

Magical Ambiguity

A discussion of Magic in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and
Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*

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1. Introduction

Shakespeare is widely regarded as “our contemporary”. Many agree that Shakespeare wrote his plays about common and everyday problems, as opposed to narrowing himself to limiting politics. This made his plays easily adaptable to many other problems in the world. There have been adaptations, re-writings and many other appropriators of his plays, such as *Hamlet*, *Prince of Quebec* or *Lear's Daughters*. However, after some research I discovered that not only Shakespeare had left himself open to interpretation, his contemporary Marlowe was also intentionally vague. Both authors have a lot of ambiguity in their plays; they never present the audience with an easy explanation on a silver platter. The audience is encouraged to think for themselves and draw their own conclusions.

In Portugal the group discussing *The Tempest* discovered that the play as ambiguous in almost any way we could come up with. This angle seemed a bit too wide for one MA-Thesis, so I decided to focus on magic. I chose magic because it is present throughout both plays, and because I enjoy fantasy as a genre. However, there is a great difference in types of magic presented throughout the genre. The magician Merlin in the King Arthur series uses a very different type of magic than the more modern magicians like Harry Potter or Dragonrider Eragon. Not only are the magicians different: the view on magic has changed over the ages. With the changed view of magic there is also a changed view on the plays, perhaps giving the plays a layer the authors might not have foreseen or intended.

2. Thesis

In this paper I want to research the ambiguity of magic in the plays *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare and *Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe. Both plays are ambiguous; they are open to different interpretations and they are often used to back up a diverse range of arguments. One of the key elements in both plays is magic. Even though in the Renaissance the Catholic Church had a very clear view on magic and if it was good or evil, the plays both offer a very wide range of interpretations. It all depends on what the reader, audience, producer, actors and critics make of the plays.

The ambiguity in both plays works throughout the play. It is present in the plot, the protagonists, the other characters, books and various other elements. It seems that both authors intentionally wrote their plays to fit many forms or ideas. It is generally accepted by most critics that Marlowe opposed the Catholic Church. His play *Doctor Faustus* however takes on the guise of a morality play, a play often used to convey a moral coveted by the Catholic Church. Within *Doctor Faustus* lies a message to elicit curiosity for the forbidden arts in the audience. The play is riddled with characters, items or other components that seem to take on different meanings, depending on where you stand. This also applies to *The Tempest*, a play about a magician who is either good, bad or somewhere in between. Prospero's alignment fully depends on the interpretation of the audience. This ambiguity of several key elements in both plays is closely related to magic. Both plays are about acquiring power and letting go of power. Often this power is magic. When it is not, then the power is gained through magic, for example Prospero who regains his dukedom through magical means. However, to regain the power of his dukedom, he has to reject his magical powers. Faustus is a slightly different matter, he gains magical powers through his pact with the Devil, and then he struggles throughout the play with this contract and although he has the option to forfeit the contract he never does let go of his powers. Magic is both wanted and unwanted. It is a tool to gain whatever one desires, but also something the magician needs to let go. It is something to shun, and something

to wonder at.

This double meaning of magic is what makes these plays interesting and often discussed by critics. However, many often only write about their singular views of the play. Adaptations or re-writings of the plays often focus on just one aspect of the play. Critics often use whatever part of the play suits them best to use as evidence to their argument and leave the rest of the play out of it. On the other side, especially in the introductions written to accompany a printed play, some critics are open to multiple interpretations. Moreover, even though the plays are very much alike, I have not found a great number of texts discussing both of them side by side. Sometimes a critic will quickly touch upon how the plays are alike, but often not in great detail.

Both *The Tempest* and *Doctor Faustus* are filled with magic, but within the various magical elements many different messages can be found. I wish to discuss a variety of messages that can be found and how one interpretation might not stand in the way of another.

“What you take to be wonderful turns out to depend on where you stand to look at it”

(Butler, xxvi)

3. A Comparison of Critics

A critical essay is usually backed up with quotes from fellow scholars and researchers. However, on the subject of *Doctor Faustus* and *The Tempest* many of the sources are not straightforward on what the correct interpretation of either of these plays is. Most authors even agree that there are many possible, correct, ways to view the plays. For this chapter I did a close reading and made summaries of nine texts, some of them critical pieces and some introductions to printed versions of the plays. Then with those summaries as a basis I started comparing the texts. Therefore, when referring to authors I used the opinion found throughout the each essay, as opposed to referring to certain lines. The texts used are listed at the end of this chapter.

Most critics seem to agree that there is such a thing as “good” and “evil” magic, although the direct definitions vary. The definition of “good” magic is usually straightforward: it is control over spirits through studying. These spirits tend to be spirits of the natural world, like the air spirit Ariel, and not devils. The “evil” side of magic varies from just summoning and controlling demons to being subservient to demons or the Devil. Vaughan and Vaughan suggest that Prospero’s magic may be evil because it distracted him from his duties and because Prospero’s final speech suggests it may not be as good as he first said. Bate and Rasmussen note that Prospero himself makes a difference between his own magic and that of the (so-called) witch Sycorax, but that near the end he calls his own magic “rough magic” (V.1, 50) and uses the words of the classical witch Medea as his goodbye to magic. Also, Butler points out that Sycroax was demonised by linking her to Medea. So, by comparing both himself and his opposite with the same witch, Prospero might be sending out a message concerning the nature of his magic. Vaughan and Vaughan quote Bate to prove that Shakespeare was actually saying that all forms of magic were evil and should be abhorred. There seem to be as many views of magic as there are critics. Most seem to argue that even though there is a distinction between “good” and “evil” magic, it is unclear if they believe that the magic that

Prospero uses is evil. This is one of the reasons why magic is so ambiguous, many critics cannot decide if it is “good” or “evil” or somewhere in between. Perhaps magic is just a bit of both, or whatever the audience wants it to be. Sources on *Doctor Faustus* comment less on whether magic is good or evil. Most likely because the magic in the play comes directly from the Devil and so it can hardly be seen as something which is (partially) good. Robert A. Logan comments that while Prospero is a natural magician, Faustus is a necromancer. Moreover, the audience is made aware of what might have happened to Faustus if “good” had prevailed and is made to realise how ignorant the magician has been. Faustus confuses the two types of magic set out by Pico della Mirandola: *goetia* (witchcraft, involving subservience to demons) and *magia* (superiority of the magician to demons and spirits). Faustus is subservient, while Prospero is superior. Unlike Faustus, Prospero comes close to the image of the ideal magician. Because of their magical powers Faustus and Prospero are often compared, but their perspectives differ considerably. For Prospero magic is a way to promote moral well-being as well as a practical end. Faustus sees magic as a way to fulfil his ambitions. So, the many possible interpretations of magic might not just rely on magic being a very diverse object, but also on the protagonists using it in a variety of ways, and to achieve different goals.

Many critics agree on magic being linked to imagination. Robert A. Logan writes about how the magic of both Prospero and Faustus are linked to their imagination, they can do whatever they imagine. Prospero’s plans work out near the end, he can imagine regaining his former position as Duke of Milan. Faustus however lacks imagination. For example, Robert Logan describes a number of instances where the imagination of Faustus lacks, and how that affects his magic. Faustus asks for a wife when he could also have asked for an unlimited harem filled with the most beautiful women. Why ask for one if you can have many? Another fault in Faustus’ imagination is described by Sean Lawrence: it is beyond the imagination of Faustus that a God who saves sinners could exist. Faustus is too much of a rationalist to believe that God gives grace freely. Because of this

flaw, Faustus could not be saved and therefore got dragged off by demons. Sean Lawrence also quotes a critic who thinks that Faustus does not believe in Heaven or in Hell. However, Lawrence does not agree and claims that Faustus is so much of a rationalist that he cannot understand that grace is given freely. The imagination of Faustus fails to grasp the rather irrational concept of forgiveness. Prospero's imagination seems to have been greater than that of Faustus. Both men have a plan at the beginning of their respective play, and Prospero achieves his goal (albeit with a few bumps along the road), while Faustus never even comes close to his original plans. However, like Faustus, Prospero also has a rational mind, and he seemingly also does not believe in grace, as he returns to a place where every third thought shall be of his grave. Because a number of critics touched on this subject I will elaborate on this in chapter 4 when describing the ambiguity of both protagonists.

Not only imagination is important, also illusions form a major part of both plays. Bevington and Rasmussen write about how the magic of Faustus, just like that of Prospero, calls up shadows of the past to entertain audiences. The pinnacle of these shows for Faustus are when he is conjuring up the image of Helen of Troy, whom he adores so much that he would rather choose her illusion over salvation. Robert A. Logan notes that throughout the play Faustus becomes more and more gluttoned with conceit, which blinds him to reality. Logan concludes that Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* always has been a popular play, and Shakespeare adapted pieces of it into a variety of plays. All these plays have a powerful sense of imagination and its impact on society and mankind, and at the end of the plays the audience is left with the feeling of weakness of imagination, as the playwrights intended. Shakespeare and Marlowe both seemed to think that clarity weakens the imagination of the audience, and their plays are filled with ambiguity and unresolved issues to keep the audience, past and present, interested.

