, and the fairy island of Avalon, to where many stories send a dying king Arthur to heal and hopefully return to England someday.

9. Roger Lancelyn Green, "Shakespeare and the Fairies," *Folklore* 73, no 2 (1962), 89, http://www.jstor.org.library.collin.edu/stable/1258609.

10. "The mad merry pranks of Robin Good-fellow. To the tune of, Dulcina," London: Printed for F. Coles, T. Vere, and J. Wright.,

[between 1663 and 1674], http://gateway.proquest.com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:47012524.

11. Muir, "Folklore and Shakespeare," 237.

12. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Carol V. Kaske (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2008). Edmund Spenser wrote about fairies in his epic *Faerie Queene*, first published in 1590, and he employed courtly fairy lore, drawing on medieval romances to flatter Queen Elizabeth by portraying her as the just, beautiful, and wise fairy queen Gloriana. His piece is almost purely allegorical, and his mortal-sized fairies feature little agency. Spenser ensured his fairy poetry upheld the ideals of Elizabethan society; fairies offer moral lessons. Spenser's fairies do not engage in commerce, nor do they comment on humanity's changing relationship with the rural and natural worlds.

13. William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *William Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (New York: The Modern Library, 2007), 376, 382.

14. Lamb, "Taken by the Fairies," 302.

15. Marjorie Swann, "The Politics of Fairylore in Early Modern English Literature," *Renaissance Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (2000): 452, doi:10.2307/2901875.

16. Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 382.

17. Ronald F. Miller, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream:* The Fairies, Bottom, and the Mystery of Things," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1975), 263.

18. For a more complete discussion on how weather and environmental events affected Medieval England, see Bruce M. S. Campbell, "Nature as Historical Protagonist: Environment and Society in Pre-industrial England," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 63, no. 2 (2010): 281-314. http://www.jstor.org.library.collin.edu/stable/27771614.

19. Sylvia Bowerbank, *Speaking for Nature: Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2004).

20. William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, in *William Shakespeare Complete Works,* ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (New York: The Modern Library, 2007), 1690.

21. Swann, "Politics of Fairylore," 457.

22. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 1690.

23. Roughly 35 years after *Romeo and Juliet*.

24. Gordon Goodwin, ed., *The Poems of William Browne of Tavistock: Edited by Gordon Goodwin, with an Introduction by A.H. Bullen, Vol. II,* London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1893.

25. John Masefield, ed., *The Poems of Robert Herrick* (London: E. Grant Richards, 1906), 81-86, 107–9, 146–50.

26. Swann, "The Politics of Fairylore," 469.

27. Nothing other than people can come to the city to grow and thrive: instead of flourishing gardens, teeming pools, and fields ranged with lively calves, the city features bustling markets hawking wilting vegetables, dead fish, and hunks of meat. Many men, single or living as bachelors with wives in the country, frequented inns and common houses, taking another step away from the natural world as they only engaged with cooked food. In London, the Thames river, a small source of wildness running through the city, carried foul, polluted water from further upstream into the city and soon deposited ten-fold pollution into the murky harbors of London. In addition to polluting, the people of London exerted dominance over the Thames river in the form of bridges, building so many in the 1400s that the Thames river actually froze twenty-four times in four hundred years. England, as an island nation, typically enjoys temperate weather, and the freezing of the Thames is entirely a human-made phenomenon.

28. Swann, "The Politics of Fairylore," 469.

29. Walter Raleigh, ed., *Johnson on Shakespeare: Essays and Notes Selected and Set Forth with an Introduction.* (London: Henry Frowde, 1908): 66.

30. J.M. Barrie, "Chapter 3: Come Away, Come Away!" *Peter Pan* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1987), 23.

31. Henry B. Wheatley, "The Folklore of Shakespeare," *Folklore* 27, no. 4 (1916): 378.