

Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres

Duality, Theatre and Self-discovery in Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

Auteur : Caroline Vanhaudenarde

Promoteur(s) : Guido Latré

Lecteur(s) :

Année académique 2018-2019

Master en langues et lettres modernes, orientation germanique, à
finalité didactique

Duality, Theatre and Self-Discovery in Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed*
and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

Mémoire réalisé par
Caroline Vanhauenderde

Promoteur
Guido Latré

Année académique 2018-2019
Master [120] en langues et lettres modernes, orientation germaniques, à finalité didactique

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Mr. Guido Latré, for his patience, his invaluable assistance and his meaningful feedback.

I would also like to express my gratitude to all those who, directly or indirectly, helped me to conduct this study. I am especially grateful to Isabelle, Olivia, Jordane and my mother for their unconditional support.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	1
Introduction: <i>Hag-Seed</i>, <i>The Tempest</i> retold	1
Chapter 1: The duality between Caliban and Ariel	7
1.1. The duality between Caliban and Ariel in <i>The Tempest</i>	7
1.2 The duality between Caliban and Ariel in <i>Hag-Seed</i>	13
Chapter 2: The representation of theatre in <i>The Tempest</i> and <i>Hag-Seed</i>	25
2.1. The representation of theatre in <i>The Tempest</i>	25
2.1.1 The role of art in <i>The Tempest</i>	29
2.1.2. Illusion and reality in <i>The Tempest</i>	32
2.2 The representation of theatre in <i>Hag-Seed</i>	35
2.2.1. The role of art in <i>Hag-Seed</i>	37
2.2.2. Illusion and reality in <i>Hag-Seed</i>	45
Chapter 3: the process of self-discovery and confinement in <i>The Tempest</i> and <i>Hag-Seed</i>	53
3.1. The confinement and self-discovery of Prospero in the tempest	53
3.2. The self-discovery and confinement of Felix in <i>Hag-Seed</i>	59
Conclusion	72
Bibliography	77
1. Primary Literature	77
2. Secondary Literature	77
1. Books	77
2. Scholarly Articles.....	77
3. Online Articles	79
4. Websites	79

Abstract

L'année 2016 commémorait les 400 ans de la mort de Shakespeare. Pour cette occasion la maison d'édition Hogarth, a décidé de lancer une série de romans adaptés des pièces de ce dernier. C'est dans ce contexte que l'auteur canadienne Margaret Atwood reprend l'intrigue de La Tempête, la pièce de théâtre du célèbre dramaturge mêlant magie, romance et trahison. Hag-Seed est donc une réécriture moderne de cette pièce. Les deux œuvres sont caractérisées par la présence d'un personnage principale énigmatique. Ce mémoire analyse et compare ces deux figures emblématiques au travers des thèmes de la dualité de l'âme humaine, la représentation de l'art dramatique et de l'illusion ainsi que de la quête d'identité au moyen d'un processus d'identification.

Introduction: *Hag-Seed*, *The Tempest* retold

Prospero: Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air;
(*The Tempest*, 4.1.148-150)

William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616) is universally regarded as one of the greatest writers in the English language. His work has been read, performed, and adapted for more than four hundred years. In the preface of the First Folio of 1623, Ben Jonson declared “he was not of an age, but for all time,” anticipating the playwright’s influence on future generations. Each new generation has provided interpretations and adaptations of his plays in a variety of forms, whether on stage, in print or on-screen. Our early 21st century carries on with the tradition of re-interpreting Shakespeare’s plays. In honour of the four-hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare’s death, the Hogarth Press launched in October 2015 the Hogarth Shakespeare project. The project aims to provide rewriting of the Bard’s works by acclaimed contemporary novelists. From Howard Jacobson engaging with *The merchant of Venice* to the re-telling of *Othello* by Tracy Chevalier, the Hogarth Shakespeare series demonstrate the perpetuity of Shakespeare’s stories.

One of the authors taking part in this project is the Canadian poet, novelist, and essayist Margaret Atwood (1939 -). Her work, which defies easy classification, spans a variety of genres and themes, including gender and patriarchal society, speculative and science fiction, art as well as its creation. With her novel *Hag-Seed*, she offers a metafictional, witty, and imaginative adaptation of Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest*, which has always been a favourite of hers.¹ She viewed the challenge of rewriting the play as an opportunity to address the unanswered questions and “tease out the complexities”² of the characters. It is thus legitimate that these two aspects are especially important in her novel *Hag-Seed*.

The Tempest is an eminent play first performed in 1611 and printed in Shakespeare’s collected works of 1623. The play enchanted audiences and readers with its elaborate combination of illusion and music, humour and love, betrayal and intrigue. It depicts the story

¹ Atwood, Margaret (2016, September 24). *A perfect storm: Margaret Atwood on rewriting Shakespeare’s Tempest*. Retrieved March 14, 2019, from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/sep/24/margaret-atwood-rewriting-shakespeare-tempest-hagseed>.

² *Ibidem*.

of Prospero, *The Tempest*’ “vibrant but ambiguous central character,”³ who seeks revenge since his dukedom was usurped and taken from him by his brother Antonio, conspiring with Alonso, the King of Naples. Prospero and his daughter Miranda were set adrift on the sea but eventually arrived on the island where they have been living for twelve years with the monstrous Caliban, Prospero’s servant and the son of the dead Sycorax. With the help of the airy spirit Ariel, Prospero carries out a magical storm that causes his enemies’ ship to shipwreck on the island. After that, the magician appears to be very much in control of what happens to the play’s characters as he puts his plan of revenge into motion. He separates the shipwreck survivors into groups. First, the son of the king of Naples, Ferdinand, is led by Ariel to Prospero and Miranda’s side. Ferdinand and Miranda fall in love, which is a part of Prospero’s plan. At the same time, Sebastian, Antonio, Gonzalo and Alonso, who believes that his son has perished in the shipwreck, are lost on the island. Antonio and Sebastian secretly plot to kill Alonso and Gonzalo in their sleep so that Sebastian can become King. However, Ariel hinders this conspiracy. Meanwhile, Stephano, the king’s drunken butler, and Trinculo, the king’s jester, find Caliban and make him drink alcohol while conspiring to overthrow Prospero. However, the latter is not preoccupied with their plan. He torments the shipwrecked noblemen with his spirits by creating an illusionary banquet. This banquet vanishes as Ariel appears like a harpy and accuses the king and his partners of being evil in exiling Prospero. While he is preparing his daughter’s wedding to Ferdinand, the sorcerer is reminded by his airy servant about the treason organized by Caliban. He distracts the drunken men from their plan with luxurious clothing and then evicts them with a pack of spirits in the shape of dogs and hounds. Finally, all the characters are reunited for the resolution: At Prospero’s command, Ariel brings Alonso and the others before him. Prospero confronts his enemies with their treachery and forgives them. He then reveals Miranda and Ferdinand to Alonso, who is amazed by the miracle of Ferdinand’s survival. The group plans to return to Italy, where Ferdinand and Miranda will be married, and Prospero will be restored to his dukedom. Ariel is set free, according to the magician’s promise. The play ends with Prospero’s farewell to magic and request for the audience’s applause.

Hag-Seed is a novel which was written by Margaret Atwood in 2016. It transfers the events of the original play to contemporary Canada. Its connection with the Shakespearean play is distinctly established with the subtitle of this work *The Tempest Retold*. The novel relates the

³ Vaughan, T., Vaughan, V., (2011), Introduction. In W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (pp.1-160). London: the Arden Shakespeare, p.1

story of Felix Philips, the Artistic Director of the imaginary Makeshiweg Theatre Festival, who is deposed by his assistant, Tony Price, with the help of Sal O’Nally, while he was working on a new production of *The Tempest*, a tribute to his beloved late daughter Miranda. Brewing revenge, he is exiled to live in loneliness in a small cottage. In his isolation, he begins to imagine that his deceased daughter is keeping him company in the form of a ghost. After eight years of exile, he starts teaching Literacy Through Theatre to the prisoners at the nearby Fletcher Correctional Centre. After having staged *Macbeth*, *Richard III*, and *Julius Caesar* with the prisoners, he eventually decides to direct his former project of *The Tempest* when his enemies, now influential leaders in the political sphere, are invited to attend the performance. The production of the play with the actors-inmates turned actors is Felix’s agents of retribution. Furthermore, the fact that Tony and Sal plan to cancel the literacy program motivates the inmates to take part in Felix’s plan, not knowing that their teacher has personal motives on the side. The day of the performance, Felix organizes an artistic immersion with the complicity of the inmates, disguised into a prison riot. It makes the audience live and enact the play. Each character experiences the same events as his Shakespearean alter-egos in the play. The different narratives of *The Tempest* occur: after being taken as a hostage and presumably killed during the riot, Frederick, Sal’s son, becomes romantically interested in Anne-Marie, Miranda’s actress. Tony and Sebert, willing to take advantage of the chaos, conspire to overthrow Sal and dispose of Lonnie. The piece of interactive theatre gives Felix the opportunity to regain his former position as Artistic Director. After the inmates conceive the possible afterlives of the play’s characters, the novel closes with the epilogue: Felix finally releases the constructed ghost of his daughter and, at the same time, frees himself from the guilt that he has been enduring since she died.

After a comprehensive reading of these two works, it is clear that these two works mainly focus on the development of their ambiguous principal character: the magician Prospero in *The Tempest* and his present-day equivalent, the artistic director Felix in *Hag-Seed*, are respectively the focus of their story.

On the one hand, *The Tempest* focuses on Prospero’s use of magic and illusion as well as his quest for revenge and power. First, his thirst for vengeance and his attitude towards his servants raise question on his morality and fairness. Secondly, Shakespeare’s most enigmatic character appears to be in control throughout the play. Vaughan writes in his introduction to the play that “he is clearly the play’s central character; he has far more lines than anyone else and

manipulates the other characters throughout.”⁴ He is not only capable of managing the natural phenomena on the island, he also conducts the other characters on and offstage, manipulating the events for his own personal retaliation. As a result, *The Tempest* seems to be explicitly affected with its own nature as a play. It draws links between Prospero’s “art” and theatrical illusion. Prospero’s attitude is comparable to a dramatist creating a play with special effects. Hulme states that “Prospero, like Shakespeare, is a dramatist and creator of special effects. The analogies between the play he stages and *The Tempest* itself are close and important.”⁵ Prospero has often been identified with Shakespeare himself. Dowden’s biographical approach illustrates the association of Prospero with Shakespeare and his renunciation of magic as signalling Shakespeare’s retirement.⁶ Furthermore, Vaughan writes that “one’s reaction to Prospero almost inevitably determines one’s response to the entire play.”⁷

On the other hand, Margaret Atwood decided to adapt Prospero’s character into Felix Philips, the artistic director. “Felix, a.k.a. Prospero, is both the victim of one plot and the master manipulator of another. The actors are also prisoners – dangerous but vulnerable. The means of vengeance – the theatre – are also the means of forgiveness and grace. Illusion is also truth.”⁸ In terms of narration, Atwood copied Prospero’s strong presence in the play’s text by using free indirect discourse in her novel. The narrative instance is a third-person voice that often explores Felix’s thoughts. This narrative style allows Atwood to combine the detachment of a third-person narrator and the subjective perspective of Felix. As a result, the narration’s sceptical distance points out Felix’s flaws or unreliability. With this narratological technique, Atwood presents her main protagonist in multiple dimensions, which is particularly interesting for character analysis. “It’s a formidable literary sleight of hand that allows Atwood to tell the story from Felix’s perspective, whilst maintaining a humorously critical awareness of his many shortcomings.”⁹

⁴ Vaughan, T., Vaughan, V., *op. cit.* p. 24.

⁵ Hulme, P., (1992). *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1472-1797*. Cambridge: University Press. p. 115.

⁶ Dowden, E., (1875), *The Serenity of The Tempest*. In Palmer, D.J. (Ed.). *Shakespeare: The Tempest* (pp. 61-66), Glasgow: Macmillan.

⁷ Vaughan, A., Vaughan, V. *op. cit.* p. 24.

⁸ Awad, M., (2016, October 14). *Review: Margaret Atwood’s Hag-Seed is an insightful retelling of The Tempest*. Retrieved August 03, 2019 from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/book-reviews/review-margaret-atwoods-hag-seed-is-an-insightful-retelling-of-the-tempest/article32360859/>.

⁹ Broad, L., (2017, January 1). *Review: Hag-Seed*. Retrieved 03, 2019 from <https://theoxfordculturereview.com/2017/01/01/review-hag-seed/>.

Furthermore, the author defines her novel as a “triple box” story, i.e. a play about mounting a play within a novel.¹⁰ The fact that Felix is directing an ambitious version of *The Tempest* emphasises not only the connection between the novel and the play, but also the themes of theatre and creativity. Imagination and illusion are also represented in Felix’s creation of a projection of his deceased daughter, Miranda. His constructed ghost acquires its voice throughout the narration. the reader is often reminded that Miranda is nothing but a project of Felix’s imagination. His revenge plan successfully achieved, Felix’s development and self-awareness are nonetheless only completed when he understands that he must free himself from his most important creation: his projection of Miranda.

This dissertation seeks to address Atwood’s depiction of the modern re-invention of Prospero, Felix Philips, within the framework of three key aspects legitimized by the original play: duality, theatre and self-discovery. In this dissertation, I intend to compare and examine Shakespeare’s magician Prospero and Atwood’s theatre director Felix. It is divided into three parts. The first chapter analyses the duality between Caliban and Ariel in *The Tempest* and in *Hag-Seed*. The second chapter examines the representation of theatre in the two texts. The third chapter is devoted to the portrayal of the main characters’ self-discovery in their respective work. Finally, my conclusions are drawn in the last section.

¹⁰ “The Next Chapter: Audio Interview with Margaret Atwood.” *CBC Listen*, October 10, 2016. <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2695699874>.

Chapter 1: The duality between Caliban and Ariel

1.1. The duality between Caliban and Ariel in *The Tempest*

The characters of Caliban and Ariel in *The Tempest* have often been considered by critics as two opposing sides of a spectrum, with Ariel as the angel and Caliban as the beast. Allegorically, they represent the dichotomy at work in Prospero's mind. The allegorical interpretation of the play makes it possible to analyse the magician's morality and his position between Virtue and Vice. The analysis of Prospero's servants offers further insight into his quest for self-discovery in the play.

