"Sweet Power of Music":
The Political Magic
of "the Miraculous Harp"
in Shakespeare's The Tempest

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In a recent paper critical of the logical discrepancies between "new historicist" theory and practice, Robin Headlam Wells argues that a true historical approach to The Tempest would focus on the mythological topos of Orpheus as the conventional prototype of Prospero rather than on modern views of colonialism and demonized otherness. In response to this important suggestion, I shall discuss here the conflation of two such traditional topoi in Shakespeare's tragicomedy: (1) the benevolent and thus successful ruler as Orpheus, a magician in control of Nature and the poetic civilizer of barbaric peoples, and (2) the ideal commonwealth as a melodious and fruitful garden. Since my iconographic materials will be taken from the political discourses of the Renaissance itself, and not from Foucault or Greenblatt, they will help to historicize Shakespeare's tragicomedy rather than theorize it in the usual postmodern fashion. Moreover, I reject the fallacious either-or logic of Foucault who implies that artistic works like The Tempest must be either for or against state power.

Instead I shall suggest that Shakespeare is primarily interested in neither royalist propaganda nor revolution but in reform during an Age of Reformation, and that he indicates in this play precisely those aspects of Renaissance kingship that must be corrected if the monarchy is to survive. Prospero's long exposition in Act I of his personal failure to govern Milan well lists a number of them: negligence, lack of interest in the work of government while immersing himself completely in his hobby, handing over the real power to others, ignoring the ordinary people over whom he rules, and, above all, refusing to consider and provide for the future of his family and his dukedom. It is well known that James I of England was guilty of many of these same faults,
especially that of putting his hobby of deer hunting ahead of the welfare of the nation while delegating royal authority to courtiers such as the notorious Duke of Buckingham.

In the present iconographic study of *The Tempest* and its politics, I shall refer to relevant musical imagery in Renaissance emblems and in woodcuts of royal and civic pageants, both of which provide useful analogues but are probably not sources for Shakespeare. I offer visual materials here primarily as evidence of a general cultural interest in the figure of Orpheus and of his political symbolism in Renaissance Europe, and with the hope that these pictures and their verses will supply at least a partial explanation of how an early seventeenth-century English audience might have understood the political aspects of the tragicomedy.

Although Orpheus is never directly mentioned in the text, critics often observe that, as Shakespeare’s most musical play, *The Tempest* contains many of his best songs. It also contains a musical masque featuring an elaborate stage dance, numerous poetic references to the techniques of music, and an unusual number of sound effects (from whistles, thunder, roars, barking dogs, and howls of pain contrasted to exquisite serenades from unseen musicians). David Norbrook, brilliantly discussing much of this stage dissonance in terms of political language and rhetoric, has argued that in this play “the boundless voice of the elements and of social transgression is pitted against the name of king, the arbitrary language of power.” Although Norbrook is quite correct in calling our attention to the political linguistic resonances of the tragicomedy, his analysis glosses over the fact that the magician Prospero controls through his daemon Ariel the voice of the elements which drowns out the name of king and contains the comic howls and drinking songs of social transgression that serve as the bass line of the musical composition of *The Tempest* as a whole. Indeed, from the initial noisy shipwreck to the last scene of the play, the symbolic island in *The Tempest* (which could be a fantasy version of England itself) resonates with the competing vocal and stringed music of harmonious Apollo, representing rational order and measure, and the irrational pipe and tabor music and sheer racket of discordant Dionysus/Pan, symbolizing both passion and freedom. A resolution to the cacophony is finally achieved by Prospero in Act V, scene i. At this point the Boatswain returns to the stage to proclaim that the previously split and sinking ship (of state) is now as “tight and yare, and bravely rigg’d as when/ We first put out to sea” (V.i.
Also, in contrast to Norbrook, I shall emphasize in the present essay the harmonist elements of Shakespeare's text rather than its political discords. Both are present—working together like the differing vocal and/or instrumental lines in the polyphonic music of the Renaissance.

I

In the iconography of Renaissance emblem books and civic pageants, Orpheus symbolized for Europeans the ideal ruler of a commonwealth that also resembled a peaceful, well-cultivated, and fruitful garden. When the mythical Orpheus is unable to control his own passions of desire or grief, he is indeed drowned out by the discordant music of the Dionysian maenads and dismembered by them. However, Shakespeare makes certain that this catastrophe does not happen in *The Tempest* by making no references in the play to Prospero's sexual past or present. Nonetheless, the threat of political and personal disaster is always dramatically present in the play until Caliban and his drunken cohorts are tamed and until Caliban learns the difference between a self-restrained ruler and a drunken sot. Throughout *The Tempest*, the master of poetic language and of Ariel's musical magic as well is the magician Prospero, Shakespeare's Renaissance analogue to Orpheus, who has been said to haunt all of the final plays. The multifaceted figure of Orpheus the Civilizer was, of course, very useful for Renaissance poets, philosophers, and politicians as a popular fictional representative of qualities ranging from art itself, to the love of *humanitas*, and finally to the idea of political harmony among all the social classes in a well ordered state.

As Charles Segal observes, the demi-god Orpheus began his career in ancient Greece as a magician much like Prospero, an enchanter (from the Latin *canere*—to sing) who persuaded others to act in concord through the magic of his song and his poetic rhetoric. According to Segal,

> Orphic song can embody that universal harmony which unites man with nature, the unifying concord of the cosmos that finds expression in the song that moves birds, beasts, stones, and trees in rhythmic response to its own beat and tune. Orpheus' music can express man's participation in that cosmic harmony and also recreate it in the shaped, human terms of art.

