

# Magic, Conversion, and Prayer in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

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• <https://doi.org/10.31823/d.30.4.3> •

UDK: 821.111-2:27 • Original Scientific Paper

Received: 26<sup>th</sup> August 2021 • Accepted: 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022

**Summary:** *This paper deals with the concepts of magic, conversion to Christianity, and prayer in Shakespeare's play The Tempest. Employing New Historicism and using Christian writings, it analyses Prospero's prayer and conversion, which have so far been neglected by scholars in favor of magic, and juxtaposes them to magic. This reading supports the underrepresented view of Prospero's magic as heretical and punishable, suggests that Prospero's abjuration of magic is comparable to the deliverance from the occult and conversion to Christianity, and reveals the first interpretation of Prospero's prayer. Namely, prayer, following Prospero's conversion, is represented by Shakespeare as the true and ultimate value of human life and the antithesis to magic.*

**Keywords:** *Shakespeare, The Tempest, magic, conversion, prayer, Christianity.*

## Introduction

In Shakespearean scholarship, an extensive body of research describes, classifies, and evaluates Prospero's magic from different points of view. On the one hand, a significant number of researchers claim that Prospero is a theurgist or an Artist-magus, whose »white magic« is considered benevolent and therefore used for good causes in comparison to Sycorax's evil magic. On the other hand, other scholars believe that Prospero's magic is, like all magic, damnable. In addition, there is a third group of researchers, who display the attitude that Prospero's magic is more complex than a simple dichotomy between black and white.

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As one of the first significant classifications of Prospero's magic, *Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns* (1937) by Walter Clyde Curry applies Neo-Platonist philosophy to differentiate between Sycorax's and Prospero's magic, i.e., goety or black magic and theurgy or »the honorable science« (167), thus claiming that Prospero uses his powerful magic for benevolent causes. Similarly, in his essay »This Rough Magic: Perspectives of Art and Morality in *The Tempest*« (1972), Robert Egan considers Prospero a demiurge, claiming that Prospero does not reject his art as a whole, but only his »rough magic,« which is considered to be his refusal to forgive. Furthermore, Yates argues in *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (1979) that Prospero is a white magician, who stands in contrast to Sycorax, a practitioner of black magic. She sees Prospero as a Dee-like magus, who represents a part of the Elizabethan revival, since, according to her, the occult philosophy was the main philosophy of the Elizabethan age. However, *The Tempest* was written and performed during the reign of King James I, a king who disliked Doctor Dee and feared magicians and witches, which is a fact that Yates mentions, but does not associate with *The Tempest*. Moreover, John S. Mebane's book *Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age: The Occult Tradition and Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare* (1989) portrays Prospero's art as benevolent and as »a means through which God's will is accomplished« (176). There are other scholars who accept the view of Prospero's magic as benign, such as Clifford Siskin, who classifies Prospero as »a 'white' witch« (150) in his article »Freedom and Loss in *The Tempest*« (1977), Cosmo Corfield, whose essay »Why Does Prospero Abjure His 'Rough Magic'?« (1985) describes Prospero as a theurgist who is going in the wrong direction, John D. Cox in »Recovering Something Christian about *The Tempest*« (2000) considers him a »white magician« (32), and Hossain and Isseni regard his magic as white and »morally neutral« (33) in »Perception of the Supernatural Worlds in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*« (2014).

The thesis of Barbara A. Mowat's article »Prospero, Agrippa, and Hocus Pocus« (1981) is somewhat different. She argues that Prospero's magic is more complex than a dichotomy between white and black magic, on which the other critics insist. According to her, »Prospero is a product of several magic traditions« (302): he is a magus, an enchanter, a wizard, but also an illusionist. Her later article, »Prospero's Book« (2001), suggests that Prospero's book »both is and is not a grimoire« (25), and that the distinction between Prospero's and Sycorax's magic as white versus black is inadequate. Furthermore, she argues that Prospero's book indicates neither Prospero's belonging to »Neoplatonic/Cabalistic magic nor to witchcraft,« but to the category of a »magician« or »necromancer« (25), toward which the Church showed a fairly hostile attitude although magicians and necromancers opposed witches (26). However, Mowat acknowledges that many questions about Prospe-

ro's magic will remain unanswered until we gain more knowledge about conjuring books. In the wake of Mowat's research, Eva Eliašová observes in »Shakespeare's Magic and *The Tempest*« (2014) that the difference between white and black magic »is not so easily definable,« which she recognizes in *The Tempest*, claiming that it is »full of ambiguities concerning magic« (24).

