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Shakespeare on the influence of music

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Thesis

SHAKESPEARE ON THE INFLUENCE OF MUSIC

Submitted by

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Analysis of the Thesis,

The introduction to the thesis includes some passages quoted from Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice showing what he in his own words says of the influence of music.

The main body of the paper is divided into two parts: the first takes up the most noteworthy effects which music produces on the emotions; the second is an analytical study of the use made of music in The Tempest, a play which is itself constructed like a musical composition as regards its discords and harmonies, all ending in one grand symphony at last.

The magic quality in harmony by which inanimate objects of nature as well as living creatures and human beings are depicted as being moved is first taken up and illustrated by a representative passage from A Midsummer Night's Dream.

This idea of supernatural melody leads to the Celtic Glendower's attempting to entertain
the plain English warriors, Hotspur and Mortimer, with strange music claimed by the Welsh prince to be in the air a thousand leagues away.

This in its turn ushers in the use which Shakespeare makes of music to emphasize welcome and good cheer.

Then, listening to the song which is sung as Bossanio leans over the caskets, we catch the suggestion, which Shakespeare advances again and again throughout his works, that music sounds rightly and beneficially only to the true in heart. Bassanio being loyal the music directs him to his sweetheart.

From this view of the subject it is only a step to the succeeding one which shows music to be the recognized food of those in love.

Next we may turn our attention to another power which music possesses. Being played to induce slumber it actually points out the mental condition of the subject. Two contrasted characters show this to be true: one is the carefree Titania in A Midsummer Night's Dream sung to sleep by the fairies: the other is the conscience-stricken King Henry IV.

Under the head of the lulling quality in music may be placed its soothing tendencies alike
dependent upon the condition of the subject. We see how the music which is playing when Queen Katharine falls asleep sounds harsh to her as she awakes after her vision. And in so many words King Richard II says of music that although it has helped madmen to their wits for himself it seems as if it would make him mad.

Shakespeare is fond of introducing the supernatural into his works. In many instances the notes of different birds are represented as foreboding events to come; while foreshadowing of disaster often finds lodgment in the breast without any apparent reason as in the case of Desdemona whose sadness prompts her song of Willow just previous to her unfortunate death.

In the second part of the thesis the play of The Tempest is regarded as an epitome of all the other dramas as regards its use of music. Here Shakespeare personifies music in the creation of the delicate Ariel, and makes it the moving power of the whole piece. The effect which the sprite's tabor, drum and songs have upon the various characters of the drama is studied, and the paper ends with Prospero's own idea of harmony.

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Readers of Shakespeare are fortunate in having the poet himself in one of the most picturesquely beautiful passages in all literature definitely set forth his belief on the influence of music over the human emotions. That he had faith in the harmony of sound to rouse or to soothe is evident throughout his works, but only in this one place does he expressly state what he considers that it is able to effect. It seems best therefore to introduce the study of the various uses that Shakespeare makes of music by noting what he himself through the character of Lorenzo in The Merchant of Venice has said about it.

Standing with Jessica, his young bride, in an avenue leading to Portia's home, the moon shining and the wind noiselessly stirring the leaves, his heart unable to contain its throbbing joy, Lorenzo speaks:

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank! Here will we sit and let the sounds of music creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night become the touches of sweet harmony. Sit, Jessica. Look how the floor of heaven is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:"
There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubins;
Such harmony is in immortal souls;
But whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it."

(The Merchant of Venice, V, i, 54-65)

As Lorenzo utters these words the musicians
with their instruments enter, and breaking away from
his rapturous description of heavenly music, he turns
his attention to that which is heard with mortal ears.
As the strings are struck Jessica remarks: "I am
never merry when I hear sweet music." Does it seem
too much to suppose that her thoughts have been
carried back to old Shylock in his lonesomeness?
He had loved her, and in spite of all his faults
he was her father. She does not repent having left
him for her lover, and yet it seems sad that she
could not have had his consent for her departure.
Her husband fathoms the depth of her emotion when he
replies:

"The reason is, your spirits are attentive:
For do but note a wild and wanton herd,
Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,
Fetching mad bounds, bellowing and neighing loud,
Which is the hot condition of their blood;
If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,
Or any air of music touch their ears,
You shall perceive them make a mutual stand,
Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze
By the sweet power of music."