In *The Tempest*, Caliban, the original inhabitant of the island, is the offspring of the witch Sycorax and the devil. He is often referred to as monster, or, in other words, as a "beast" or a "misshapen knave" (4.1.140; 5.1.268). He is forced into servitude, and out of revenge, he plots to undermine Prospero. Caliban is a rather ambivalent character. On the one hand, he seems to be driven exclusively by his physical needs, hence his attempt to rape Miranda. Moreover, Caliban appears as a thing made of earthly elements: "Thou earth, thou" (1.2.314), "A thing most brutish" (1.2.356), "this thing of darkness" (5.1.275): Caliban's connection to the earth marks his primal status.¹¹ On the other hand, he is the character who delivers the most beautiful and poetic speech, which shows his emotional and sensitive nature:

CALIBAN:

Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices
That, if I then had waked after long sleep
Will make me sleep again; and then in dreaming
The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
I cried to dream again. (3.2.130–138).

¹¹ Lupton, J. (2000). Creature Caliban. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51(1), 1-23, p. 9.

These lines express Caliban's special relation to the wondrous beauty of the island, as well as his deep affection for it. As Hazlitt states, "the poet shows us the savage with the simplicity of a child and makes the strange monster amiable"¹².

Moreover, he can be interpreted as a victim of Prospero's tyranny and oppressive force, which highlights "the idea that Caliban and the 'primitive' peoples were exploited innocents whose potential was abused by the colonizers."¹³ The postcolonial interpretations of the play focus on Caliban's protest "this island is mine" (1.2.333), and associate him with native inhabitants of India, Africa and the Caribbean. Critics examine the experience of colonization in the New World and compare Caliban with dispossessed Native Americans or Africans. In the light of this, as Vaughan comments, "since Caliban's first appearance in 1611, Shakespeare's monster has undergone remarkable transformations. From drunken beast in the eighteenth century, to noble savage and missing link in the nineteenth, to Third World victim of oppression in the mid-twentieth, Caliban's stage images reflect changing Anglo-American attitudes toward primitive man."¹⁴

Caliban's earthly nature contrasts with Prospero's other servant, Ariel, who is identified with the airy element. Ariel was formerly imprisoned by Sycorax, Caliban's witch mother. He is rescued by Prospero when he arrived on the island. In comparison with his relationship with Caliban, which is filled with animosity, Prospero and his airy servant seem affectionate towards each other. Despite claiming for his liberty in act 1 scene 2, Ariel gladly satisfies his master's requests throughout the play, which stands in stark contrast to Caliban's cursing and plotting against the same master. Ariel's immense powers help Prospero to control events and characters. He is the main source of Prospero's magic. Without his servant's support, Prospero would be incapable of carrying out his revenge plan. Ariel creates the opening storm that brings Prospero's enemies on the island, and then employs illusion to lead the court party to their respective punishments while making sure that they do not get hurt. He also stops a conspiracy to kill Alonso, King of Naples. Prospero describes Ariel as "quaint", "delicate", "dainty", and "tricky" (1.2.318; 4.1.49; 5.1.95, 226). He is a shape-shifting air elemental, musician, and singer. He is not only associated with air but also with water since he can disguise himself as a

¹² Hazlitt, W. (2009). *The Tempest*. In J. Lobban (Ed.), *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (pp. 92-98). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.97.

¹³ Griffiths, T. (1983). 'This Island's mine': Caliban and Colonialism. *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 13, p. 166.

¹⁴Vaughan, V. (1985). "Something Rich and Strange": Caliban's Theatrical Metamorphoses. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36(4), 390-405, p. 390.

“nymph o’th’sea” (1.2.302). His association with “air and water connote[s] lightness, fluidity and grace of movement.”¹⁵

In addition to his supernatural powers, the play also depicts Ariel as sensitive and attached to nature. Ariel’s spiritual qualities and closeness with nature is emphasized by his song “Where the bee sucks, there suck I” when the moment of his release is near:

ARIEL

Where the bee sucks, there suck I:
In a cowslip’s bell I lie;
Then I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat’s back I do fly
After summer merrily.
Merrily, merrily shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough. (5.1.88-94).

This song’s imagery insists on Ariel’s connection with nature through the comparison of the spirit with a bee. The emphasis on the word “merrily” shows his contentment in being placed in nature’s bosom as he lies “in a cowslip’s bell”. Ariel’s freedom is related to his reunion with the natural world. In this song, Ariel praises freedom to go where he pleases as an “airy spirit” once he is released from the service of his master, Prospero.

Although the text identifies Ariel as a non-human, he has enough compassion to know how he would feel if he were human. In act 5, he feels pity on the court party and tells his master that his “affections would become tender” (5.1.18-19) if he were human. His words convince Prospero to rethink his plan and reconcile with his enemies. Through Ariel’s intervention, Prospero metamorphoses from a resentful magician to a man capable of forgiving the people who betrayed him and exiled him to the island. Ariel’s merciful attitude appears to be the catalyst for Prospero’s transformation.

In the play, Caliban and Ariel are both servants of Prospero, but they are considerably different in appearance and nature. However, the delicate Ariel and the savage Caliban seem to be the two sides of the same coin. According to Hazlitt, these two characters embody the “contrast between the material and the spiritual, the gross and delicate”¹⁶. Ariel, as an airy spirit, “can be seen as one pole in a neo-Platonic dualism: Air as opposed to Caliban’s Earth.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Vaughan, A., Vaughan, V. *op. cit.* p. 9.

¹⁶Hazlitt, W. *op. cit.* p. 96.

¹⁷Vaughan, A., Vaughan, V. *op. cit.* p. 28

In this tradition of thoughts, Ariel is the “imaginary power, the swiftness of thought personified”¹⁸ and Caliban is viewed as “the brute body, responding to sensory and sensual instincts and desires and operating at the subsistence and reproductive level of life.”¹⁹ *The Tempest* can be interpreted as an allegory of the soul, with Ariel and Caliban as allegories of the parts that compose the human mind. Caliban can be seen as the representation of the uncivilized or animal aspect in human condition, “a representation of the instincts and passions in man.”²⁰ As Egan argues, Caliban can be interpreted as the “lowest common denominator”²¹ of all the play’s characters, since he represents the agonizing and ruthless self in human mind. By contrast, Ariel is a symbol of the “higher imaginative powers”²² in human nature. Ariel’s apparitions are associated with poetry, music, and dramatic performances. Through this symbolic association of Ariel and Caliban with the significations of angel and beast, *The Tempest*’s depicts the moral terms of man’s nature as “a conflict between his Holy Guardian Angel and his Malevolent Demon.”²³ The allegorical reading of the play supports the idea that Ariel and Caliban are not only dramatic characters but also manifestations of Prospero’s mind. Considering this, *The Tempest* is consistent with Renaissance humanism characterized by the dichotomy between de beast and the angel.²⁴ Mebane states that “*The Tempest* is a dramatic debate over the question of whether humanity is bestial or godlike, Caliban or Ariel.”²⁵

With Ariel and Caliban being parts of Prospero’s own mind, the play seems to raise the following question: how does Prospero’s humanity meet its balance between Caliban’s earthiness and Ariel’s spiritual status? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to consider Prospero’s moral development throughout the play. First, his own narration of his backstory in act 1 scene 2 describes the acquisition of his art through his “secret studies” (1.2.77) and how he left the organisation of his dukedom to his brother. It could be argued that his years of seclusion and the neglect of his duty in Milan demonstrate that his humanity was not flawless. His main preoccupation was to satisfy his narcissistic search for knowledge. After being betrayed by his brother and forced to live in exile on the island, Prospero does not

¹⁸Hazlitt, W. *op. cit.* p. p. 97.

¹⁹ Davidson, F. (1963). "The Tempest": An Interpretation. *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 62(3), pp. 505-506.

²⁰ Phillips, J. (1964). The Tempest and the Renaissance Idea of Man. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15(2), p. 150.

²¹ Egan, R. (1972). This Rough Magic: Perspectives of Art and Morality in The Tempest. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 23(2), p. 174.

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ Corfield, C. (1985). Why Does Prospero Abjure His "Rough Magic"? *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36(1), p. 34.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ Mebane, J. (1988). Metadrama and the Visionary Imagination in Dr. Faustus and the Tempest. *South Atlantic Review*, 53(2), p. 36.

reconsider his previous attitude but brews revenge and makes use of his magic to bring his enemies to repentance. He employs his art to elevate himself to a higher authority that can destroy his fellow men. In this sense, he assumes God's prerogative of punishment and forgets his humanity in the process.²⁶ Moreover, his attempt to restore order to his world by imposing his moral vision is only justified by his vengeful passion and resentment which "threatens constantly to overwhelm the nobler ends of his project."²⁷ In addition, he even seems to derive sadistic pleasure from the suffering of his enemies:

PROSPERO:

And these, mine enemies, are all knit up
In their distractions. They now are in my power. (3.3.88-90).

Consequently, his project of revealing and purging evil from his enemies, the inappropriateness of his revenge enterprise and, his oppressive attitude toward Caliban are representative of Prospero's evil self.²⁸ Egan argues that "there is a Caliban in the best of men, his presence and even his birthright must be recognized if he is to be effectively dealt with, for if left to run entirely at large he will inevitably perpetrate evil."²⁹ Prospero's most essential endeavour is thus not his vengeance but overcoming his corrupted self.³⁰ The play depicts his ordeal of self-knowledge and acceptance of the human condition³¹. As Vaughan explains, Prospero's range of emotional states demonstrates that his nature is still in development³². He uses his magic in an attempt to transcend his human limitation, in other words "the Caliban within him"³³. Prospero has to make use of Ariel's power, i.e. the creative function of the imagination, through the arts of music, dance and poetry, to discipline his lower, amoral self³⁴. Prospero has to follow Ariel's "Virtue" to transcend Caliban's "Vice". In the light of this, it is consistent that Ariel influences Prospero's decision at the end. When the airy spirit appears to report that the courtly sinners are now in his master's mercy, he adds:

ARIEL

Your charm so strongly works'em,
That if you now beheld them, your affections
Would become tender.

²⁶Egan, R. *op. cit.* p. 177.

²⁷ *Ibidem.*

²⁸ Corfield, C. *op. cit.* p. 43.

²⁹ Egan, R. *op. cit.* p. 177.

³⁰ *Ibidem.* p. 175.

³¹ Phillips, J. *op. cit.* p. 147.

³² Vaughan, A., Vaughan, V. *op. cit.* p. 25.

³³ Corfield, C. *op. cit.* p. 35.

³⁴ Phillips, J. *op. cit.* p. 155

PROSPERO

Dost thou think so, spirit?

ARIEL

Mine would, sir, were I human.

PROSPERO

And mine shall.

Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling

Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,

One of their kind, that relish all as sharply

Passion as they, be kindlier mov'd than thou art? (5.1.17-24).

This extract shows that Prospero can overcome his impulse to satisfy his emotional hunger for retaliation and discover forgiveness. It also suggests that Ariel possesses the capacity of feeling and compassion. Through Ariel's expression of feeling, Prospero acknowledges his sensitive soul and abandons his desire of revenge. However, Prospero's regeneration is not completed unless he accepts his lower instinct embodied by the rebellious Caliban. Caliban's conspiracy demonstrates that evil that cannot be repressed without rebelling.³⁵ During the climax of the play, he effectively recognizes his flaws and "acknowledges" Caliban as his own responsibility. His words express his recognition of Caliban as a thing of darkness for which he is responsible³⁶:

PROSPERO

This thing of darkness I

Acknowledge mine. (5.1.275-276)

These lines support the allegorical reading of Caliban as part of Prospero's reflection and shows his acceptance of his evil self that was yearning for revenge. Prospero can only regain his humanity through the acceptance of his lower self, which allows him to overcome his natural desire for vengeance.³⁷ With these words, he "establishes that his humanity irretrievably includes elements of a lower nature."³⁸ The passage implies that "acknowledging" the part of darkness in man is an essential phase to rationalize it. Prospero realizes that he cannot escape from his human condition. This is the reason behind the releasing of his powers. By abjuring his "rough magic", Prospero accepts his humanity.³⁹ Berry explains that "in renouncing his 'rough magic', Prospero accepts his limitations as a man and re-enters the human

³⁵ Egan, R., *op. cit.* p. 177.

³⁶ *Ibidem.*

³⁷ Corfield, C. *op. cit.* p. 43

³⁸ *Ibidem.*

³⁹ Berry, E. *op. cit.* p. 47.

community.”⁴⁰ Considering the fact that he employs his magic to reveal the true nature of the other characters, it is only logical that he experiences a higher degree of self-awareness in the process⁴¹. Coupled with the resolving of his mind’s conflict between Ariel and Caliban, Prospero also realizes the danger of playing god and the misapplication of his magic powers. Prospero acknowledges his human limitations.⁴² He also repents for his assumption of divine power and for judging his fellow men. This self-awareness prompts the final phase of his development: his request for the audience’s forgiveness in the epilogue.⁴³

To sum up, Ariel and Caliban are two opposite forces in Prospero’s mind. The two characters represent a scale with Caliban at the bestial end and Ariel at the angelic side. In the light of this, the most significant development in *The Tempest* is that of Prospero’s self-discovery. Prospero aspires towards Ariel’s airiness and tries to suppress his lower instincts represented by Caliban. The play does not only depict Prospero’s revenge, it also dramatizes his aspiration towards the divine sphere and his final acceptance of his human limitations followed by his humble apology as a man in front of the audience.

1.2 The duality between Caliban and Ariel in *Hag-Seed*

As mentioned above, many of the *Dramatis personae* in the play are transformed into easily discernible characters in the novel: Felix Phillips (Prospero, former Duke of Milan) Heritage Minister Tony Price (Prospero’s brother, Antonio), Justice Minister Sal O’Nally (Alonso, King of Naples), his son Frederick O’Nally (Ferdinand), Lonnie Gordon (Gonzalo) and Veterans Affairs Minister Sebert Stanley (Sebastian, Alonso’s brother). However, in *Hag-Seed*, Atwood decided not to include two characters who were very important in other adaptations: Caliban and Miranda. While the character of Caliban is simply absent from the novel, the character of Miranda is supposed to have died but her presence is felt throughout the novel in various manners, among which as Felix’s equivalent of Ariel. Considering these characters’ importance on adaptation works throughout the years, it is necessary to examine this decision.

In *Hag-Seed*, there is no distinct allusion to a Caliban character in comparison to the clear connections of Felix as Prospero, Anne-Marie as Miranda, Tony as Antonio, Sal as

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁴¹ Egan, R., *op. cit.* p. 181.

⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁴³ Egan, R. *op. cit.* p. 180.