The farthest shift away from the glorification of Prospero's magic is presented in »'Unless I Be Reliev'd by Prayer': *The Tempest* in Perspective,« published in 1974 by D'Orsay W. Pearson. Opposing the majority of scholars, the author presents strong arguments against the acceptance of Prospero's magic as benevolent. He agrees with Curry's view of Prospero as a theurgist but claims that to see him as a benevolent magician means »to violate both the text of the play and the context of ideas in which it must be approached« (253). Pearson takes into consideration the historical context of Shakespeare's play and reports that any kind of magic was considered unlawful and damnable at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Similar to Pearson, in »*The Tempest*: Gratuitous Movement or Action Without Kibes and Pinches« (1981) Margreta de Grazia claims that Prospero's magic is not very different from Sycorax's. She emphasizes that Prospero had to abjure magic in order to feel compassion, which is an action that freed him and the others from his spells and thereby helped him avoid Sycorax's fate. There are other scholars who interpret Prospero's magic in a similar way. For instance, Theodore Spencer's article »Shakespeare and the Nature of Man: *The Tempest*« (1972) argues that Prospero renounces his power that lies »outside the limits of human nature« (459) and returns to his position of an ordinary human being. Anthony Harris explains in *Night's Black Agents: Witchcraft and Magic in Seventeenth-Century Drama* (1980) that Prospero acknowledges »the damnable nature of his art« (136). Unlike his earlier article, John D. Cox's book *Seeming Knowledge: Shakespeare and Skeptical Faith* (2007) admits that Prospero had to use »demonic power« to wake the dead (214), while Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan in their »Introduction« to *The Tempest* (2011) express an attitude that the distinction between Prospero's and Sycorax's magic »is erased . . . in Prospero's speech of renunciation,« supporting the point of view that Prospero's »magic is not really benign and must be rejected« (66).

To the best of my knowledge, Pearson's and de Grazia's arguments as well as the more moderate argumentation by Mowat have never been disputed, unlike the arguments by the school headed by Curry. However, the issue of prayer in *The Tempest* has been largely neglected by scholars so far. The main essays dealing with this notion are David N. Beauregard's »New Light on Shakespeare's Catholicism: Prospero's Epilogue in *The Tempest*« (1997), which interprets the key concepts in the Epilogue, among them prayer, as »expressions of a sensibility rooted in Roman

Catholic doctrine« (161), Tom McAlindon's »The Discourse of Prayer in *The Tempest*« (2001), which studies the language of *The Tempest*, »Rereading Prayer as Social Act: Examples from Shakespeare« (2013), in which Joseph Sterrett reads prayer in Shakespeare's plays as a performance, and Beauregard's »Shakespeare's Prayers« (2018), which discovers allusions to Roman Catholic doctrine in the vocabulary and phraseology of the Epilogue. Nevertheless, the notion of prayer has never been analyzed in contrast to magic, and the motives for the sudden change of Prospero's heart in Act V are still a matter of debate.<sup>1</sup> What this paper will argue is that Prospero's conversion to Christianity is the missing link necessary for the understanding of his renunciation of magic, forgiveness, and prayer.

In other words, contributing to the view of Prospero's magic as damnable by providing new theological and historical evidence, this paper will examine the issues of prayer and conversion, which have a crucial role in understanding *The Tempest*. The paper has four main sections. Firstly, the role of religion and the attitude toward magic in the Jacobean era will be examined in order to place *The Tempest* in the historical context as well as to justify the usage of Catholic theoretical literature in the paper. The next section will present a thorough analysis of Prospero's magic, which will be followed by the interpretation of Prospero's abjuration of magic as conversion to Christianity. The final section will address the issue of prayer in *The Tempest*, interpreting the Epilogue as Prospero's humble prayer, discovering the elements of the Lord's Prayer in the play, and identifying the objects of Prospero's prayer. It will then be suggested that the central theme of *The Tempest* is conversion, through which Shakespeare acknowledges the power of prayer.

## 1. The Attitude toward Magic and Religion in the Jacobean Era

In order to understand the context in which *The Tempest* was written and played, it is necessary to take a closer look at the role of religion and attitude toward magic in the Jacobean era. The Renaissance society was generally interested in, but also afraid of magic (and this was particularly true for King James I), resulting in magicians' conflict with the law (Eliašová 22). By regulating laws and courts and by controlling the public opinion, the Church played a prominent part in the society (Thomas 181), and it considered sorcery to be a heresy, »the greatest of all sins, because it involved the renunciation of God and deliberate adherence to his greatest enemy« (Thomas 521)—the Devil. The punishment for heretics was not only ecclesiastical, but also secular (Macfarlane 129, Pearson 255, Thomas 292), and it

<sup>1</sup> For example, Marnieri comments that »Prospero mysteriously and inexplicably gives up his magic just before starting the voyage back« (15).

involved death, imprisonment, or excommunication, (Thomas 203-4, Tyson 301-3), the latter being a great penalty since the offender was cut off both from church sacraments and from the whole community (Thomas 632).

It is important to emphasize that theologians considered all kinds of magical activities equally evil (Thomas 305-6), which King James I agreed with, not recognizing »white magic« as lawful or benevolent in his highly influential book *Demonology* (Tyson 5). In particular, »not only did no theory of beneficent magic ever become a part of general learning in Elizabethan England, but also—and of even greater importance for *The Tempest*—no general acceptance of a beneficent magic as lawful is evident during the period« (Pearson 255). In other words, the official attitude toward Hermetic magic, a practice believed by a large number of scholars to be exercised by Prospero, was generally hostile (Thomas 319), and it was never part of conventional Protestant education (Thomas 267), contrary to the argumentation of authors such as Curry and Yates. Considering Prospero a magician (who stands in opposition to witches), Mowat reports that the Church was extremely hostile toward them, regarding them as perhaps even more dangerous than witches, despite their countering of witchcraft (»Prospero's Book« 26). Macfarlane confirms this opinion of magicians as the enemies of witches by quoting Puritan writers of the period, William Perkins and Gaule, who wrote that wizards were even worse than black witches, that they were the most dangerous enemies of God and salvation, »and that seeking to them constituted a tacit compact with the Devil« (129), so that they should be executed as well as black witches (129). In the context of *The Tempest*, according to Pearson, Shakespeare's approach to Prospero is marked by »the attitude of both church and state that theurgy is a damnable, unlawful art which is sometimes more dangerous to the practitioner than is the obviously damnable and unlawful practice of goety« (255).

