Vulgar poesy and the music of disorder in *The Tempest*

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ABSTRACT

This article suggests that the twin principles of *The Tempest*, music and storm, bring together issues of class and race in an inventive topography whose connotational synergies enable a conceptual transfer to be made from Caliban, the figure of a disorderly colonial subject in Prospero's play, to the mariners and, beyond them, the potentially disorderly English subjects located outside the frame of Prospero's illusion. Read in the light, on the one hand, of contemporary ideas about music and order and the relationship between music, class and race and, on the other hand, of accounts of storm and mutiny in contemporary voyage reports, the play leaves considerably less securely contained the pressing threat of social disorder, masquerading as it does beneath and beside the colonial issue of race, than is often supposed.

KEYWORDS: George Puttenham, music, storm, social disorder, *The Tempest*

1. Introduction

Is *The Tempest* about domestic politics or colonialism? It may be true that the terms of the question propose a "spurious dichotomy" (Hadfield 1998: 242), but nonetheless recent readings of the play usually opt for one alternative or the other. Favouring the former, Orgel (1987: 25) sees an allegory of the class struggle, Greenblatt (1985: 143-158) an essay on the exercise of martial law, Dolan (1992) an inscription of anxieties about insubordinate domestic workers, and Schneider (1995) a stoical discourse on kingship. But it is still the latter alternative which claims more adepts so that, despite Skura's (1989) serious misgivings, Fuchs (1997: 45) regards the play's colonial interest as an axiom of contemporary criticism, while Maguire (2004: 215) writes unproblematically that "*The Tempest* investigates colonialism, the politics and ethics of assuming ownership of a land that is already inhabited." But might not the play be about both domestic politics *and* colonialism? Trevor R. Griffiths (1999: 45-51) has explained how in the late nineteenth century, in the wake of the

slavery debate and Darwinian evolutionism, "the virtual interchangeability of typifications of class and race [...] makes it particularly difficult to differentiate between Caliban as native, as proletarian, and as missing link." Following this lead, I would like to suggest that the twin principles of *The Tempest*, music and storm, bring together issues of class and race in an inventive topography whose connotational synergies enable a conceptual transfer to be made from Caliban, the figure of a disorderly colonial subject in Prospero's play, to the mariners and, beyond them, the potentially disorderly English subjects located outside the frame of Prospero's illusion. In other words, masquerading beneath the colonial issue of race is the more pressing political threat of social disorder. After exploring the vexed relationship between music, race and class, chiefly as it transpires in George Puttenham's *The Arte of Englishe Poetry*, the article will review three points of disorder in the play before reconsidering the play as a whole in the light of the inventive topography composed by music, storms and disorder in contemporary voyage reports, which together constitute one of *The Tempest*'s undisputed discursive contexts (see Barker and Hume 1985).

2. Puttenham's cannibal and the problem with "vulgar poesy"

It is conventional to observe how, far from being a mere adjunct, *The Tempest*'s music is an integral part of the action and, in the form of song, of the dialogue. But apart from helping to configure the last word in Jacobean multi-media experiences, what are we to make of it? More than forty years ago, Rose Abdelnour Zimbardo argued that *The Tempest*'s theme was "the eternal conflict between order and chaos" and that Prospero's music, "the very symbol of order," enables him to control the island "almost completely through order and harmony – I say almost because he cannot wholly bring Caliban, the incarnation of chaos, into his system of order" (1963: 50-51). Yet by no means is all the music in the play Prospero's; Caliban has his music too. If, then, there is a connection between music and order, it seems clear that the play does not contrast order (Prospero) with disorder (Caliban), but two competing forms of order, each of which might predictably cast the other as disorder or chaos.

Writing of the "Elizabethan scheme of things", J.M. Nosworthy suggested that music was "no less essential to the overall pattern than the concepts of degree, the body politic, the elements

and humours, and the like" (qtd. Dunn 1969: 391). Music was at the heart of a cosmology which, deriving from Plato and Pythagoras and syncretised by Christian philosophers, notably Boethius, found that the universe was arranged in harmonious order and proportion. In response to Stephen Gosson's bilious swipe at music in his *School of Abuse*, Thomas Lodge adjured him in 1579 to "looke upon the harmonie of the heavens? hang they not by Musike?" and to mark well "this heaue[n]ly concent, w^c is ful of perfectio[n], proceeding fro[m] aboue, drawing his original fro[m] aboue, drawing his original fro[m] the motion of ye stars, fro[m] the agrement of the planets, fro[m] the whisteling winds & fro[m] al those celestial circles, where is ether perfit agreeme[n]t or any *Sumphonia*" (2000: 8, 9-10). Here Lodge appeals to *musica mundana*, one of the three types into which Boethius differentiated speculative music. *Musica mundana*, the universal harmony manifest in the movements of the heavenly bodies, the rhythm of the seasons, the music of the spheres, and so on, was used exhaustively as a trope throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Hollander 1961). This was due, among other reasons, to the analogical frame of mind which found correspondences between macrocosm and microcosm, correspond- ences which were licensed by Boethius's postulation of the two other types of speculative music, *musica humana* (the relationship between the parts of the body and the faculties of the soul) and *musica instrumentalis* (music-making as aesthetic activity). Thanks to such correspondences, Sir John Davies and Robert Burton both asserted the iatric power of music to cure physiological and mental disorders, a power that surfaces time and again in Shakespeare's romances (Dunn 1969: 392-396, 402-404). Meanwhile, the explanatory force of speculative music was sufficiently strong for it to underwrite much of the research and experimentation undertaken in the scientific revolution by the likes of Robert Hooke and Isaac Newton (Gouk 1999).