Most critics adopt a dual view on Prospero, agreeing that he does manipulate the rest of the characters, but also that he has his redeeming qualities. Robert A. Logan writes that Prospero rises

above his personal animosity and sets himself, and his magic, aside on behalf of society, the same society from which he retired to pursue his magical studies. Faustus on the other hand does not seem as much involved in society; his goal is to control the heavens and the earth. Prospero may seem focussed on reclaiming his position in society and revenge on his brother; he is also on a quest to discover himself. Faustus might also be trying to discover who he is, but with a very different outcome. Some believe Faustus got what was coming to him, others believe he did not deserve to be sent to Hell. John D. Jump even encourages his readers not to get stuck on one explanation but to keep an open mind. This open-minded view makes it difficult to make a fixed definition of the character of either Prospero or Faustus.

The Church, both Catholic and Protestant, and its view on magic are a source of inspiration for many of the critics. Magic was forbidden by law, the bible, king James I and many others. Thomas Healy writes that by the 1580's the Protestant church had issued pamphlets warning against the dangers of going to a theatre, a place that offended God and the gospel. Healy offers that that *Doctor Faustus* might be a reaction to those pamphlets, or other messages on magic that were sent out. Of course, Faustus mocks the Catholic Faith, not so much Protestantism. Healy even adds that in the B-text Faustus encounters and frees the captive Bruno, adding sympathy for Protestantism to a scene that is very anti-Catholic. Magic might not have been an anti-faith device to everyone, Logan argues that magic was an almost religious act of combining Heaven and Earth and the way to understand God through learning about His creation. Bate and Rasmussen write about the magical thinking of Shakespeare's contemporaries: they were accustomed to a world of magic co-existing with this world. However, magic always had a demonic shadow accompanying it. Vaughan and Vaughan seem to agree in this, as they argue that Shakespeare tried to say that all magic should be abhorred. They based that claim upon Shakespeare's use of a speech by the witch Medea, and James I, who wrote a book on the dangers of magic. *Doctor Faustus* is of course full of religious references. Faustus is seen making a fool out of the Pope, but Jump has found arguments that prove

that there is no impiety present in the play. Healy writes that the play may not set out to warn the audience, but to make them curious about the arts forbidden by Christianity. Bevington and Rasmussen say that Marlowe's plays *Doctor Faustus* and both parts of the play *Tamburlaine* have in common that they feature a struggle of man against God. In the perfect Christian world there is no room for both ambition and salvation. However, it remains questionable if these are biographical plays, because the sources linking Marlowe to blasphemy, such as the Baines notes and other testimonies, may not be reliable. Moreover this hypothesis causes a very simplified equation between the play and history, although this does not deter a number of critics from arguing a close relationship between the religious views of Marlowe and *Doctor Faustus*. Although *Doctor Faustus* is more easily connected to religion, there are also parallels to religion in *The Tempest*. The most noticeable is the notion that Prospero is the God of the play, as mentioned by Robert A. Logan. The relationship between the Church, both Protestant and Catholic, and magic in *Doctor Faustus* and *The Tempest* is very open to interpretation.

Many critics seem to be willing, or even encouraging their readers, to take a flexible stand on both plays, agreeing that there are many possible interpretations. This is my main focus, as the number of possible interpretations is quite overwhelming. It seems as if every critic has his or her own point of view, but is also willing to accept the view of the others. Even if their views are different, most critics seem to agree that there are numerous (correct) interpretations.

Works used in this Chapter:

Sources on Both Plays

Sean Lawrence "Re:*The Tempest* and *Faust*"

Thomas Larque "Re: Shakespeare's *The Tempest*"

Robert A. Logan "Glutted with Conceit": Imprints of *Doctor Faustus* on *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*"

Sources on *Doctor Faustus*

Thomas Healy, “*Doctor Faustus*”

John D. Jump “Introduction to: *The Revels Plays: Doctor Faustus*”

David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen “Introduction to: *The Revels Plays: Doctor Faustus*”

Sources on *The Tempest*

Martin Butler “Introduction to: *Penguin Shakespeare, The Tempest*”

Vaughan and Vaughan “Introduction to: *The Arden Shakespeare: The Tempest*”

Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen “RSC, *William Shakespeare Complete Works:*

Introduction to *The Tempest*”

4. A comparison of Magic in the Two Plays

4.1 Magic in Marlowe's and Shakespeare's time

Magic and how people feel about it, changes through the ages. As Thomas Larque has pointed out: Prospero and Faustus are unlike the magicians in modern stories. A modern audience is more likely to associate the word 'magic' with either Harry Potter or Gandalf; a person who waves a wand, speaks some magical words and so works his magic. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines a magician as:

one who practices magic, sometimes considered the same as a sorcerer or witch. Conjurers are also sometimes called magicians, reflecting a historical confusion whereby legerdemain was considered to involve the supernatural. (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2008)

A modern magician is a person who performs tricks, usually on stage. However, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a magician was involved with the supernatural. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen write that: “[m]agical thinking was universal in the age of Shakespeare” (2) and the general population was brought up to believe that there was a realm of spirits beyond what the eye could see. Wise woman, often labelled witches, were common. However, practising magic was still seen as evil. So the audience Shakespeare and Marlowe wrote for were well accustomed to magic and magical thinking. In the Middle Ages magic was not just about magicians, it also had much to do with the Church. Small rituals and masses were performed to make sure that the Devil would be gone from certain places. Bad luck and sickness were often blamed on the Devil. Moreover, people were extremely superstitious when it came to objects linked to the Faith. Droplets of Holy Blood, pieces of bread smuggled from the Holy Communion and other small religious relics were widely used to ward off evil or cure sickness (Thomas, 31-40). In the sixteenth century the view of a magician was different from that of a modern one. Magic had an ambiguous character: on the one hand it was a way to God, on the other side it was a ticket to Hell.

Magic in Shakespeare's and Marlowe's time was forbidden by law. Under Queen Elizabeth a statute against witchcraft and conjuring evil spirits was enacted by Parliament in 1563. According to

this statute by conjuring evil spirits the magic-user commands the Devil to do his bidding by prayer or invoking God's holy name. Witchcraft was a voluntary agreement between the wizard or witch and the evil spirit to obtain a certain desire, usually at the cost of blood or a mortal soul. (Sisson, 72) The forbidden kinds of magic were focussed on the summoning and controlling of demons and spirits. On the other hand, Queen Elizabeth consulted her own court astrologer John Dee, and "Elizabethan thinkers continually probed the crucial yet blurry distinction between white and black magic" (Sofer, 3). So magic was both forbidden and practised.

Another law concerning magic was the one recorded by Pico della Mirandola. It describes two forms of magic, namely: *goetia* or witchcraft involving subservience to demons, and *magia* or superiority of the magician to demons and spirits (Logan, 214). There is some difference between the Elizabethan laws and those by Pico della Mirandola. The Elizabethan law did not discern between good or bad magic, but forbade any kind. However, all the magic described was about working with demons, so perhaps the law just forbade a pact, of any kind, with a demon. Pico della Mirandola discerns between forms of magic that could be considered black and white, and does not condemn all forms of magic.

There were also other practices that could be considered magical, such as alchemy, astrology and other ways of understanding nature. "For a Renaissance mage such as Girolamo Cardano, who practised in Milan, medicine, natural philosophy, mathematics, astrology and dream interpretation were all intimately connected" (Bate and Rasmussen, 2). Occult arts such as alchemy and astrology were common hobbies, especially with the nobility, who either did the experiments themselves or were patrons for alchemists. There was also an organisation that called itself "hunters of knowledge" who collected information on experiments into large books (more on these in chapter 4.4). With alchemy and magic being so similar, it is no wonder that material books are an important source of power throughout both plays.

Rules on magic in the sixteenth century seem focussed around the summoning and the

control of spirits and demons. The magician could either be subservient to or in control of the summoned demon. Some laws or guidelines forbade all sorts of magic, others only subservience to demons. Control of spirits could also be a part of science, which was aimed at understanding nature, and its spirits, better. So it seems there was no clear-cut opinion on magic. The playwright might try to convey a certain message by using a certain type of magic within the play, but with something as versatile as magic a play could be interpreted in many ways. A mage summoning a spirit of nature to do his bidding might not be evil under the rules of Pico della Mirandola, but the 1563 law would condemn him.