Since King James I held witches responsible for raising tempests in order to sink his and the queen's ship, he was deathly afraid of them, so he made Queen Elizabeth's laws against sorcery even stricter. As his fear of witches was no laughing matter (Eliašová 22, Greenblatt 356), it is clear that no plays glorifying magic would have been allowed by censors to be performed in England, let alone at court and later during the marriage celebrations of the king's daughter, where *The Tempest* was performed, especially if it is taken into consideration that a parallel can be drawn between the tempest raised by Prospero and the one raised by witches to sink King James's ship. If all arguments above are taken into consideration, despite the belief and interest of Shakespeare's contemporaries in magic, it is clear that the official attitude toward magic in general was at least unsympathetic, if not hostile. Consequently, Prospero's magic neither could have been intended by Shakespeare to be

benevolent nor was it officially held to be as such since censors approved it, and it was performed at King James' court at least twice.

As the opposition to magic, Christianity was taken very seriously in the seventeenth century. After the Reformation, Protestantism was the official religion in England; it was required that all children were baptized and catechized, and not attending church on Sundays was a criminal offence (Thomas 179-80). Prayer was considered a means of self-formation as well as a means of the formation of community through baptism, since every child was baptized (»Shakespeare's Prayers« 123), so it played a particularly important role. Apart from that, it was a Christian duty to pray every day for blessings such as faith, the forgiveness of sins, and food (Thomas 133). These activities and beliefs naturally bear witness to the dominant position of religion in Jacobean England in opposition to magic.

However, Shakespeare's religious affiliation cannot be determined with certainty. According to Greenblatt, there is much evidence for double consciousness in his plays (Greenblatt 100) but also in his life, which Batson also points out (XI), while Elisabetta Sala claims in *L'Enigma di Shakespeare: Cortigiano o dissidente?* that Shakespeare was a Catholic. Whether a Protestant or a Catholic, Shakespeare's Christian beliefs are evidenced by his plays. Since his family background and plays testify to his Catholic affiliation or at least double consciousness, it is justified to use both Catholic and Protestant theoretical literature to discuss his plays, especially *The Tempest*, in which Beauregard finds convincing evidence for Shakespeare's Roman Catholic affiliation. This is the reason why Catholic theoretical literature, among other literature, will be used in this article.

## 2. Prospero's Magic

As Prospero's story of the loss of his dukedom reveals, his troubles began with his negligence of the ducal role in order to study, as he reports, »volumes that I prize above my dukedom« (Shakespeare I.ii.167), and with the consequent appointment of his brother Antonio to execute his duties, whereupon Antonio usurped the throne, resulting in Prospero's exile. Embittered by his brother's betrayal, Prospero fails to recognize his own responsibility for his political downfall but views himself as an innocent victim and »the selfless seeker for knowledge« (Pearson 259). However, Prospero's knowledge proves not to be as selfless and noble as he depicts it. Apart from the laws against magic and the general attitude toward it, which were explained in the previous section, the evidence against the benevolence of Prospero's character and magic is to be found in the text of the play too.

Namely, in Act V, Prospero himself reports that he used his »rough magic« to bedim the sun, raise winds and thunders, cause earthquakes, and wake up the dead, whereby he disrupted the natural order for an unknown reason. What especially catches the eye is his waking up the dead. Cox explains that »the reversal of death was thought to be God's unique prerogative and therefore beyond the power of benign spirits,« so »[f]or Prospero to have waked the dead must therefore require his recourse to demonic power« (*Seeming Knowledge* 214), which is one of the proofs that Prospero's magic could not have been benevolent. When he raises the tempest and afterwards inquires whether the castaways are safe, one might wonder what his true intentions are. It soon becomes clear that the charms we witness afterwards are driven by his rage against the usurpers of his dukedom, and that his aims are vengeance and the marriage of his daughter, which represents his desire to control both people and events. Namely, he manipulates the castaways like marionettes, orchestrating the action of the play like a skillful director. He decides what they will do and think, and how they will feel, thus destroying their »freedom of action and free will at the same time« (Berger 219). He successfully induces despair and anxiety in them by using magic, which leads them to madness. To illustrate, after raising the tempest, Ariel announces that he »felt a fever of the mad, and play'd / Some tricks of desperation« (Shakespeare I.ii.209-10). Afterward, having made the banquet vanish, Ariel observes that he has made »the three men of sin« (Shakespeare III.iii.53) mad and such »men hang and drown / Their proper selves« (Shakespeare III.iii.59-60). Alonso has a »strange stare« (Shakespeare III.iii.94) and rambles in delirium: »Therefore my son i' th' ooze is bedded; and / I'll seek him deeper than e'er plummet sounded, / And with him there lie mudded« (Shakespeare III.iii.100-2). Realizing the state of the men, Gonzalo perceives that »[a]ll three of them are desperate« (Shakespeare III.iii.104) and beseeches their fellows to »follow them swiftly, / And hinder them from what this ecstasy / May now provoke them to« (Shakespeare III.iii.107-9). Although Prospero wants his enemies to repent, Pearson warns that madmen are not capable of repentance (268); consequently, their most likely destiny is, instead, suicide, as we have seen in the quotation above. De Grazia explains this further by recognizing that Prospero awakens guilt but eliminates the hope of absolution, which drives the sinners toward destruction (257). Apart from that, Prospero uses his powers to enslave Ferdinand, so that he and Miranda fall in love, in which Anders sees »Prospero's Machiavellian self-interest and immoral behavior . . . highlighted« since Prospero's true motive is creating a union between Milan and Naples (111). Prospero also tortures Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo by setting spirits in the shape of dogs and hounds on them. Caliban constantly fears the tortures of Prospero's spirits that he frequently endures:

All the infections that the sun sucks up  
 From bogs, fens, flats, on Prosper fall, and make him  
 By inch-meal a disease! His spirits hear me,  
 And yet I needs must curse. But they'll nor pinch,  
 Fright me with urchin-shows, pitch me i' th'mire,  
 Nor lead me, like a firebrand, in the dark  
 Out of my way, unless he bid 'em; but  
 For every trifle are they set upon me;  
 Sometime like apes that mow and chatter at me,  
 And after bite me; then like hedgehogs which  
 Lie tumbling in my barefoot way, and mount  
 Their pricks at my footfall; sometime am I  
 All wound with adders, who with cloven tongues  
 Do hiss me into madness. (II.i.1-14)

The airy spirit Ariel is not spared from his master's rage; inspired by the punishment of the evil witch Sycorax, Prospero threatens him with pegging him in an oak tree for twelve winters, which implies that his magic is as malevolent as hers is. De Grazia observes that Caliban, having experienced both Prospero's and Sycorax's magic, considers their powers »different in degree not in kind« (255): »His art is of such pow'r, / It would control my dam's god Setebos, / And make a vassal of him« (Shakespeare I.ii.372-4).

The majority of Prospero's charms are exercised through his spirit Ariel, whom Pearson proves is of diabolical origin. Namely, he argues that Prospero's promise to liberate Ariel a year before his time of servitude expires indicates »the traditional blood pact of goety rather than the divine manipulation of beneficent spirits,« considering that, according to traditional pneumatology, it is impossible to constrain good spirits as they do not perform service for men through fear or force but out of love and as God's agents (262-3). Secondly, Ariel's subjugation by the evil witch Sycorax as well as her power over him that enables her to punish him confirm the hypothesis that Ariel must be of demonic nature, which consequently sheds a not-so-positive light on Prospero as his current master (263). Thirdly, the talents that Ariel possesses were usually attributed to demons; in particular, manipulating the weather such as causing storms, tormenting people, or supplying dainties from distant lands, the latter being comparable to Ariel's banquet (Pearson 263-4). The play further confirms the demonic character of Prospero's spirits: during the tempest, Ferdinand jumps overboard crying »Hell is empty, / And all the devils are here« (Shakespeare I.ii.213-4), while in the banquet scene Prospero declares



that some of his spirits »Are worse than devils« (Shakespeare III.iii.36) (Pearson 264-5). Pearson's statement is supported by King James's *Demonology*, according to which the devils convince their scholars that spirits fell in the four elements at Lucifer's fall, which emphasizes that the actual reason for their fall is their falling from God's grace (90). Consequently, since Ariel is an airy spirit, King James's claim makes him a demon. Although Prospero believes he is Ariel's master, it should be taken into consideration that a magician is only a means through which the Devil accomplishes his goals, providing the magician with a certain service in exchange for his soul, as demonstrated in *Doctor Faustus*. Following the above-stated arguments, it can be deduced that one of Prospero's goals is control, which »seems to be inseparable from anger, anxiety, and possible bad conscience« (Gillies 190).

It is significant that King James's description of witches' abilities closely resembles Prospero's charms. Namely, King James I reports that witches can raise storms and tempests, make people frantic or maniacal, and make spirits follow or trouble people (130), which is a list that matches Prospero's deeds. In fact, according to King James's statute, the majority of Prospero's charms are punishable by death:

... if any person or persons . . . shall use, practice, or exercise any Invocation, or Conjuraton of any evil and wicked spirits, or shall consult, covenant with, entertain, employ, feed or reward any evil and wicked spirit to or for any intent or purpose, or take up any dead man, woman or child out of his or her or their grave, or any other place where the dead body resteth, or the skin, bone, or any other part of any dead person, to be employed or used in any manner of witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or Enchantment; or shall use, practice, or exercise any witchcraft, Enchantment, charm, or sorcery whereby any person shall be killed, destroyed, wasted, consumed, pined, or lamed in his or her body, or any part thereof; then that every such Offender or Offenders, their Aiders and Abettors and Counselors, being of any the said Offenses duly and lawfully convicted and attainted, shall suffer pains of death as a Felon or Felons, and shall lose the privilege and benefit of Clergy and Sanctuary. (Tyson 302)

For that reason, it is highly unlikely that the character of Prospero could have been considered benevolent by King James I, i.e., it would have been officially interpreted as malevolent and heretic. In other words, his magic must have been condemned at least because it was a serious crime, if not for religious reasons.