An apologist for iatric medicine's efficacy in treating the ailing body private, Thomas Lodge asked "how can we measure the debilitie of the patient but by the disordered motion of the pulse? is not man worse accompted of when he is most out of tune?" (2000: 8) He might well have asked the same of the body politic for, occupying an intermediate position between microcosm and macrocosm, the state was also treated by speculative music as "a harmonious organism" which, as Prospero and Shakespeare's Ulysses knew, could, like a stringed instrument, be tuned to the taste

of its rulers or untuned by social unrest (Hollander 1961: 47). Indeed, social harmony was a political aspiration whose realisation in Jacobean society meant the preservation of class order and respect for degree. Orderly society was a static hierarchy, in which each class was bound through obligations of service to those classes above it; and it was a harmonious hierarchy, too, which is why Sir Thomas Eliot had urged educators of the ruling class to "commend the perfect understanding of music, declaring how necessary it is for the better attaining the knowledge of a public weal: which is made of an order of estates and degrees, and, by reason thereof, containeth in it a perfect harmony" (qtd. Tillyard 1971: 110). Regardless of the extent to which the cosmological premises of the ideally harmonious body politic were actually believed by those who propounded them, *musica mundana* was a convenient and powerful metaphor for the ruling classes by whom, as J.W. Lever (1971: 5) wrote of the Elizabethan World Picture *in toto*, it was exploited as a "creed of absolutism [....] to bolster up a precarious monarchy which lacked a standing army or an efficient police force." Thus, in Elizabethan and Jacobean society it was important to distinguish between music and noise and to cultivate harmony and proportion in line with the power élite's prescriptions.

As indexes of divinity, harmony and proportion could be cultivated by the courtly for reasons of spiritual self-betterment – "harmony is in immortal souls" (*The Merchant of Venice* 5.1.63); as guarantees of the social status quo, they could be perfected through courtly musicianship in order to hive off its practitioners from the rest – deaf to harmony in, and because of, their "muddy vesture of decay" (ibid. 5.1.64). And of course, poetry's kinship to music made of it another art whose mastery promised the attainment of quasi-divine harmony. In equal measure rhetorician, courtly encomiast, and English Castiglione, George Puttenham (1936: 64) was diligent in exploiting this socio-political potential of speculative music and its sister art poetry, or the "skill to speake & write harmonically." Unsurprisingly, his chapter on rhetorical decorum or "decencie" – the quality which separates "deformitie" from beauty, the "vicious" from the "pleasaunt and bewtifull," and which is achieved through "proportion" and "simmetry" – is followed by his long chapter "Of decency in behaviour." However, the seams of Puttenham's courtly rhetoric are forever bursting under the pressure of the very vulgar bodies his readers might have preferred kept at arm's length, or out of sight altogether. His ambition to differentiate the courtly from the

rest on the grounds of poetic prowess, with Elizabeth herself as the pinnacle of political power, social status and poetic achievement (1936: 63) is badly undermined by his theory of linguistic evolution.

The standard aetiology of language – or the myth of the part played by rhetoric in man's progression from isolated existence in the forest to living in society in the city – as found in Cicero's *De Inventione rhetorica* (I.1-I.4), had been given heavy socio-political spin by Thomas Wilson in *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553, 1560). The "good order" to which reason framed folk once they had emerged from their pre-lingual state was a manifestly static and hierarchical society founded on mutual obligations of service.

> For what man, I pray you, being better able to maintain himself by valiant courage than by living in base subjection, would not rather look to rule like a lord than to live like an underling, if by reason he were not persuaded that it behooveth every man to live in his own vocation, and not to seek any higher room than whereunto was at the first appointed? Who would dig and delve from morn till evening? Who would travail and toil with the sweat of his brows? Yea, who would for his king's pleasure adventure and hazard his life, if wit had not so won men that they thought nothing more needful in this world, nor anything where unto they were more bounden, than here to live in their duty, and to train their whole life according to their calling? (1999: 75).

To adapt Canterbury's words (*Henry V* 1.2.183-4), "Therefore doth reason divide/ The state of man in divers functions." Those with no ties of service – the rogues, vagabonds and beggars; casual labourers and criminals (up to 30,000 in London by 1602); protestant sectaries; rural cottagers and squatters; itinerant traders (Hill 1991, 39-45); in short, the "masterless men" – were literally out of order and, unimpressed by reason, had degenerated to the savage state of the "woodwose", from which Wilson's ministers of rhetoric had originally rescued them. Figuratively and, in many cases, literally once again, they had retreated to the woods.

A Wilsonian social order is what Puttenham's *Arte* should have been glorifying and serving. Certainly his own myth of linguistic and then poetic evolution starts off conventionally enough:

> The profession and use of Poesie is most ancient from the beginning, and not as manie erroniously suppose, after, but before any ciuil society was among men. For it is written that Poesie was th'originall cause and occasion of their first assemblies, when before the people remained in the

woods and mountains, vagrant and dispersed like the wild beasts, lawlesse and naked, or verie ill clad [...] so as they little diffred for their maner of life, from the very brute beasts of the field. (1936: 6)

But when he complements the Ciceronian-Wilsonian account of the origin of civil society with the Horatian, things begin to go awry:

Whereupon it is fayned that *Amphion* and *Orpheus*, two Poets of the first ages, one of them, to wit *Amphion*, builded vp cities, and reared walles with the stones that came in heapes to the sound of his harpe, figuring thereby the mollifying of hard and stonie hearts by his sweete and eloquent perswasion. And *Orpheus* assembled the wilde beasts to come in heards to hearken to his musicke, and by that meanes made them tame, implying thereby, how by his discreete and wholesome lessons vttered in harmonie and with melodious instruments he brought the rude and sauage people to a more ciuill and orderly life, nothing, as it seemeth, more preuailing or fit to redresse and edifie the cruell and sturdie courage of man then it. (1936: 6)

In the context of early modern racial and colonial discourse, it is pertinent to remark that some such Orphic strategy of getting "rude and savage people" to dance to Empire's tune was actually being implemented by England's proto-colonialists: for instance, Ralegh's half-brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, equipped his ill-fated Newfoundland expedition of 1583 with "for solace of our people, and allurement of the Savages [...] musike in good variety: not omitting the least toyes, as Morris dancers, Hobby horse, and Maylike conceits to delight the Savage people, whom we intended to win by all fair meanes possible" (Hayes 1979: 29). Of course, such a program for delighting "the rude and savage" with what Gosson would consider as the devil's instruments (Pollard 2004: 99) presupposes a sensitivity to harmony in non-European indigenous peoples which had already surfaced in Thomas More's (1997: 124) account of the Utopians' excellent musicianship (the "one thing [in which] doubtless they go exceeding far beyond us," resembling and expressing so perfectly as it does "natural affections") and, more recently, in Montaigne's famous essay "Of the Caniballes" which praised their Anacreontics (1999: 312).