4.2 Ambiguous Ideas Concerning Magic

The plots of the two plays, which both heavily rely on magic, are open to many interpretations. Many scholars wonder about what Shakespeare and Marlowe tried to convey to their audiences. Both plays seem to have their own interpretation on whether magic should or should not be used, but the exact nature of this message remains open to interpretation by the audience or the reader. At first glance magic seems to be unwanted, because it causes Faustus to be dragged to Hell, and Prospero swears that he will never use magic again. Magic seems something to be abhorred. However, that might not be the message that Shakespeare and Marlowe wished to convey to their audience. To the close observer *Doctor Faustus* elicits curiosity about the hidden arts, and in *The Tempest* the audience could see the triumph of magic, not its defeat.

The story of *Doctor Faustus* is that of a scholar who is tempted by magic, sells his soul to the Devil and in the end is dragged off to Hell. The summary of the plot is quite like that of a morality play. A morality play was usually written to warn the audience of the temptations of magic and show them it is wise to stay away from the devil. However, it seems unlikely that this was the message Marlowe wanted to convey with *Doctor Faustus*. Just before his death Marlowe was accused of atheism and the play contains scenes of anti-Catholic propaganda. Thus it does not seem logical that Marlowe wanted to write a play with a very Catholic message. Thomas Healy argues

that the final speech in *Doctor Faustus* is not as it seems a warning against the studies of magic, but was instead meant to provoke curiosity in its listeners. The last few lines of the play, the epilogue, are an example of how *Doctor Faustus* can be read as both a warning against magic and an encouragement to those who wish to study magic:

Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
 And burned is Apollo's laurel bough
 That sometimes grew within this learned man.
 Faustus is gone: regard his hellish fall,
 Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise
 Only to wonder at unlawful things,
 Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits
 To practice more than heavenly power permits. (Epilogue)

A morality play might have a moral warning against these “unlawful things” as those plays concerned the life of man, temptations he might face and the struggle for his soul (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2008). As such, the first lines are as expected. The Chorus warns that Faustus could have had a good life, he could have “grown full straight” (Epilogue,1). Perhaps this is a reminder that Faustus should never have started practising magic, as that is what led him astray. Moreover, he had several opportunities to repent, but in the play he rejects them all. But then in the last few lines Marlowe hints that tales like these may have the opposite effect: the wise may be tempted to wonder at such unlawful skills that magic may bring. This ambiguity leaves the play open to a variety of readings. John D. Jump quotes several critics, each with their own interpretation. There are some that claim that Faustus did not deserve to go to Hell, or that the last scene is meant to fill people with admiration for Faustus. William Hazlitt even claims that he cannot find any signs of the atheism or impiety that is attributed to the play. Those who agree tend to think that Marlowe tried to make his audience sympathise with Faustus. On the other hand there are also

those who think Marlowe wanted the audience to be critical of Faustus. Jump concludes that one does not need to commit to either party, as it has been discovered that there is a lot of uncertainty in the play (xlvi-xlvii). Because he practised magic through his bond with the devil, Faustus was dragged to Hell. As such, magic can be considered evil. However, it is also merely a way to acquire forbidden knowledge, prohibited either by the faith or law. That way magic is only a tool, albeit a forbidden tool.

Not only *Doctor Faustus*, but also *The Tempest* has a number of possible interpretations when it comes to giving the audience a moral message about magic. Most readers consider Prospero a good magician, much like the nobility of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who were patrons to those who searched for knowledge. To some, Prospero is an example of a white magician, who does not deal with the devil and uses his magic for good. However, his ever continuing studies of magic are what got Prospero banished from Milan all those years ago. His interest in magic caused him to withdraw from his duties as a ruler and so his brother saw a chance to seize power. To get that stolen power back Prospero must destroy what got him into trouble: his books. So magic is what kept Prospero from being a functional member of society, and this puts his magic in a rather different light. Maybe it was not so good after all. Moreover, Prospero compares his magic to the magic of the former ruler on the island: the witch Sycorax: he makes it explicit that she was evil and he is not. Then the play makes that statement doubtful when in the final scenes Prospero talks about his magic. He calls it “this rough magic” (V-1, 50) and he uses the words of the classical witch Medea. Even the play is not clear on the meaning of magic. *The Tempest* is very ambiguous. Magic is what got Prospero exiled in the first place, but it is also his way back to society. Perhaps magic is both a good and a bad thing. However it is something that needs to be given up before one can return to society. Because magic is given up, no matter if it is good or evil, it seems to be presented to the audience as something unwanted.. However, not everyone agrees. Even though Prospero gives up magic the audience might not be watching the decline of magic: “In

the end we witness, not the renunciation of magic, but magic's triumph" (Schneider, 125). Magic is the catalyst that drives the plot of *The Tempest*. As such, magic could be considered both wanted and unwanted. This ambiguous message about whether magic is a force of good or bad, and if it triumphs or loses, is what keeps the play interesting and open to many interpretations.

4.3 Ambiguous Protagonists

Not only the plots, but also their protagonists are ambiguous. This duality is not only in their actions, but also in their names. Prospero can either be a cruel slave-driver, a kind old man looking for justice, or a man trying to find out who he is. Faustus acts strangely, he can never make up his mind whether he is truly evil, or if perhaps deep inside him there is some good left. Depending on the view of the audience, the producers or the critics, the character of either protagonist can go in various different directions. Both Prospero and Faustus are not completely good or evil. Because the authors left a lot of gray areas the audience has to make up their own mind about whether the protagonist is good, evil or a shade of gray.

The names of the protagonists were not randomly chosen. They carry their own meaning. Prospero, he who prospers, is the master of a utopian island, the island can sustain him and his daughter, and he has time to study the art of magic. One could say that he is indeed prosperous. However, at the end of the play he goes from this utopian island back to Milan. It is questionable if this is a better life for him, as he will be restored to his position as Duke, but it is also made clear that he is getting old.

Also the name Faustus carries its own meaning; some say it means the fortunate or lucky one. Bevington and Rasmussen say it means "auspicious" (4). According to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* "auspicious" means: "Marked by success; prosperous." This gives the name of Faustus a very similar meaning to that of Prospero. Although they might not seem alike at first glance, Prospero and Faustus might be alike: both are men of power and throughout the play they seem to have a lot of success. Prospero successfully manipulates most of the characters on

the island and so reaches his goal to regain his position as Duke of Milan. Faustus tells the audience what he wants to do with his power in the first act, he has grand schemes to make spirits do his bidding and so become a very powerful man. Like Prospero works his way by using those around him, Faustus plans on doing the same with the spirits he would be commanding. However, he is not successful in the sense that most critics seem to agree that Faustus never gets what he originally wanted. With Faustus the definition 'lucky' might seem questionable if one considers that Faustus is dragged to Hell at the end of the play. On the other hand, he was lucky enough to have a great series of adventures in his lifetime and his desire to obtain magic is somewhat fulfilled.

Prospero is a character with many aspects. He is either portrayed as the benevolent ruler of a utopian island, or a cruel master who mistreats his slaves. A more utopian reading focuses on the benevolent actions of Prospero, such as how he sacrifices his studies for the good of society and the best possible future for his daughter. Also, Prospero adopted Caliban and tried to educate him. Although this has sadly failed, Prospero can forgive Caliban in the end. Moreover, Prospero forgives his brother who stole his dukedom. This makes him sound like a good, calm and collected man. On the other hand there are also numerous readings that put Prospero in a bad light. B.R. Schneider Jr. produces a list of times where Prospero loses his temper with all other major characters, or where he enjoys his enemies' suffering (124). Prospero's servant Caliban dreams of freedom and sings a song about how glorious that would be, some say that this is the first documented freedom song of the African Slaves who were forced to do heavy labour in America. This places the play around the Caribbean instead of the Mediterranean and this opens up a new set of interpretations. This placement makes Caliban into a slave who was forced to do manual labour on the fields. It also turns Ariel into a house-slave and makes Prospero their cruel owner. It really depends on the point of view of the audience if they believe that Prospero is a good or an evil character. Another view of Prospero is that he has very profound male and female aspects. W.L. Benzon argues that Prospero is Shakespeare's best character because he is well-rounded and

because of that Shakespeare did not need to write in a female counterpart for him to balance the play: “Prospero is androgynous. Many of his actions and motivations are, in Shakespeare’s cultural code and in ours too, feminine” (Benzon, par. 10). The only other prominently mentioned magic user of the play is a woman, namely the evil witch, and Caliban’s mother, Sycorax. Even though she does not appear in the play itself, she might be the feminine counterpart of Prospero. From Prospero’s point of view he uses good magic and Sycorax used evil magic. Prospero makes a clear distinction between himself and her, but what if one saw Prospero as a character that is both male and female. Then perhaps the clear difference between them, and therefore also their use of magic, may not be as distinct as Prospero makes them to be. The view of magic in *The Tempest* is often linked to the view one has of the protagonist, who is the main magic user of the play. Therefore, if one believes Prospero is evil then his magic is also evil, and vice versa.