Alonso, Lonnie as Gonzalo, and Freddie as Ferdinand. The novel does not present any character being mistreated by Felix or distorted and misshapen, nor is there any character plotting to undermine him after Tony's coup. Consequently, it could be argued that the novel simply does not consider that aspect of the play, since *Hag-Seed* does not concentrate on all facets of *The Tempest*. The title of the novel, however, a direct reference to Caliban, does not support this interpretation, on the contrary, it suggests that elements of Caliban should be central to the story. "Hag-seed" (1.2.366) is one of Caliban's names in *The Tempest* used by Prospero. Atwood comments on her decision quite obscurely: "I called my novel *Hag-Seed*, which is one of the names used by Prospero when he is railing at Caliban, and Caliban is cursing him right back. Why name it after Caliban rather than Prospero? I won't tell you that in advance, but there is a reason."⁴⁴ The use of Caliban's name in the title is therefore evocative of his importance among the novel's main themes.

First, it could be a reference to the inmates at the Fletcher Correctional Centre to whom Felix teaches Shakespeare's work. In the novel, the "hag-seed" of the title seems to be metamorphosed in a multifaceted collective entity. The monster slave of the original play finds his voice into the group of prisoners, characterized by their vhuman weaknesses and failures and a multicultural background. In *The Tempest*, Caliban arrives at the end of Act 1. Similarly, the prisoners are introduced at the end of Section 1 with the literacy through literature program at the Fletcher Correctional. Felix teaches them to use Shakespeare's curses, which mirrors Prospero's teaching of language to Caliban, "You taught me language and my profit on't / is I know how to curse" (1.2.437-38), the character's post-colonial interpretation is also mentioned when the inmates demonstrate that they all possess something of Caliban. They identify themselves with Prospero's oppressed and rebellious servant and want to play his part in the prison play:

"We *get* him." "Everyone kicks him around but he don't let it break him, he says what he thinks." ... "he's mean [...] Wicked mean! Everyone who's dissing him, he wants to get them back!" (*Hag-Seed* p. 120)

Caliban is embodied in an indirect way, through the group of actor-inmates that Felix uses for his retaliation. However, the interpretation of Caliban as being replaced by the prisoners has limitations. This version of Caliban does certainly not, as the title suggests, takes the focus of

⁴⁴ Atwood, Margaret, (2016). « A perfect storm: Margaret Atwood on Rewriting *The Tempest*. » *The Guardian*, October 17, 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/sep/24/margaret-atwood-rewriting-shakespeare-tempest-hagseed>.

the novel. Moreover, the inmates are explicitly referred to as Felix's goblins, imitating Prospero's goblins:

The goblins, thinks Felix, the ultimate weapon. For the kernel of his secret project, his nugget of revenge, everything hinges on the Goblins. (*Hag-Seed* p. 137)

Another possible interpretation is based on the allegorical reading of the original play, which implies that Caliban is Prospero's darkness. It is possible to identify Felix as Caliban, perhaps as a symbolic reference to the line "this thing of darkness I/Acknowledge mine" (5.1.275-276). In this context, the title *Hag-Seed* may be Atwood's reference to Prospero and Felix. Atwood refers to this hypothesis in her novel through the voice of the inmates:

Plus, he sees that the bad in Caliban is pretty much the same as the bad in him, Prospero. They're both angry, both name-callers, both full of revenge: they're joined at the hip. Caliban is like his bad other self. Like father, like son. So he owns up: 'This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine.' That what he says, and that's what he means. (*Hag-Seed* p. 267)

Caliban is thus not completely absent from the novel but integrated in Felix's character. The fact that Miranda's projection in *Hag-Seed* is the equivalent of both Miranda and Ariel reinforces the idea that Felix can be a mixture of Prospero and Caliban. Consequently, the title *Hag-Seed* is a reference to Felix and his obsession with his revenge. The title encompasses Felix's uses of his authority in the prison and his dark ambition to regain his previous position of power in the theatre festival. This interpretation is also discussed by Atwood when she addresses the different questions raised by the connection between Prospero and his servant: "Is he bad by nature? Is he Prospero's dark shadow? What does Prospero mean when he says of Caliban, at the end of the play, 'This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine?' And by the way, who is Caliban's father?"⁴⁵ However, Felix is not only representative of Caliban's earthy darkness, he has also inherited of the monster's poetic sensitivity. For instance, Felix's thoughts resemble the "The isle is full of noises" speech at some point:

The silence began to get to him. Not silence, exactly. The bird songs, the chirping of the crickets, the wind in the trees. The flies, buzzing so contrapuntally in his outhouse. Melodious. Soothing. Sometimes, to escape that ongoing semi-music, he'd climb into his increasingly unreliable car and

⁴⁵ Atwood, Margaret, (2016). « A perfect storm: Margaret Atwood on Rewriting *The Tempest*. » *The Guardian*, October 17, 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/sep/24/margaret-atwood-rewriting-shakespeare-tempest-hagseed>

drive into Wilmot and buy something at the hardware store, just to hear the sound of an ordinary human voice. (*Hag-Seed* p.40)

This extract mentions the “ongoing semi-music” that Felix experiences during his moment of isolation in his cottage. The “melodious” noises express the natural world and are similar to those Caliban could have heard on the enchanted island. Moreover, the passage implies that when Caliban cries to dream again, Felix longs for real human contact and especially, the “sound of an *ordinary* human voice” as if the other voices he was hearing were supernatural. Their respective situations are reversed: one wants to live in his constructed dream world to escape from the agony of curses and pinches, the other experiences the outside world to escape from the misery of solitude in his cottage. In the ensuing events, however, Felix will also adopt Caliban’s attitude and will prefer to get lost in “a non-reality as if it were real” (*Hag-Seed* p. 45) by creating a ghost to replace his deceased daughter.

In conclusion, Caliban does not have a definite representative at the centre of *Hag-Seed* despite the clear reference to him in the title. Nonetheless, his presence is conveyed in different manners throughout the novel. First, Caliban could be represented in an indirect way by the inmates’ performance *The Tempest*, Felix’s means of retaliation. This interpretation, however, is not clearly justified by the text, even if the prisoners express their identification with Caliban’s situation of oppression and his attempts to rebel against it. It is thus more appropriate to consider Caliban’s representative in the novel as Felix himself, which is the option that seems to be supported by the author. By naming her work, that is focused on her re-writing of Prospero, after Caliban, Atwood does not only establish an explicit connection with the original text; she also highlights the connection between Caliban and Felix. The title suggests that the central theme is the “The thing of darkness” which is, in the context of the novel, Felix’s obsession with vengeance, grief, manipulation and loss.

In the novel, Nadia, Felix’s wife, died “of a galloping staph infection right after childbirth.” (*Hag-Seed*, p. 14) Felix is left alone to raise his new-born daughter, Miranda. Felix is described as “entranced” with her and has great expectations about her future. However, Miranda passes away at the age of three, which leaves her father devastated by her loss. Felix’s daughter can be interpreted as Prospero’s daughter but also as the airy spirit Ariel in the original play. In Atwood’s novel, even though Felix’s real daughter died at the age of three, her presence is conveyed throughout the novel. She is resurrected several times in two different forms: in theatrical productions of *The Tempest* and in Felix’s mind. In his solitude, Felix begins to hear

voices and comes to half-believe that the spirit of his child keeps him company. Felix turns her into an entirely new construction and creates a projection of his daughter to ease his solitude.

But he'd gradually been opening another space in his life that verged on full-blown lunacy. It began when he was counting time by how old Miranda would be, had she lived. She'd be five, then six; she'd be losing her baby teeth; she'd be learning to write. (*Hag-Seed* p. 45)

From that point on, his projection of Miranda takes on a considerable importance in the novel's plot. Felix slowly lets himself be carried away by his imagination. His dreamy fantasy evolves into the presumption that her daughter is still alive but only imperceptibly. It is never clear, however, how seriously he takes these delusions. He borrows children's books from the local library, helps her with her homework, and teaches her to play chess. Felix truly engages with his construction of ghost Miranda, which can be interpreted as half a vision of desire and hallucination.

Felix's projection of his daughter Miranda is not only a creation of his mind, she acquires her own consciousness. Although she is only a project of Felix's imagination, she gradually gains her own voice and slowly evolves into an equivalent of Ariel. Being "invisible to every eyeball else" (1.2.303-304), she becomes Felix's "brave spirit" (1.2.206), and even whispers Ariel's lines in his ear:

"Approach, my Ariel." He leans forward, as if listening. "Come!" Right next to his ear he hears his Miranda's voice. It's barely a whisper, but he hears it. Felix drops his staff as if it's burning him. Did that really happen? Yes, it did! He heard it! (*Hag-Seed* p. 180)

Felix actually "hears a whisper" while he rehearses the role of Prospero, and more specifically, the moment when the magician is calling out his airy servant. The use of the play's lines highlights the intertextuality between the two texts, as well as Felix's explicit identification with Prospero.

Miranda's made a decision: she'll be understudying Ariel. [...] Only he will be able to see her, from time to time. Only he will hear her. She'll be invisible to every eyeball else. "My brave spirit!" he cries. (*Hag-Seed* p. 180)

I'll fetch them, sir, Miranda whispers. Do you love me, Master? (*Hag-Seed* p. 231)

Being an illusion created by Felix, it is consistent with the underlying principles of the adaptation that she serves as a counterpart for Shakespeare's most magical character, Ariel.

Felix draws a comparison between his self-constructed phantom Miranda and the character of Ariel in the way he addresses to her and feels her presence. She shares the same features as her Shakespearian equivalent: She is an airy spectre characterized by her non-human nature. Moreover, she is innocent and pure due to her illusional nature that protected her from reality:

She's been protected from the worst in human nature: how would she cope, once brought face to face with that worst? (*Hag-Seed* p. 167)

Being one of Felix's illusion, she has been protected from the "human nature" or, in other words, from human reality. She belongs to another dimension that is completely distinct from the natural world. In addition to the common attributes of spirits such as being composed of a misty or airy material and invisibility, Miranda can fly "as light as a bird" (*Hag-Seed* p. 69). Moreover, she also has Ariel's shifting shapes and connection with nature:

He would see a cloud of butterflies lift in the meadow: she must have startled them. When blue jays or crows would make a fuss in the woods, he'd conclude that Miranda had been walking there. Squirrels chattered at her, grouse whirred away at her approach. In the dusk, fireflies marked her path, and owls greeted her with muffled call. (p. 46)

In this description, phantom Miranda is analogous to a fairy of nature that hides behind natural phenomena such as the flight of butterflies or the hooting of nocturnal owls. It conveys a sense of supernatural and magical atmosphere, especially coupled with the idea that she is glowing in the dark surrounded by fireflies. The depiction of spiritual nature in this excerpt is similar to Ariel singing "Where the bee sucks" when the moment of his release approaches. In this sense, she is associated with a magical illusionary spirit hiding behind natural phenomena.

The fact that *Hag-Seed's* Ariel is transformed into a constructed ghost supports the idea that the allegorical reading of the play, with Ariel and Caliban as parts of Prospero's mind, was one of Atwood's source of inspiration. It also provides an explanation to Caliban's status in *Hag-Seed*; the reader is indeed prompted to identify Prospero's bestial servant with Felix himself. From this perspective, it can be argued that the main issue of the book is therefore, as in the play, not the revenge of the main character but rather his moral evolution and psychological development linked with his traumatic backstory that haunts him. It is therefore necessary to analyse Felix's relation with his inner Caliban and Ariel.

Felix's inner quest throughout the novel is not, in contrast to his Shakespearian equivalent, focused on his attempt to suppress his lower self and to transcend his human

limitations. It is, instead, focused on the expression of his Caliban-self; his obsession with revenge his resentment and the final acceptance of traumatic feelings.

Felix experiences Tony's take over as the artistic director as a tragic betrayal. Felix is characterized by an irrational need for retaliation for the offenses that he has suffered. The novel depicts his earthly and personal pursue of revenge. In this sense, he imitates his Shakespearian counterpart by ensuring justice is served and the sinners are repentant:

Second, he wanted revenge. He longed for it. He daydreamed about it. Tony and Sal must suffer. His present woeful situation was their doing, or a lot of it was. They'd treated him shabbily. But what form could such revenge possibly take? (*Hag-Seed* p. 41)

This passage illustrates his dangerous obsession with retribution for Tony's betrayal. Furthermore, it conveys his sadistic desire to make his enemies "suffer". In addition, he also seems to wallow in his state of victim: "playing the flagellant, the hermit. *Watch me suffer.*" (*Hag-Seed* p. 31-32) The narration insists on his dark project of conspiracy and violence during the twelve years of concealing and wallowing:

He's been chewing over his revenge for twelve years – it's been in the background, a constant undercurrent like an ache. Though he's been tracking Tony and Sal on the Net, they've always been out of his reach. But now they'll be entering his space, his sphere. How to grasp them, how to enclose them, how to ambush them? Suddenly revenge is so close he can actually taste it. It tastes like steak, rare. Oh, to watch their two faces! Oh, to twist the wire! He wants to see pain. "We're doing *The Tempest*," he said. (*Hag-Seed* p. 72)

In comparison, Felix seems angrier than Prospero, ready to destroy Sal and Tony for their wrongdoings, both in reputation and sanity. Prospero has often been interpreted as a wise magician following God's will. Felix, however, cannot be interpreted as the representative of divine power on earth since he only wishes to torment his enemies and to make them atone for their sins without the assistance of a Higher instance. While Prospero aspires to the divine sphere by assuming God's will of retribution, Felix seems to be aware that the justice he longs for has nothing to do with celestial punishment. He places himself as a man who judges his fellow men in a post-Christian society. He is, in comparison with Prospero, completely aware that divine justice does not exist. Human beings can only wish for a "confrontation" with those who wronged them:

What was Felix waiting for? He hardly knew. A chance opening, a lucky break? A pathway toward a moment of confrontation? A moment when the balance of power would lie with him. It was an impossible thing to wish for, but suppressed rage sustained him. That, and his thirst for justice. (*Hag-Seed* p. 45)

Felix is obsessed with his revenge towards “that self-promoting, posturing little shit” (*Hag-Seed* p. 10). The very expression of Felix’s hatred reminds one Caliban’s vocabulary, which has curses as one of its principal ingredients. The wording of his overwhelming rage thus brings him closer to the rebellious and resentful Caliban. Felix can be identified with defiant Caliban who is bitter and twisted and who intends to overthrow the one who stole his island from him. This impression is strengthened by his curses and insults towards Tony; “that devious, twisted bastard” or “the sneaky rat” (*Hag-Seed* p. 28; p. 11). Felix even explicitly imitates Caliban’s language after he introduces *The Tempest* to the inmates and asks them to take note of the swear words to use them during class:

Your profanity, thinks Felix, has oft been your whoreson hag-born progenitor of literacy. Along with your whoreson cigarettes, may the red plague rid them. (*Hag-Seed* p. 89)

This passage of sudden harshness and verbal violence has to be linked with the dialogue of the original play that also introduces the expression “hag-Seed”. Both extracts refer to the uses of language and cursing:

CALIBAN

You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

PROSPERO

Hag-seed, hence!