Such music can also quell ordinary human dissension, as when we see Orpheus calm the quarreling Argonauts with his lyre and
his song in the poetic account of Jason’s voyage by Apollonius of Rhodes. As Apollo’s son, Orpheus is an eloquent peacemaker, but when he personally crosses a psychological boundary into the Dionysian realm of the passions after the death of Eurydice, he succumbs to poetic furor or frenzy and apparently loses his magical power to restore the dead Eurydice to life. His loss of self control is fatal to his beloved but paradoxically vital to his art, which derives from the frenzy of poetic inspiration. For this reason, no doubt, we see the magician Prospero constantly fighting himself in Shakespeare’s complex tragicomedy in order to master his own baser passions (ranging from irascibility and impatience to violent thoughts of vengeance) as well as the daemonic spirits who serve him in his attempts to secure a good future for Miranda and to regain his dukedom. We should also remember, however, that Orpheus was thought to be the first priest and prophet of the wine cult of chthonic Dionysus, who is as obviously celebrated in The Tempest as is his brother celestial Apollo. Cosmic harmony depends on the music of both Apollo/Orpheus and Pan/Dionysus, as Robert Fludd indicates in his engraving of “The Temple of Harmony” (fig. 1) from Utriusque Cosmi Historia, and Prospero regulates both with the help of Ariel, whose name (although biblical) suggests Air (the melody) and music as breath or pneuma.

The magical powers of Orpheus, like those of Shakespeare’s Prospero, allowed him in antiquity to charm even the winds and the seas, as the chorus leader announces in a Greek ode by Pindar: “I shall imitate in my songs . . . that siren-sound which silences the Zephyr’s swift winds when Boreas, shivering with the storms’ strength, rushes upon us with his blasts and stirs up the wave-swift sea.” Shakespeare echoes this power over the sea in the famous Orphic “Song” of his Henry VIII: “Every thing that heard him play,/ Even the billows of the sea,/ Hung their heads, and then lay by” (III.i.9–11). The occult spells of Orpheus are equally praised by Pausanias, who hails him as “wondrously skilful at magic” like Amphion, who built the stone walls of Thebes with his music. Pausanias’ conflation of Orpheus with Amphion continues as a commonplace throughout the Renaissance. However, Shakespeare chooses to announce this central Orphic theme of the artist as the builder of cities and of civilization ironically in The Tempest by having his entirely unmusical villains Antonio and Sebastian make fun of Gonzalo’s conflation of Tunis with Carthage in Act II, scene i: “His word is more than the miraculous harp. . . . He hath rais’d the wall, and
houses too” (ll. 87–88). The seven strings of this miraculous harp (sometimes a lute or a lyre) represent both the harmony of the spheres and the harmony of a well-organized society of men and women living together in mutual rhythm and in tune with nature and the cosmos.12 Antonio and Sebastian sneer at this possibility, and it is true, of course, that musical instruments do constantly need to be retuned, as does the human psyche itself.13

Shakespeare and other Renaissance poets also conflated Orpheus with the mythic poet-musician Arion. As Arion was tossed overboard by thieving mariners to die in the waves, so Prospero and his infant daughter were placed in a rotten wine butt and thrown into the sea by his rebellious and ambitious brother Antonio, aided by King Alonso of Naples. Emblem X in Book I of A Collection of Emblemes by George Wither on the Arion topos (fig. 2) makes the meaning of such retold stories quite clear.

Under the motto “An Innocent no Danger feares, How great soever it appeares,” Wither writes the following explanatory verse:

When some did seeke Arion to have drown’d,  
He, with a dreadlesse heart his Temples crown’d;  
And, when to drench him in the Seas they meant,  
He playd on his melodious Instrument;  
To shew, that Innocence disdayned Feare,  
Though to be swallow’d in the Deeps it were.  
Nor did it perish: For, upon her Backe  
A Dolphin tooke him, for his Musick’s sake:  
To intimate, that Vertue shall prevaiile  
With Bruitish Creatures, if with Men it faile.

In his final verse, the emblematicist insists that virtue will always save innocent poets from the world’s malice.
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“Arion-like, the Malice of the World,
Hath into Seas of Troubles often hurl’d
Deserving Men, although no Cause they had,
But that their Words and Workes sweet Musicke made.
Of all their outward Helps it hath bereft them;
Nor meanes, nor hopes of Comfort have been left them;
But such, as in the House of Mourning are,
And, what Good-Conscience can afford them there.
Yet, Dolphin-like, their Innocence hath rear’d
Their Heads above those Dangers that appear’d.
God hath vouchsaf’d their harmelesse Cause to heed,
And, ev’n in Thraldome, so their Hearts hath freed,
That, whil’s they seem’d oppressed and forlorn;
They loyd, and Sung, and Laugh’d the World to Scorne.”

Much as Arion was thrown overboard with his musical instrument, the defeated Prospero was given his magical books by Gonzalo to take along in the wine butt, and these in turn allowed the magus to free Ariel (the daemonic spirit of music and poetry) from a tree on the island and ultimately to overcome his enemies.

No real distinction was made either in antiquity or in the Renaissance between the cosmic aspects of Orphic music and human politics. They were one and the same, or ideally should be, as Exeter observes in Shakespeare’s Henry V:

For government, though high and low, and lower,
Put into parts, doth keep in one consent,
Congreeding in a full and natural close,
Like music. (I.ii.180–83)

In fact, James Daly reminds us in his excellent analysis of “Cosmic Harmony and Political Thinking in Early Stuart England” that the ideal of “Cosmic harmony never allowed anything to exist in isolation, since everything from the firmament to the humblest parts of the human body reflected the same analogical principles.” The place of Orpheus within this system was that of a numinous figure of political rhetoric or eloquence who would persuade through magical song rather than force others to behave well.