Puttenham's problem is compounded in his chapter "How the wilde and sauage people used a naturall Poesie in versicle and rime as our vulgar is" (I.v), where on the one hand a direct link is forged between class and race, and on the other any distinction between

court and the vulgar on the grounds of musicality comes close to erasure. After driving a wedge between the non-rhyming verse of the Greeks and Romans and the more ancient, rhyming verse of the Hebrews and Chaldees, Puttenham aligns English rhyming verse with the latter and concludes, "it appeareth, that our vulgar running [=metrical] Poesie was common to all the nations of the world besides, whom the Latines and Greekes in special called barbarous. So as it was notwithstanding, the first and most ancient Poesie, and the most vniversall" (1936: 10). It is not clear why Puttenham wants to make respectable "our vulgar running poetry" if later he is to expatiate on the virtues of the artificial courtly sort. He may wish English to outstrip Greek and Latin in terms of venerability and universality, and thereby raise its stock in comparison with the contemporary Latin-derived languages of continental Europe; or, more practically, he may realize the impossibility of disinventing the vernacular, non-courtly verse so popular at all levels of society, for example, the bardic which Sir Philip Sidney records as lasting "to this day" (Vickers 1999: 240). However that may be, the drawback of aligning vulgar verse with the Rest of the World in opposition to Greeks and Latins is its consequent contiguity with the "barbarous" (in classical terms) or the "savage" (in Elizabethan terms). Puttenham is not original in positing a universal poesy predating classical poetry; indeed, Samuel Daniel, writing around 1603, speaks of the "number, measure, and harmony" of English verse, the "melody" of which is so "natural [...] and so universal, as it seems to be generally borne with all the nations of the world as an hereditary eloquence proper to all mankind" (Vickers 1999: 443). But Puttenham is interesting because his *Arte* is riven with just the tension between conflicting poetries and orders that underpins *The Tempest*.

Puttenham continues to shoot himself in the foot when explaining how the great age and universality of "vulgar running poesy"

is proved by certificate of marchants & trauellers, who by late nauigations haue surueyed the whole world and discouered large countries and strange peoples wild and sauage, affirming that the American, the Perusine, & the very Canniball do sing, and also say, their highest and holiest matters in certain riming versicles and not in prose (1936: 10)

Bending over backwards to demonstrate the universality of "vulgar Poesie," Puttenham casts about for evidence of its existence

elsewhere and comes up with the reports of travellers attesting to the rhymed songs of the indigenous peoples of the American continent. Inevitably, his cannibal draws us to Shakespeare's Caliban: even if the latter's name is not a conscious play on "cannibal", he is certainly a figure of indigenous alterity, and his crudely rhyming freedom chant (2.2.176-181) argues his kinship with Puttenham's other racial others and Montaigne's cannibals. But additionally, by linking English vulgar poetry with the poetry of savages, Puttenham provides the conditions for a conceptual transfer between the categories of race and class. For if the primary meaning of "vulgar" is "vernacular", it also connotes something like "plebeian" or "characteristic of the common sort" as it does, for example, in Puttenham's chapter "Of Ornament Poeticall" (1936: 138-139), where the nakedness associated with the savage or the indigenous is employed as an index of vulgarity. Not only that, but given the proximity of Puttenham's retelling of the Horatian myth of language, it is tempting to recall Horace's ode "Odi profanum vulgus et arceo" (3.1) which declares his Puttenhamian intention to use poetry to rise above the common rump of citizens in general and the rest of poets in particular.

To Puttenham's mind his ethnological analogues also prove

> that our maner of vulgar Poesie is more ancient then the artificiall of the Greeks and Latines, ours comming by instinct of nature, which was before Art or obseruation, and vsed with the sauage and vnciuill, who were before all science or ciuilitie, euen as the naked by prioritie of time is before the clothed, and the ignorant before the learned. The naturall Poesie therefore being aided and amended by Art, and not vtterly altered or obscured, but some signe left of it, (as the Greekes and Latines have left none), is no lesse to be allowed and commended than theirs (1936: 10).

Puttenham's ascription to "instinct of nature" of the development of "vulgar" or "naturall Poesie" on the one hand, and his association of "instinct of nature" with man's evolutionary savage state of pre-social and pre-civil existence on the other, together suggest that in its origins vulgar poesy was a natural language, whose rhyming quality approximated it more to music than to formal, syntagmatic prose, which it emphatically was not, as he had previously been at pains to stress. The danger here for Puttenham's poetic ideology is that the vulgar poesy which he identifies as still existing in England, indeed as still underlying more artificial and courtly expression, belongs to,

is proper to, and harks back to a different, pre-rhetorical social order where, in place of the harmonious hierarchy of rigorously policed social positions, masterless men roamed in disorder like woodwoses. Puttenham's admission into his *Arte* of vulgar poesy is a chink offering a glimpse of that cacophonous disorder associated with potential agents of subversion such as common players and minstrels (see Pollard 2004: 304, 321-322) and on alarmingly close display in Ireland where the "idelnes [of the Irish] makes them love liberty a bove all thinges, and likewise naturally to delight in musick" (Moryson 2001: 92). Despite itself, Puttenham's *Arte* traces no straightforward evolution from vulgarity, incivility and ineloquence to courtliness, civility and eloquence, no triumphant progress from disharmony and disorder to harmony and order. Disharmony and disorder still lurk, pulsing in the veins of the vulgar and palpable beneath the veneers of artificial poetry, one of the cultural mechanisms for the suppression of that whose complete eradication is impossible. And since, like woodwoses and savages, the masterless have their own rhyming verses to chant and may therefore be just as in tune with God's cosmic harmonies as Elizabethan sonneteers at court or, for that matter, moon-calves and, later, children of nature and idiot boys, perhaps the distinction is not between order and disorder at all, but between competing notions of order, each of which brands its rival as disorder.