The discussion about the ambiguity of Prospero seems to be of a relatively late date. Martin Butler writes that in early productions Prospero’s straightforwardness was seen as the Achilles’ heel of the play. One reviewer once called Prospero the “usual combination of Father Christmas, a colonial bishop, and the president of the Magicians Union” (Butler, lxx). This makes Prospero a good and benevolent person, and as such his magic was really only used for good. Only when the audience started to take an interest in Caliban was it that Prospero came to be seen in a different light: Prospero could also be an unfair master. This changed the role, and transformed the part from a straightforward Prospero into a Prospero who is struggling for mastery over himself and questioning the journey he is undertaking. When Prospero becomes less straightforward, his magic changes with him. Butler has an interesting point there, but I believe he skips over another aspect of Prospero, namely the Prospero-as-Shakespeare issue. Vaughan and Vaughan suggest that Shakespeare might have been influenced by the street wizard, a figure his audience would have recognised, as a source for Prospero. Moreover, this makes Prospero more like Shakespeare, as the street wizard, like a playwright, is a skilled illusionist (63). “*The Tempest* was almost certainly

Shakespeare's last solo-authored play" (Bate and Rasmussen, 1). If Shakespeare was aware of this, then this play is his goodbye to the magic of the stage, just like Prospero is saying goodbye to the magic of his island. Bate and Rasmussen say they do not know whether Shakespeare was aware that this could be his last solo play, but they quote Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who says that Prospero is the Shakespeare of the play (1). Moreover, they claim that Prospero calling up the storm in the first act is like that of a playwright conjuring up a play. "Art" is the keyword of the play, with Caliban as Prospero's "other" (1). The theory that Prospero is Shakespeare himself is strengthened by the epilogue, where Prospero directly addresses the audience and asks to be released by their applause. If Shakespeare was aware that this would be his last solo-written play then perhaps this was also his way to say goodbye. Shakespeare would then say goodbye to the world of the magic of the stage and return to another life, a bit like how Prospero went from his island back to his dukedom. However, if Shakespeare did not know this was his last play, then this theory is not that solid. So where some think Prospero is Shakespeare, some are also not sure, which can lead to conflicting interpretations of the play and the character. This does not mean that any of the possible interpretations are wrong, but some do seem mutually exclusive. That is why Prospero is such an ambiguous character. There are so many ways to interpret him that sometimes he can be seen as a completely different person. Every possible aspect of Prospero's magic in a different light. The Father Christmas side of Prospero would be expected to only use his magic for good, the feminine aspect, as described by Benzon, would be caring for Miranda's well-being and as such would be using magic for the good of his child, while the slave-owner aspect of Prospero would have him use his magic to control his slaves. So the view of magic in the play greatly depends on how we see the protagonist.

Faustus does not seem either good or evil at the beginning of the play, just very ambitious and arrogant. Robert A. Logan even thinks that Faustus sees himself as a white magician at the start of the play. He only sells his soul to the Devil when he decides that black magic is the best course to

get the power he desires. However, that is when he begins to doubt. His conscience plays up throughout the play, represented by the Good and the Bad Angels, who constantly contradict each other. Then there is the figure of the Old Man, who almost manages to persuade Faustus to ask God for forgiveness, until Mephistopheles comes along and suddenly Faustus changes his mind. One moment Faustus is willing to follow the Old Man, and only moments later does he send Mephistopheles out to kill him. It is almost as if Faustus can never quite make up his mind if he himself is truly evil or not. At the beginning of the play Faustus just seems overly ambitious, and a benevolent reader might forgive him and say he was just misled by his two friends Valdes and Cornelius. This changes when the Devil conjures up the parade of the Seven Deadly Sins which, or so Faustus claims, pleases his soul. This suggests that he might be more evil than he seemed at first. It is unclear if Faustus is truly evil. Also both Faustus and the audience are never told if Faustus can be saved. The students are convinced that they could have prayed and so saved him, the Good Angel shows Faustus the heavenly throne he could have possessed. Then there is the Devil and the Bad Angel who reminds Faustus of the contract that he signed and which he, according to them, cannot get out of. Finally there is the Old Man, who says that anybody who is not evil by nature can be saved. This brings us back to the, still unanswered, question if Faustus is or is not evil.

Another question might be why Faustus does not repent. Especially in the final scene he seems very willing to give up his magic and turn back to God. There are many possible theories. Perhaps he does not really wish to repent, as he should have known that the contract was not legally binding, or perhaps his imagination was not good enough. According to T. McAlindon: "It was common knowledge that oaths and covenants 'which do promise evil and unlawful things' are not binding; to respect them was judged a 'double offence' against God" (215). So one can safely assume that Faustus, being a man of learning, would have been aware of that fact. If he had been aware then maybe deep inside him he did not want to be saved, for whatever reason, and so could not be saved. It is likely he lacks the faith or the imagination. Even the Devil and Mephistopheles

seem to believe that the contract is not binding, why else would they pester and threaten Faustus every time he thinks of repenting (McAlindon, 216). Most likely Faustus lacks faith in the mercy of God, and as such cannot be saved. Many critics such as Robert A. Logan and Sean Lawrence have theories on the magic and imagination. The magic of Faustus is linked to his imagination. Because he lacks imagination Faustus does not receive all that he wished out of the bargain with the devil. Only a man with limited imagination would ask for a wife if he could get a harem filled with women. Even though Faustus has made many plans in the first scene, he never really orders any of these fantastic plans to be set into motion. This lack of imagination could also cause Faustus to not believe in salvation. Sean Lawrence in an online essay “Re:*The Tempest* and *Faust*” claims that Faustus is a rationalist. Faustus cannot imagine God as being a benevolent entity who is full of mercy. The only thing Faustus understands is the tangible evidence, namely the contract he signed in his own blood. As long as Faustus cannot believe in a forgiving God, his salvation is simply impossible.

4.4 Burning and Drowning Magical Books

A quote often used when comparing Prospero and Faustus is taken from speeches of both characters near the end of both their plays. They both promise to destroy their books. Faustus promises this in a desperate attempt to ward off the Devil who is about to drag him to Hell. Prospero on the other hand promises this as a final step in his process once more to become Duke of Milan, together with breaking his staff. The ways of destroying are different, as Faustus promises to burn his books and Prospero will drown them. Books serve a dual purpose. They are both part of magical practice and scientific research. Even though nowadays magic and science are seemingly opposites, it was not so in the Renaissance. Elizabeth Spiller describes how readers often do not associate Shakespeare with science. However, in *The Tempest* concepts of both magic and science are combined. Spiller believes that Aristotle would have agreed with the early modern notion that science has nothing to do with art, but Shakespeare’s play shows signs of a transition in thinking

about science and art. She writes that “in order to understand how poetry and drama shared in the emergent scientific cultures of early modern England we must recognize that art was not separate from the practices that became science but instrumental to them” (Spiller, 25). Some consider both Faustus and Prospero to be not only magicians, but also scientists. Their actions were not just magical. Some actions could be considered scientific, such as Prospero summoning spirits of nature, or Faustus demanding books on the movement of heavenly bodies. Books were an important element in scientific research, and they also play their part in both plays.

Sixteenth and seventeenth century scientists wanted to know the secrets of nature. They were like hunters carefully tracking their prey, looking for subtle hints and tracks, which would eventually lead them to where the secret were hidden (Eamon, 269). This hunt for knowledge was mostly done by the nobility, such as Emperor Rudolf II, who was one of the most famous patrons of the occult sciences. Scientists hoping for a wealthy patron offered the nobility rare and exotic gifts. So, where the church was condemning magic, the nobility on the other hand funded the quest to find the ultimate scientific discovery.

In *The Tempest* Prospero’s servant Caliban enlists the help of two other servants to assist him to overthrow Prospero and become masters of the island themselves. They plan to kill him, but Caliban warns them that they need to destroy Prospero’s books first. According to Caliban: “For without them; he’s but a sot as I am” (3.2.93-94). Caliban believes that without his books, Prospero is just a normal man with no magical powers and no control over spirits. Books are also the method with which Prospero could have subdued Caliban. Bate and Rasmussen think that maybe the education of Caliban was not so much done from the kindness of Prospero’s heart, but meant to subdue the boy. Through educating Caliban Prospero might have imprinted the idea of a savage nature on Caliban (3). So Caliban feels suppressed by Prospero’s books, which are a sign of Prospero’s supposed superiority, and to fight that suppression the books must be destroyed. The magic that Prospero wields was learned from books; back in Milan Prospero spent all his time in the

library studying magic and neglecting his duties as a Duke. At the end of the play, Prospero's farewell to magic, he says that he will drown the books from which his craft and power originally came. So the books play an important role in sustaining Prospero's power. Not only his magical arts depend on them, but also some of his worldly powers.