However, Shakespeare obviously had some doubts about the ability of music and poetry to achieve this high ideal, since Lorenzo observes in The Merchant of Venice that certain people (such as Antonio and Sebastian) are simply tone deaf and cannot be persuaded by reason’s measure:
The man that hath no music in himself
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as [Erebus]:
Let no such man be trusted. (V.i.83–88)

Not surprisingly, Prospero as a Jacobean Orpheus finds it necessary to use the negative persuasion of pinches and cramps as well as the positive charms of sweet harmony to temper the rebellious humors of such primitives as Caliban, who is eventually redeemed, and his drunken cohorts Stephano and Trinculo in The Tempest. Vigilance is the only answer in the case of the born traitors and entirely tone deaf Antonio and Sebastian, who can never be trusted. Thus, the ruler of a harmonious state must ideally practice both the active and the contemplative modes of life, rather than retreat into his study as Prospero had previously done in Milan. As Richard Hooker puts it, “Where the King doth guide the state and the lawe the King, that commonwealth is like an harpe or melodious instrument, the stringes wherof are tuned and handled by one hand.”

Yet, while the king plays the melody or air on the harp, Caliban, or others like him, must be persuaded by any means possible to bear the burden—or the bass musical accompaniment—of the daily workings of human society. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (s.v “Burden,” IV):

Apparently, the notion was that the bass or undersong was “heavier” than the air. The bourdon usually continued when the singer of the air paused at the end of the stanza, and (when vocal) was usually sung to words forming a refrain, being often taken up in chorus. . . . As the refrain often expresses the pervading sentiment or thought of a poem, this use became coloured by the notion of “that which is carried” by the poem: its “gist” or essential contents.

On the other hand, Shakespeare also points out that rulers are expected to work as hard at the business of good government as others work at more humble occupations such as cooking, washing up after meals, and bringing in firewood. In fact, we never see the watchful Prospero at rest in The Tempest, although Miranda and Caliban believe that he takes a nap every afternoon in his cave.

In addition to his magical powers, Orpheus was also understood to be a civilizer of barbaric peoples through his eloquence. According to John Warden, “The locus classicus is Horace Ars
Poetica 391ff: Orpheus the first poet is the first to soften the hearts of the ‘stony and beastly people’ and set them on the path to civilization. His instrument is his eloquence (for Boccaccio the lyre is ‘oratoria facultas’).” Warden adds that “Humanism represents the moral action of the word fashioning the raw materials of primitive man into a civilized member of a community.” This fundamental logocentrism of Orpheus is reflected by Shakespeare in Prospero’s determined efforts to teach Caliban human language, which the wild man then uses primarily for cursing.

Not always, however. We must remember that Caliban speaks some of the finest poetry in the entire play in order to praise the musical qualities of his island to Stephano and Trinculo and to calm their fears:

Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices,
That if I then had wak’d after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again, and then in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I wak’d
I cried to dream again. (III.ii.135–43)

Caliban not only responds to music’s charms but he has also learned from Prospero the importance of an education in words. He reminds his fellow rebels to “Remember/ First to possess his books; for without them/ He’s but a sot, as I am” (III.ii.91–93). Learning is apparently the one factor that makes the difference between ruler and servant, according to the wild man. However, if Caliban considers Prospero to be a “tyrant” (III.ii.42) because of the magician’s efforts to restrain the wild man’s sexuality and self-indulgence, the drunken Trinculo is far more realistic about the results of unrestrained Dionysian celebrations when he observes, “They say there’s but five upon this isle: we are three of them; if th’ other two be brain’d like us, the state totters” (III.ii.5–7).

Since Orpheus was famous for the taming of wild men, the presence of a barbaric creature like Caliban in The Tempest is further evidence of the play’s Orphic tendencies. Caliban is an iconographic example of the traditional European wild man. He is compared to a fish by Trinculo mainly because of his bad smell, although the comparison is a just one when we also con-
sider the monster’s unrestrained lust, believed to be a typical characteristic of most such imaginary wild men living a solitary life in nature. The fish, of course, is an ancient symbol of the phallus, while one type of acknowledged wild man in art is the lustful ithyphallic satyr commonly associated with Dionysus/Bacchus. An example of this figure in iconography and his musical association with wind instruments—pipes or recorders—appears in Edward Topsell’s *The History of four-footed Beastes* (fig. 3), where we read that

The *Satyres* are in the Islands *Satiridae*, which are three in number, standing right over against *India* on the farther side of *Ganges*; of which *Euphemus Car* rehearseth this history: that when he sayled into *Italy*, by the rage of winde and euill weather they were druen to a coast vnnavigable, where were many desart Islandes inhabited of wilde men, and the Marriners refused to land vpon some Islands, hauing heretofore had triall of the inhumaine and vnciuill behawour of the inhabitants; so that they brought vs to the *Satirian Islands*, where we saw the inhabitants red, and had tayles ioyned to their back not much lesse then horses. These, being perceiued by the Marriners to run to the shippes and lay hold on the women that were in them, the ship-men for feare, tooke one of the Barbarian women and set her on the land among them, whom in most odious and filthy maner they abused, not onely in that part that nature hath ordained, but ouer the whole body most libidinously, whereby they found them to be very brut beasts.22

This richly illustrated book, which emphasizes the primitivism and innate beastliness of wild men, was easily available both to Shakespeare and his audience.