3. Points of disorder

Puttenham's account of the origins of language feeds on the same nexus of ideas that ultimately issued in nineteenth-century evolutionary theories. It also looks forward to Matthew Arnold's distinction between Celtic literature on the one hand, and Greek and Latin literature on the other, the former infused, and infusing nature, with "charm" and "magic", the latter with "lightness and brightness" (1993: 187-192). More significantly, its proposed distinction between natural and artificial poesy is an avatar of the modern distinction between the semiotic and symbolic orders. As Terry Eagleton (1983: 190) reminds us, the semiotic "is not an *alternative* to the symbolic order, a language one could speak instead of 'normal' discourse: it is rather a process *within* our conventional sign-systems, which questions and transgresses their limits." The semiotic is therefore the linguistic equivalent of the fifth columnist, or the enemy within, an oppositional force which authority may seek to repress but cannot altogether eliminate since, as "a sort of residue

of the pre-Oedipal phase [it] can still be discerned as a kind of pulsional pressure within language itself" (Eagleton 1983: 188), much as Puttenham could still detect some signs of natural poesy beneath the emendations of the artificial. The semiotic is the symbolic order's thing of darkness which, Jekyll-like, it cannot help but acknowledge as sharing the same skin even when it would wish it away. The way Shakespeare's later plays are drawn towards romance can easily be taken as a yearning for Hélène Cixous' semiotic world inhabited by a "phantasmatical mingling of men, of males, of messieurs, of monarchs, princes, orphans, flowers, mothers, breasts" (qtd. Kanneh 1992: 141). More particularly, *The Tempest*'s inscription of absent mothers – from banished Sycorax to Prospero's nameless wife (whose virtue his nervous locker-room humour jibes at [1.2.56-9]), and even to Alonso's consort, who did not journey to her daughter's wedding – is entirely consonant with a reading of the play which would see Prospero as intent on shoring up or restoring the symbolic order by, in Julia Kristeva's terms, "repressing instinctual drive and continuous relation to the mother" (qtd. Furman 1988: 72). Prospero's suppression of Caliban is, in many ways, a repression of the instinctual, perhaps even of his own *id*, and, more generally, of the semiotic. This is implicit in the not altogether abortive attempts to instruct Caliban in Prospero's language, more explicit in the rough treatment to which he is continually subjected. It would be mistaken to regard Caliban's recalcitrance as evidence that he is "inherently unsuited to civilization" (Fuchs 1997: 53) for the play does not suggest any watertight dichotomy between civilization and savagery. The civilization which Caliban resists is Prospero's civilization; to make of it the only possible civilization or order of life is as misguided as to confuse Prospero's play with Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (see Barker and Hulme 1985: 199-203).

It was once customary to regard *The Tempest*'s dramatic narrative as demonstrating Prospero's supreme ability to contain a number of threats against the order he represents, much as the play itself contains and apparently ridicules the alternative order cribbed from Montaigne and expounded by Gonzalo. Footling incompetent by name, if not in fact, Gonzalo muses about a "Golden Age" which inverts the patriarchal, feudalistic, hierarchical order preached by Wilson, imperfectly served George Puttenham and restored by Prospero after the temporary disorder and confusion wrought by usurper Antonio's efforts to compose a different political score, "set[ting]" in the process "all hearts i'th'state/ To what tune pleased

his ear" (1.2.84-5). Crucially, Gonzalo's ideal order dissolves the service nexus which simultaneously binds together and segregates Wilson's, Puttenham's and Prospero's classes. There would be no commerce, no law, no "letters" (education); no

> … riches, poverty
> And use of service, none; contract, succession,
> Bourn, bound of land, tilth, vineyard, none;
> No use of metal, corn, or wine or oil;
> No occupation, all men idle, all;
> And women, too – but innocent and pure;
> No sovereignty – (2.1.156-62)

For all Sebastian and Antonio's ironizing on Gonzalo's aspiration to rule in his commonwealth, the radicalism of his manifesto is plain: an undoing of that civil society which rhetoric or eloquence, artificial or symbolic language had made possible, it is a blueprint for a different order. But it is a blueprint that is safely contained by Gonzalo's characterisation, undermined by his hearers' ironies, and dwarfed by the play's virtually all-consuming attention to Prospero's order, which rests on Caliban's servile carrying and fetching and whose restoration is represented symbolically by Ferdinand's enforced entry into log-carrying labour. Once restored on the political plane and safeguarded in perpetuity through Miranda's betrothal to Ferdinand, Prospero's order is consecrated in the celebratory masque, a cultural form which "presents the triumph of an aristocratic community," is predicated on "a belief in the hierarchy," and "overcome[s] and supersede[s]" the "world of disorder or vice" presented in the antimasque" (Orgel 1975: 40). All that remains for Prospero to do is foil the plot against his life, and then his play may end happily ever after. However, much recent criticism has argued that the play leaves disorder a good deal less contained than was supposed in the days when Prospero was still viewed as a benign magus and his farewell as Shakespeare's misty-eyed adieu to the stage. This section will, in the light of the foregoing discussion, comment on three points of tension between order and disorder.

