

The main purpose of my research is to revise the belief established among scholars that the roots of Prospero's magic in William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* may lie in Neoplatonic theurgy which has often been understood as white magic.

Critics who suggest the priestly or even holy nature of Prospero's magic very often refer to the fifth and sixth chapter of Walter Clyde Curry's book *Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns* published in 1937 (second edition 1959). Curry argues that Marsilio Ficino's Latin translations of such Neoplatonic philosophers as Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus must have stood behind the creation of *The Tempest*. He furthermore asserts that Neoplatonic philosophy made Shakespeare shape his Prospero as a master of the sacerdotal science called theurgy in contrast to the "goety," or "black magic", represented by the witch Sycorax.

Although critics sometimes fail to agree with Curry's interpretation of Prospero, the scholar's book has exerted a great influence upon Shakespeare criticism by and large. Ever since *Shakespeare's Philosophic Patterns* was published, the name of a theurgist has stuck to Shakespeare's Prospero. It should be noted that the fifth, and the sixth chapter of Curry's book in particular, where the critic expounds his argument about *The Tempest*, has never been scrutinised in the light of more recent studies on Neoplatonism. The works of such experts on Neoplatonism as John M. Dillon, Gregory Shaw, Emma C. Clarke and John F. Finamore are hardly ever mentioned in Shakespeare criticism. Still, Curry's book has become a classic text to be read by Shakespeare scholars.

Therefore, the present study aims at a thorough re-examination of the Neoplatonic conception of theurgy and its relevance for the analysis of *The Tempest*. I would like to divide my research plans into two different parts. First, I intend to examine the writings of Iamblichus as well as those fragments of the texts by Plotinus, Porphyry and Proclus which are concerned with theurgy. Secondly, I shall seek to explain what the word *theurgy* really meant in Shakespeare's day, how it was understood and what it was associated with. The scope of the research will be expanded to include the works of Marsilio Ficino and Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa in order to demonstrate possible distortions of the Hellenistic view of theurgy in Renaissance Neoplatonic philosophy. The results of my research will be published in international scholarly journals.

I am convinced that the study on the conception of theurgy will contribute to a better understanding of *The Tempest*. Indeed, while asking whether Prospero's magic indeed has anything to do with Renaissance Latin translations of Neoplatonic philosophers, we will probably draw closer to the origins of the play and possibly reduce a number of superfluous terms which may only distort our reception of Shakespeare's great masterpiece.