Topsell has much more to say about satyrs, including the “fact” that they were hunted with dogs in Saxony (as in *The Tempest*). He relates that after one male satyr was captured, “he was brought to be tame, and learned to go vpright, and also to speake some worde, but with a voice like a Goat, and without all reason: he was exceeding lustfull to women, attempting to rauish many of what condition soeuer they were, and of this kinde there are store in *Ethiopia*.”23 As a member of this fictitious family of ithyphallic wild men, Caliban cannot control his lust for Miranda, in contrast to the civilized and restrained sexual behavior of Ferdinand under Prospero’s watchful paternal eye.

Many Renaissance emblems praise the magical power of music and reiterate the significance of Orpheus to the Renaissance as a figure of eloquence capable of taming all kinds of brutes, including wild men. Henry Green has shown that the
verses of such emblems are very similar to the comments on music and Orpheus which we find in The Merchant of Venice, Two Gentlemen of Verona, and Henry VIII. We might begin here with Pierre Coustau’s 1560 emblem “Sur la harpe d’Orpheus” or “La force d’Éloquence” (fig. 4). The picture shows Orpheus playing his harp and leading men and beasts out from the forest toward a city that boasts a tall obelisk. Green translates the French verse as follows:

On the Harp of Orpheus

The Power of Eloquence.

With sound gentle and very melodious
Of an instrument Orpheus caused to move
Rocks and pastures from their place and home.
It is eloquence having force and power
To steal the hearts of all his learning shows,
It is the orator who by strength of eloquence
First brings even under influence
Brutal people, and from fierceness
Gathers them; and who to benevolence
From fierceness then reclains.  

Nicholas Reusner’s 1581 emblem on “The Power of Music and Poetry” conflates Orpheus and Amphion in the verse, but his

woodcut (fig. 5) depicts only the harpist Orpheus sitting under a tree and charming the birds and animals with his song. The Latin verse (in translation) tells us that

Orpheus tamed terrible tigers, raging lions and wild birds also by his singing.
Amphion, likewise, moved stones with the sound of his alluring lyre, when he built Thebes without using his hands.
That is, he civilized rustic spirits and wild men, and he instructed ignorant people by his art.
He moved them with friendly enticements and eloquence, and he taught them to follow law and justice.
Thus Music, like divine Poetry, has great strength through the harmonious cooperation in its measures.
If you have a voice, sing! If the spirit moves you, dance the song.
But fit the song to life, give thanks to God.
Minds are charmed by the songs, ears by the singing.
Each stream flows from heavenly fountains.  


Geoffrey Whitney’s Orpheus emblem entitled “Orphei Musica” offers more of the same observations (fig. 6).

As Orpheus brings art to nature, so in The Tempest the magus Prospero brings the arts of civilization to an island once ruled by nature alone and attempts to endow it with the divine harmony dramatized in the wedding masque. In this performance
for Miranda and Ferdinand, reapers of cultivated fields dance with forest nymphs. Like music and poetry, dance was believed to reflect through its ordered patterns the sacred harmony of the spheres. Sarah Thesiger reminds us of Sir Thomas Elyot's observation in *The Boke of the Governour* that dancing is excellent exercise and that it symbolizes Prudence and matrimony as well as the Aristotelian notion of the mean. "The mean is seen as the concord to two qualities, or of two dancers symbolizing two qualities, rather than as a somewhat paradigmatic quality in itself."

In contrast to Orphic harmonies of the Apollonian variety on the island, Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo perform the wild music of Dionysus or Bacchus with drunken songs and capers, and they make a religion of intoxicating wine in II.ii. The farcical action of kissing the book, or the bottle in this case, is actually a parody of Christian eucharistic ritual, which itself derives from the earlier Dionysian and Orphic mysteries. However, the sober emblematist Whitney prints a disapproving Bacchus emblem "In statuum Bacchi" on the page directly opposite his Orpheus emblem, just as Shakespeare himself contrasts Prospero's Apollonian art with the parodic Dionysian songs of the clowns.
Under the woodcut of a fat Bacchus playing pipe and tabor (fig. 7), Whitney writes:

The timelie birthe that SEMELE did beare,  
See heere, in time howe monsterous he grewe:  
With drinkinge muche, and dailie bellie cheare,  
His eies were dimme, and fierie was his hue:  
His cuppe, still full: his head, with grapes was croun’de;  
Thus time he spent with pipe, and tabret sounde.29


The fiery hue of Bacchus reminds us not only of the effect of wine on one’s capillaries but also of the fiery passions that wine helps to liberate from rational control. Another name for Dionysus or Bacchus was, of course, Liber (Free).

In *The Tempest*, Ariel enters immediately after the controlled Apollonian dance in the masque to report on the drunkards to Prospero. He tells his master that although “they were red-hot with drinking” (IV.i.171), he managed to lead them to their punishment with the only kind of music they could understand:
Then I beat my tabor,
At which like unback'd colts they prick'd their ears,
Advanc'd their eyelids, lifted up their noses
As they smelt music. So I charm'd their ears
That calf-like they my lowing follow'd through
tooth'd briers, sharp furzes, pricking goss, and thorns,
Which ent'red their frail shins. (IV.i.175–81)

While satirizing the Dionysian aspects of human life in this particular instance, Shakespeare was well aware that men and women need both gods—Apollo and Dionysus—in their lives. In fact, the classical view of human nature describes humanity as possessing both intellect and discordant passions, or, as the Renaissance would have it, angelic minds and beastly bodies. The perennial question was and still is, as Theseus puts it in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, “How shall we find the concord of this discord?” (V.i.60).