The magical powers of Faustus came from both a similar and a different source. Faustus, just like Prospero, studies a lot; he is a Doctor at Wittenberg University. In his first speech he talks about settling his studies and aiming for more power. He thinks the way to this power is by summoning a demon and making it do his will. This does not completely go according to Faustus's plans. Mephistopheles appears, but he says it is not because he was forced to by the summoning ritual, but because he heard Faustus "rack the name of God" (III.49) and saw an opportunity to get a soul. This might not be completely truthful, as later on Mephistopheles is also summoned by Robin the Clown and Dick, who have stolen one of Faustus' conjuring books. Mephistopheles is angry as he is only summoned for pleasure: "From Constantinople they brought me now; Only for pleasure of these damned slaves" (X.33-34). Where he claimed to appear before Faustus because he saw an opportunity for a soul, he appears before the clowns because he was summoned by magical words. So it seems that the books used to conjure Mephistopheles do have the power to summon a demon. Sadly for the clowns that demon was not under their control, and not amused, and turned them into animals. Andrew Sofer concludes: "*Something* has conjured Mephistopheles onstage, but it is very difficult to locate any agent behind the act other than the playwright's dialogue" (Sofer, 15). It remains unclear what causes Mephistopheles to be summoned, if there is a deeper meaning behind the books, or if it was just because Marlowe decided to write it this way. Whatever summoned the demon, the book does seem involved. Another mentioning of books of learning is when Faustus has just made the deal with the Devil. After Mephistopheles refuses to give Faustus a wife, but offers him a book which gives him control over "thunder, whirlwinds, storm, and lightning" (V, 162), and which enables him to call on armed men to do what he commands. Faustus then asks for a number

of other books, including books on how to raise up spirits, a book that contains all the planets in the heavens and their motions, and a book containing all the herbs in the world. Like the seekers of knowledge, Faustus has obtained books filled with information on the world. However, we never hear of these books again. Faustus does raise up spirits, but we do not see him use the books to do so. The stage directions mention Mephistopheles bringing in the spirit of Helen of Troy, but not the use of books. Books have a number of purposes in the play, they seem to have the power to summon devils, but they seemingly lack the power to control the summoned devil. Faustus has a world of knowledge contained in all his books, but it is a power he never seems to use.

The final speech of Faustus does not contain the only reference to burning books in *Doctor Faustus*. Faustus also promises to burn the Holy Scriptures (VI.100). He does this when he swears he shall never turn to God again. He says he will burn the scriptures, slay ministers and destroy churches. Fire is an effective way to destroy a book, and it could hold a parallel to Hell. Faustus promises to burn certain books to affirm that he will turn away from what is written in them. So why does Prospero drown his books? William Harlan says about the use of fire and water:

“Marlowe had his hero utilize the satanic power of the Devil in *Doctor Faustus*; Shakespeare has Prospero rely upon the less spectacular power of nature” (par. 73). Prospero did not work with the magic which can be related to Hell. He worked with nature’s powers. It would therefore be more logical for him to utilise nature for the destruction of his books. Moreover, by using water he is the complete opposite of Faustus. In early modern times science included a system that related elements to humours: water was moist and cold, while fire was dry and hot. Water and fire are opposites, and Prospero and Faustus show signs of being opposites as well. Faustus sells his soul to the devil while Prospero works with nature. The Devil drags Faustus to hell while Prospero goes back to how things were. It could be a signal of Shakespeare that his protagonist was the opposite of Faustus. The matter of the destruction of books might be there to show the difference between the two magicians, on the other hand it shows how alike their methods are.

On a magical level the books play an important role in the creating and destruction of magical powers. The magic starts and ends with books; however between the beginning and the end the books are absent. This is the ambiguous side of the magical books, they are very important to magic, but they are hardly mentioned in the stage directions. Of course, this may not mean that they were never present on stage, but in the directions of the play itself they are absent.

4.5 Duality of the (Magical) Servants

Not only the magicians themselves have magical powers, but their servants too. There are four servants in the two plays: Mephistopheles and Wagner serve Faustus, Ariel and Caliban belong to Prospero. Mephistopheles is a summoned devil, Wagner is a human servant, Ariel is a spirit of air and Caliban is the son of a witch. All these characters have a nature that could arguably be dual, as they can be interpreted in a variety of ways, some even completely opposite. Even though Mephistopheles and Caliban are very easily tagged as being evil, even they have their redeeming qualities. Ariel, as a spirit, seems to be on the side of good, but his magic is sometimes seen as evil. Wagner is the least magical of the lot and the only one who is clearly human, but even he has some control over the devils of his master, although in the play he does not share the fate of his master.

Mephistopheles and Ariel are (seemingly) similar roles; both spirits do as their master commands, not out of loyalty but because they are bound to them. Mephistopheles serves Faustus because of the contract Faustus made with the devil. Ariel serves Prospero because Prospero freed him from imprisonment in a cloven pine. The difference is, however, that most agree that Mephistopheles does not live up to the original bargain. He never quite gives Faustus all he desires. Faustus, however, never objects to this. He just continues using the limited amount of power given to him. Prospero on the other hand does protest when Ariel objects to his wishes. He even threatens to put Ariel back in the tree where he found him. When comparing Ariel to Mephistopheles in the light of the 1563 English Law there is a slight difference between them. The relationship between Faustus and Mephistopheles is easily identified as witchcraft. They have a voluntary agreement and

Faustus has signed over his mortal soul in exchange for power. Identifying the agreement between Prospero and Ariel is harder, when comparing it to the law. Ariel was not summoned by Prospero, or captured by invoking the name of God. Instead, he was liberated from a cloven pine. Ariel belongs to the island. He was never summoned to it, so Prospero does not practice conjuring magic. He does not practise witchcraft either, as the agreement does not involve him paying any sort of price to Ariel in return for the servitude. It does resemble conjuring more, as Prospero forces Ariel to do his bidding, but instead of using the name of God to control him he threatens to lock Ariel up in a tree. According to the law the relationship between Faustus and Mephistopheles is straightforward. Faustus practices witchcraft and is breaking the laws on magic. The bargain between Prospero and Ariel is a lot harder to define by this law. Perhaps it is not as evil as the Elizabethan law might claim it is.

The natures of Mephistopheles and Ariel are different, but both of them are open to multiple interpretations. Both servants are magical; one is a spirit and the other a fallen angel. Mephistopheles is a fallen angel and he is with the Devil to capture the immortal soul of Faustus. However, when Faustus doubts that Hell exists, Mephistopheles says that he himself is living in Hell because he is no longer in the presence of God. This almost sounds like a warning to either Faustus or the audience: beware, or you will never live in the light of God. Even though this possible message missed the mark when it came to Faustus, it may have an influence on the audience. According to Martin Puhvel this story about the creation of devils was known to most in the Renaissance. Therefore, Faustus was already aware of how Mephistopheles must have fallen. Mephistopheles is attempting to manipulate Faustus, and lying about something Faustus would know does not serve that purpose. Therefore he tells the truth about his fall and Hell (2). The nature of Mephistopheles sounds like a warning: beware, or fall like this devil. Ariel is also a dual character. On one hand his actions could be considered evil, such as calling on a tempest or taking away food. However, he is a spirit of nature, and as such not of evil origins. Moreover, all his

actions are for the greater good and for justice. Without the storm or the other magical tricks that Ariel performs there would have been no way for Prospero to forgive his usurping brother. Martin Butler argues that the origin of Ariel is ambiguous, as we never know if he was brought to the island by Sycorax or if he was already there and was then enslaved by her. If the latter is true then the island would by rights be his, although Ariel has no need of possessions, he just wishes to be free (Butler, lv). So the nature of the spirit Ariel is unknown, and how to interpret his nature and origins is up to the audience. The reason why Mephistopheles serves Faustus is also ambiguous; did he come because Faustus forced him by calling for him, or because he saw a chance to grab a soul? The play is never clear on that. Mephistopheles is a devil, which by nature is an evil being, he is of course also a fallen angel. He was once good and now he is dragging others down to his level of existence. Ariel is a more difficult case, is he a good or an evil spirit? Some say he performs destructive magic, such as raising a tempest. This magic is however done in the name of good and just revenge, so it could also be good. Then there is the reason why Ariel serves Prospero. Martin Butler notes that Ariel longs to be free and be his own master, and different productions of the play have different ways of portraying that. Sometimes Ariel is presented as a young, tricky spirit, while some productions go as far as having Ariel hate Prospero with a passion. This desire for freedom of Ariel builds tension into the role. Ariel might always be trying to get away, so Prospero can never fully trust him and so needs to resort to threats to keep him in line. On the other hand Prospero does take Ariel's advice and claims to love him (lxxv-lxxvii). So the nature of both these magical servants is different, but also open to discussion. If they are completely good or evil is up to the interpretation of the reader.