(The Merchant of Venice, V, i, 70-79)
And then comes that passage the substance of which Shakespeare used again and again throughout his plays signifying the illimitable depths in human nature which music is able to stir:

"therefore the poet
Did feign that Orpheus drew trees, stones, and floods;
Since nought so stockish, hard and full of rage,
But music for the time doth change his nature.
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."

(The Merchant of Venice, V,i,79-88)

As Lorenzo ceases to speak Portia and Nerissa draw near. A little candle from the hall is throwing its beams towards them. All is silence except for the strains of music. The same it is which Portia had always been used to hear, but now after her noble and unselfish action towards the friend of her husband it sounds much more bewitchingly beautiful than it ever had before. She is tired after her journey, yet at peace with herself and as happy as one dreaming a beautiful dream. The spell of evening is upon her and instinctively she feels what Shakespeare is so fond of observing, that external conditions largely determine the value
of things. Addressing Nerissa she says of the music:

"Nothing is good, I see, without respect,
Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.
The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark
When neither is attended; and I think
The nightingale, if she should sing by day,
When every goose is cackling, would be thought
No better a musician than the wren.
How many things by season season'd are
To their right praise and true perfection!"

(The Merchant of Venice, V,i,99-108)

The magic power of music is emphasized throughout the plays. Oftentimes this is done by attributing to it supernatural qualities. In the myths of Greece Orpheus was represented as playing his lute, strung with the sinews of poets, until from force of fascination steel and stones softened, tigers became tame, and the mystic leviathan left the deep to dance upon the sands. Cleopatra's oars keeping time to the tune of flutes are pictured as followed by the enchanted waters. In another place we have the queen desiring music to play that the fish she would catch may be attracted into her net. The virtuous Marina singing to her lute causes the night birds to cease from song.

In such places in the plays music is represented as able to move not only human beings
but also the lower animals, and the inanimate objects of nature. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* we have a beautiful imaginative passage in which we can trace how Shakespeare was stimulated by his classic models and yet was in himself so truly original. His mind being flooded with airy nothings he bodies them forth just for the sake of delight. Preeminently sublime is the following quotation which portrays music with the power to charm the insensible water and stars:

"Thou remember'st
Since once I sat upon a promontory,
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain stars shot madly from their spheres,
To hear the sea-maid's music."

(*A Midsummer Night's Dream, II,i,148-154*)

This takes us out into the world of the unknown. The music which the mermaid makes is in its melody more beautiful than mortal ears have ever heard: it is harmony so powerful in its effect that waves and constellations are quickened into feeling at its sound.

Such music as this is what Glendower is ambitious of imitating when he entertains the two warriors, Mortimer and Hotspur. With the true
Celtic love for the supernatural the Welsh prince tries to make the practical Englishmen believe the music to be in the air a thousand leagues away. Mortimer is indeed fascinated by his lovely bride and by her song which accompanies the hidden music; but the restless Hotspur says contrarily that the howling of his brach would be preferable to him.

It is characteristic of Shakespeare that at times he introduces music into his plays for the purpose of denoting good cheer. In one of the most wholesome and hearty parts of As You Like It the banished duke, welcoming Orlando and old Adam to their forest meal, makes the cheer more abundant by bidding his cousin to sing. Happily the song is not one of cheap optimism. It recognizes the life which they are living as one of endurance and of hardship but still preferable to the one passed in former days when hollow-hearted friends surrounded them. After such a demonstration of real feeling as is expressed in the subject matter of these verses our love for Shakespeare increases. We are conscious that he is sincere and that we can trust his fidelity. Some lighter dramatist or smaller man would have made this song suggest
that the banished lords had reached Elysium, and that there was nothing left to be desired in this world. It is not so with Shakespeare. The bitter disappointment of the former life is not forgotten nor is the roughness of the present one, yet the song shows a cheerful heart and a disposition to make the best of what fortune has bestowed. While Amiens sings with his lips, upon the strings of the heart he plays the accompaniment to his song, which when it is ended satisfies the feelings of all. Nothing but truth has prevailed and friendship is cemented.