Despairing of ever improving Caliban “on whose nature/Nurture can never stick” (IV.i.188–89), Prospero then subjects him and his fellow bacchanalians to the Dionysian ritual of the hunt. To the cacophony of barking and baying dogs set on by Prospero and Ariel, the roaring rebels are driven off stage to suffer the kind of ultimate chaos meted out in tragedy to King Lear on the heath. There is no concord to be heard as yet, although in the previous “glistening apparel” scene Caliban has finally shown the first signs of using his human capacity for reason. While Stephano and Trinculo grab for the fancy clothing Ariel has hung on the lime tree to tempt them from rebellion into common thievery (as even today rebels are often distracted from their political ends by the attractions of looting), Caliban sees through the trick and identifies the garments as mere outer appearances. He rudely says to his new king Stephano, “Let it alone, thou fool, it is but trash” (IV.i.224), leading us to believe that there is hope for him after all.

As suggested above, the magician Orpheus was often depicted in the visual arts as the ruler through musical eloquence of a peaceful garden in which the lamb could safely lie down with the lion. For example, such an ideal kingdom was sculpted in plaster bas relief on the major chimneypiece at Haddon Hall in Derbyshire (fig. 8). In apparent contrast to this hopeful vision of political concord, Prospero’s island is filled with dangerous creatures, from snakes to murderous rebels within the very highest and the very lowest social groups. Antonio and Sebastian plot to murder Alonso, King of Naples, and his advisor Gonzalo;
while Caliban and his "civilized" European cohorts intend to murder Prospero and rape Miranda. Meanwhile, the ordinary workers of this world, or the mariners, are safely locked in sleep below hatches in their foundered ship, which is probably as good a way as any to describe what we now call "middle class complacency." Despite its fantasy qualities, Prospero's island is thus real rather than ideal. Yet, with the help of Ariel's music and his own magical spells, Prospero manages to maintain at least some control over all the discordant elements—including his own passionate desire for revenge—until he has achieved his ends. This, along with the merciful treatment of wrongdoers or clemency, is what was expected of a good king in the Renaissance.

Indeed, the emblem tradition concerned with Orpheus includes the notion of clemency as necessary for harmonious rule. Under the motto "Peragit Tranquila Potestas" ("Use power peacefully to get things done") and the usual picture of Orpheus taming the animals and trees (fig. 9), Julius Wilhelm Zincgreff writes the following epigram:

La clemence d'vn Roy conduit tout aisement
Le plus barbare peuple, & doucemente le force,
Et mene ou bon luy semble; autrement par la force
Il n'en viendra jamais à son contentement.
(The clemency of a king leads the most barbarous populace quite easily and gently forces and leads it where good appears to it; otherwise, by force it will never arrive at its contentment.)

In other words, persuasion and mercy rather than force will help to achieve an harmonious and happy kingdom.


II

Shakespeare imaginatively combines garden imagery with musical references throughout *The Tempest*. This conflation begins with Prospero’s narrative of his deposition by his brother in Milan. While Prospero was in his study, Antonio, he says,

Set all hearts i’ the state
To what tune pleas’d his ear, that now he was
The ivy which had hid my princely trunk.
And suck’d my verdure out on’t. (I.ii.84–87)

This commonplace of the parasitic ivy winding itself about the ruler, who is described here as a tree trunk, and thus destroying its host, is the antithesis of the fruitful association of the elm and
the vine. The latter topos was often employed in poetry to symbolize marriage. It could also represent the metaphor of a fruitful spousal relationship between a benevolent prince and his people, as Shakespeare uses the elm and vine image to represent the relationship between Duncan and Banquo in Macbeth.\(^3\) Deriving from Catullus’ Carmen LXI, the elm and ivy topos, in contrast, symbolizes an illicit love (see Comedy of Errors II.i.174–81) that ultimately kills the male tree.\(^3\) Indeed, an alert gardener is needed in the ideal kingdom to prevent such disasters by constantly weeding his garden and pruning his trees (see Richard II III.iv).

Thomas Combe’s The Theater of Fine Devices contains an emblem on the destructiveness of ivy compared to the similar destructiveness of ungrateful kinsmen like Antonio (fig. 10). This is an English translation of Guillaume de la Perrière’s Emblem 82 in Le Théâtre de bons engins of 1539. Under the motto “Ungratefull men breed great offence,/ As persons void of wit or sense,” the woodcut illustrates ivy winding up and around an oak tree. According to the verse,

The Oke doth suffer the yong Ivie wind
Vp by his sides, till it be got on hie:
But being got aloft, it so doth bind,
It kils the stocke that it was raised by.
So some proue so vnthankfull and vnkind
To those on whom they chiefly do rely,
By whom they first were called to their state,
They be the first (I say) giue them the mate.33

Combe advises checkmating such people, which is exactly what Prospero finally does to his greedy and ungrateful brother.

Of course, gardens may be either green or withered in iconography. Shakespeare seems to imply in *The Tempest* that the garden’s appearance depends on our own perspective or our own willingness to love it and care for it, since the optimistic Gonzalo sees Prospero’s island as green and fertile, while Antonio and Sebastian perversely describe it as withered.

*Gon.* Here is every thing advantageous to life.
*Ant.* True, save means to live.
*Seb.* Of that there’s none, or little.
*Gon.* How lush and lusty the grass looks! How green!
*Ant.* The ground indeed is tawny. (II.i.50–55)

Adrian takes the middle point of view: “Though this island seems to be desert . . . Uninhabitable and almost inaccessible . . . Yet . . . It must needs be of subtle, tender, and delicate temperance” (II.i.35, 38, 40, 42–43). The word “temperance” refers not only to moderation but also to the state of being in tune musically. As we know, Queen Elizabeth, during her coronation celebrations, witnessed a pageant depicting the change from a withered garden to a green garden kingdom by the very fact of her royal presence. The topos thus signifies the communal hope for regeneration and renewal under a benevolent and temperate ruler.