If the above description of Prospero's magic is taken into account, it follows that it matches the practices that *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* also warns against as the most condemned since Prospero's intentions are to cause harm to others while he uses the help of demonic spirits:

All practices of *magic* or *sorcery*, by which one attempts to tame occult powers, so as to place them at one's service and have a supernatural power over others – even if this were for the sake of restoring their health – are gravely contrary to the virtue of religion. These practices are even more to be condemned when accompanied by the intention of harming someone, or when they have recourse to the intervention of demons. (2117)

Naturally, the source of these beliefs is to be found in the Bible, for instance: »There shall not be found among you . . . a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord. And because of these abominations the Lord your God is driving them out before you« (Deut. 18:10-12). By means of magic, Prospero tries to raise himself to the level of God in pursuance of knowledge and powers that would enable him to gain complete control over his life, other people, the spiritual world, and nature. While being confident about the strength and justification of his superhuman powers, he is arrogant, self-centered, and uncompassionate to anyone he harms up to the point of his conversion, which will be discussed in the next section, so that Caliban rightly calls him a tyrant (Shakespeare III.ii.40-1). His powers are »unlawful violations of his human condition« (Pearson 257) since Prospero strives for control that is not intended for human beings with imperfect moral vision (see Egan). In fact, Jeanguenin explains that occult practices are morally reprehensible because they are used, among other things, to satisfy all human needs and caprices (100), which can be recognized as the reason for Prospero's magic practices. In this sense, magic is the antithesis to the Christian belief that people get what is good for them—and not necessarily what they themselves wish—through prayer, trusting in God's omniscience, and admitting the limited capabilities of human reason.

### 3. Prospero's Conversion

If Prospero's behavior and emotions in the first four acts are compared to the ones in the fifth and the epilogue, a clear difference is noticeable. Observing the emotion that drives Prospero in the first four acts, De Grazia compares him to Sycorax, who acts out of anger when confining Ariel (255). She reports that Prospero's anger is directed toward Ariel for his alleged disobedience, toward Caliban for his misbehavior, pretendedly toward Ferdinand for his intended usurpation, and toward Miranda for insubordination (255-6). Without diminishing the injustice inflicted upon Prospero by the usurpers, his anger and desire for revenge can nevertheless be identified as his main unchristian characteristics. Namely, Prospero »views himself as more sinned against than sinning,« not realizing that his usurpation of divine power is graver than the usurpation of his throne (Pearson 257).

He seems to believe that his viewpoint and the sense of justice are flawless and righteous, which serves him as a justification of the means he uses to manipulate and punish those whom he believes are wrong (cf. Corfield 42-43). He twists the truth frequently for that purpose. For instance, we witness his one-sided recounting of the past to Miranda, his accusation of the obedient Ariel for disobedience, his deception of Ferdinand that his father is dead and vice versa, and his deception of Miranda that Ferdinand is wicked, which demonstrates that »the father of lies« successfully seduces Prospero into sin.

From a psychological point of view, psychiatrist Melvin L. Lansky observes that the shame of Prospero's suffered betrayal results in »defenses that protect [him] against the danger of future shame« (1006), among others, »omniscience and omnipotent control« (1006), which prevent him from forgiving his betrayers (1006). In other words, Prospero's direction of events »embodies Prospero's dominant defensive operation—the fantasy of omnipotent control that is part of the intra-psychic world of unforgiveness« (Lansky 1017), manifested in the wish for retribution (Lansky 1018). As argued in the previous section, Prospero's retribution involves causing despair and anxiety in the castaways, resulting in their madness. However, all of a sudden, his behavior changes in the last act and the epilogue, which, according to Pearson, would be confusing and superfluous if the audience did not view Prospero as a doomed sorcerer (279), who decides to renounce magic and forgive his enemies. According to Hunt, »Prospero's reason seizes upon a spiritual, Judeo-Christian prompting to break an impasse between hatred and love so as to realize his human worth in a tradition stretching back as far as Aquinas« (58). Prospero's conversion from the mindset of classical antiquity—marked by practicing magic, anger, and unforgiveness and symbolized by Roman gods that Prospero summons as well as by Ariel's transformation into a harpy—to Christianity, characterized by forgiveness and humility, occurs throughout act five.

Immediately upon Ariel's claim that, seeing the pitiful state of the castaways, his affections for them would become tender if he were a human (Shakespeare *Vi*.18-20), there is a sudden change of Prospero's heart. Corfield, de Grazia, and Pesta agree that it is Ariel's intercession that changes Prospero's mind, providing him with the power of forgiveness (Corfield 40, de Grazia 257, Pesta 55). Contrary to the opinion that Prospero's initial goal was indeed forgiveness, Corfield argues the following:

If the culmination of Prospero's project was foreseen from the outset, and he was in full command of it, he would not require Ariel to underscore him. Nor would Ariel need to preach the converted. The conclusion which is hard to avoid is that Ariel's persuasive presence helps mediate Prospero's volte-face. (40)

Experiencing his volte-face, Prospero realizes that he, as a human, should be touched by the castaways' misery:

Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling  
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,  
One of their kind, that relish all as sharply,  
Passion as they, be kindlier mov'd than thou art? (Shakespeare Vi.i.21-24)

He thereby finally accepts his human nature, which implies his realization that he is not and should not be divine, but that he is subordinate to God. According to Pearson, »[Prospero's] potential excellence lies not in the power to know the secrets of the universe or to manipulate both elements and men as a result of knowing those secrets, but in his ability to 'passion with' his fellow man and to seek, to the best of his human ability, to know God« (272).<sup>2</sup> With this realization, Prospero's conversion to Christianity begins, so Greenblatt observes his abjuration of magic not as a weakness but as a moral triumph (389). Since forgiveness is the essence of Christianity, immediately after the acceptance of his human nature, Prospero accepts this virtue instead of his former fury and vengeance:

Though with their high wrongs I am struck, to th' quick,  
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury  
Do I take part; the rarer action is  
In virtue than in vengeance (Shakespeare Vi.i.25-28)

He then reverses the effect of his magic and frees the castaways: »My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore, / And they shall be themselves« (Shakespeare Vi.i.31-32). Following the command to »[1]ove your enemies, do good to those who hate you« (Lk 6.27), Prospero heartily welcomes his enemies and forgives them. Namely, he addresses Gonzalo: »I embrace thy body; / And thee and thy company I bid / A hearty welcome« (Shakespeare Vi.i.109-11). Even though his brother does not show remorse, Prospero utters the words of forgiveness to him even twice:

You, brother mine, that entertain'd ambition,  
Expell'd remorse and nature, who, with Sebastian –  
Whose inward pinches therefore are most strong –  
Would here have killed your king, I do forgive thee,  
Unnatural though thou art. (Shakespeare Vi.i.75-79)

<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Pesta argues that Ariel »reminds Prospero that despite his considerable power he remains merely human, suffering the same infirmities and capable of the same inconsistencies as other men. It is this reminder that moves Prospero to reject his magic and cast away his extraordinary powers in exchange for a return to the real world« (55).

»For you, most wicked sir, whom to call brother / Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive / Thy rankest fault – all of them« (Shakespeare V.i.130-132). The most compelling evidence of the power of his forgiveness lies in its result. In contrast to magic, which is vindictive, forgiveness frees Prospero from anger and the wish to revenge, so that in the last act, Prospero leaves an impression of a humble and grateful man, who is at peace with himself, the world, and God. At the same time, his forgiveness affects Alonso, who humbles himself and declares: »Thy dukedom I resign, and do entreat / Thou pardon me my wrongs« (Shakespeare V.i.117-118). Even Caliban, who could not have been changed by Prospero's continual punishment through magic, becomes reasonable and obedient by Prospero's grace of forgiveness:

PROSPERO: . . . Go, sirrah, to my cell;  
Take with you your companions; as you look  
To have my pardon, trim it handsomely.  
CALIBAN: Ay, that I will; and I'll be wise hereafter  
And seek for grace. (Shakespeare V.i.291-95)

According to Nikčević, »revenge continues the circle of evil and hatred, but forgiveness is the only thing that stops it« (my trans.). She further explains that, in his tragedies, Shakespeare represents this circle of revenge as destructive, while in *The Tempest*, his last play, he shows a way out: forgiveness. To put it differently, through Prospero, Shakespeare demonstrates that the power of a Christian is enormous since compassion and forgiveness can influence people and situations in a way that no magic can.

The point often overlooked is that Prospero's eventual abjuration of magic and his final speech are strikingly similar to deliverance from the occult and conversion to Christianity. Namely, exorcist Gilles Jeanguenin's instructions for the deliverance from the occult largely coincide with Prospero's actions after the key moment of his change. Firstly, he suggests that the affected person should freely express a wish to be delivered from the occult (101) and renounce any occult practices and superstition (102), which Prospero does when he renounces magic of his own free will: »But this rough magic / I here abjure« (Shakespeare V.i.50-1). Moreover, Jeanguenin instructs that occult objects should stop to be worn (102). Prospero meets this requirement by destroying his book by drowning it and his staff by breaking it and burying it deep in the ground. This is comparable to the practice of destroying hexed objects, which Gabriele Amorth, another exorcist, points out (141). Generally, the practice of destroying occult objects is widely known among Christians, so Prospero's action is not surprising at all. Equally important, the af-

fectured person should participate in a deliverance prayer and pray to God for forgiveness, while the change should be reflected in his/her life and in a sincere return to God (Jeanguenin 102). Prospero drastically changes his life: he is not arrogant and angry like he used to be, but humble and forgiving. Spencer describes his conversion in the following way: »there is a re-birth, a return to life, a heightened . . . awareness of the beauty of normal humanity after it has been purged of evil« (460-1). At the end of the play, Prospero claims that his every third thought will be his grave (Shakespeare Vi.i.311), which Greenblatt considers to be Prospero's recognition of mortality (389), but at the same time, this is his realization that true life and true consolation will come after death (cf. St. Augustine 461). Apart from that, in Prospero's last speech, there is a clear Christian perspective on prayer, God's mercy, and forgiveness; aware of his own sins, especially the gravest one of all—sorcery, which is »a sin against God, the Creator, and the Lord« (Jeanguenin 100; my trans.)—Prospero believes that he can only be saved by prayer, through which his sins will be forgiven by God's grace. By this, Prospero's deliverance from the occult and his conversion to Christianity is completed.