In The Merchant of Venice Portia has music play while Bassanio chooses the casket. A suggestion of how to determine the right one is inwoven in the accompanying song but so hidden that only the heart rightly tuned can perceive its meaning. Once more this serves to illustrate that Shakespeare believed music to work beneficially on only those whose hearts are true. During the long period of suspense previous to the opening of the casket uncertainty of the outcome causes Portia to break out into a succession of musical similes. She says that if Bassanio loses, he makes a swanlike end fading in music. But if he wins, what is music then? It is
"Even as the flourish when true subjects bow
To a new-crowned monarch."

Here she compares the rejoicing of a people in the presence of a new sovereign to the joy that she and her lover will mutually feel if he is successful in his selection. The rapture in her breast being somewhat subdued, again she says that music can be compared to the dulcet sounds at the break of day which creep into the bridegroom's ear summoning him to marriage.

Shakespeare believed that music was also an incentive to love. Orsino, in Twelfth Night, despairing to win the favor of Olivia, commands the musicians to play on that if music be the food of love, surfeiting he may sicken and so die. Mercutio says of the young Romeo that he is dead; shot through the ear with a love-song. And the Egyptian siren, Cleopatra, calls for music; music, "moody food" of those that trade in love. Even the clownish Cloten Shakespeare depicts as seeking to win Imogen from her fidelity to her husband by causing music to be played outside her chamber door. To serenade sweethearts seems to have been a custom in the poet's time, but how fine is the feeling of him who never allows any of his heroines to be deceived by such
music when played by false lovers!

Another virtue of music is its lulling tendency. Shakespeare recognizing this obtains some of his greatest dramatic effects by introducing melody into his plays for the purpose of promoting sleep. In A Midsummer Night's Dream he reveals how carefree Titania is by showing how quickly she falls into slumber as the fairies sing the weird and lightsome song:

"You spotted snakes with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong,
Come not near our fairy queen." etc.

(A Midsummer Night's Dream, II, ii, 9-12)

With this let us contrast the king's soliloquy in the second part of Henry IV. Had he told us nothing but this that, although "lull'd with sound of sweetest melody", sleep no more would weigh his eyelids down we should still know that in some way he had "frighted sleep."

Closely connected with the sleep-producing quality in music is that which it possesses to soothe the mind. Queen Katharine, striving to calm her agitated spirit, calls for her maid to take her lute and sing a song to her. The subject of the verses is the old myth of how Orpheus with his lute made
even senseless objects of the earth to do him reverence. Significantly interpretative are the three closing lines of the song:

"In sweet music is such art,
Killing care and grief of heart
Fall asleep, or hearing, die."

(King Henry VIII, i, 12-14)

Later on with music playing the queen falls asleep. As she slumbers she sees a beautiful vision. So delightful and real it seems to be that when she wakes to realize its immaterial nature the perplexity that she feels causes the music to sound harsh and heavy to her.

Shakespeare so often comes over this same idea that only when things are in their right order do we have harmony, and that only when the lives of human beings are in accordance with the divine nature of their existence can this harmony be appreciated to its full extent. The same music which to a guiltless and unvexed soul sounds divine to a sinful or perplexed being strikes chords of terror and warning. It is the condition of the man who listens that largely determines the effect of melody.

In As You Like It the song which serves to make the rest of the company merry brings melancholy to Jaques. Richard II on hearing music
played outside his prison calls for it to sound no more for he says that, although it had helped madmen to their wits, for himself it seemed as if it would make him mad.

Shakespeare introduced into his dramas many of the old traditions of Britain. It would be interesting to discover how certain of these have grown up. Throughout the plays the songs of the lark and of the wren are recognized as signs of joy and happiness; while the notes of the owl and of the night-raven signify disaster. It seems reasonable to suppose that these ideas sprang from analogy. Evil matters are looked upon as out of tune, discordant and harsh; so too is the screech of the owl or the croak of the raven: but pleasing to the senses is the natural order of events, and so also is the warbling of the glorious songsters.

The deep, hoarse sound of the raven or the scream of the owl was thought to give warning of ensuing disaster. Of Gloucester, later Richard III, the king who wrought so many murders in England and brought such dire calamity upon his country, it is written:
"The owl shriek'd at thy birth,--an evil sign;
The night-crow cried, aboding luckless time;
Dogs howl'd, and hideous tempests shook down trees;
The raven rook'd her on the chimney's top,
And chattering pies in dismal discords sung."