In *The Tempest*, the courtly characters not only are psychologically “amazed” by the wonders of the island but are also required to walk endlessly through an actual maze, always a popular component of the formal Renaissance garden and an excellent image for the complexities of political life at a Renaissance court. Moreover, according to James J. Yoch, Jr., “The familiar gardening and literary image of the labyrinth forms an important part of Prospero’s plot to transform his enemies. Each sloughs off his old life by coming to a strange landscape and a different part of the island.”34 The exhausted Gonzalo finally complains
that "My old bones aches. Here's a maze trod indeed/ Through forth-rights and meanders" (III.iii.2–3). The maze image is later repeated by Alonso:

This is as strange a maze as e'er men trod,
And there is in this business more than nature
Was ever conduct of. (V.i.242–44)

Indeed Prospero's garden kingdom, as well as being a primitive wilderness, is as complicated as the intricate dance of the reapers and nymphs in the wedding masque; both are the products of an Orphic civilization within nature.

Royal entries and civic pageants are also pertinent to our understanding of the iconography in The Tempest since many pageants presented Orpheus surrounded by birds and animals in an enclosed garden. For example, in 1515 the city of Bruges welcomed the young Prince Charles of Spain, who was to become Emperor Charles V, with exactly such a pageant. The woodcut of this scene depicts two wild men with clubs (one of which was decorated with the rooster of vigilance) standing outside a garlanded fence in front of the pageant. The wild men wear wreaths on their heads and around their waists. The entire series of pageants for this celebration was designed by local rhetoricians, who hoped that Charles would help the city economically and allow the people to live in a peaceful and harmonious kingdom like that of the musician Orpheus.35

The 1550 entry of Henry II of France into Rouen featured a street show of Orpheus and the Nine Muses, all playing musical instruments.36 A 1562 woodcut of a Spelen van Sinne (fig. 11) shows another civic pageant illustrating Orpheus enchanting the animals. It is stated in the accompanying poem "De Pioen Bloeme van Mechelen" that Orpheus and the animals represent "princely harmony."37 A similar pageant welcomed Mary Tudor and Philip II of Spain into London in 1564. This was the third pageant, which was constructed at the end of Ironmonger Lane in Cheap:

In the height wherof was one playing on a harpe, who signified the most excellent musician Orpheus, of whom and of Amphion we reade in the fables of old poeetes; where also were nyne faire ladyes playing and singing on divers sweete instrumentes, signifying the nine Muses. And not farre from them were men and children decked up like wilde beastses, as lions, wolves, foxes, and beares. So that the moste sweete strokes, noyse, and soundes of Orpheus, with the nyne Muses playing and singinge, in the sayd pageant, and also the coun-
terfeated beastes daunging and leaping with Orpheus harpe and the Muses melodye, exhilarated and rejoysed their majesties very much.38

Many years later, on Princess Elizabeth’s wedding night, 14 February 1613, she and her bridegroom the Prince Palatine were entertained by Thomas Campion’s The Lord’s Masque in which Orpheus appeared to bring both sexual-poetic frenzy and the harmony of the spheres into their marriage. The Tempest was also performed during the celebrations of this important Protestant wedding.

Seventeenth-century civic pageants in honor of London’s Lord Mayor by Thomas Middleton and Thomas Heywood employed the same Orphic topos in respect to civic government in England and for the same reasons that it had been used for earlier royal entries.39 The importance of all such shows (except for the court masque) is that, since they were paid for by the guilds and merchants, they represented the political aspirations of the middle class so noticeably absent from the action in The Tempest. As Ferdinand comments of the ordered sexuality in the wedding masque shown him by Prospero, “This is a most majestic vision, and/ Harmonious charmingly” (IV.i.118–19). However, it was actually offered to Prince Ferdinand and to the audience by an actor-playwright named William Shakespeare, one of “the middling sort” in England at that time, rather than by a representative of majesty like Ferdinand himself.

If a melodious garden was the political ideal of Renaissance Europe, the reality always fell short of perfection because not everyone had a musical ear or was willing to work cooperatively at performing the composition. A good musical performance, after all, depends on playing in tune, coming in at the right time, observing the measure, not drowning out other parts, etc. As Prospero suggests throughout The Tempest, discipline and hard work are thus both necessary in the ideal harmonious kingdom, in contrast to Gonzalo’s utopia where no one works and Nature generously provides for all.40 For this reason, Prospero trains Ferdinand for both kingship and marriage by making him carry burdens. A loving Miranda wants to help the young prince carry logs in what is probably Shakespeare’s most subversive scene in this play. Ferdinand protests that “I had rather crack my sinews, break my back,/ Than you should such dishonor undergo,/ While I sit lazy by” (III.i.26–28). To this Miranda replies, “It would become me/ As well as it does you” (III.i.28–29). Everyone must work both in a civilization and in the microcosm of a happy
marriage as they are presented in *The Tempest*.

Of course, marriage itself is another traditional Renaissance topos referring to the king’s relationship, which must be loving, restrained, and harmonious, with his nation. This is undoubtedly why Shakespeare contrasts the Ferdinand-Miranda love scenes with the drunken and quarrelsome cacophony of the rebels’ scenes. As Donna Hamilton has argued in her provocative study of *The Tempest* as a constitutionalist rewriting of the imperialist *Aeneid*, Shakespeare through emphasizing the Neoplatonic “idea of service” also “makes central to the play a dialectic on the relationship between bondage and freedom... Instead of mystifying absolutism, he mystifies the other choice—the constitutional relationship between subject and ruler that depends on reciprocity, on *meum et tuum.*” Indeed Ferdinand agrees to marry Miranda “with a heart as willing/ As bondage e’er of freedom” (III.i.88–89), a reference to the Petrarchan conceit of the lover’s willing bondage to his beloved. As the two parties agreeing to a marriage contract, Ferdinand and Miranda will then exemplify the mutual bearing of burdens and loving cooperation proper to the marriage between an ideal king and his subjects.