Throughout the play it is Prospero's art which, like Puttenham's artificial language, staves off disorder or brings it into line; decked out in his magician's garb, the vestments of civility, he can bend the naked savage to his wishes. In this sense Prospero, often relying on

music to do the work of preserving order, is like Puttenham's and Lodge's Orpheus, driving men from the woods and making them live aright. But Prospero is not the play's only Orpheus. Another is Gonzalo who, after the Tunis/Carthage quibble, is sneered at by Antonio and Sebastian in the following terms:

ANTONIO: His word is more than the miraculous harp.
SEBASTIAN: He hath raised the wall, and houses too. (2.1.91-3)

Thus Gonzalo is figured as a hybrid of Orpheus (the harp) and Amphion (raising walls to his lute), appropriately enough as proponent of a new order. So how ludicrous is the honest counsellor's Utopian manifesto? True, it is roundly debunked on stage and not favoured by the pantaloonish connotations of its proponent's name. It is true, too, that we were in no doubt whom to believe when a few lines earlier Antonio had countered Gonzalo's observation of "lush and lusty" grass (a reiteration of the verdant acres sown as wish-fulfilling topics in countless voyage reports) with the matter-of-fact rejoinder, "The ground, indeed, is tawny" (2.1.57-9). But between that exchange and the Golden Age speech, there is a passage which weaves together the information about the shipwrecked party's previous business in Tunis and some rather tiresome, apparently aimless, yet extended bickering over whether their garments are as fresh and glossy as when first donned for Claribel's wedding, with Gonzalo insisting on their pristine condition, "a rarity [...] almost beyond credit" in view of the tempest, shipwreck, drenching, dousing and sanding the marooned party has undergone. If we, as audience, buy into the illusion of the storm and the shipwreck, then we must buy into necessary corollaries such as drenched costumes and silt-lined pockets (2.1.70-1), even if it is our imaginations which do the drenching. In other words, to join Antonio and Sebastian in scoffing at Gonzalo's pig-headed insistence on dry, neatly pressed garments, we are swallowing Prospero's illusion, assenting to his order and investing in the political arrangements his dramatic narrative promulgates.

However, if we take this quibbling metadramatically, Gonzalo suddenly becomes a paragon of clear-sightedness for, beyond the illusion, outside Prospero's play, the actors' costumes really are as dry and intact as when the curtain rose – unless we are to believe that at some point the actors were liberally doused on the stage with buckets of water and left to shiver their way through the rest of the

performance. It is Gonzalo's vista that momentarily dispels the illusion by reminding the audience of the material reality coexisting with the theatrical illusion they have bought in to. And at the very moment the audience is jolted into re-cognisance of the real world, they may just entertain the thought that Prospero's order, belonging as it does to a different ontological realm from their own, hived off and contained within a theatre, is as artificial as the play being performed before their eyes. The containment at this juncture of Prospero's order is corresponded by the equal and opposite uncontainment of Gonzalo's disorder (from Prospero's viewpoint) or counter-order (from a neutral viewpoint). Converted momentarily into the wise fool, Gonzalo is privileged with insight into the true state of things, even if he is at a loss how to account for it. His subsequent Golden Age speech therefore gains a special authority since he is the only character who can see beyond Prospero's order and its theatrical representation to the real world beyond the illusion, a real world for which, as befits another Orpheus, his Utopia now becomes a rather more serious proposal.[1]

Out of tune with Prospero's harmonies Caliban is not surprisingly "as disproportioned in his manners/ As in his shape" (5.1.294-5) for "[t]he proportions of the human body were praised as a visual realisation of musical harmony" (Panofsky 1983: 121). Yet he is a further incarnation of Orpheus for, in addition to chanting in "rhyming versicles" like Puttenham's savages, he shares with Orpheus the gift to summon music from the natural world around him:

> ... 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 waked after long sleep,
> Will make me sleep again; (3.2.138-43).

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[1] In his note on 2.1.65-6, Stephen Orgel refers us to Ariel's earlier answer to Prospero's question, "But are they, Ariel, safe?" Ariel reports: "Not a hair blemished./ On their sustaining garments not a blemish,/ But fresher than before" (1.2.218-20). According to Orgel, Ariel means the garments are "fresher"; as a consequence, in 2.1 Gonzalo would be in agreement with Ariel (and right), while Antonio "is presumably being perverse." My point is that both Gonzalo and Antonio are right, the former outside the frame of Prospero's illusion, the latter inside. Another possibility is that Ariel's previous answer to his master is an exercise in self-advertising crowing.

It is difficult to be certain how to interpret these lines. Does Caliban break down the island's circumambient "noises,/ Sounds and sweet airs" into two categories, namely the "thousand twangling instruments" and the "voices"? Or does he specify three categories, namely "noises,/ Sounds and sweet airs", "twangling instruments" and "voices"? The latter seems the better option since "twangling" can hardly be taken as a delightful noise, sound or air. Accordingly, Caliban is shown as being attuned to the island's own noises and able to find in them relief from the privations and pinchings of his menial existence. Like Orpheus, that is, he is able to find harmony, measure and proportion in the natural world, an order in contrast to which Prospero's music is so much "twangling". In other words, if Caliban is "disproportioned" in Prospero's order, Prospero is "twangling" in Caliban's. Indeed, the pull of the island's immanent order, whose harmonies Caliban is sensitive to, is so strong that Prospero's order is gradually disarmed by it, as proven by the debasement of his language. Even though Caliban's language has traditionally been rated as greater in poetic quality than Prospero's (e.g. Coleridge, qtd. Vaughan and Vaughan 1999: 89; Graves 1961: 426; Hughes 1992: 497), no attempts have been made to account for that superiority. Yet if Prospero is the arch-magus, the high-priest of artifice, the standard-bearer of civilization and order in the struggle against nature, savagery and disorder, why is his poetry at times so stilted, "stripped-down" (Ann Barton, qtd. Vaughan and Vaughan 1999: 21), broken and poor in imagery (Kermode 1954: lxxix-lxxx)? Perhaps Prospero is a man struggling to keep down seething rage or at the end of his tether: underlying his disharmonies is a mental and/or emotional disorder that the verse is barely able to contain. Or perhaps his fractured, impoverished poetry is a symptom of the contamination or decomposition of his order through contact with Caliban's, of the semiotic's infiltration of the symbolic and of a linguistic levelling of master and servant. In short, it may be that Prospero's language splinters under pressure from Puttenham's "natural poesy", the original "vulgar poesy" bursting through the repressive bonds of artificial poesy, as disorder is slowly but surely uncontained and Prospero, castaway in the "contact zone" (Pratt 1992), slips into uncontrollable acts of "cultural mimesis" (Whitehead 1997: 55) and teeters on the brink of going native or turning déclassé.