Felix uses Caliban’s words in the context of Prospero’s appellation of his earthy servant as “hag-seed”. It reinforces the identification of Felix as the “hag-seed” of the novel.

Consequently, Felix is an ambiguous character who loses control of his lower instinct of violence. He lets his need for revenge bring him into the darkness:

He must follow it forward into darkness. Whatever the form the thing assumes, it will depend on exact timing. This is his last chance. It’s his only chance. To vindicate himself, to restore his name, to rub their noses in it – the noses of his foes. (*Hag-Seed* p. 111)

To achieve his goal, he manipulates other characters by hiding his true motivations when he directs *The Tempest* with the prisoners. He uses the fact that Tony and Sal are going to cancel the literacy program to carry out his vengeful operation that will stay unquestioned. The purpose of the performance is to make his enemies suffer. He is far from the humble and naive victim, on the contrary, he is a merciless perpetrator only governed by his destructive resentment.

Considering this, it could be argued that the novel depicts Felix's morally dubious attitude and his descent into the realm of dark instincts that he has in common with Caliban. However, unlike *The Tempest's* magician, Felix has lost his only child. The main tragic aspect of the novel is the feeling of loss illustrated by Felix's mourning for his daughter. The theme of loss is depicted through a wide range of emotions. Felix is not only confronted to despair but also to regrets, solitude and even madness. His attachment to his late daughter and his attempt to replace her by a constructed spirit prevents him from totally falling into the lower sphere of human existence. His sadness and sorrow make him profoundly empathetic and human. The reader is invited to consider him as a wounded figure who needs the relief of "rub[bing] someone else's in his own misery" (*Hag-Seed* p. 26). Consequently, Felix is not only motivated by his vengeance, but also by his grief:

A retreat where he could recuperate, for now he was beginning to acknowledge to himself how badly he was wounded. (*Hag-Seed* p. 30)

His emotional wounds due to the loss of his wife and daughter, who became shapes in his memories that "he fills with sadness" (*Hag-Seed* p. 14), as well as his dismissal from his position as artistic director, give Felix a deeper profile than a revenge-thirsty manipulator. It also allows the reader to empathize with him. In this context, Felix's obsession with revenge acquires more credibility. His trauma is described as excessively painful and displays a feeling of helplessness and loss of reference:

What did he care about? What did he want, in the way he had once wanted, so passionately, to be a mover and shaker in the world of the theatre? What was his purpose now? What did he have to live for? His occupation was gone, and the love of his life. Both of his loves. He was in danger of stagnating. Losing all energy (*Hag-Seed* p. 40)

This passage describes Felix's traumatic loss of bearings. He finds himself in a situation where he cannot progress or move forward. Stuck in an intractable situation, Felix needs "an evasion" or "a focus, a purpose" (*Hag-Seed* p. 15; 40), and "eventually, he concluded that there were two things left for him" (*Hag-Seed* p. 40). The first project is his revenge, which includes to let

himself be carried away by his anger, and the second is that his Miranda “must be given a life” (*Hag-Seed* p. 40) first through his adaptation of *The Tempest* and then through his projected spirit, Ariel. The narration situates Felix between these two opposite poles represented by the two projects of his life: his vengeance and his creation of a illusionary daughter, in other words, his lower impulse and his humanity. The allegorical reading of *Hag-Seed* suggests that Felix is caught in the dichotomy between his inner Caliban and Ariel, between his dangerous obsession with retaliation and his traumatic loss. To Felix’s mind, Miranda represents his only defence “if he felt himself starting to slip down into the dark” (*Hag-Seed* p. 32). His projection of his daughter in the role of Ariel maintains his human dimension and keeps him from completely becoming evil. Felix’s Ariel is the voice of virtue in his life that makes him question the morality of his operation, using the exact same lines as Ariel:

All this time Miranda has been hovering behind him – a shadow, a wavering of the light – though she’s been silent: there haven’t been any lines she’s needed to prompt. But now she whispers, I would sir, were I human. She’s such a tender-hearted girl. (*Hag-Seed* p. 231)

It is important to note that the words “were I human” are also appropriate in the context of the novel since Miranda, only existing in Felix’s mind, cannot be considered as human. Felix’s projection of Miranda has witnessed Felix’s performance of *The Tempest*, his agent of retaliation without intervening until the highly symbolic moment of his change of mind. Felix thus puts an end to the production and reveals himself to his detractors.

The novel does not only depict Felix’s descent into the evil end of the human scale but also shows his journey of healing and his capacity to face his grief. The novel presents a vertical dynamic from Felix’s fall to his renewal. The narration even suggests that his fall is necessary for his evolution: “from the height, there’s nowhere to go but down” (*Hag-Seed* p. 12). If falling is the natural consequence of Felix’s position at “the height of his powers” (*Hag-Seed* p. 12), the reverse is also true. Once he hits the bottom of the human scale, governed by his lower emotions, he can only improve as a human being.

In conclusion the allegorical reading of the two texts demonstrates that Prospero and Felix present the same division between Caliban and Ariel. Atwood’s 21st century rewriting introduces a main character that declines in his amoral self and his own selfish motives, i.e. his revenge after Tony’s betrayal. Like the original play, it suggests that unnatural creatures are not so far away from human beings who consider themselves natural and civilised. Felix, similar to his Shakespearian equivalent, has to overcome his amoral self. On the one hand, Prospero

tries to conceal his corrupted self, and then acknowledges his “thing of darkness”. And on the other hand, Felix indulges in his selfish and dark obsessiveness. Felix’s motivations behind his brutal operation are related to his emotional trauma. The novel rejects the play’s idea of people being caught between the notion of “bad” and “good”. In *Hag-Seed*, the evil actions of human beings have an explanation or a justification. Felix assumes the role of Caliban in the novel due to the pain and suffering that he has endured. Felix’s backstories enhance his sense of victimhood and justify his destructive plan of revenge and make him more human. With her protagonist, Atwood characterizes humanity as entangled in a complex combination of emotions. In the chaos of resentment and anger, his humanity is preserved by his invisible servant, his spirit Miranda. The fact that Felix imagines and creates his Miranda that eventually takes the role of Ariel and causes him to cease his enemies’ ordeal, points out the capacity of compassion that lies within humankind. Existing only in Felix’s imagination, Miranda appears as the symbolic manifestation of empathy and mercy within the human mind. Felix’s final development can only occur after he experiences dissatisfaction from his revenge plans. Felix does not acknowledge his dark self as Prospero recognizes Caliban. Instead, he acknowledges his need to free himself from the grief he has been trying to conceal with his projection of Miranda.

Chapter 2: The representation of theatre in *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed*

2.1. The representation of theatre in *The Tempest*

In order to fully understand the representation and the role of theatre in *Hag-Seed*, it is necessary to describe to usage of theatre in the source material.

The Tempest is one of the few Shakespearean plays that takes theatre as a dominant theme. According to Walter, “theatre is the most direct of all the arts. All the others use materials, such as words and paint, to create. Only the theatre uses the living presence. The actors become an instrument alive enough and real enough to create reality – by means of reality”⁴⁶ This major theme is represented throughout the play in various ways: performances, Prospero’s magic and speeches to the audience. Firstly, *The Tempest* displays several performances; the masque that Prospero puts on for Miranda and Ferdinand, for example, in act 5 scene 1. In addition to the masque, the play also depicts theatrical scenes such as Ariel’s apparition as a harpy to Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian during the illusionary banquet animated by strange shapes in act 3 scene 3. The storm with which the play opens, the hunting dogs, the spirits, the disappearing banquet and the masque are all “spectacle[s]” (1.2.26) that made full use of the latest stagecraft techniques on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage.⁴⁷ These spectacles are “Perform’d to point” (1.2.194) by Prospero’s airy spirit, Ariel “who is the real creator of special effects.”⁴⁸ The illusions are not harmful since they were only semblances. The performances that require the use of elaborate theatrical devices highlight the motif of theatre and engage in the play’s charmed atmosphere.

The magical mood of *The Tempest* is also constructed by the musical parts during the play. Vaughan states that “the atmosphere of *The Tempest*’s enchanted island is created largely through sound.”⁴⁹ The play contains several musical performances that support the plot of the play. For instance, Ariel’s apparitions are often coupled with music. These musical parts provide a considerable contribution to the play’s enchanted condition. Ariel, who was probably performed by an accomplished musician, has two important songs “Full fathom five” and “Where the Bee sucks”. Moreover, the text also refers to the influence of music; Ferdinand, for

⁴⁶ Walter, J., (1983). From *Tempest* to Epilogue: Augustine’s Allegory in Shakespeare’s Drama. *PMLA* 98(1), p. 60.

⁴⁷ Vaughan, T., Vaughan, V., *op. cit.* p. 9.

⁴⁸ Hulme, P., *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁴⁹ Vaughan, T., Vaughan, V., *op. cit.* p. 9.

example, questions “Where should this music be? I’th’air, or th’earth?” (1.2.388). Caliban’s reference to the “Sounds and sweet airs” of the island also reinforces the importance of sound and music in the play. Few of Shakespeare’s plays require so much music. It highlights *The Tempest*’s emphasis on the motif of performance and theatricality.

In addition to the musical features that hold up the theatricality of the play, music is also a vehicle for Prospero’s magic. Prospero employs his “potent art” through intermediaries and performances, “linking the staging of the storm which gives the play its name to a specifically theatrical enterprise within the play.”⁵⁰ *The Tempest*, which is self-aware of its status as a play, draws a parallel between magic and dramatic illusion. It is represented in Ariel’s magical powers, comparable to theatrical devices, that help the magician to control the other characters on the island. In this sense, Prospero’s magic is a metaphor for theatrical artistry.⁵¹

The text also refers directly to theatre. Prospero’s speech after he abruptly dissipates the masque is similar to that of a director congratulating his actors on their performances. Moreover, this speech explicitly compares the brevity and artificiality of a theatrical performance to the briefness and the dreamlike nature of life:

PROSPERO:

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air:
And like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capp’d tow’rs, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on; and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. (4.1.148-158)

The speech is delivered after the masque. Davidson states that the masque is a play-within-the-play part that is “an indicator of concealed meaning.”⁵² and the first line “Our revels now are ended” begins an extended metaphor of a playwright signalling the end of a play. Prospero presents the theme of theatrical illusion. He refers to the performance of Ariel and the other

⁵⁰ Abrams, R. (1978). "The Tempest" and the Concept of the Machiavellian Playwright. *English Literary Renaissance*, 8(1), p. 50.

⁵¹ Bergeron, D. M., & Egan, R. (1977). Shakespeares Artistry. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 28(3), p. 371.

⁵² Davidson, C., (1975). The Masque within “The Tempest”. *Notre Dame English Journal* 10(1/2), p12.

spirits who serve him. They were the “actors” that acted out that “visions” with no other foundation than “thin air”. This vision is only temporary and “shall dissolve”. With these lines, Prospero refers to the illusionary and impermanence nature of theatre and relates it to “our little life” that “is rounded with a sleep”. He also mentions “the great globe itself” which is a reference to the Globe theatre in London mostly associated with Shakespeare. Prospero implies here that the world outside the globe, off stage, is equally friable and brittle than his illusions. In the light of this, theatre becomes a metaphor for the external world; temporary dramatic illusion is associated with illusionary aspects of life itself. Human life is identified with a brief dream that is completed with a sleep, or in other words, that ends just as it was before it came into existence. The magical spirits that Prospero conjures forth do not exist strictly speaking. They are just little bits of nothingness. These illusions resemble human life that is feeble and ephemeral. Prospero’s speech elaborately celebrates the magnificent but brief “vision” of theatre and life. Prospero’s extended metaphor compares life to a dream. Life is not only limited in time and ultimately vanishes without a trace but is also defined only by imagination. The theme of imagination is also reinforced by his imagery of towers and palaces; these buildings represent all the transformations only limited by imagination that a stage can display. The impermanence and artificiality of a performance on a stage is a metaphor to the shortness and illusionary nature of life. It could be argued that Prospero laments on the limitations of theatrical illusion. However, it is more appropriate to interpret his speech as a characterization of the imaginative impalpability of theatre and the dream-like essence of the human existence it emulates, which is coherent with “the *topos* of life as a dream [that] is of course very common in the Renaissance.”⁵³ Prospero also seems to directly address the audience and points out that, when the play ends, the magic island will disappear, and no trace will be left since it was only an illusion.⁵⁴ With this speech, *The Tempest* emphasises the illusionary nature of theatre and life. Prospero draws a comparison between the world of performance on a stage and the real world offstage.

In the play’s epilogue, Prospero, alone on stage, delivers another speech that is directly addressed to the audience after having overthrown his powers as a magician. In this speech, he requires that the audience releases him from the island, his prison. The audience’s applause will be the signal that he is freed. Prospero, who was in control throughout the play, finds himself

⁵³ Kirsch, A. (1997). Virtue, Vice, and Compassion in Montaigne and *The Tempest*. *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 37(2), p. 348.

⁵⁴ Davidson, C., *op. cit.*, p. 16.

in the same position as his previous servants Ariel and Caliban since the audience is symbolically given Prospero's authority.⁵⁵ He humbly asks for his freedom "with the help of [the audience's] good hands" and expresses his earnest plea to the audience to be merciful. With this speech, Prospero gives the control to the audience who is raised beyond spectatorship and invented to assume a role in the play-world.⁵⁶ The magician giving his power to the audience also suggests that theatre's "influence upon the audience's thoughts and perceptions is a form of magic."⁵⁷ The analogy between Prospero's art and Shakespeare's dramatic work is explicit, which leads scholars to interpret Prospero's farewell to magic as Shakespeare's retirement from the stage. Prospero might serve as an avatar to represent the Bard and conveys his request to be freed from his craft. Even if there are still hesitations whether or not *The Tempest* was chronologically the last of Shakespeare's play, "there is an unmistakable sense of finality permeating the work"⁵⁸, especially in the epilogue's speech:

PROSPERO

Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant,
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so that it assaults
Mercy itself and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardoned be,
Let your indulgence set me free.