In *The Tempest*, Prospero symbolizes not only the powerful magic of Orpheus, a rough magic he relinquishes when he drowns his book, but also the industry or Art necessary to lead others well and to correct or improve Nature in his realm. Whitney depicts this political art based not on magic but on hard work in his emblem “Industria naturam corrigit” (“Industry corrects nature”) in which Mercury (often a symbol of Intellect) repairs a lute, while in the background a bearded man plays on a lute and a woman dances (fig. 12). Both activities symbolize harmony, as we have previously seen. Whitney’s verse reads as follows:

The Lute, whose sounde doth most delighte the eare,
Was caste aside, and lack’de both stringes, and frettes:
Whereby, no worthe within it did appeare,
MERCVRIVS came, and it in order settes:
Which being tun’d suche Harmonie did lende,
That Poëtes write, the trees theire toppes did bende.

It is interesting to notice the conflation here of Mercury as industry with Orpheus and his magical control over nature. The emblem continues with an expression of the same kind of hope Prospero feels for the court party after the punishment and the training to which he has exposed them.

He had no hope, however, for the civilizing of Caliban, would-be rapist and murderer, and apparently incurable rebel. Whitney says otherwise:

Euen so, the man on whome doth Nature froune,
Whereby, he liues dispis’d of euerie wighte,
Industrie yet, maie bringe him to renoume,
And diligence, maie make the crooked righte:
   Then haue no doubt, for arte maie nature helpe.
   Thinke howe the beare doth forme her vglie whelpe.42

In any case, the point of this English emblem is that politics is much more a matter of art than it is of force, which is nature’s untaught way and invariably provokes more violence in response. Of Caliban, Prospero bitterly complains in the play that he is

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature
Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost;
And as with age his body uglier grows,
So his mind cankers. (IV.i.188–92)

But this same Caliban, after his painful experience as the roaring quarry of an instructional hunt by Prospero and Ariel, and after sobering up in a foul pond of horse piss, changes his savage manner. The wild man suddenly appears to be reformed, despite his fears of further punishment, as does his social opposite King Alonso at the top of the hierarchy. Instead of further punishment, Prospero merely orders Caliban to clean up the cave (symbolically a place of transformation), which is the first actual work that Caliban seems willing to do.

Ay, that I will; and I'll be wise hereafter,
And seek for grace. What a thrice-double ass
Was I to take this drunkard for a god,
And worship this dull fool! (V.i.295–98)

Civilized at last, or so we hope, even Caliban’s quality of speech has now changed radically back to blank verse to match his master’s final decision, also stated in blank verse, to overcome his own baser passions through a noble act of clemency:

Though with their high wrongs I am strook to th’ quick,
Yet, with my nobler reason, ’gainst my fury
Do I take part. The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance. (V.i.25–28)

This final success of Prospero as a type of Orpheus in bringing harmony to his garden kingdom, controlling his own passions, and civilizing the wild man is, of course, only an illusionary vanity of Shakespeare’s theatrical art. Yet it is also the artistic reflection of an ever recurring human dream.43

NOTES

1 Robin Headlam Wells, “The Tempest: New Historicism and the Director,” in Shakespeare from Text to Stage, ed. Patricia Kennan and Mariangela Tempera (Bologna: Editrice Bologna, 1992), pp. 51–61. In particular, Wells points out that “Post-structuralist historicism says it wants to return literature to its cultural context. But instead of showing me what is unique about The Tempest’s political vision, these critics are showing me how it reveals a trans-historical truth about the way power works, something that, provided we have read our Nietzsche and our Foucault, we already knew before we reread the play. Instead of inserting the text into history, these critics are taking it out of the cultural history of its own time” (p. 55).

my essay was completed. Wells and I have obviously been working along similar lines in respect to Orpheus and Shakespeare for a number of years. See "The Tempered Music of Orpheus" in my Myth, Emblem, and Music in Shakespeare's 'Cymbeline' (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1992), pp. 334–63.

2 David Norbrook, "What cares these roarrers for the name of king?" Language and Utopia in The Tempest," in The Politics of Tragicomedy, ed. Gordon McMullan and Jonathan Hope (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 21. This is an interesting and provocative essay containing insights that we must take seriously.

3 I use the term "daemon" in the sense of Plato and Ficino as a word referring to a higher intellectual spirit that serves the magician as his intermediary.

4 All quotations from Shakespeare are from The Riverside Shakespeare, gen. ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), and are cited parenthetically in my text.

5 Mythological figures were often used by Renaissance artists symbolically for certain aspects of their personalities, while other aspects were suppressed. For example, Jupiter was a famous lover of mortal women and boys, but there is certainly no suggestion of this in his thunderous appearance as a god of justice and providence in Shakespeare's Cymbeline. Likewise, Ganymede could symbolize either homosexuality or the love of the soul for God and wise counsels. Aciatic clearly chooses the former meaning in his Emblem 4, while other writers and artists emphasize the latter.


8 Ibid., p. 9.

9 In this effort Prospero is the direct opposite of Shakespeare's tragic hero Hamlet, who struggles to arouse himself to passion and thus to an irrereligious act of vengeance.