The third point of tension between order and disorder is the abrupt termination of Prospero's masque which renders abortive his

best efforts to seal the restoration of patriarchal class-society through a performance of the aristocracy's preferred cultural means of celebrating that order. Short-lived indeed is the promise of relief the masque held out to the members of the social élite which, from the first scene's technical *tour de force* of the wreck of the ship of state to this point in the play, has enjoyed no respite from figures and enactments of disorder and treachery. Prospero's masque cannot put the lid on the anti-masque conspirators, cannot quite contain all disorder, just as the political order he represents can never exist in harmony. By means of the masque, Prospero tries to put into practice Exeter's platitudinous, Ciceronian (*De Republica*, II. xlii), officially sanctioned conceit, according to which "government, though high and low and lower,/ Put into parts, doth keep in one consent [=harmony],/ congreeing in a full and natural close,/ Like music" (*Henry V*, 1.2.180-83).[2] As in Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique*, political and social order is a concord of players arranged by rank or degree, the harmony of which depends on each player knowing his part and sticking to it: if "degree is shaked", society's "string" becomes "untuned" and "discord follows" (*Troilus and Cressida* 1.3.101-110).[3] Because Caliban, Stephano and Trinculo threaten to depart from their allotted social positions, Prospero is forced to cheat the masque of its "full and natural close," thereby leaving disorder uncontained. Certainly, Prospero's masque is not the first to be girt round with disorder; indeed, anti-masques deliberately evoked disorder as is the case with the music of the witches in Jonson's *Masque of Queens* (1609), a work contemporary with *The Tempest* and whose happy conclusion is "guided and controlled by the pacific virtue of the royal scholar" (Orgel 1987: 45) – by a regal Prospero, that is.

But Prospero's masque is not an anti-masque. Even if it were, the salient point regarding anti-masques is that their internal threat of disorder is always successfully repelled in a triumphant progression from "chaos to order and from disjunction to harmony" (Limon 1990: 10; see also Magnusson 1986: 61-2). In contrast, Prospero's masque is dispelled by a threat of disorder external to it. At this point, then, it would seem that the play sides with the forces in opposition to Prospero's order, although they will, of course, soon be

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[2] Compare Puttenham (1936: 64): "the harmonicall concents of the artificial Musicke."
[3] Compare Thomas Hooker's received notion of law and order: "of law there can be no less acknowledged than that her seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world" (qtd Tillyard 1972: 22).

brought roughly back into place. Interestingly, the prosody of Exeter's closing line and a foot reproduces in small a similar conflict between hegemonic aspirations to a self-serving order and a reality which won't quite toe the line. Shakespeare's verse does not concede Exeter's pyramidal, exploitative order the end-stopped "full and natural close" the good Bishop would have chosen. Most unlike music, Exeter's idea of government falls a full four feet short of the mark. Most unlike music, too, is the "noise" which accompanies the vanishing nymphs and reapers of Prospero's masque. "Strange, hollow and confused" (S.D. at 4.1.138), it is the music of a different order, possibly of the lower orders in the taverns (Dunn 1969: 402n23); it is an order which threatens to subvert Prospero's, or bring it to chaos, for "confusion" is the early modern equivalent for anarchy, the same anarchy below decks ("*A confused noise within*," S.D. at 1.1.57) into which Gonzalo had retreated at the height of the storm and from which he emerged with an anarchist's credo on his lips.

4. Music, storm and tumult

Ultimately, Prospero's plot ends prosperously for him; shaken, but not stirred, his order has been restored, its future safeguarded. To achieve his ends, Prospero uses his magic to unleash the natural world's meteorological counterpart to social and political disorder, namely, the storm. A collateral effect of the storm, which brings the usurping Antonio, Prospero's future son-in-law, and the rest to the island, is its temporary inversion of the social hierarchy when the mariners arrogate to themselves the power to command and be obeyed. The danger latent in this apparent inversion of authority is usually explained away on the grounds that it is merely an instance of that theatre of power whereby pockets of subversion (e.g. playhouses) are tolerated on the grounds that subversion is better contained than repressed (see Greenblatt 1988: 30, 64-65, 156), and risks of subversion (e.g. treasonous plots) are artificially generated and publicised in order to justify the sort of strong-arm, autocratic government the subverters allegedly contest (Breight 1990: 2-9). Alternatively, it is pointed out that the custom of the sea permitted mariners to take charge in adverse climatological conditions (Barker and Hulme 1985: 198), thus allowing the conclusion that the play's opening inversion of order is not subversive at all. But surely the significance of sailors taking power resides not so much in the misprision that they were effectively lording it over their superiors,

but in the way such temporary and allowed mutiny figured other possible acts of insubordination and consequently made in-subordination a concept for people to harbour in their minds. *The Tempest*'s discursive anchorage in voyage narratives, shot through as they were with simulacra of alternative polities (Hadfield 1998: 17-68), makes all the more plausible a reading of the opening scene that regards it as introducing disorder as the keynote of the play – a disorder whose eddies are still felt even when Prospero has restored his own order.