#### 4. Prayer

##### 4.1. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHRISTIAN PRAYER IN *THE TEMPEST*

Having analyzed the process of Prospero's conversion to Christianity, let us observe his addressing the audience with the elements of prayer, which appears at the end of the play as Shakespeare's central message:

Now my charms are all o'erthrown,  
 And what strength I have's mine own,  
 Which is most faint. Now 'tis true,  
 I must be here confin'd by you,  
 Or sent to Naples. Let me not,  
 Since I have my dukedom got,  
 And pardon'd the deceiver, dwell  
 In this bare island by your spell;  
 But release me from my bands  
 With the help of your good hands.  
 Gentle breath of yours my sails  
 Must fill, or else my project fails,  
 Which was to please. Now I want  
 Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;  
 And my ending is despair

Unless I be reliev'd by prayer,  
Which pierces so that it assaults  
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.  
As you from crimes would pardon'd be,  
Let your indulgence set me free. (Epilogue, 1-20)

While the prevailing atmosphere of the majority of the play is marked by the anger of an egoistic, vindictive, and unsympathetic magician, the epilogue reflects his serenity, reconciliation with God and his enemies, and the acceptance of his human nature. Namely, he admits that he is only a weak human being and asks for the help of the audience. Many scholars view this help as merely an applause that will release him from the island. However, the meaning of these words is twofold since »the help of your good hands« and »gentle breath of yours« also represent Prospero's plea for the audience's prayer for him, alluding to hands clasped in prayer and mouths uttering prayers. In Urban's words, »the once-spiritually isolated Prospero reenters the community of the faithful, seeking grace as he begs the audience's charity through spiritual intercession« (448). What is even more important, he claims that only prayer can save him from despair.

Even though Prospero only asks the audience to pray for him, it is plausible to assume that he prays for himself too, since he wants to avoid despair so desperately that he seeks other people's help. This is supported by his surprisingly accurate description of the characteristics of prayer so that it is quite certain he speaks from experience. The characteristics of prayer (Epilogue, 15-18) are clearly juxtaposed to the features of Prospero's magic, and his prayer reflects St. Augustine's words: »strive in prayer to overcome this world: pray in hope, pray in faith, pray in love, pray earnestly and patiently« (468). In the first place, by the act of prayer, Prospero acknowledges God and His supremacy over himself, thus admitting that he is weak and subordinate (Epilogue 2-3), which is in accordance with Meschler's observation that in prayer we consciously or unconsciously honor and acknowledge God (10). Secondly, the precondition of prayer lies in humility (*Catechism of Trent* 468), which Meschler agrees with: »[w]e come to God as beggars, not as creditors; as sinners, not to strike a bargain on terms of equity« (26). Acknowledging his sinfulness, Prospero humbly asks to be saved from despair by the mercy of God's power, i.e., by prayer that »frees all faults,« thus humbling himself before both God and people (his fellow countrymen and the audience).<sup>3</sup> This attitude

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<sup>3</sup> According to Montemaggi, by accepting his true nature, Prospero realizes that he is no longer in control, but that he is dependent on God's mercy »in and through the audience« to gain the forgiveness he needs, if »we are ready to recognize our own dependence on the same Mercy« (143).

best reflects the complete change of his life direction; Prospero transforms from a proud and arrogant sorcerer who used to put himself at the level of God into a man who shows genuine humility, which is the greatest power of all since it is a precondition for forgiveness, the strength of which was illustrated in the previous section. Third, one of the main differences between magic and prayer is that magic works automatically, while it cannot be guaranteed that prayers will certainly be answered (Thomas 46). The reason for this is that God »gives what is good, and when it is good, for us« (Meschler 28), while ensuring our free will. As discussed in section three, people's imperfect moral visions do not allow them to have supernatural control over the world, which would deprive both the magician and other people of their freedom and free will. In contrast, by prayer Prospero accepts God's will and throws himself to His beneficent mercy, which is proven by Dowden's assessment that »Shakespeare's faith seems to have been that there is something without and around our human lives of which we know little, yet which we know to be beneficent and divine« (215).

#### 4.2. THE ELEMENTS OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

Scholars have noticed that the last two verses of *The Tempest* contain a reference to the Lord's Prayer (see McAlindon 349; Kermode 49; Vitkus 422), but what they have failed to notice is that the majority of elements of the Lord's Prayer are subtly reflected in it. Although the invocation of God the Father is not explicitly mentioned, it is implied by the whole epilogue, which is overtly Christian. In addition, Prospero's humble heart enables him to become like a child in front of God (cf. *Catechism of Trent* 686), whom he then may call his Father. Moreover, by »hallowed be Thy Name,« it is meant that God's name is holy when a Christian lives according to God's rules and gives others an example, thereby encouraging them to »praise, honor, and glorify the name of our Father who is in heaven« (*Catechism of Trent* 492), which is realized after Prospero's conversion to Christianity, that is, at the time when he forgives and asks for forgiveness. Prospero's desire for salvation in the epilogue recalls the verse »Thy kingdom come« as the ultimate moment of salvation, which should, according to *The Catechism of Trent*, be preceded by the life in which grace reigns (498), and this becomes true for Prospero's life after his conversion. St. Augustine explains the line »Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven« as »the grace of obedience,« (465)<sup>4</sup> which we can recognize in *The Tempest* as the main character's final acceptance of God's will instead of the implementation of his own will through magic. He, namely, admits the weakness of his strength and obediently asks for mercy. The petition »give us this day our daily bread« is

<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Bellarmine believes that »[i]n these words is demanded grace, to obserue wel the law of god« (87).



symbolized in this play by spiritual food, which is embodied in prayer, which asks for righteousness and salvation. Furthermore, Shakespeare's verses »As you from crimes would pardon'd be, / Let your indulgence set me free« (Epilogue 19-20) are a clear allusion to »forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,« which indicates that God cannot forgive us if we have not first forgiven our neighbors. As Prospero forgave his enemies (»pardon'd the deceiver«), he asks for forgiveness for himself. Finally, the last lines of the Lord's Prayer »lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil« are reflected in Shakespeare's verses: »And my ending is despair / Unless I be reliev'd by prayer« (Epilogue 15-16), by which Prospero asks to avoid both sin and punishment for committed sins (see *Catechism of Trent* 549). In brief, although all the parts of Lord's Prayer are not explicitly addressed in *The Tempest*, with the exception of the lines that call for forgiveness, they are alluded to in the story about the magician's conversion to Christianity and his prayer.