(III Henry VI, V, vi, 44-48)

In Julius Caesar the death of a man, accounted the saviour of his people, is said to have been presaged by the bird of night, sitting even at noonday upon the marketplace, hooting and shrieking.

In such passages as these we see how well Shakespeare knew the superstitious nature of many of the people, but for himself he refutes such opinion. (see King Lear I, 2.) His faith however seems to accept another kind of forewarning involving the belief that a supersensible person can receive premonition of evil merely from the atmosphere of what is going on around him.

Perhaps nothing more pathetic in the whole of Shakespeare's works can be found than the song which Desdemona sings just before her murder. Innocent and consequently unable to understand the passion of her husband yet her delicate spirit has received the impression that all is not well. As she sings her song of Willow it seems impossible that the Shakespeare audiences should not have felt what
was to be her fate. This song Emilia remembers later when by the side of her mistress she too lies dying.

"What did thy song bode, lady? Hark, canst thou hear me? I will play the swan, And die in music. (singing) Willow, Willow, Willow."

(Othello, V, ii, 246-248)

After studying what Shakespeare believes that music is able to accomplish, it will be enlightening to see how he employs it in his plays. A progress from a scarcely significant to a completely masterful use of music is coincident with the development of the poet's dramatic powers. In the early plays music is brought in to obtain few of the subtly emotional effects for which it is introduced into the later ones.

From childhood Shakespeare had been fond of music. Even as a boy he had learned to know the subterraneous music made by the south wind, the "hollow whistling in the leaves," foretelling "a tempest and a blustering day." In his native Warwickshire as evening drew on he had listened to the nightingale; and often had he heard the lark, "herald of the morn, beat the vaulty heavens with
his notes." Laying his ear close to the meadow grass he had caught the murmur of the gentle "zephyrs blowing below the violet, not wagging his sweet head." He had been up early on a May-day morning and heard the sounds of the hunt, the winding horn and the voices of the hounds, "match'd in mouth like bells, each under each."

All such music Shakespeare had early loved, but it was only gradually that he came to understand the full significance of harmony. As the period of his dramatic activity drew to a close his belief that music acted as a quickening spirit over men's minds seems to have so taken possession of his fancy that in what may very possibly be his last complete play he personified or rather spiritualized music in the creation of the delicate Ariel. The Tempest is an epitome of all the other dramas in so far as music is concerned. The merry Ariel lives, moves and has his being in music. His tabor, drum, and songs are the motive power of the entire play. He makes "the thunder, that deep and dreadful organ pipe," which accompanies the tempest which is raging when the play opens. It is he who disperses the shipwrecked persons severally about the island and
it is the same dainty sprite whose song Ferdinand has no will but to follow until he is brought into the presence of Prospero and Miranda. In his own words Ferdinand says:

"Where should this music be? i' the air, or th' earth?
It sounds no more: and, sure, it waits upon Some god o' the island. Sitting on a bank, Weeping again the king my father's wreck, This music crept by me upon the waters, Allaying both their fury and my passion With its sweet air: thence I have follow'd it, Or it hath drawn me rather."

(The Tempest, I, ii, 387-394.)

As he thus meditates Ariel invisible sings anew:

"Full fathom five thy father lies; Of his bones are coral made; Those are pearls that were his eyes: Nothing of him that doth fade But doth suffer a sea-change Into something rich and strange. Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell."

(The Tempest, I, ii, 396-402)

That the music has inspired Ferdinand as something mystic and supernatural appears when seeing Miranda for the first time he addresses her with the words: "Most sure the goddess on whom these airs attend!"

Observing the effects of this meeting
upon the young prince and his own daughter Prospero turns to Ariel with the words:

"It goes on, I see,
As my soul prompts it. Spirit, fine
spirit! I'll free thee
Within two days for this."

(The Tempest, I,ii,419-421)

But this is not the end of Ariel's labors.

In another part of the island is the king and his shipwrecked lords. Ariel's music has attracted them thither and it will lead them away again when it shall serve his master's purpose to have them go. Before the day is done wonders as great as the miraculous harp of Amphion was anciently said to have achieved he is to work upon their senses.