The interactive aspect of this epilogue and Prospero's comparison between life and theatre in his "Our revels are now ended" speech emphasize the connection between the play and reality where the audience appear. Furthermore, the epilogue also highlights the interpretation of art itself. The epilogue suggests, as Mebane points out, that the dramatist has no power without the audience's imaginative participation.⁵⁹ In the play, Prospero constructs an entry to an imaginary world of illusion, or "a living drollery" (3.3.21) and integrates art into reality for the audience, whose role is to confer "a degree of reality upon the play, and hence send Prospero to Naples,

⁵⁵ Egan, R., *op. cit.* p. 182.

⁵⁶ Mebane, J. (1988). Metadrama and the Visionary Imagination in Dr. Faustus and the Tempest. *South Atlantic Review*, 53(2), p. 26.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁸ Egan, R. *op. cit.*, p. 171.

⁵⁹ Mebane, J., *op. cit.*, p. 39.

or leave him confined upon the 'bare island' of an empty stage."⁶⁰ *The Tempest* depicts humankind's creative endeavour while blurring the contrast between illusion and reality.

2.1.1 The role of art in *The Tempest*

Through its approach to theatre and performance, the play demonstrates the Renaissance fascination with art. According to Egan, *The Tempest* "deals centrally with ideas and concepts of art to a far greater extent than any of the plays before it."⁶¹ As previously mentioned, Prospero is comparable to a dramatist. Wright comments that the other characters "become merely the actors in a drama of redemption which Prospero directs and fashions by means of illusions."⁶² Many critics favoured the autobiographical interpretation of the play and associated Prospero's attitude toward his magical art to Shakespeare's view of his own dramatic art and communicating his departure from theatre. In the light of this, it is interesting to analyse the depiction of Prospero's art in the play, which is principally related to the elaboration of illusionary worlds. The nature of Prospero's art involves the dramatic medium; his magical art thus allows him to create illusionary worlds that incorporate "visions, music, thunder, spells and deceptions."⁶³ The play invites the reader or the audience "to overstep existing and familiar worlds in order to enter an imaginary dimension of unlimited possibility."⁶⁴

Among the theatrical performances in the play, Prospero's masque shows the power of dramatic art to shape a "world of imagination, of dreams or supernatural phenomena."⁶⁵ The masque illustrates Prospero's creation of illusionary and magical worlds. The piece of art depicted in the act 4 scene 1 does not aim to simply entertain the audience. Prospero's constructed world reflects his moral vision. With the masque acted out by Ariel and other spirits disguised in goddesses, Prospero depicts a flawless world governed by Iris, Ceres and Juno. The goddesses embody premarital chastity and give their blessing to the "contract of true love" (4.1.84) between the young people.⁶⁶ As Davidson explains "the masque through its iconography is a revelation of the generative principle of the universe, the ecstatic fertility of

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁶¹ Egan, R., *op. cit.*, p. 171.

⁶² Wright, N. H. (1977). Reality and illusion as a philosophical pattern in "the tempest". *Shakespeare Studies*, 10, p. 250.

⁶³ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁴ Blanchard, J. (2009). Marlowe's and Shakespeare's Late Masterpieces: "such stuff / As dreams are made on". *South Atlantic Review*, 74(1), p. 165.

⁶⁵ Wright, N. H., *op. cit.*, p. 243.

⁶⁶ Egan, R. *op. cit.*, p. 178.

all creatures motivated by love.”⁶⁷ Prospero thus employs this performance to present his vision of love. During their dialogues, the spirits refers to Venus and Cupid that have not been invited and therefore, “have been denied their rightful place in the pantheon, and the generative, sexual impulse they represent is strictly expelled from the world of the masque.”⁶⁸ Prospero intends to educate Ferdinand and Miranda with “a production where, in accordance with Renaissance theories, the arts of music, dance, and poetry are made to serve a moral function.”⁶⁹ Davidson writes that “the masque represents the celebration of human intelligence freed from the bondage of passion.”⁷⁰ Prospero’s created “world of art”⁷¹ illustrates his vision of how the external world should be and his attempt to influence it; to control it “by influencing the human mind and imagination.”⁷² However, the world of intellect created by Prospero’s magic cannot resist to the sin of the external world and must vanish when the magician is reminded of “the beast” Caliban’s “foul conspiracy” (4.1.139-140). The “baseless fabric of this vision” (4.1.150) vanishes into the air without a trace. With the “Our revels now are ended” speech, Prospero implies that the world that he means to create through his art is just as ephemeral as reality.⁷³ The interruption of the masque suggests that “the power of art to reform life is limited.”⁷⁴

Another important “vision” that is performed by Ariel under Prospero’s command is the vanishing banquet in act 3 scene 3. In this scene, Prospero, the leading creator of illusionary world in the play, establishes a purgatory for the “three men of sin” (3.3 53). The magician elaborates an illusionary world where Ariel, dress as a harpy, confronts Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian with their faults. With his art of illusion, Prospero aims to bring about his enemies’ repentance. He uses his magic to create performances and monitoring other characters not just for entertainment, he aims for moral and social improvement.⁷⁵ In her essay *On Writers and Writing*, Atwood shares the idea that Prospero attempts to impose his moral vision. She states that Prospero is “at the intersection of art with power, and therefore with moral and social responsibility.”⁷⁶ Prospero assumes the role of the “minister of fate” (3.3.61) and his ambition is nothing less than purging the evil from the people on the island. To restore his enemies to

⁶⁷ Davidson, C., *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁶⁸ Egan, R., *op. cit.*, p. 178.

⁶⁹ Phillips, J., *op. cit.*, p. 155.

⁷⁰ Davidson, C., *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁷¹ Wright, N. H. *op. cit.*, p. 267.

⁷² Mebane, J., *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁷³ Egan, R., *op. cit.*, p. 179.

⁷⁴ Mebane, J., *op. cit.*, p. 36.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁷⁶ Atwood, M., (2015). *On Writers and Writing*, London: Virago Press Ltd. p. 102.

goodness, Prospero employs magic that allows him to control and order all the elements.⁷⁷ The purpose of his illusionary world, “of poetry, of feigning, of imitating, of making illusions, therefore, is to bring about moral regeneration.”⁷⁸ As Mebane points out, the magical and dramatic art in the play offers to the characters an opportunity to improve their morality and self-knowledge.⁷⁹

The association of Prospero to the almighty presence on the magical island is also explained in Abrams’ comparison of Prospero with the concept of the “Machiavellian Playwright.”⁸⁰ According to Abrams, Prospero is a Machiavel “who most faithfully gives back to the playwright the image of his own powers and aspirations, his privilege to do nearly whatever he pleases within his artistic creation.”⁸¹ Prospero’s dominance of the events of the play does not only account for his powerful status, but also illustrates his supernatural force. He is comparable to a divine presence on the magical island. Furthermore, Prospero casts the roles among the other characters of the play and transforms their identity in the process.⁸²

In conclusion, *The Tempest*, with its parallel between magic and art, portrays the creative power of humankind. The role of art, illustrated by Prospero’s “rough magic” (5.1.50), is associated with theatrical illusion. Prospero’s art involves creating “baseless” illusions made of “thin air” (4.1.150-151). The magician mainly uses his powers to create worlds of illusion that are beyond nature and that illustrate his vision of real concepts such as chaste marriage or repentance. With Prospero’s desire for order and goodness in the masque and the banquet, *The Tempest* insists on the artistic creation of illusionary flawless worlds focused on the value of chastity and purity. The play illustrates “the attempt of art to impose form upon the formless and chaotic.”⁸³ Furthermore, he employs his illusionary worlds to “exert a very real influence upon the world of experience.”⁸⁴ The elaboration of dramatic performances highlights the influence of art and illusion on to enlightenment of human beings. Prospero’s theatrical enterprise induces self-discovery and moral improvement. In addition, as a Machiavellian

⁷⁷ Egan, R., *op. cit.*, p. 175.

⁷⁸ Wright, N. H., *op. cit.*, p. 265.

⁷⁹ Mebane, J., *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁸⁰ Abrams, R., *op. cit.*, p. 44.

⁸¹ *Ibidem.*

⁸² Abrams, R., *op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁸³ Zimbardo, R. (1963). Form and Disorder in *The Tempest*. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 14(1), p. 49.

⁸⁴ Wright, N. H., *op. cit.*, p. 265.

Playwright, Prospero imposes roles “on the likeliest performers”⁸⁵ and changes the nature of one’s personality.

2.1.2. Illusion and reality in *The Tempest*

In addition to the depiction of art in *The Tempest*, the theme of theatre and performance also highlights the connection between illusion and reality. The relation between illusion and reality is explored through several features. The blurred distinction between the two spheres leads the audience to confuse what is real and what is illusionary within the play. The play, through Prospero’s magic, questions the contrast between the real world and the world of illusion created by the magician. Prospero’s manipulation of illusions to affect and order the natural world offers the opportunity for moral improvement. It also suggests that the two spheres can influence each other; illusion affects reality, and vice versa. However, reality triumphs over the unnatural in the end.

In his collection of essays *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye develops the literary concept of the “green world” that he presents as “the archetypal function of literature in visualizing the world of desire, not as an escape from ‘reality’ but as the genuine form of the world that human life tries to imitate.”⁸⁶ In other words, he uses these terms to describe the illusionary world in Shakespeare’s comedies and romances. He also states that the extraordinary world, as explained in point 2.1.1, is a place of metamorphosis and cure.⁸⁷ In *The Tempest*, the entire setting is encompassed in the green world, which implies that “the green world and the closed world reality becomes indistinguishable from dream.”⁸⁸ The island presented in the play is a real island that becomes the place of unnatural phenomena. The actions of the play completely lie in the unreal world, “which differs, therefore, from every other work of Shakespeare.”⁸⁹ *As you like it* and *Midsummer Night’s Dream* also depict an ideal world, but the real world is present too. Both plays illustrate a transition from one world to the other. *The Tempest* directly transports the audience into the magical dimension of the island “and its influences [...] do not cease till the last line of the play.”⁹⁰ The shipwrecked men embody the real world that will be subjected to the influence of unknown powers and be determined by the

⁸⁵ Abrams, R., *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁸⁶ Frye, Northrop (2000). *Anatomy of Criticism* (15th ed.). Princeton University Press. p. 183.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁸ Hawkins, S. (1968), The two worlds of Shakespearean comedy. *Shakespeare Studies*, 3, p75

⁸⁹ Snider, D. (1874). Shakespeare's “Tempest”. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 8(3), p. 193.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*.

green world. Prospero rules over both worlds through Ariel and his spirits.⁹¹ According to Wright, the island setting represents a dualistic world that reflects the human nature; “the characters on Prospero’s island perceive the world around them as a reflection of their own inner beings.”⁹² Prospero’s “Our revels now are ended” speech also emphasizes the juxtaposition of the green world to the world of experience. In his remarks to Ferdinand and Miranda, he defines the briefness of the masque’s world and that of the world outside it. Both worlds are bound to disappear and “leave no rack behind” (4.1.156). Caliban also laments the brevity of his dream and describes, in his “The isle is full of noises” speech, the juxtaposition of the world of illusion with the world of experience. The world of experience is associated with his status as a slave and the agony of curses whereas, in his dream, he is transported into a world of comfort and pleasure.⁹³ In this case, the green world reveals Caliban’s humanity and sensitivity. This extraordinary world, which is filled with music and beautiful dreams, is a construction of the ruling Prospero who employs the imaginary to reveals the truth.⁹⁴

First, it is interesting to examine how Prospero, through Ariel’s performances, influences reality to manipulate events and people on the island. Prospero makes indistinct the line between the spheres of reality and illusion. As previously mentioned, Prospero uses illusion to influence reality and he brings his usurpers to awareness of their crimes and to repentance. Prospero conceives the illusion that Alonso’s son, Ferdinand, has drowned in the shipwreck. The illusion of Ferdinand’s death associated with Alonso and Gonzalo’s sleep leads Antonio and Sebastian to erroneously believe that they are acting in secrecy and to conspire against Alonso. By doing so, they reincriminate themselves by repeating their act of usurpation.⁹⁵ The judgmental banquet with Ariel’s speech as a harpy confronts them with their crimes and conspiracy. However, only Alonso seems to be repentant after being guided by this series of illusion. Even if Prospero forgives the sinners, the attitude of Antonio and Sebastian stays ambiguous since they do not repent for their deeds. In contrast to Alonso’s recognition of his sinfulness, they “do not experience the tragic recognition; they remain reprobate and unenlightened and are simply blackmailed into submission.”⁹⁶ The end of the play does not insist on their lack of remorse but rather on Prospero’s evolution. Prospero might, indeed, not have brought his enemies to repentance through the use of his art, but he has found forgiveness

⁹¹ Snider, D., *op. cit.*, p. 193.

⁹² Wright, N. H., *op. cit.*, p. 247.

⁹³ Wright, N.H., *op. cit.*, p. 257.

⁹⁴ Wright, N. H., *op. cit.*, p. 244.

⁹⁵ Wright, N. H., *op. cit.*, p. 252.

⁹⁶ Wright, N.H, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

and reconciliation. In this sense, the green world was a place of therapeutic experience for the magician before he can return to the normal world and regains his dukedom. Consequently, the actions and events managed by Prospero in his green world were supposed to lead his enemies to moral improvement but rather influence him to regeneration.⁹⁷

The play's epilogue displays another form of distinction between illusion and reality. It eliminates the boundary between the play-world and the real world. In this case, the illusionary world is not the green world within the play, but the dramatic illusion of theatre itself. The epilogue invites the audience within the play-world.⁹⁸ According to Atwood, "in the theatre, [...] there was often a moment at the end of the play at which the text stepped out of its frame, so to speak, and the play appeared for a moment to be no play at all, but alive in the same sense as its audience."⁹⁹ Normally, the epilogue's speaker would step out of his dramatic character to address the audience in its own sphere of reality. But, in *The Tempest*, Prospero transports the audience into the play.¹⁰⁰ In this particular play, the speech is not delivered by an actor who steps out from his part, but by Prospero who is still on the island and not on the stage. His speech implies that the play's final event, the forthcoming return to Naples, is the audience's responsibility. It can be argued that the audience is invited to enter the play-world.¹⁰¹ The members of the audience are given a predominant role: completing the plot with their applause. Without their participation, the project, that they have witnessed through the entire play fails.¹⁰² The request for applause is not simply metaphoric since it is delivered from within the play-world. Consequently, the play-world "has no terminal boundaries but rather subsumes the 'real', extra-theatrical world of its spectators, supplanting their sense of reality with its own."¹⁰³ According to Kirsch, Prospero's appeal for applause is a "recapitulation and crystallization of what the experience of the play itself has all along induced us to feel: that the illusory and evanescent passions of the theatre are like those of actual life."¹⁰⁴

In conclusion, there are two distinctions between illusion and reality that occur at different levels. First, there are two worlds depicted within the play; the green world and the

⁹⁷ Wright, N.H, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

⁹⁸ Egan, R., *op. cit.*, p. 172.