### 4.3. THE OBJECTS OF PROSPERO'S PRAYER

Prospero's prayer is petitionary, and he does not pray for material things but for spiritual blessings. Jeanguenin quotes Saint John of the Cross, who states that »[t]he devil is afraid of a man who prays as much as he fears God Himself« (7; my trans.) and later confirms that people should pray to be delivered from the occult (74). Similarly, in *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, it is declared that »devout prayer . . . is a most powerful means of casting out demons« (454). Realizing that, Prospero seeks God's help through prayer since a mere abjuration of magic is not enough for a convert to be saved from the influences of the devil; prayer is of paramount importance for deliverance from the occult. It is also recognized as such in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, whose main character is often compared to Prospero, whom many critics, such as Lucking, Mowat (»Prospero, Agrippa, and Hocus Pocus« 296), Pearson (257), and Reid (54), identify as a potential Doctor Faustus. In Marlowe's play, Good Angel advises Doctor Faustus that contrition, prayer, and repentance are means to come to heaven (II.ii.15-16). In the same way, when Faustus's contract with the devil is about to expire, scholars tell him that if they knew earlier about the contract, they would have prayed for him, which they indeed try to do when the gates of hell open for Faustus (Marlowe V.ii.44-61). Similarly, Thomas reports about a story recorded in 1672, according to which a boy who invoked the Devil after reading the story of Faustus, panicked when Satan indeed appeared and was only saved by prayer (564). Prospero resorts to prayer and asks for mercy, forgiveness, and indulgence,<sup>5</sup> so he escapes Faustus's fate because, as Meschler points

<sup>5</sup> Indulgence is »remission of part or all of the temporal and especially purgatorial punishment that according to Roman Catholicism is due for sins whose eternal punishment has been remitted and whose guilt has been pardoned (as through the sacrament of reconciliation)« (Merriam Webster).

out, it is necessary to pray to find salvation (13). Unlike Faustus, who remains overly proud to the end of his life, believing that his sin is so grave that not even God can ever pardon it, Prospero humbles himself, which is in accordance with the Christian belief that »everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the man who humbles himself will be exalted« (Lk 14.11). His humbleness is represented by his forgiveness, his petition for the forgiveness of his sins, and the reliance on the prayer that »frees all faults.« It is believed that prayer secures »escape from punishment« (*Catechism of Trent* 455) and »disarms the anger of God« (*Catechism of Trent* 458), so Prospero employs it to be relieved from despair, i.e., damnation. It is important to note that, before seeking forgiveness, Prospero forgives his enemies, acting in accordance with Christ's command »when you stand in prayer, forgive whatever you have against anybody, so that your Father in heaven may forgive your failings too« (Mk 11.25). With this notion, Shakespeare ends his play—»As you from crimes would pardon'd be, / Let your indulgence set me free« (Epilogue 19-20)—asking the audience to pray for him in order for their sins to be pardoned. Nikčević rightfully claims that, with the realization that faith is stronger than magic, Prospero starts a new life, which gives *The Tempest* a happy ending. In the end, by abjuring magic, Prospero embraces the belief that prayer is a Christian duty of accepting God's will.

## Conclusion

Taking into account the historical and religious context of the seventeenth century, Prospero's magic could not have been considered a benevolent ability, but a vindictive and destructive expression of a man who puts himself at the level of God. The focus of Shakespeare's play is consequently Prospero's conversion from the mindset of classical antiquity to Christianity, during which he must be delivered from the occult. In this process, the main protagonist accepts his humanity, forgives his enemies, and asks for salvation and forgiveness of his sins through prayer. Prospero's prayer is humble, and it reflects his awareness of his sinfulness and subordination to God. Most importantly, Prospero accepts God's will and understands that the power of prayer is stronger than the power of magic, thus recognizing the supremacy of God over the Devil, which Shakespeare depicts at the very end of the play. In this way, Shakespeare represents prayer as the true and ultimate value of human life and its features such as humility, forgiveness, and acceptance of God's will as the antithesis to the vindictive nature of magic.

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## MAGIJA, OBRAĆENJE I MOLITVA U SHAKESPEAREOVOJ OLUJI

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**Sažetak:** Ovaj rad bavi se konceptima magije, obraćenja na kršćanstvo i molitve u Shakespeareovoj Oluji. Primjenjujući novi historizam i koristeći se kršćanskom literaturom, ovaj rad analizira Prosperovu molitvu i obraćenje, koje su znanstvenici dosad zanemarivali u korist magije, te ih suprotstavlja magiji. Ova analiza podupire nedovoljno zastupljen stav da je Prosperova magija heretička i kažnjiva, upozorava na činjenicu da je Prosperovo odricanje od magije usporedivo s oslobođanjem od okultnoga i obraćenjem na kršćanstvo te nudi prvu interpretaciju Prosperove molitve. Naime molitvu koja je uslijedila nakon Prosperova obraćenja Shakespeare predstavlja kao istinsku i konačnu vrijednost ljudskoga života i kao suprotnost magiji.

**Ključne riječi:** Shakespeare, Oluja, magija, obraćenje, molitva, kršćanstvo.

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