The third servant is Caliban, a character seen by some as part man/part monster or even part fish. Caliban is not seen doing anything magical, but he does have some basic knowledge of magic. Caliban knows that by destroying Prospero's books he can overthrow the wizard. Like the other servant Ariel, Caliban is not easily placed in a category laid down by the English 1563 law.

Prospero did not give anything in exchange for Caliban's work and neither did he summon him. Caliban was on the island before Prospero arrived there. One could argue that Prospero used to educate Caliban, teaching him his letters and the names of things, and this might be the exchanged gift. However, that deal is no longer active since Caliban tried to rape Miranda, but the servitude continues. So Prospero does not perform witchcraft. Caliban is Prospero's slave and as such must do what he is ordered to do. However, he is never asked to do a magical task. He is made to fetch wood for the fire and do other mundane tasks. A conjured demon is usually made to do magical tasks for his master, but Caliban is never ordered to do anything magical. Caliban might be a magical creature, as his mother was a witch, but he is not a spirit. His relationship to Prospero as such does not truly fall under any category as laid down by the law. Images of Caliban, both those appearing on stage and those in paintings, are a variety of shapes. Often Caliban is portrayed as a being that is not human: a monster. Those who see him as such base their views on comments made about him, such as Trinculo in 2.2 repeatedly calling Caliban a monster or a fish. The most often quoted evidence might just be Prospero saying: "A freckled whelp, hag-born – not honoured with a human shape" (1.2.283-84). If Caliban does not have a human shape, he must therefore be a monster. However, the quote is incomplete. When you include the two preceding lines then suddenly the lines read something different.

Then was this island--

Save for the son that she did litter here,

A freckled whelp hag-born--not honour'd with

A human shape. (1.2.280-84)

Suddenly, the same lines tell us that before Prospero and Miranda came to the island Caliban was the only thing on the island with a human shape. As Trinculo is marooned on a strange island that he suspects may be haunted, anything that might be even a bit unlike himself could be a monster. Travel literature was riddled with strange beings one could find on uninhabited islands, from

unicorns to people with two heads, so a character that would look even slightly different may be viewed as a monster. Actions speak louder than words, and according to some, Caliban's actions condemn him most of all. Caliban tried to rape Prospero's daughter Miranda, an action which makes him a "monster". However, others sympathise with Caliban, claiming he is a poor and miserable man, who lost his mother at a young age and then was imprisoned and enslaved by Prospero. For many writers on colonialism Caliban is a focal point for literary voices, and *The Tempest* is a mirror of British Imperial History (Bate and Rasmussen, 3). The actions of Caliban just stem from the violence and mistreatment he has suffered, and so his violent behaviour may not be his fault. The opinions of Caliban range from male chauvinist pig to poor mistreated slave. To some he is a monster, to others a man. He is an ambiguous character and has been portrayed in a great number of ways, and how the reader sees him depends very much upon what interpretation they have encountered first. Martin Butler describes Caliban as a "theatrical black hole" (xlvi) as he has no distinctive characteristics; portrayed as a great number of possible beings he is what other people make of him.

Faustus does not only have a devil as a servant. He also has a human servant named Wagner. If Mephistopheles is like Ariel, then Wagner resembles Caliban. However, unlike Caliban, there are not many secondary sources on Wagner. He is, however, an interesting figure. He is loyal to Faustus until the end; Faustus leaves him all his possessions just before he is dragged off to Hell. Wagner does have some control over the spirits or devils, as in scene IV where he tries to get the clown Robin to be his servant, but when Robin refuses he calls upon devils:

Wag. "[F]or I will presently raise up two devils to carry thee away. Bania! Belcher! [...]"

Enter two Devils, and the clown runs up and down crying.

Wag. How now, sir, will you serve me now?

Rob. Ay. Good Wagner, take away the devil then.

Wag. Spirits away! *Exeunt Devils* (IV.1.31-38)

Wagner himself has no contract with the Devil, but still he can call upon lesser devils. He could either have his own powers, or as a servant of Faustus he is allowed some small benefits of his master's powers. Wagner also serves as the chorus in Act III, where his part is treated as a formal chorus. In act V, scene 1 he also serves as the chorus, but as he is in character it is usually treated as part of scene 1 (Bevington and Rasmussen, 185). Even though Wagner does not have a contract with the devil himself, he seems to be allowed to tag along on the deal Faustus made. He uses the devils to threaten Robin, an evil act in itself. On the other hand, Wagner is the most loyal of all servants in both of the plays; he is the only one of the servants who is loyal throughout the play and is willing to stay with his master until the end. So on one side he threatens people, on the other side his loyalty is praiseworthy.

4.6 Religious Duality

The duality of magic in *Doctor Faustus* and *The Tempest* is also clear when looking at magic in relation to religion and the way to God. On one side religion claimed that magic was leading people away from God. On the other hand there were the scientists who were trying to understand God and the world he created better by studying magic. Already these very different points of view are the cause of very different interpretations of the play. Moreover, both plays are ambiguous in other aspects when it comes to religion. Some critics have taken to comparing Prospero to God himself. Faustus on the other hand makes fun of the Catholic faith, and the play is riddled with angels and demons.

Religious duality is present in *Doctor Faustus* in the form of the Good Angel and the Evil Angel, two opposite figures who always appear together. Both Angels try to persuade Faustus to see things their way. The Good Angel advises Faustus to read the scriptures and repent, the Evil Angel tells Faustus to go on and continue this search for power. For every argument that the Good Angel presents, the Evil Angel has a counter-argument. Also, Faustus and the audience are made aware that Lucifer, Mephistopheles and the other demons were once angels too. Mephistopheles claims he

is always in Hell because he has seen the face of God, but now is eternally deprived of that glorious sight. Hell is said to be terrible because God is not there. The play represents the well-known struggle between Heaven and Hell. Especially Marlowe's contemporaries would have been familiar with the war between Heaven and Hell, but this play gives no clear-cut opinion on it. Every argument of the Good Angel is countered by the Bad Angel, but the Good Angel never responds to those counter-arguments. The Good Angel often stresses how vital it is that Faustus repents and that he can yet be saved. However, we as the audience never know if it is the truth, or if it is just Faustus' subconscious mind desperately hoping for salvation. If the Good Angel is right and Faustus can be saved by renouncing his magic, then the opinion on magic seems clear. However, as the audience we are never quite sure of the Good Angel is right. This leaves room for discussion on the nature of magic.

There are many theories on the nature of the magician Prospero, one of them being that he is in effect playing God (Logan, 227). Prospero is the ruler, he knows all that is going on and he decides what is going to happen next. Moreover, he becomes a forgiving benevolent ruler, just like how God is often described. This coincides with Butler's description of Prospero in the earliest productions of the play. Those Prosperos were straightforward friendly old men (Butler, lxx). As such, they could be seen as God-like. However, Prospero is also the puppet-master of the play. Or at least, he attempts to be the one who decides it all. Ferdinand and Miranda fall in love because he wishes it so, Ariel keeps an eye of Caliban as commanded and everyone gets together just in time for the great finale. Of course, not everything goes according to plan. Halfway through the masque Prospero realises that he has forgotten the plot against his life and he quickly goes off to correct that. Most importantly, no matter how well orchestrated all the plans are, Prospero's brother does not show signs of true remorse. However, the original order is restored and that is what counts. But is Prospero really as good as some make him sound? Although Prospero loves his child unconditionally, the other characters often have to face his wrath. Although Prospero claims to

dearly love Ariel, he threatens to imprison the spirit several times. This is not very benevolent behaviour. Then there are the Italian noblemen whom Prospero wishes to teach a lesson and he mentally assaults them by shipwrecking them, taking away the prince Ferdinand and some other tricks. Ariel has to remind Prospero that they are suffering and that even he, although he is a spirit and not human, would feel sorry for them. Anyone who really would be like God would not get so caught up in revenge that they would need a spirit as his conscience. It depends on the view of the audience if Prospero can be like God or not. If he is portrayed as in the early productions then Prospero is God-like. However, the later productions have made that aspect of his personality unlikely. If Prospero is like God, then his magic is also benevolent, but if he is not then the source of his magic may be more questionable.