⁹⁹ Atwood, M., (2015). *op. cit.*, p. 128.

¹⁰⁰ Egan, R., *op. cit.*, p. 172.

¹⁰¹ Egan, R., *op. cit.*, p. 173.

¹⁰² *Ibidem.*

¹⁰³ Egan, R. (1972). This Rough Magic: Perspectives of Art and Morality in *The Tempest*. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 23(2), 171-182. P 173

¹⁰⁴ Kirsch, A. *op. cit.*, p. 350.

world of experience. Prospero rules over the green world that he creates with his illusions to correlate events and the other characters on the island with his moral vision. As theorized by Frye, the green world is a place of metamorphosis. In Prospero's case, the green world offers him the opportunity for self-discovery and resilience. Secondly, the epilogue also blurs the distinction between the play-world and the real world by inviting the audience to send Prospero back to Naples with their applause and thus complete the plot of the play.

2.2 The representation of theatre in *Hag-seed*

With *Hag-Seed*, Margaret Atwood adapted *The Tempest*'s into a multi-layer narrative. She offers a theatrical fiction set within a narrative one. She decided to focus her novel on a production of *The Tempest*. The novel's construction, which is made of stories-within-stories, resembles a Matryoshka Doll. This section describes the two narratives that are combined in Atwood's novel and investigates their role in the adaptation work. In an interview for the podcast *The Next Chapter* on the CBC radio in 2016¹⁰⁵, Margaret Atwood insists on the fact that *The Tempest*'s major preoccupation is theatre. She describes it as a play about putting on a play staged by the chief character, Prospero. She states that, of all Shakespeare's plays, *The Tempest* is most obviously "a play about a producer/director/playwright putting on a play – namely, the action that takes place on the island, complete with special effects – that contains another play, the masque of the goddesses. Of all Shakespeare's plays, this one is most obviously about plays, directing and acting."¹⁰⁶ Her vision echoes autobiographical interpretation of the play during the nineteenth century. Atwood's rewriting literally embarks on the interpretation of the main character as a stage director by focusing on Felix, the artistic director of a theatre festival.

In the novel, Felix asserts, "the island is a theatre, Prospero is a director. He is putting on a play. Within which there is another play."¹⁰⁷ (*Hag-Seed* p. 116). Similarly, *Hag-seed* presents Felix's production of *The Tempest*. Atwood's novel distorts the play's ambiguities and complexities, performing and interrogating them into a multi-layered plot. Atwood was inspired by the critical tradition of interpreting Prospero as a dramatist creating a play. She develops and

¹⁰⁵ "The Next Chapter: Audio Interview with Margaret Atwood." *CBC Listen*, October 10, 2016. <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2695699874>.

¹⁰⁶ Atwood, Margaret, (2016). « A perfect storm: Margaret Atwood on Rewriting *The Tempest*." *The Guardian*, October 17, 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/sep/24/margaret-atwood-rewriting-shakespeare-tempest-hagseed>.

juxtaposes the adaptation of the play's plot with its production. With her novel centred on the directing of the play, Atwood copies Shakespeare's dramatic device of a story within a story. This device emphasizes the contrast between "performance" and "reality", between "show" and "authenticity". The utilization of these multiple structures thus enhances the role of performances and the relation between theatre and imagination.

First, the novel offers significant insights on the directing methods that imply casting or searching for accessories, costumes and designing settings. The novel's "behind-the-scene" moments show all the necessary steps to put on a performance that would "challenge the audience" (*Hag-Seed* p. 132). The thematization of theatre in *Hag-Seed* insists on the fact that a production is the result of a long process of creative work that implies many different features such as "tech special effects, prompters, understudies. Costumes and props." (*Hag-Seed* p. 136). In the context of the prison production of the play, the narration includes lyrics of the prisoners' numerous rap sequences coupled with dances, which serves as a reference to the musical performances of the original play. Spirits become rap singers and break dancers. Atwood transferred *The Tempest* into contemporary pop-culture by using rap as musical feature and digital effects as magical devices, which corresponds to her vision of the play as an "an early multi-media musical", as stated on the back cover of the book. The adaptation of *The Tempest* in the novel replaces magic with audio-visual and digital media, controlled by an Ariel in the form of a professional hacker. Multimedia technologies coupled with hallucinatory effects of recreational drugs replace Prospero's magic.

Secondly, Atwood combines Felix's directing moments with teaching sequences on the play and theatre in general, which offers meta-theatrical discussions on the play and comments on theatre as a teaching tool; "we'll be showing them that theatre is a powerful education tool." (*Hag-Seed* p. 200). The author suggests through the narration that theatre, and especially Shakespeare which "is the best and most complete way of learning theatre", can be used to teach literacy to prisoners because "Shakespeare has something for everyone" (*Hag-Seed* p. 84). The unfolding of Felix's teaching methods, which includes reading of the text in modern English, studies of themes and characters and the writing of essays and assignments, supports the idea that theatre, Shakespeare's dramatic work and "the arts can be used as a therapeutic and educational tool, in a very creative and unexpected way" (*Hag-Seed* p. 71) especially in the context of prison. Felix aims to make the inmates "rethink, reframe" (*Hag-Seed* p. 155) the original play with his teaching methods.

The novel does not only focus on Felix's adaptation and teaching work, it also presents the world of theatre in general with the competitiveness between the actors as well as their hard conditions. The "life in theatre" (*Hag-Seed* p. 196) appears as extremely difficult as exemplified by the meeting between Felix and the future actress of Miranda's part;

He remembered the starving actor's first rule: never pass up free food. How many green room grapes-and-cheese plates had he himself once devoured? (*Hag-Seed* p. 95)

Felix watched her devour it, trying to remember what it had been like to be that hungry. (*Hag-Seed* p. 98)

In this passage, there is a clear parallel between Felix, the accomplished actor and director, who experienced the same difficulties as the starving young actress, which suggests that arduous conditions of life are a necessary phase in artistic careers. Atwood, through the narration, comments on the hardships encountered in the artistic fields, especially by women:

He's never wanted her to go into the theatre. It's too hard a life, it's too rough on the ego. There are so many rejections, so many disappointments, so many failures. You need a heart of iron, a skin of steel, the willpower of a tiger, and more of these as a woman (*Hag-Seed* p. 167)

Artistic domains are associated with struggle on material level as well as on psychological terms. Artists have to face poverty and disillusion in "the business" (*Hag-Seed* p. 27). The meta-discussion on theatre in *Hag-Seed* depicts the world of theatre as demanding and challenging. Atwood implies that the path chosen by artists, and actors in particular, "won't be easy because theatre has never been easy." (*Hag-Seed* p. 281)

2.2.1. The role of art in *Hag-Seed*

In addition to the disenchantment and frustration that artists are confronted to, they also have to face the creation process of their arts which can have a destructive effect. In the original play, Prospero's magic is physically harmless but "rough" on the character's mind. In the novel, theatrical illusion plays the role of Prospero's art and is equally powerful:

Charm the pants off them at first, not that he'd relish the resulting sight. Wow them with wonder, as he says to his actors. *Let's make magic!* (*Hag-Seed* p. 10)

The novel addresses the power of theatre and acting as well as its influence on the human mind. Actors have to embody and interpret a character by using their own emotions. When he directs

the actor-inmates, Felix insists on the application of emotional and mental disposition to enact a character and to “find” it in its inner depth.

Ordering them to reach deep, find the character, torquing their emotions to the breaking point and telling them to use the resulting blood and pain, *use it!* But these are fragile egos (*Hag-Seed* p. 154)

The players are requested to find and use their emotions, which includes anger in the prisoners’ case, “like fuel” (*Hag-Seed* p. 174). Felix also states that the inmates’ performances were more passionate than professionals’ acting that he had witnessed when he was working at the Makeshiweg Theatre Festival. The prisoners’ acting is probably more intense and passionate due to their painful and severe personal experiences.

The performances were a little rough, maybe, but they were heartfelt. Felix wished he could have squeezed half that much emotion out of his professionals, back in the day. The limelight shone briefly and in an obscure corner, but it shone. (*Hag-Seed* p. 58)

This passage refers to the “limelight”, a metaphor of the power of theatre, acting and art in general that enlightens the human mind. According to Felix, actors, in order to enact another self, have to “explore their hidden depths” (*Hag-Seed* p. 132). Commenting on her own domain, i.e. the process of writing, Atwood states that it “has to do with darkness, and a desire or perhaps a compulsion to enter it, and, with luck, to illuminate it, and to bring something back out to the light.”¹⁰⁸ but the narration of *Hag-Seed* also refers to the danger of the unknown that might emerge from acting: “or are those depths better left unexplored?” (*Hag-Seed* p. 132). Acting, in this context, seems to allow the actor to achieve self-knowledge by exploring hidden parts of one’s own mind but the process might, at the same time, reveal undesired features of the human spirit. In light of this, the creative endeavour that she describes in *Hag-Seed* resembles, in theory, *The Tempest*’s magic responsible for Prospero’s renewal and enlightenment but might also appear as more destructive. This section analyses the role of art in *Hag-Seed* and inquires whether the power of art is salutary or damaging.

Similar to his Shakespearian alter-ego, Felix’s development is also associated with the creation of other worlds. His first attempt on elaborating illusionary environments was caused by the loss of his daughter. In the novel, Nadia, Felix’s wife, died “of a galloping staph infection right after childbirth.” Felix is left alone to raise his newborn daughter. Miranda seemed to be

¹⁰⁸ Atwood, M. (2003). Introduction. *On writers and writing* (p.xv-xxii). London: Virago press. p.xxii.

the perfect name for a “motherless baby girl with a middle-aged, doting father.” Felix is described as “entranced” with her and has great expectations about her future. He even considers taking her to the theatre once she could talk, “so bright she’d been.” (*Hag-Seed* p. 14) However, Miranda passes away at the age of three, which leaves her father devastated by her loss. She thus joins the lost daughters of the Shakespearean mythology:

Lavinia, Juliet, Cordelia, Perdita, Marina. All the lost daughters. But some of them had been found again. Why not his Miranda? (*Hag-Seed* p. 15)

This excerpt addresses an essential theme of the novel: Felix’s wish to find his daughter again. The despair that he endures is compared to King Lear by explicitly referring to Lear’s speech in which he is crying with his daughter Cordelia in his arms:

In the time just before Tony’s coup, things had changed. They had darkened and darkened so suddenly. *Howl, howl, howl...*
But he could not howl. (*Hag-Seed* p. 14)

LEAR

Howl, howl, howl, howl! Oh, you are men of stones.
Had I your tongues and eyes, I’d use them so
That heaven’s vault should crack. She’s gone forever.
I know when one is dead and when one lives.
She’s dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass.
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
Why then, she lives. (*King Lear* 5. 3.270 -277)

Lear’s speech conveys his emotional state of denial: he cannot believe that his daughter died and claims that she might still be breathing. Felix also refuses to accept the death of his child and is convinced that “she couldn’t have simply vanished from the universe. He’d refuse to believe that.” (*Hag-Seed* p.15). In addition to the strong imagery of superposing Felix and Lear both holding the body of their daughter. Both extracts refer to the use of language to express human emotions. Lear’s repetitive exclamation demonstrates the deconstruction of his language that is useless to express his agony. Felix also experiences the same failure of language; the narration insists on his inability to howl. He cannot express himself on his internal turmoil, even the word “death” is impossible to use; “back before Miranda and then no Miranda” (*Hag-Seed* p. 24). Words are absurdly useless to depict his sadness and sorrow:

What to do with such sorrow? It was like an enormous black cloud boiling up over the horizon. No: it was like a blizzard. No: it was like nothing he could put into language. (*Hag-Seed* p. 15)

This extract illustrates the exploration for the most appropriate conceit or imagery to express inner states, evoking the poetic quest for the perfect metaphor. However, language fails to represent the extreme desperation caused by the death of a child. Considering this, Felix is searching for an answer to the question “what to do with such sorrow?” Confronting the failure of language, Felix cannot “face it head-on” and resorts to theatre to “transform it, or at the very least enclose it.” (*Hag-Seed* p. 15) After the funeral of his child, he launches his new project: his adaptation of *The Tempest*, a tribute to Miranda. His objectives are ambitious:

to create the lushest, the most beautiful, the most awe-inspiring, the most inventive, the most numinous theatrical experience ever, to raise the bar as high as the moon. To forge from every production an experience no one attending it would ever forget? (*Hag-Seed* p. 12)

The repetitive use of superlatives and hyperboles illustrates his ambition to direct a masterpiece. This is not the only purpose of his enterprise. However, Felix aims to create a play that will have an extraordinary effect on the audience, and probably on him at the same occasion. His production of *The Tempest* would be equivalent to “the Taj Mahal, an ornate mausoleum raised in honour of a beloved shade, or a priceless jewelled casket containing ashes.” (*Hag-Seed* p. 17). At this point, it is still unclear whether he is trying to achieve resilience or to evade from his overwhelming inner confusion. The narration, however, seems to refer to theatre as a means to escape from reality:

He’d plunged himself into *The Tempest*. It was an evasion, he knew that much about himself even then, but it was also to be a kind of reincarnation. (*Hag-Seed* p. 15)

This extract suggests that his ambitions are not limited to the effect of his play on the audience. He considers it as a kind of evasion. The theatrical world that Felix intends to construct is an alternative to the world of experience. Felix decides to “plunge himself” into another form of reality to escape from his sorrow. Moreover, his play will also allow him to access to a world where death does not exist. In this sense, his project is very similar to Prospero’s masque that depicted a flawless universe. Felix’s new world on the stage is supposed to serve as a reincarnation for his daughter. He does not only aim to escape the cruelty of reality, he also desires to create a new world or a new setting for the rebirth of Miranda:

Miranda would become the daughter who had not been lost; who’d been a protecting cherub, cheering her exiled father as they’d drifted in their leaking boat over the dark sea; who hadn’t died, but had grown up into a lovely girl. (*Hag-Seed* p. 15)