11 Quoted in Segal, Orpheus, p. 12.


13 There is an interesting reference to the problem of achieving personal and social harmony in the Hermetica XVIII: "On the soul hindered by the body's affections." The passage begins with the observation that "If someone promises to bring harmony out of a piece of music played on many instruments, his effort will be laughable if during the performance discord among the instruments hinders his zeal. Since weak instruments are altogether unequal to the task, inevitably the spectators will jeer at the musician" (Her-
metica, trans. Brian F. Copenhaver [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1992], p. 63). Hermes’ advice to kings facing this problem is to “tune the inward lyre and adjust it to the [divine] musician” (p. 64) who never loses control over his instrument, the world lyre.


15 This story of Ariel’s liberation may remind us of a famous riddle on the making of a musical instrument from a tree. After the cruel ax has killed the tree, once again the wood sings with new life as an instrument: “Viva fui in sylvis sum dura occisa securi/ Dum vixi facui mortua dulce cano” (“I was alive in the woods: I was cut down by the cruel axe. While I lived I was silent: In death I sweetly sing”). The idea derives from the myth of Hermes, who changed a tortoise shell into a lyre and gave it to Apollo to calm his anger. Shakespeare seems to be playing with this ancient tradition of upward metamorphosis in his creation of Ariel. At least Shelley apparently thought so when he wrote his poem “With a Guitar to Janie” in which Ariel tells the above story of transformation and song after death to Miranda.


17 According to John Hollander, “The association of Orpheus with abstract eloquence and concurrently with the power of actual secular music can be seen very early” (Untuning of the Sky, p. 63), and Robin Headlam Wells quotes the English rhetoricians George Puttenham and Thomas Wilson on the association of Orpheus with political persuasion instead of force (“The Tempest: New Historicism and the Director,” pp. 57–58).

18 Richard Hooker, Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie, The Works of Richard Hooker, ed. W. Speed Hill (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1977–82), IV, 342. Wells explains that “It has to be one hand that plays the harp of state, because, if you live in a universe governed by the rule of analogy, it follows with inescapable logic that, ‘As one God ruleth the world, one master the family ... so it seemeth no less natural that one state should be governed by one commander’ (“The Tempest: New Historicism and the Director,” p. 59).


23 Ibid., p. 15.


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26 Green, Shakespeare and the Emblem Writers, p. 272.

27 Nicholas Reusner, Emblemata (Frankfurt, 1581), p. 129 (Emblem 21); translation by Roger T. Simonds.


30 See Julius Wilhelm Zincgreff, Emblemata Ethico-Politicorum (Heidelberg: Johan Theodore de Bry, 1619), Emblem 51. The English translation is by Roger T. Simonds.

31 I explain the embrace between Duncan and Banquo as analogous to the elm and vine topos in my Myth, Emblem, and Music in Shakespeare’s “Cymbeline,” p. 267, as follows: “Noble Banquo,” [Duncan] says, ‘That hast no less deserv’d, nor must be known/No less to have done so, let me infold thee/ And hold thee to my heart.’ Accepting his role as the fruitful vine supported by the elm Banquo gratefully replies, ‘There is I prays, the vine is sweet and fair.’ In the tragedy of Macbeth, the subject must accept the submissive role of a wife to the tyrannous husbandman.

32 Peter Demetz supplies an excellent survey of these contrasting topos in “The Elm and the Vine: Notes Toward the History of a Marriage Topos,” PMLA, 73 (1958), 521–32.

33 Thomas Combe, The Theater of Fine Devices (London, 1593 and 1614), Emblem 82.

34 James J. Yoch, Jr., “Subjecting the Landscape in Pageants and Shakespearean Pastoral Walk in Potters at the Shakespearean Theater, ed David M. Bergeron (Athens: Georgia: University Press, 1984). Yoch also points out that Prospero had the figure of Orpheus placed in his garden at Richmond (p. 213), and that “Prospero uses positive elements from Medea’s great speech (Metamorphoses, 7.191–214) about her control over the landscape to reveal his similar powers and, surprisingly, to announce his plan to surrender them (V.1.33–57)“ (p. 212). Yoch argues persuasively that the drama is organized around the theme of royal restraint.

35 For the woodcut, text, and a complete description of the pageant series, see Sydney Anglo, La triumphante Entree de Charles Prince des Espagnes en Bruges 1515 (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarvm, n.d.).

36 For the woodcut, text, and a complete description of this entry, see Margaret M. McGowan, L’Entrée de Henri II à Rouen 1550 (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarvm, n.d.).

37 Spelen van Sinne: Volsoone moralisacien... zijn (Antwerp: M. Willem Silvius Drucker, 1562), sig. Gggi. I am indebted to Elizabeth McGrath and Paul Taylor of the Warburg Institute Library for this reference.

38 Quoted in Sydney Anglo, Spectacle, Pageantry, and Early Tudor Policy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 333. Some Protestants resented the imagery of this pageant, however, interpreting the charmed animals as Philip’s image of the beastly English people captivated.

Caliban, of course, supplies the answer to Gonzalo's dream of a Golden Age of leisure by pointing out in prose the hard work of primitive life: "I prithee let me bring thee where crabs grow; and I with my long nails will dig thee pig-nuts, show thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how to snare the nimble marmazet. I'll bring thee to clust'ring filberts, and sometimes I'll get thee young scamels from the rock" (II.i.167–72). Survival skills are needed to live off the land. Stephano immediately makes him their leader but, at the same time, he insists, "Here! bear my bottle" (II.i.175–76).


Whitney, A Choice of Emblemes, p. 92. The same emphasis on reason and hard work and the same woodcut appear earlier in the 1564 Emblemata by Johannes Sanbucus.

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