An important event occurs when Faustus and Mephistopheles are in Rome and they are pestering the Pope. Faustus steals food from the Pope and boxes his ears, so the friars who are with the pope try to banish the entities that are bothering their Pope. This ritual is like the religious rituals that Keith Thomas describes in *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (40-47). Religious rituals often employed a number of holy tools and relics and the name of God was invoked. The rituals were meant to bless people, or to banish the devil or his servants. A similar ritual is attempted in *Doctor Faustus*. The friars come in with the proper tools to banish the suspected devils with the help of a bell, a book and a candle. Bevington and Rasmussen say in the footnotes that the author may have made a mistake here: the bell, book and candle were well-known tools in the ritual of excommunication and not banishment (166). The friars chant or sing their lines and so attempt to get rid of Faustus. However, Faustus is not banished and he just beats the friars and throws fireworks among them. This could be another jest at the expense of Catholicism, just because it was something the audience would have appreciated. This is a debated scene, as it is one of the scenes that is sometimes attributed to another author than Marlowe. So perhaps this scene is only there to amuse the audience, or perhaps it is to remind those who are interested in magic of how foolish the

Catholic Church can be.

Religion plays a role in both plays. Even though through specific laws religion had a very black-and-white view on magic, the playwrights did not. To some Prospero is a God-like creature, but still he does not come close to being as good, forgiving and benevolent as the God from Christian lore. *Doctor Faustus* may be a critique on the Catholic Church cleverly hidden in the standard form of a morality play.

4.7 Magical Art: the Masque

Not only the plays themselves are works of art, they also include other forms of art. Both *The Tempest* and *Doctor Faustus* contain a masque. Masques used to be very popular at court, and, as opposed to regular plays on stage, women were allowed to join in. Vaughan and Vaughan describe a masque where Queen Anne joined in as Lady Fame, chasing away hags and witches and so restoring good fame back in court. (Vaughan, 68). These masques were highly symbolical and contained a moral message. Masques created illusions for the audiences to enjoy, much like a street magician and even a playwright would (Vaughan, 63). *The Tempest* not only contains a masque, but also includes a great number of specially written songs. Even though a morality play in itself has little to do with magic, in these plays they are conjured up by magic. With his magic Prospero commands his magical spirits to perform for him, and through that masque he works his will upon his daughter and her future husband. The Devil gets the Seven Deadly Sins to parade in front of Faustus, and so corrupts Faustus into rejecting God. The art is created through magic, and as such may give an insight into the nature of the magic that created them.

Shakespeare's masque shows many elements of Jonson's *Hymenaei*, a masque performed at court in 1606 (Vaughan, 68). In Shakespeare's play the goddesses Isis, Ceres and Juno bless the union of Ferdinand and Miranda with fertility. Nymphs and reapers enhance this fertility ritual with dance. The goddess of love Venus and her son Cupid, gods one would expect at a celebration of a marriage, are not present. Ceres and Isis even say that they are not welcome here, as they were

planning to tempt Ferdinand and Miranda with lust. With this play Prospero wishes to stress that they should not be ruled by lust, but wait to consummate their marriage. Even though Ferdinand and Miranda seem to have fallen in love, their marriage is arranged to unite two dukedoms, so if they were to consummate their marriage before it was properly established then the business aspect of their union would be jeopardised. The masque is not so much a celebration of love, as a warning against lust and a blessing of fertility. *The Tempest* was performed at court, so it would seem logical that Shakespeare included an element which would appeal to a courtly audience. Ferdinand expresses his interest in marrying Miranda early on in the plan, but only if she is a virgin. Miranda was nearly raped by Caliban, but luckily for her and her father's plans this was prevented. Without this marriage Prospero cannot secure a male heir for his dukedom. So the masque stresses how important the marriage is to Prospero. But it is also important to Miranda, as this is also her chance for a good future. Moreover, it is a miniature of Prospero's might in the play: the magician is the puppet master, not only does he control the actors in the masque, but also most of the other characters of *The Tempest*. Prospero controls most characters. They meet, fall asleep and eat, or don't eat, when it is most prosperous for Prospero. Interestingly, the characters he cannot control are also the ones who cause Prospero to end the masque prematurely. Caliban joins with the servants Stephano and Trinculo to rebel against Prospero and take over the rule of the island. Halfway through the masque Prospero remembers the plot against his life, ends the masque prematurely and goes to deal with the problem. Throughout the play Prospero is the puppet master, and he is the same in the masque. Then he ends the masque to deal with Caliban, and with the ending of the masque the play goes towards the end of the magic as well. The masque is a mirror of Prospero's magic, both are used to control the other characters of the play. However, the masque may also be an extension of Prospero's manipulative powers. The masque is used to enforce what Prospero wants to reach, and to imprint on Miranda and Ferdinand the importance of waiting with consummating their union. As such, magic is a tool of manipulation, which does not put magic in a

good light. On the other hand, it could also show how much Prospero cares for Miranda, as he wishes her to have the best future possible, and she will only truly be the wife of Ferdinand if she remains a virgin until they are officially wedded on the continent. As such, the magic that created the masque is a caring power, perhaps even stemming from fatherly love. Or perhaps it is somewhere in between Prospero's fatherly love and his ambitions. According to Bate and Rasmussen the masque could also serve a different purpose: "One almost wonders whether the figure of Prospero is a gentle parody of Ben Jonson" (4). They seem to think so, as they mention Ben Jonson including a parody of *The Tempest* in a later play. However, the line "one almost wonders" (4) leaves the option quite open that Shakespeare never intended the parody at all. Masques were very fashionable when *The Tempest* was first performed, so perhaps Shakespeare just used the masque as a device to make his work more appealing to a courtly audience. So Shakespeare's masque may just be a clever play within the play, a way to make his play appealing to his audience, or a parody on a well-known device. If the masque is only meant as a fashion statement or a parody, then it says very little about the magic that created it. However, even if the masque was just a device to please the courtly audience, it would not automatically rule out a possibility of it having another meaning.

In *Doctor Faustus* a parade is part of the temptation of Faustus, where the devil shows him the Seven Deadly Sins to take his mind off Heaven. The Seven Deadly Sins parade before Faustus and for every sin Faustus asks who it is and they answer by telling about themselves. These sins could either be a warning or an enlightenment. Gluttony threatens to eat everything, Wrath tells of how he longs to fight anyone who would and all the other sins also answer true to their nature. In a classical morality play the audience watch the struggle for the soul of a man (*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*). The nature of the soul of Faustus is made clear when he exclaims: "Oh how this doth delight my soul!" (VI.170). This parade of sins is like the antimasque described by Bate and Rasmussen: "a convention whereby grotesque figures known as 'antics' danced boisterously"(4).

Usually an antimasque was the prelude to a masque, but here it is the main event. In a masque the good characters, such as Lady Fame, would triumph. Here the Devil triumphs over God, as this parade distracts the mind of Faustus so he will no longer think of God. As a result he fully dedicated himself to the Devil. So the question could be: is this masque there to warn Faustus or to educate him, or is it there to warn or educate the audience? Faustus is delighted, but is the audience meant to be delighted as well, or should they be horrified, or should they experience a totally different emotion? This would be the part of the play where an audience, who might before have been mild in their judgement of Faustus, would have to admit that there is something evil inside of him. The masque proves that Faustus does delight in sin. The magic that created the Parade of the Seven Sins comes from the Devil himself and as such is evil. Its purpose seems to be to lead Faustus away from God, but that is just the goal of the Devil, and perhaps not what Marlowe wanted to convey with the play. Outside of the play it might be there to shock the audience, or to make them wonder about sin or even magic. The epilogue tells about how observing the fall of Faustus might cause the wise to wonder about unlawful things (epilogue, 4-8) and the masque is an important part of this fall. Perhaps the masque is not only to tempt Faustus, but also the audience. Should that be the case, then magic is not a tool for evil, but a force to be curious about, a power that is desirable.

Both *The Tempest* and *Doctor Faustus* contain a masque. Even though these masques are not magic by themselves, they might offer insight in the magic that created them. Prospero uses his masque to control Miranda and Ferdinand, but that could either be out of fatherly love, a need to manipulate everyone, or perhaps somewhere in between.

4.8 The Power of Illusion

The magicians Faustus and Prospero both use a similar kind of trick when performing their magic: a mirage. Moreover, they both use the same type of mirages. Faustus conjures up the likeness of people long gone, while Prospero makes Ariel change his shape into that of a harpy, nymph or the goddess Ceres. Then there is the theme of the disappearing food. Prospero's vanishing

banquet is a true mirage, while Faustus uses a trick. These mirages are an important part of the magic in the plays. However, nothing about these mirages is straightforward.