The phenomenon described here conveys two important features; first, it highlights Felix's identification to the character of the original play which will be examined in chapter 3. In this context, if Felix himself is Prospero then his daughter is no other than the innocent Miranda who has survived, "cheering her exiled father", on the magical island of *The Tempest*. Secondly, the imagery used in the excerpt illustrates Felix's metaphorical departure "in their leaking boat" for the isolated and illusionary island in the "dark sea" of theatrical illusion where his daughter could still be alive. Atwood establishes another explicit comparison between her characters and Shakespearean persona. Felix and Prospero are both navigating to their respective green worlds. Concerning Felix, his creation of an unreal world is associated to the original play, which suggests that the world of fiction, Shakespeare's dramatic works here, can be a substitute to the world of experience. Through his production of *The Tempest*, "what he couldn't have in life." (*Hag-Seed* p. 15). His desire to conceive a setting to reincarnate his daughter, his "reborn Miranda" (*Hag-Seed* p. 15) demonstrates his ambition to "twist reality until it twangled", i.e. see things that does not exist strictly speaking (*Hag-Seed* p. 16) and, more importantly, to defy death:

There was a feverish desperation in those long-ago efforts of his, but didn't the best art have desperation at its core? Wasn't it always a challenge to death? A defiant middle finger on the edge of the abyss? (*Hag-Seed* p. 16)

Felix's art is focused on the dichotomy between death and reincarnation. The themes of loss and mourning as a life-altering experience have often been treated through art and literature. Confronting death and using desperation in his art are Felix's real purpose with his production. Through his obsession with resurrecting his daughter, Atwood expresses the nature of art and evaluates creativity as human being's only actions toward immortality and resurrection. Considering this, Felix's project could be considered as his own attempt to explore and enlighten his inner "obscuration, obscurity, emptiness, disorientation."¹⁰⁹ The passage also suggests that art is associated with human's darkness and producing order out of chaos. However, the "charmed bubble he was creating" for his resurrected Miranda is doomed to fail when Felix is fired from his work. Just as Prospero's masque must vanish because of Caliban's conspiracy, Felix's reborn Miranda cannot sustain with Tony's coup;

And now she would have to stay locked behind the glass, because, with the destruction of his *Tempest*, the new Miranda – the Miranda he'd been

¹⁰⁹ Atwood, M. (2003). Introduction. *On writers and writing* (p.xv-xxii). London: Virago press. p.xxii.

intending to create, or possibly to resurrect – was dead in the water. (*Hag-Seed* pp. 32-33)

Facing the failure of language and of his art, Felix is forced to fall into his inner darkness and transfers all his energy into his new project. It releases the expression of his lower self, in other words, of his inner Caliban (see Chapter 1). The vehicle of his revenge plan is another production of *The Tempest* elaborated with the Fletcher Correctional Players. This production is not only Felix's means of retaliation but also offers the occasion for the inmates to create alter-egos.

In the context of the prison play, Felix resembles Prospero who monitors the event and the other characters to achieve his own personal goal. Although Felix does not seem to play the role of any divine entity in the prison, he does impose his vision and decisions on the prisoners. Felix insists on the fact that “the theatre isn't a republic, it's a monarchy” (*Hag-Seed* p. 147) and that his decisions are final since he is the king:

“I'm the director, and these choices are mine. Maybe you won't get the role you want but that's life. No pressuring, no horse-trading, no complaints.”
(*Hag-Seed* p. 147)

In the light of this, Felix can be, as his Shakespearian equivalent, considered as a Machiavellian playwright. He has the authority to act as he pleases within his artistic creation. It is also important to note that he manipulates the players to enact his plan without specifying his own personal motives. When the day of the production comes, Felix surprises his audience, by delivering a piece of immersive theatre over which he has total control thanks to cameras, microphones, digital effects, music and the complicity of the inmates. This production of *The Tempest*, his “artistic immersion” (*Hag-Seed* p. 233), represents Felix's creation of another world that is supposed to bring about his enemies' repentance.

This production in the novel is constantly and consciously referring to the original material. According to Felix, Prospero's modern equivalent, his presentation of *The Tempest* is a “version [that] would suddenly have real people in it, directed and controlled by himself. Creating an illusion through doubles – it's one of the oldest theatrical gimmicks in the box.” (*Hag-Seed* p. 107-108). The characters Anne-Marie, Anthony, Sal, his son Frederick, Sebert and Lonnie eventually becomes perfect equivalents of the play's characters Miranda, Antonio, Alonso, Ferdinand, Sebastian and Gonzalo. During the performance, Atwood uses key moments of the play and adapts them to the plot: Tony suggests killing Sal and Lonnie in theirs

sleep and blaming their deaths on the prisoners, Anne-Marie and Frederick become romantically involved, Lonnie and Frederick are both overjoyed to be reunited. On this last event, Felix comments that even though “The Bard provided more eloquence at this moment, [...] they’ve covered the main points.” (*Hag-Seed* p. 236). The narration of *Hag-Seed* refers explicitly to the play’s scenes and draws a comparison between the two texts. It creates a mirror between the two narratives. This creation of mirrors illustrates another role of theatre and art in general: the establishment of alter-ego through the experience of the green world. Atwood seems to suggest that the process of identification and creation of doubles is necessary to the construction of the inner self. For example, choosing a stage name and performing a character’s part helps the prisoners to redefine themselves.

Watching the many faces watching their own faces as they pretended to be someone else – Felix found that strangely moving. For once in their lives, they loved themselves (*Hag-Seed* p. 58)

The mirror is here replaced by the recording of their performances on a screen. The inmates do not only enact a Shakespearian character, they “welcome the return of those other self of theirs” and are “ready for them to assume” (*Hag-Seed* p. 86). They explore their hidden self through theatre and find another alter ego with which they can identify to construct their own identity. Felix implies, during the casting of the play, that any natural Romeo might also have a hidden Iago in his inner disposition. In the same veins, any predisposed Iago can display the features of a Romeo:

There are the stated preferences of the actors themselves, but through long experiences Felix has learned to disregard these. What natural Romeo has not longed to play Iago, and vice versa? (*Hag-Seed* p. 132)

Through Felix’s inner conflict between his Ariel and Caliban and the players’ faculty to identify to two completely different characters such as Romeo and Iago, Atwood suggests that human identity is full of contradictions and conflicts. The notion of the double and its influence on identity will be analysed in chapter 31. In order to further analyse the character’s psychological evolution through theatre, it is important to go back to the initial question “are those depths better left unexplored?”, in other words, is the discovery of their other self destructive or does it lead to moral improvement? Estelle, Felix’s lady luck, expresses her reservation and refers to the destructive effect of theatre when Felix first submits the idea to actually perform the play with the inmates. She says that the prisoners might “act out”. Felix

automatically replies by insisting on the beneficial energy that might emerge from their violence:

“And I’ve known many actors – that’s what they do, they act out! Stage rage. There are ways of handling that.” (*Hag-Seed* p. 51)

The fact that acting and performing are associated with rage and darkness could indicate that the influence of theatre on the human mind is harmful. But the novel mostly associates theatre with resilience and ethical development. Felix praises the power of illusion and creativity in life-altering experience by referring to the purifying dimension of theatre, *Catharsis*:

It’s theatre, Felix protests now, in his head. The art of true illusion! Of course it deal in traumatic situations! It conjures up demons in order to exorcise them! Haven’t you read the Greeks? Does the word *Catharsis* mean anything to you? (*Hag-Seed* p. 80)

Illusion allows the human mind to cast away its dark elements. It appears that theatre encourages the recognition of the demons, or obscurity, in one’s temperament and helps to purify the darkness of one’s soul, which corresponds to the journey of self-discovery and renewal that Felix undergoes in the novel (see chapter 3). The Fletcher Correctional Players also learn “self-control” (*Hag-Seed* p. 51), i.e. their ability to control their inner demons, in addition to their improved literacy. However, the narration also shows that the power of illusion, comparable to Prospero’s magic which is based on “thin air”, can be fragile if it is not correctly executed:

If the words are not perfect, the pitch exact, the modulation delicately adjusted, the spell fails. People start to shift their seats, and cough, and go home at intermission. It’s like death. (*Hag-Seed* p. 9)

If the “charms” does not “hold good” (*Hag-Seed* p. 109), the performance is nothing more than a fading pageant that does not produce any effect both on the audience and on the actor, who experiences a sort of death. Consequently, Felix’s unstable art is susceptible of failing to enlighten the mind’s obscurity.

In conclusion, *Hag-Seed* draws a parallel between Felix’s and Prospero’s art. Both disciplines are associated to magic and illusion and have a powerful influence on the human spirit. Felix compares theatre to a limelight that can enlighten the obscurities of human mind. Felix also imitates his Shakespearean equivalent by creating illusionary worlds on the stage. His first attempt to elaborate an alternative to the real world was a pursuit of reincarnation for

his daughter; it recalls humanity's desire for immortality through art. Felix's use of theatre does not only show his struggle against the finite nature of human existence but also the resort to art in great desperation. Felix, however, fails to create a setting for his reborn Miranda and falls into the inferior sphere of his personality by developing his obsession with his vengeance. The vehicle of his revenge is his new production of *The Tempest* with the Fletcher Correctional Players. This second attempt to create another world brings about his enemies' repentance. Although Felix do not find the satisfaction that he hoped for, the inmates experience the salutary power of theatre. By enacting another self, they are able to purge their inner darkness and learn to control their lower impulse of violence. Considering this, the novel insists on the salutary effect of theatre and art. It also suggests, however, that theatre's effects can easily fail. Felix has to resort to another kind of illusion after realizing the vanishing nature of dramatic illusion.

2.2.2. Illusion and reality in *Hag-Seed*

Hag-Seed's major preoccupation is the importance of human imagination which has an influential effect on human perception of reality. In the context of theatre, Felix states that the imaginative capacity of humankind is necessary to complete the dramatic illusion on stage:

All you need is a few items: the brain completes the illusion. (*Hag-Seed* p. 165)

The brain, representative of human beings's creative faculty, participates into the creation of alternative green world and demonstrates the self-persuasive potential of the human mind; one can persuade oneself that a phenomenon is real although it is only an illusion completed by the brain, leading to an incapacity to dissociate illusion from reality. The blurred boundaries between illusionary and real world is also central in *The Tempest*. In *Hag-Seed*, the reader is confronted to a chief character who confines himself in "a world of illusions – of vanishing rainbows, of bursting bubbles, of cloud-capped towers" (*Hag-Seed* p. 168), which results in confusion and interrogation on Felix's sanity as a character. The novel explores the limitations between illusion and reality in different manners.

First, the prison play makes actors confuse their role in the theatrical world and in the real world. During the rehearsals, Anne-Marie, Miranda's actress, and the actor playing Ferdinand's part, WonderBoy, do not simply rehearse their scenes together. Similar to their alter-egos, they are also bound by a romantic interest:

"He proposed to me", said Anne-Marie.

“He’s supposed to do that. It’s in the scene,” Felix said, keeping neutral.
“No, I mean he really proposed to me,” said Anne-Marie. “He said it was love at first sight. I said it was only a play. It wasn’t real.” (*Hag-Seed* p. 153)

Although Wonderboy confounds his real identity with his role of Ferdinand in the play by truly proposing to her, Anne-Marie seems to be aware of the boundary between the play and reality. Likewise, she reminds Felix that he is not her real father when he shows a little too much concern over her:

“I’ll talk to him,” said Felix. “straighten things out.”
“you’re not my real dad,” she said. “I can deal with this. It’ll be all right. Trust me.” (*Hag-Seed* p. 184)

WonderBoy and Felix are not the only characters who confuse reality with theatre. During the immersive theatre experience, Frederick becomes the perfect replacement for Ferdinand. In addition to becoming romantically involved with Miranda’s actress, the relationship with his father is similar to that of Ferdinand and Alonso. Exactly as in the play, both are convinced that the other was killed in the chaos, whether it be of the shipwreck or the prison riot, and are overjoyed when they see each other:

The door to the cell bursts open. ‘Freddie! Yells Sal. ‘You’re alive!’
‘Dad!’ Freddie reciprocates. ‘You’re alive too!’
‘Thank God!’ They fall into each other’s arms.
The Bard provided more eloquence at this moment, thinks Felix, but they’ve covered the main points. (*Hag-Seed* p. 236)

Felix compares here the original scene in *The Tempest*, in which Ferdinand and Alonso reunite, with Frederick and Sal’s reunion. Atwood juxtaposes her characters with their Shakespearian equivalents. He compares the two scenes of reunion and establishes connections between acting and authenticity. Felix considers the scene in front of him is a part of his “artistic immersion”, his illusionary world, whereas Frederick and Sal experience it as a real incident in their life. The connection between the novel’s reality and the play’s events goes beyond Felix’s simple comparison. Anne-Marie implies, at some point, that those two spheres might have an influence on each other.

“Just let me get through this,” she said.
“You’re leading him on,” said Felix. “Is that fair?”
“We haven’t shot the big love scene yet,” she said. “You’re the director. You want an *Ooo* scene or a *Meh* scene? Because if I say a definite no, it’ll be *Meh*.” (*Hag-Seed* p. 184)

In this passage, Miranda's actress explains that her partner's performance depends on their relationship and on her attitude towards him in real life. Witnessing the ensuing rehearsal sessions, Ariel's actor remarks that "it's almost like they meant it, [...] the true love and all that. It's kind of elegant." (*Hag-Seed* p. 227). Consequently, their relationship in real life affects their acting, and vice versa. This extract suggests that the limitations between acting and real life are permeable. The boundaries between the two concepts are thus indistinct. Play's scenes frame the novel's characters in their attitude and the reverse is also true; their behaviour in the real world influences their performances in the acting world. The ambiguous relation between illusion and reality leads Anne-Marie to eventually confuse the two during her encounter with Frederick while acting the "immersive" version of the play:

Anne-Marie gives a small giggle. "Is that your idea of asking me whether I'm a virgin? Which is what he does in the play, right?"
"This isn't the play. So, boyfriend or not?"
'Not,' she says. Level gaze. 'Really not.'
"So would you mind if I did fall in love with you?"
'I don't think so,' says Anne-Marie." (*Hag-Seed* pp. 216-217)

This excerpt is another example of confusion between an authentic discussion in the novel and an acted dialogue from the play. The novel's characters are constantly confusing acting with reality, which leads to some misunderstandings as previously shown in different dialogues and conveys a general atmosphere of ambiguity and disorientation throughout the novel. Playing in and out of their roles, characters end up being lost between the two spheres, between reality and theatre:

"Don't you feel sorry for them?" says 8Handz. [...]
Has 8Handz heard her? No, but Felix has. "Hast thou," he says, "which art but air, a touch, a feeling of their afflictions, and shall not myself be kindlier moved than thou art?"
"Are we back in the play?" says 8Handz. 'Am I supposed to say, "I would, sir, were I human"?' (*Hag-Seed* p. 231)

In this dialogue, 8Handz, who is playing Ariel in the play, is bewildered and does not even know whether Felix is acting or not. The limitations between the play-world and the world outside the play are ambiguous, and the characters are lost in the middle of the two spheres. Authenticity and performance are indistinctly combined with one another, giving rise to ambiguous interactions. Real life and acting does not have any impervious boundaries, each domain nourishes the other. Fiction's influence on reality supports the idea that the novel's characters are directed "from the life of theatre to the theatre of life" (*Hag-Seed* p. 205) and

move back and forth between the two worlds. It is also interesting to note that Atwood chose to represent this confusion mainly through dialogues, which imitates dramatic texts. Her approach to the vagueness between illusion and reality appears, moreover, at different moments when the narration questions the limits and the very nature of reality itself:

But he's a con man, don't forget. A con man playing an actor. A double unreality. (*Hag-Seed* p. 185)

This sentence is ambiguous. It is unclear whether it refers to falsehood or reality.