Shakespeare intimates that not all souls are receptive of the divine music. Alonzo and the group of lords sleep as the invisible spirit works upon them, but the two wicked lords, Sebastian and Antonio, do not feel its soothing influence. Antonio confesses that his spirits are nimble and diabolically proposes killing the king and the good old lord, Gonzalo. Together they lay the plot of death. But just as they are about to strike, the
same mystic force that weighed down the eyelids of the lords also arouses them. On the one side of the sleepers stand the would be murderers: on the other side hovers the invisible good singing in Gonzalo's ear:

"While you here do snoring lie,
Open-eyed conspiracy
His time doth take.
If of life you keep a care,
Shake off slumber, and beware:
Awake! awake!

(The Tempest, II,i,300-305)

The situation at this juncture is dramatically impressive. If we may trust the villains, Sebastian and Antonio, the strange humming which served to wake Gonzalo sounded to them "a din to fright a monster's ear; like the bellowing of bulls or the roar of lions."

It is most certain that the music of the island works upon the hearer according to his merits or ill deserts. The innocent Ferdinand is attracted directly to Prospero's cell by its influence, but the royal three are desperate: their great guilt

"Like poison given to work a long time after,
Now 'gins to bite the spirits."

(The Tempest, III,iii,105-6)
No easy path to the place of happy reunion is open to them: and not alone are they to suffer: the attendants to their wishes are doomed to be mocked as well as their masters by the vanishing banquet.

Of the trio Alonzo is the most receptive of the influences about him; but it must be remembered that the chastening rod had already fallen upon him in the supposed death of his son. The solemn and strange music which accompanies the mock feast at first strikes only an harmonious note in Alonzo's breast, and when the shapes appear with the banquet, he realizes that there is something out and beyond the natural in the event, and as from some dreaded spectre he calls on heaven for help. Later when the tables have suddenly disappeared, Ariel rebukes the king for having helped to supplant Prospero and for subsequently exposing him and his infant daughter to the rude sea. Struck with remorse Alonzo exclaims:

"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 organ pipe, pronounced Pronounced the name of Prosper: it did bass my trespass."

(The Tempest, III,iii,95-99)
But the imposing exhibition appears to the two who are still meditating murder merely as a drollery. They seek not self-destruction as Alonzo does, but with drawn swords will fight "one fiend at a time their legions o'er." The time comes at last however when they as well as their king are compelled to yield to the charm which the magician works upon them.

"Confined together all are prisoners in the line-grove." At command Ariel releases them, and they follow his music until they come into the presence of the duke whom they have wronged. Here a solemn air, as the best comforter to an unsettled fancy, cures their brains. All enter a circle where they are spell-stopped. Prospero now intends first to make himself known to them, and then to forgive all and to release them from further pain. He sends the dainty Ariel for his robes of office which he had worn when he reigned duke of Milan. At this juncture once more comes the dramatic effect of the song. On one side of the stage within the magic ring stand the shipwrecked men gazing dumbfoundedly at the transformation of the man before them into the great duke whom they supposed had perished.
twelve years before. On the other side of the plat-
form, conscious of his triumph, is Prospero attended
by Ariel singing as he works:

"Where the bee sucks, there suck I:
In a cowslip's bell I lie,—
There I couch: when owls do cry
On the bat's back I do fly
    After summer, merrily
Merrily, merrily shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough."

(The Tempest, V,i,88-94)

The freedom of the sprite as expressed in
his song is aptly contrasted with the hungry looks
in the eyes of the subdued men.

Then comes the resolution of the whole
action of the drama. Prospero not only discovers
Ferdinand to his father, he also reveals each man
to himself: and in Alonzo's very fitting words the
sentiments of the whole tempest-tossed crew are made
plain:

"This is as strange a maze as e'er men trod;
And there is in this business more than nature
Was ever conduct of."

(The Tempest, V,i,242-44)

Turning back over the play we find that
Shakespeare with great fidelity to fact did not
depict his characters of low life as having any
great skill in music, but he has justly attributed
to them that instinctive love for music which even the lower animals possess. The intimacy which such persons hold with nature often gives them a subtle and mystic knowledge of her moods which the trained scholar is not seldom ignorant of.

