



The Magician Prospero in Shakespeare's the Tempest. a True Renaissance Magus?

Juliane Stratz

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Seminar paper from the year 2012 in the subject English Language and Literature Studies - Literature, grade: 1,3, University of Potsdam (Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik), language: English, abstract: In Renaissance, the magus, the adept of natural magic, was considered a powerful man. He was not only aware of natural, mystical and magical phenomena but also of the "innate ideas within the mens", which is the "intuitive, suprarational faculty within the soul". He was seen as the good and white magician. Many scholars and intellectuals were either engaged in magic or at least knew about it. In the 16th and 17th century many writers, like Shakespeare and Marlowe, adopted the figure of the white or black magician in their works. In William Shakespeare's "The Tempest" the main character is Prospero, who is a powerful magician, too. He uses his magical powers to govern all events on the island and wants to leave nothing to chance. In doing so he uses different tools for magical support. He is a master of a learned art which enables him to use magical equipment like books, a staff or a magic garment. Moreover he commands natural spirits to play out a mimesis, which makes nothing on the island what it seems to be. Nevertheless, all of these actions follow a higher moral function. Prospero's morality is shattered after the usurpation and betrayal of his brother. With the help of the power that he has on the island, he wants to "purge the evil from the inhabitants of his world and restore them to goodness" (Egan 175). In this process he is often very short-sighted and so he mistakes his powers with godliness and humanity with goodness. This paper wants to examine Prospero, the magus and thus asks the question, whether this figure depicts the natural magus of Renaissance times. Elementary to this examination is the assumption that Renaissance magic is real magic. People then considered their magic, miracles, spirits etc. real and not a trick. Thus when I speak about R

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