It may be true that Caliban, the island's principal agent of disorder, is finally brought to heel and dismissed, suitably chastened, to spring-clean Prospero's cell, yet Shakespeare's eyes, if not ours, are not on potentially subversive racial others. Caliban is a decoy diverting us from the play's more subversive agenda, namely the adumbration of a possible counter-order whose explicit representations in the form of pantaloonish Gonzalo's manifesto and the drunken transgression of power's sartorial code on the part of Stephano and Trinculo are risible, but whose postulates the play's superstructure, circumambient musicality and literary-contextual genesis conspire to evoke in great earnest. An instance of a similar rhetorical strategy is Thomas Carlyle's notorious "Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question" (1848), written when Europe was rife with revolution. Carlyle believed the seed of revolution might be germinating closer to home among the rebellious Irish or the industrial working-class, the former racial, the latter socio-political, but both radical Others. As Simon Gikandi (1996: 55-65) has shown, Carlyle converts the Morant Bay black into the repository for all dangerous otherness, even if recent unrest among the descendants of slaves in faraway Jamaica hardly were no real menace for Britain's domestic integrity. By rallying the nation to stir itself in the face of a rhetorically contrived threat, Carlyle intends to lick Britain back into shape in order to contend efficiently with those forces lurking within its boundaries which might disrupt its wellbeing. Just as Morant Bay blacks represented no real threat to Carlyle's Britain, so Jacobean England was hardly imperilled by exotic others despite their not inconsiderable presence in London and Elizabeth I's earlier animadversion. *The Tempest*'s flirtation with racial disorder is a diversionary tactic to wrest the élite's gaze from its inscription of the potentially far greater threat of class disorder.

In discussions of the play's protocolonial discursive contexts, what is often overlooked is that the anxieties latent in many voyage

narratives are invariably fuelled as much by the rabble of masterless men, press-ganged Irishmen, petty tradesmen down on their luck, and the rest below decks and behind the palisade as by the savages outside in the wilderness. Indeed, if martial law were ever enforced on protocolonial expeditions, it was on the boats themselves and in the colonists' own settlements, and with such an iron hand that Prospero's despotism appears the benignest of dictatorships (albeit Caliban's servitude would have earned his master three months of imprisonment according to Sir Roger Williams's [1979: 275-276] draconian disciplinary recommendations, the precise aim of which was to protect the natives from the first Roanoke colonists of 1585). In this regard, Richard Crashaw extolled the salutary effect upon colonists' souls of corporal punishment and repressive government, arguing that, if "subject to some pinching miseries and to a strict form of government and severe discipline, [they] do often become new men, even as it were cast in a new mould" (qtd. Brown 1985: 64). As accustomed to pinchings – figurative and real – as any Caliban,[4] it was the common sort, pressed into service as sailors and colonial manpower, who generated most fear among the colonising aristocrats. And, as in Shakespeare's play, when the spectre of mutiny looms on board, voyage narratives often report the presence of music in the air, admonitory of imminent storms meteorological and social.

The Tempest's uncannily authentic rendering of contemporaneous maritime and colonial practices has often been remarked and its immediate sources recognised, chief among which is Strachey's "A True Reportory." Strachey's letter about the Bermuda storm, shipwreck and stranding certainly shares the fundamental premises of the play's plot, but what has been overlooked is the degree to which it is as much, or more, concerned with mutiny and disorder than the dramatic events with which it opens and the description of the islands themselves. This is just the opportunity maritime narratives afford to inscribe disorder through a network of related topics that might have made them attractive to the author of *The Tempest*. Like many other such narratives, Strachey's letter is forced to acknowledge the discontent and danger lodging among the

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[4] Breight (1990: 21) associates "pinching" specifically with the torture of conspirators; but travellers and voyagers such as William Webbe and William Lithgow were also often pinched literally by the Inquisition) or figuratively, as is the case with Ralegh and his men (Sell 2006: 145-54).

common sort as an ever-present threat to the stability of the ships of state and her Majesty's overseas settlements; and like other such narratives, Strachey's (1999: 298-302) weaves a leitmotif of disorder from the elements of music and storm. As the primordial storm was building, the winds sang and whistled "most unusually"; so horrific and hellish was the prelude to the tempest that "sences" were "overrunne" and "overmastered", in anticipation of the later rebel's attempts to "overrunne" authority and "overmaster" their governors. The terms used to describe how storms blew "in a restlesse tumult" or were "more outragious" than their predecessors resonate with images of disorderly human conduct and obviously invest in the same metaphorical economy which can derive "roaring boys" from waves and speak of "ruffian billows" (*2 Henry IV*, 3.1.22). During the storms, the balance of power between "the better sort" and "the common sort" remained in tact, even though the former took their turn with bucket and pump in an instant of temporary levelling (see Greenblatt 1988: 149-54) where *The Tempest* shows a temporary inversion. It is once on land that the mutinies, heralded jointly by the music and the storm, break out. After its paradisal description of the Bermudas, Strachey's report soon metamorphoses into an endless catalogue of "discontent", "disunion", "disobedience and rebellion"; and, of course, when the expedition finally makes it to the Jamestown colony, it is to find the living expression of the calamities consequent upon the sloth and riot of the "headlesse multitude." Significantly, Strachey makes the connection between real meteorological and figurative social storms when he reflects on the irony that God's merciful deliverance of the expedition from "the calamities of the Sea" had been corresponded with "dangers and divellish disquiets" once on land.