In this connection it is interesting to find the vulgar Trinculo giving form to a thought which in the nineteenth century was to be reechoed by one of Nature's most truly loving children. Wordsworth says of the shepherd, Michael, that often before a storm he heard the winds make subterraneous music. A very different character in most respects is Trinculo from Michael, yet they have one point in common: it is their ability to hear the song of nature. There is "another storm brewing", for Trinculo hears it "sing i' the wind," but instead of calling him to the mountains it warns him to seek shelter.

Subtly different from Trinculo is the drunken Stephano whom we see for the first time as he comes in singing his song of the tavern. The divining Caliban is not long in noting the distinguishing characteristics of the two sailors. Trinculo is scurrilous in his treatment of the island monster,
but Stephano is in his degree kind to him. Almost as soon as they become acquainted Stephano teaches his new admirer to troll a catch, and he undertakes to sing it anew at Caliban's request. There is something very human in all this. However, the slave has much the finer ear for the music, and although he is willing to do most humble service for his new-found master, he is ready with the criticism, "That's not the tune", when Stephano begins the song.

How delightful is the rest of this same scene. No sooner has Caliban corrected his companion than Ariel plays the air on his tabor and pipe, at the sound of which Trinculo at once shows fear. "O, forgive me my sins," he exclaims. Dreading lest he should discover his idol to be basely terror-stricken also, the native slave turns apprehensively to Stephano, and timidly asks, "Art thou afeard?" The answer is reassuring, "No, monster, not I." With a heart filled with thankfulness the witch's son bursts out into one of the loveliest and most poetic speeches in the whole play:

"Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises, Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not. Sometime a thousand twangling instruments Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices
That, if I then had waked 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 waked, 
I cried to dream again."

(The Tempest, III, ii, 144-152)

This is a height to which Stephano cannot reach. All that he sees in what Caliban has said is the bravery of his kingdom where he shall have music for nothing. Not with so much equanimity is he to come out of the next ordeal into which the tabor of the merry Ariel is to lead him and his companions. With mischievous glee the sprite describes to Prospero the plight in which he has left Caliban and his fellows:

"they were red-hot with drinking; 
So full of valour, that they smote the air 
For breathing in their faces; beat the ground 
For kissing of their feet; yet always bending 
Towards their project. Then I beat my tabor; 
At which, like unback'd colts, they prick'd 
their ears, 
Advanced 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 enter'd their frail shins."

(The Tempest, IV,i,171-181)

Up to this point the subjects affected by the music have been studied. It is now fitting to consider Prospero, the magician himself,
who recognizes music as the all-pervasive force whose mystic power is able either to soothe or to excite the emotions. In order to give his daughter and Ferdinand some spectacular demonstration of his magic, he has Ariel summon the spirits of the pageant. One at a time they enter. Iris comes first, next Ceres and then Juno with majestic tread, who after greeting her bounteous sister sings:

"Honour, riches, marriage-blessing, Long continuance, and increasing, Hourly joys be still upon you! Juno sings her blessings on you."

(The Tempest, IV,i,106-109)

As Juno ceases Ceres chants:

"Earth's increase and foison plenty, Barns and garners never empty; Vines, with clustering bunches growing; Plants with goodly burden bowing; Spring come to you at the farthest In the very end of harvest! Scarcity and want shall shun you; Ceres' blessing so is on you."

(The Tempest, IV, i, 110-117)

Afterwards the spirits of the nymphs and reapers enter and all dance together. The effect of the whole on the brain is "a most majestic vision."

The interpretation of this scene is not
far to seek. Prospero himself gives it to us. His music has conjured up before the eyes such visions as dreams are masters of which endure but for a little season and then vanish "into air, into thin air." We ourselves are dreamers and the visions that we have depend upon the harmony of the lives which we lead. While all is accordant and peaceful life is as a beautiful dream, but interrupt its music and the vision vanishes.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

The books read including the introductions were the thirty-seven plays of the Shakespeare canon. The Rolfe edition was chiefly used, but there were a few exceptions, namely:

A Midsummer Night's Dream---------New Hudson
The Merchant of Venice " "
As You Like It " "
Julius Caesar " "
The Comedy of the Tempest " "
Hamlet Arden
King Lear Old Hudson
Coriolanus " "
King Henry the Eighth---------- " "