Both plays have a very similar mirage: the disappearing banquet. In *Doctor Faustus* food is stolen from the Pope while he is having dinner. The Pope is admiring the food on this table, all dishes being expensive gifts from the Bishop of Milan and a cardinal of France. Then, just as he is about to take a bite, an invisible Faustus snatches it away from him. In *The Tempest* Prospero orders a banquet for his brother Antonio and the ones shipwrecked with him. Some of these men chose Antonio's side all those years ago and as such were responsible for Prospero's banishment from Milan. Prospero makes them aware of their choice with the banquet: "He has Ariel arrange a banquet for them (3.3). However, before they can eat, the banquet is removed and Ariel, as a harpy, recounts their past sins for them. Prospero arouses their appetite and then feeds them, not food, but their past" (Benzon, chapter 5). Both these banquets are highly entertaining. A sixteenth century audience would have enjoyed seeing Faustus make a fool out of the Pope, and Shakespeare's audience would have seen *The Tempest* in a theatre that would have allowed such tricks to be performed on stage. In both plays people sit down to dinner and their food disappears. All they are left with is food for thought. These illusions both have their good and their evil sides. Prospero's mirage robs shipwrecked men from a meal, but it is all done to bring about justice. Denying shipwrecked men their food is hardly something a benevolent ruler is expected to do, so this banquet may be used to argue that Prospero is not kind. However, the men have only been on the island for a short time, they were not yet starving of hunger yet. So, if the banquet is a good or evil tool is questionable. To some Faustus stealing food from the highest clergyman of the Catholic faith may be a sin. However with the Reformation in Sixteenth century the Pope was seen by many as the Anti-Christ and he was no longer the highest religious authority. Therefore, to the audience mocking the Pope might not have been sinful, but entertaining.

One of the biggest stage illusions of all in *The Tempest* is the first scene. To the characters

involved the storm is very real and the audience is made to believe it is real because the characters involved think it is real. Only after the tempest has passed do we learn that it was Prospero who ordered Ariel to summon and orchestrate the tempest. However, some productions break this illusion by letting Prospero, Ariel or both appear on stage in the first scene, to watch the action unfold, or to raise and control the storm. Without these two on stage the audience are willing to believe that the storm is real through the suspension of disbelief. Butler argues that when the illusion is immediately taken away, it takes away Shakespeare's ploy to leave the audience questioning reality. If the storm is revealed to be a trick, the audience is never sure where the line is between reality and theatre (Butler, xxxv). Just as with the disappearing banquet, this illusion might have just been written in to amaze the audience in a more luxury theatre that offered the opportunity for special effects. However, it also serves to set the tone of the play: through the large storm Prospero shows us exactly how powerful he can be. On the island, and the surrounding sea, Prospero is all-powerful. He can manipulate nature to his wishes, so anything that happens might not be a coincidence but a part of a cunning plan. Calling up a destructive storm is not the pinnacle of good behaviour, however without this storm Prospero would not have had his chance to return to society.

Doctor Faustus contains a number of (stage) illusions surrounding the doctor himself, such as Faustus being beheaded by Benvolio, or the Horse-courser who pulls Faustus's leg off. Benvolio wishes to take revenge upon Faustus because Faustus had graced his head with horns. So he ambushes him and strikes off Faustus's false head, but then, just as they are celebrating that the devil is dead, Faustus stirs and comes back to life. Seemingly, the twenty-four-year contract with the devil was meant to last the full term and could not be ended before its time. Then there is the Horse-courser, who is tricked by Faustus into buying a horse that is actually a bewitched bundle of hay. When the Horse-courser discovers that he has been cheated he returns and pulls on the leg of the sleeping Faustus. The leg comes off and the Horse-courser runs away, leaving Faustus behind,

who then grows back his leg and has a good laugh. These pieces are both entertaining and perhaps also educating. These pieces of the play are often attributed to another author and not to Marlowe. Because of the stark contrast between the serious scenes where Faustus heavily doubts himself, and the comic nature of the practical jokes that Faustus plays on unsuspecting people, people wonder if all scenes were written by the same person. Perhaps it was written by Marlowe and there is a lesson to be learned there: the pranks are a different kind of magic than that which Faustus wished to achieve. On the other hand, perhaps the other author just wanted to spice up the play with some entertaining scenes. This makes these scenes open to discussion. If those scenes are not by Marlowe, how serious do we wish to take them?

In the first scene Faustus proudly proclaims what he plans on doing with his magical powers. He wishes for spirits to bring him treasure, wall Germany with brass and rule as king. He even says that “A sound magician is a demi-god” (I.61). However, at the end of the play not much is left of this proud speech, as Faustus seems reduced to a mere entertainer of kings, not even close to being a king himself. Andrew Sofar blames this on Faustus being unimaginative, and so: “the devils equate magic with theatrical entertainment, and conjuring with jugglery.” (16) Instead of gaining absolute magical power, Faustus spends the last years of his life conjuring up spirits to please others, including himself. There are scenes where he conjures up spirits of the long dead, like Alexander the Great for Charles V, but he also demonstrates these powers to the Emperor, the Duke of Vanholt and his students. His magical devilish powers seem to have been reduced to a form of cheap entertainment (Healy, 187). This raises the question if this power of entertainment is worth an immortal soul? Or perhaps this is not only cheap entertainment, in the Renaissance magicians and alchemists often sought the patronage of influential people, like royalty. So perhaps Faustus is doing exactly what is expected of him. However, Faustus would not need a powerful patron, he already had one; the Devil himself. Moreover, why would Faustus want a patron when in his first speech he compares a magician to a demi-god? By making himself subservient to the Devil Faustus was

already limiting his powers, and perhaps his further subservience to the nobility is an extension of that limitation. A demi-god would not be the servant of a devil, and at the end of the play the audience gets the proof of that. However, Faustus never complains about his limited amount of power. Thomas Healy writes that Faustus, like all of the characters, is fond of role playing and wants a spectacular show for themselves. When Faustus and Mephistopheles have travelled around the globe and make ready to go see the Pope Faustus exclaims: “Then in this show let me an actor be; That this proud Pope may Faustus’ cunning see” (VIII.76-77). At that point in the play Faustus is already acting his way through his life. He is planning on making a show of humiliating the Pope, just so his fame will grow. Then at the end Faustus is getting lost in the illusions and theatre of it all. As when Helen of Troy enters the second time, Faustus knows that his time is running out and that she is just an illusion, but still he rather follows her than attempting to save his soul. The power of illusions is strong, even to those who know it is false. The ambiguity of it all is that the audience and Faustus are aware how false these illusions are, but they are the reality for Faustus.

5. Conclusion

Magic is an important part of both *The Tempest* and *Doctor Faustus*. Magic can be found throughout both plays in various elements such as the major characters, the plot, the message and many other elements. Both plays have an ambiguous message on the nature of magic. Some critics argue that this ambiguity is there because Shakespeare and Marlowe intentionally wrote an ambiguous play. However, another reason for this ambiguity could be the changing times. The definition of magic has changed through the ages, and so a message that an author might want to convey to his audience might be interpreted in a different way by an audience 300 years later.

Doctor Faustus has the form of a morality play, but it does not warn against magic. Instead it seems to encourage an interest in the forbidden arts. The protagonists of both plays, Faustus and Prospero, are also ambiguous characters. Faustus seems to be evil, as he sells his soul and delights in sin, but many critics agree that he does not deserve to be dragged to Hell. Prospero is ambiguous because he can be seen as both a calm, forgiving and benevolent ruler of a wonderful island or a cruel, manipulative slave-driver who constantly loses his temper. Books of (magical) lore are made to look important to the plot, but they might not be as important as they are made out to be. Both plays use the destroying of books as a way to get rid of magic, but they might not be the ultimate source of power. Then there are the servants, of whom it is never quite sure if they are good or evil.

Mephistopheles is evil, but he is ambiguous in the way he serves Faustus. He promises Faustus a world of power, but never gives Faustus more than mirages. Ariel is a spirit of nature and as such not evil, but he uses destructive magic. Caliban is also a very ambiguous character. Images of him vary from a hideous monster to a poor abused soul. One of those images, the one of the black slave is a modern interpretation, as in Shakespeare's time colonisation was not as great an issue as it is today. Images like this make the play more ambiguous, as interpretations evolve over time, into views that the author may not have foreseen. Wagner is the most loyal of all the servants, but he also calls on devils. All servants have their dark and their light sides. Religion condemns magic, but

still people compare the magician Prospero to God. *Doctor Faustus* is full of religious references to the war between Heaven and Hell, but it never truly chooses a side and the audience never quite knows who is telling the truth. Both plays are filled with art, such as masques, which might be there for entertainment purposes but also to convey important messages to the audience. Finally there is the overall power of illusions. Faustus lives in his own illusion. He thinks he is a great magician, but in reality he is reduced to a mere entertainer. Prospero creates illusions, but the effect they produce are also an illusion. Magic creates these illusions, but the power magic brings is the biggest illusion of them all. It may look as if everyone lives happily ever after but that is never true.

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