A similar combination of music, storm and immanent mutiny is found in Edward Hayes's account of Sir Humphrey Gilbert's Newfoundland expedition, the failure of which is ascribed in equal measure to Gilbert's capricious ineptitude and an unruly crew, joint catalysts of "confusion and disorder" (Hayes 1979: 25). Music, both figurative and real, is prominent in Hayes's sketch of the evening before the disastrous sequence of storms and shipwrecks commenced:

> The evening was faire and pleasant, yet not without token of storme to ensue, and most part of this Wednesday night, like the Swanne that singeth before her death, they in the Admiral, or Delight, continued in

sounding of Trumpets, with Drummes, and Fifes: also winding the
Cornets, Haughtboyes: and in the end of their jolitie, left with the battell
and ringing of doleful knells. (Hayes 1979: 37)

The storm is portended as much by the music-making of the
sailors as the immediately subsequent sighting of schools of
porpoises. In harmony with the omens of nature, the melodies and
merry-making of the common sort announce the imminent disorder
and chaos nature will bring to the fleet, a disorder and chaos which,
as Hayes's narrative continues, becomes an allegory of the tragic end
of the expedition's general, Gilbert himself. As night drew on, Hayes
reports, the sailors made "frivolous" claims to have heard "strange
voyces [...] which scarred some from the helme." Less frivolous is
Shakespeare's Boatswain's account of the "horrible" litany of
"strange and several noises/ Of roaring, shrieking, howling, jingling
chains/ And more diversity of sounds" which awoke him and his
companions from their captivity under the hatches (5.1.233-238). For
Northrop Frye (1965: 151), the mariners have spent "the action of the
play in a world of hellish music"; their emergence from under the
hatches would transform them, too, into Orphic revenants, much as
their real-life counterparts, after voyaging to hell and back, returned
dangerously laden with knowledge of other worlds, of poetic
Cannibals and of alternative social harmonics for the Montaignes
and Puttenhams of this world to admire or abjure. Meanwhile,
Alonso is prescient enough to hear in meteorological dissonance an
imminent modulation in the body politic's harmonies, which are
restored on this occasion to its original key:

> O, it is monstrous, monstrous!
> Methought the billows spoke and told me of it;
> The winds did sing it to me, and the thunder –
> That deep and dreadful organpipe – pronounced
> The name of Prosper. (3.3.95-99)

I am not suggesting that Hayes's *Report* is another possible source
of *The Tempest*, nor that Shakespeare had read it, or even heard of

Gilbert's Newfoundland expedition.[5] What I do think is that proto-colonial voyage reports like Strachey's and Hayes's instantiate an inventive topography in which music, storm and disorder are mutually implicit and pregnant with each other, as encapsulated in Alonso's speech. This inventive topography is exploited in *The Tempest*, indeed is foregrounded by the omnipresence of music and the opening scene of mariners, storm and shipwreck, whose figurative significance of disorder lingers on as flotsam and jetsam in the audience's mind, even as the latter is invited to contemplate Prospero's virtuoso resolution of the "difficulties, discontentments, mutinies, conspiracies, sicknesses, mortalitie, spoylings, and wracks by sea" that arise as the play progresses. The quotation in the previous sentence is Hayes's (1979: 41) inventory of the disorder that attended Gilbert's expedition, yet it would serve pretty well as a statement of the bouts of subversion Prospero has to deal with in the play; leaving aside "sicknesses", the other items are, more or less manifestly, present: Caliban allegedly attempted to "spoil" Miranda; Trinculo and Stephano appear in the "stolen apparel" (s.d. at 5.1.258); and Prospero seems to come to terms with his own eventual "mortality".

Thus *The Tempest* foregrounds, indeed is founded upon, the topical elements of music and storm whose quiet collaboration in voyage narratives composes a leitmotif of disorder. And, to repeat, if the main agent of disorder in Prospero's play is Caliban, *The Tempest*'s conversion of that leitmotif into its structural and atmospheric principal is an indication that the real threat of disorder lies in mutiny among the common sort, figured as the mariners whose presence frames Prospero's play. The conceptual leap from decoy Caliban to the mariners is facilitated by their common vulgar and/or savage musicality and their shared experience of pinchings; it is compelled by the metaphorical force of the tempest itself which,

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[5] Although the London literary grapevine must have buzzed with news of the death in the same storm of Stephen Parmenius, who had penned his promotional epic *De Navigatione* to promote the voyage alongside George Chapman's *De Guiana, Carmen Epicum* (Fuller 1995: 23-25). Curiously, Hayes implies that Gilbert put his books above the business of running a ship and protecting his men, much as Prospero's reading had distracted him from the business of government. Also, Prospero's irascibility twins him with Gilbert who tetchily boxed his cabin-boy's ears. There is, moreover, an eldritch coincidence in that Gilbert is drowned with "a book in his hand" (1979: 40-41) while Prospero promises to "drown my book" (5.1.57) once he no longer requires his art to keep disorder at bay.

interpreted in the context of voyage narratives, represents rebellion and chaos. If James I thought the tranquil precincts of the Blackfriars theatre or the Banqueting House would sequester him from the idle crowd of mutiny makers who frequented the outdoor public stages, "the ordinary places for masterless men to come together" and contrive their treasons (Pollard 2004: 321-322), Shakespeare proved him wrong: Prospero's dramatic narrative of totalitarian thaumaturgy is contained by the disquieting cadences of potential agents of disorder, and in this sense *The Tempest*'s superstructure mimics the very "admir'd disorder" (*Macbeth* 3.4.111) which Prospero's play is concerned to allay. Like *Macbeth*, its subject is the political disorder attendant on the usurpation of power; unlike *Macbeth* it conjures the spectre of usurpation by all levels of society (nobles, common sorts, servants and slaves) and thus expands the First Witch's tempest-tossed, Aleppo-bound Tiger (*Macbeth* 1.3.) into the aesthetic, topical and ordering principle of the theatrical experience. Thus, just when the patronage of power had smuggled the theatre away from the common sorts, whom Antonio would slander as whoresons and insolent noise-makers (*Tempest* 1.1.42-43), Shakespeare contrived to contain the royal show of dramaturgical autocracy, of absolutist order, within a framing topography that reverberates with the music of vulgar disorder sounding just off-stage. Significantly perhaps, the play's epilogue is spoken *in persona*: premonitory of an untuned universe, autocratic Prospero's petition for indulgent applause temporarily subjugates him to the will of the demos assembled around and below him. At a stroke the public theatre is disclosed as first step on the path towards universal suffrage; the whoreson and vulgar Stephanos and Trinculos milling in the pit might never don the vestments of royalty, but their aesthetic jurisdiction is pregnant with the political sovereignty which will one day be theirs.

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