Shakespeare’s Use of Magic

A Midsummer Night’s Dream

Rachmat Nurcahyo, M.A
Act II scene I

in mind:
- What do we learn about Puck?
- Who are Titania and Oberon?
- Why are Titania and Oberon fighting?
- What happens when they fight?
The Elizabethan Notion of Fairies

- Household nymphs
  - Punishing sloth and rewarding cleanliness
  - Good favor can be won
  - Have a penchant for mischief
    - Dairy tricks
    - Putting spells on animals
    - Leading travelers astray
    - Changelings

They are nocturnal beings who don’t like humans seeing them.
Characteristics of Magical Characters

- Robin Good-fellow: aka-Puck, Robin-Hood, Hobgoblin
  - Puck: generic term applied to class of demons
  - Origin: old English Folklore
  - Special guardian of hearth and home
  - Shakespeare uses Puck in service to Oberon
Magical Characters Cont…

- Titania: Queen of the Fairies
  - Origin: Diana
  - Sometimes referred to as Titania because of descent from Titas Coeus

- Is Worshipped by Vot’resses
Titania Cont..

- Shakespeare uses Titania in a different way.
  - Controls the elements
    - Ex: Fights with Oberon

- Has elements of royalty
  - Court

Possible Elizabethan Costuming Concept for Titania

Modern perception of Titania
Magical Characters Cont….

- Oberon: King of the fairies
  - Controls the elements
  - Keeps things in order
    - Fixes the mess the lovers are in
  - Blesses humanity
  - Has elements of the Greek and Roman Gods
    - Infidelities with mortals
    - Natural powers
Magical Characters Cont...

- Shakespeare’s Fairies
  - Unique interpretation of the fairies
  - Instruments of nature
    - Ex: fairy duties for the fairy queen
The Forest and Nature

- Shakespeare and his contemporary Elizabethans explained nature through magic
- Imagery of the forest

Discussion: What is the significance of Hermia and Lysander running away from the city and into the forest?