Another element of Atwood's instigation of the real world relates to the repercussions of illusions on reality. She addresses the question "if an illusion can have consequences on the real world, then how can one affirm that it was not real in the first place?" For example, Felix and Anne-Marie discuss Ariel's appeal to bees:

"They're only illusory bees," he says. "An illusion of bees." "So what? Ariel doesn't care," says Anne-Marie. "It's the same thing for him: the illusory is real." (*Hag-Seed* p. 256)

It does not matter to Ariel if the bees are true or false because the resulting effect is the same; he will be attracted to them. Ariel's behaviour towards illusionary bees in this context is reminiscent of Felix's obsession with his created illusions and especially, with his projected daughter. He is not concerned by her status of illusion and engages with this self-created ghost as if it was real.

After his dismissal, Felix has to exile himself and experiences solitude in an isolated rural house. This experience has a considerable effect on his mental health.

He began to spend a reprehensible amount of time sitting in the shade, in a striped deck chair he'd found at a garage sale, staring into space. When you did that long enough you began to see things that weren't there strictly speaking. But this didn't alarm him. Shades in clouds, faces in the leaves. They made him feel less lonely. (*Hag-Seed* p.39)

Felix deliberately creates "shades" and "faces" in his vision. Loneliness and solitude cause him to "see things that weren't there". In different terms, his isolation leads to illusion, i.e. creating false beliefs or ideas. He infuses fantasy and illusion in real life. The creation of illusions to alleviate aloneness results in a particular phenomenon that is at the novel's core: the formation of phantom Miranda.

But he'd gradually been opening another space in his life that verged on full-blown lunacy. It began when he was counting time by how old Miranda would be, had she lived. [...] Wistful daydreaming at first. But it was only a short distance from wistful daydreaming to the half-belief that she was still there with him, only invisible. Call it conceit, a whimsy, a piece of acting: he didn't really believe it, but he engaged in this non-reality as if it were real. (*Hag-Seed* p. 45)

He is acting and tricks himself into believing his own fantasy, integrating reality and non-reality together. He indulges in his self-created illusion and performs a "piece of acting" in his real life. Of all the characters in the novel, Felix, who tricks himself into believing non-reality, is the one who is the most lost between illusion and reality. His actions are determined by the believe that his daughter keeps him company:

He returned to his habit of checking out kids' books from the Wilmot library, only now he read them out loud in the evenings. [...] but partly he was indulging his self-created illusion. Was there a small girl listening to him? No, not really. But it was soothing to think that there was. (*Hag-Seed* p. 45)

Luckily there's no one around watching him talk out loud, or to see him opening the back door of the car for a person who isn't there (*Hag-Seed* p. 186)

Felix is acting according to "his self-created illusion" in the external world, combining theatre with reality. Since his attempt to fashion an alternate world for his reborn Miranda failed, he engages himself with the shaping of reality itself. He uses his phantom Miranda as an explanation behind natural phenomena and the movements of animals. His "imagination and wishful thinking" (*Hag-Seed* p. 107) that his daughter is still present in the world of experience evolves in a self-persuasive hallucination. Unable to "face the plain, unvarnished grime of real life" (*Hag-Seed* p. 177), Felix borders madness, i.e. loses his capacity to discern the truth from fakery:

One day he heard her singing, right outside the window. He didn't daydream it, the way he'd been semi-daydreaming up to then. It wasn't one of his whimsical yet despairing fabrications. He actually heard a voice. It was not a consolation. Instead, it frightened him. (*Hag-Seed* p. 47)

By elaborating a ghost that accompanies him wherever he goes, his senses are disturbed. He has lost his connections with the real world. Felix convinces himself that his constructed Miranda exists but is only, similar, to *The Tempest's* Ariel, "invisible to every eyeball else" (1.2.303-304). As the equivalent to the airy spirit, his Miranda has supernatural powers. He is

even persuaded that his Miranda can interfere with audio recordings. Ariel's song is mentioned in Atwood's novel, during the checking of the audio-visual recordings of the prison play:

"I think I'm picking up a radio station or something," says 8Handz. "Through my headphones. There's like, singing."

"What kind of singing?" Felix asks.

"It's faint, but... wait. Okay. It's 'Merrily, merrily.'"

"'Merrily, merrily, will I live now, Under the blossom that hangs on the bough?'" says Felix. It must be Miranda, prompting again. Clever girl, she's infiltrated Ariel's headphones! But she seems to be confused about the script.

"We already did that part, it's in the video," he says for her benefit. (*Hag-Seed* p. 238)

Felix immediately assumes that his Miranda is behind the singing in the headphones that she has "infiltrated". However, he might have jumped into a hasty conclusion by referring to Ariel's song since 8Handz refutes this option. The song in his headphones is the children's song *Row, row, row your boat*:

"No," says 9Handz. "It's not that. 'Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, Life is but a dream.'" A chill shoots Felix. The hair on his neck bristles. "I used to sing that to her," he whispers to himself. (*Hag-Seed* p. 238)

The sentence "Life is but a dream" introduces a certain vision of life which is reminiscent of Prospero's speech after making the masque disappear in *The Tempest*:

PROSPERO

We are such stuff

As dreams are made on; and our little life

Is rounded with a sleep (4.1. 156 – 158).

In this speech, Prospero aims to remind his daughter and her fiancé that mortal life, just as illusion, ends quickly. In the context of the novel, the narration establishes a subtle relation between Prospero's speech and the children's song; merrily, merrily, life is but a brief dream that stretches from sleep before birth to sleep after death. In this perspective, human beings are only ephemeral. Felix is indirectly reminded through the singing on the audio recording that human life is limited in time. Like Prospero's illusionary art, human life is a fragile dream which remains for a short moment and then vanishes into thin air. The temporary nature of human life is illustrated in the novel by the tragic death of Felix's three-year-old daughter:

That's what you do while you hold their feverish hands and stroke their foreheads in the hospital room, but despite everything they slip gently away from you, into the dark backward and abysm of time. (*Hag-Seed* p. 238)

Felix evokes, here, his experience as a father while his daughter is dying. The sentence “into the dark backward and abysm of time” is directly taken from Prospero’s lines (1. 2. 50). This line, in the context of the play, invokes the darkness of the past, i.e. memory. In *Hag-Seed*, it offers a powerful metaphor to Miranda’s death. She is not falling into a timeless black hole but rather into the darkness of Felix’s memory. The narration suggests that presence “gently” slides from Felix’s side in the physical world into Felix’s remembrance, representing the immaterial world of dream. This excerpt illustrates the moment of death or the moment one’s consciousness “gently slip[s] away” from the physical world to the incorporeal realm of memories. After this moment, Miranda is only able to be part of what “lives in [Felix’s] mind” (1.2.39). In that respect, *Hag-Seed* perfectly exemplifies with the character of Miranda Prospero’s metaphor on what “lives in thy mind” when he questions Miranda on her memories. In the novel, she is not only a memory she literally lives in Felix’s mind, grows up and evolves as if she was still alive under her father’s watch. She is a complete entity with which Felix interacts. Consequently, by “engaging in this non-reality as if it were real”, Felix manifests the denying of death and the human need for illusion over reality.

It could be argued that the novel, in contrast to Prospero’s speech, presents illusionary world as an eternal alternative to the ephemeral reality. The ending, however, shows that Felix’s projected Miranda is just as transitory as his real daughter. All forms of existence whether it be real or illusionary have to disappear eventually. Felix finally fathom that everything “shall dissolve” (4.1.154):

But everything is ephemeral, he reminds himself. All gorgeous palaces, all cloud-capped towers. Who should know that better than he? (*Hag-Seed* p. 281)

The reference to “the cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces” (4.1.152) illustrates Felix’s new awareness that nature and human beings are fated to fade and “leave not a rack behind” (4.1.156). Atwood does not offer any clear distinction between the green world of illusion and the real world of true experience, on the contrary, she copies Prospero’s speech and assembles the two notions. The two worlds are connected and influence each other. The function of *Hag-Seed*’s green world copies that of *The Tempest*’s; it serves as a place where inner conflict can be solved. Felix’s resilience is made possible by his illusion; the acceptance of his daughter’s

death involves the acknowledgement of the briefness of illusion and, then, of reality. After his journey in the illusionary sphere, Felix can re-evaluate the value of life in the world of true experience:

But real life is brilliantly coloured, says another part of his brain. It's made up of every possible hue, including those we can't see. All nature is a fire: everything forms, everything blossoms, everything fades. We are slow clouds... (*Hag-Seed* p. 178)

Through his progress in the world of illusion, Felix learns to accept that human existence is limited in time. Felix's acknowledgement resembles his Shakespearian counterpart's in the sense that they both have to accept human imperfection and finite limitations. In the case of Felix, he has to accept mortality and his child's death. He also recognizes that reality, partly comprised by aspects that "we can't see", is not the opposite of illusion, but its complement.

In summary, Atwood's portrayal of the relation between illusion and reality emphasizes mankind's imaginative capacity. Human beings are able to cross the limitations between the illusionary world and the real world due to their imagination. They can create illusions and persuade themselves that they are veritable parts of their reality. Atwood illustrates this idea through two elements in the novel. First, the prison play makes completely indistinct the differentiation between the two worlds. The players are continually acting in and out of their character. They end up unable to make the distinction between performance and authenticity. Furthermore, the spheres of the play and the real world influence each other. The characters' part in the play affects their everyday behaviours and their real experiences outside the play-world alters their performances as actors. Secondly, in this chaos between illusion and reality, the chief character, Felix, lets himself be carried away by his "wistful daydreaming" (*Hag-Seed* p. 45) that his deceased daughter follows him in the shape of a spirit. Similar to Prospero, he confines himself in a constructed green world and performs "a piece of acting" (*Hag-Seed* p. 45) by reading children's book out loud or opening the back door of his car. He loses the capacity to distinguish illusion from reality. However, Felix's green world is as ephemeral as real life. His construction of Miranda is compelled to vanish eventually. The created ghost Miranda has to follow Felix's real daughter "into the dark backward and abysm of time" (*Hag-Seed* p. 238) (1.2.50). Felix renounces his most ambitious creation with a new awareness of the real life. His progress in the green world allows him to accept the volatile nature of human life. His return to the real world is made possible by the resolution of his inner conflicts in the illusionary world.

Chapter 3: the process of self-discovery and confinement in *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed*

3.1. The confinement and self-discovery of Prospero in the tempest

It has already been mentioned in the previous chapters that self-discovery, and especially Prospero's self-knowledge endeavour, is a major concern of the play. The chief character undergoes an inner journey that is projected in the green world, the place where human conflict can be resolved. According to King, "the play explores the complexities of affects and passions"¹¹⁰ in the trajectory towards reconciliation. Considering this, the role of emotions is determinant in the play's depiction of self-discovery. This section focuses on the question "how is Prospero's self-discovery achievable in the play?".

Even though Prospero aims to morally improve the other characters on the enchanted island, he ends up imposing his own moral perspective.¹¹¹ Atwood affirms that "Prospero plays god"¹¹² since he imposes his views on the other characters' perception of reality as he allocates punishment. Prospero's powers lead him to present himself as God when he "controls his actors on the stages."¹¹³ Prospero corrupts his magic and allows it to become debased by only serving his own personal desires. It is primarily due to the series of inner conflicts which incite him to use violence to retain control over his enemies. Prospero's aspiration to gain control over natural and supernatural worlds suggests that he does not only aims to carry out his vengeance but also to surpass his status as a human being. Consequently, his "rough magic" is morally corruptive and although he has "aspired through magic to become more than human, Prospero has ended up as something less."¹¹⁴ He does not seem human in the way he interacts with other characters of the play. His behaviour toward his daughter as if she was an instrument in his plan shows his self-proclaim superiority over other human beings¹¹⁵. Furthermore, his emotional distance from the misery of the shipwrecked victims contrasts sharply with Miranda's empathetic reaction. The violence of the storm also emphasizes Prospero's superhuman powers

¹¹⁰ King, C. (2015). Learning To Feel, Self-Discovery and the Quest for God in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. *International Journal of Language and Literature*, 4 (1), p. 169.

¹¹¹ Egan, R., *op. cit.*, p. 179.

¹¹² Atwood, M. (2003). *op. cit.*, p. 102.

¹¹³ Abrams, R., *op. cit.*, p. 61.

¹¹⁴ Corfield, C, *op. cit.* p. 45.

¹¹⁵ King, C., *op. cit.*, p. 169.

which ultimately allows him to control all the action and movement of every character.¹¹⁶ He is the central figure who acts as a stage director exercising control over his victims' senses. He appears as a human being with little respect for the will of others. He employs his magic in two different manners: to manipulate nature and spirit and to influence his fellow creatures¹¹⁷. In the light of this, the moral value of Prospero's original plan for vengeance is questionable. In addition to his morally corrupted project, "Prospero's revenge suggests a preoccupation with his past and a failure to control passion."¹¹⁸ The magician considers himself as a god but "his powers are going in the wrong direction."¹¹⁹ He is not the holy and impassive representative of divine power that he claims to be, on the contrary, he impurely uses his magic to malicious and personal purposes. An example of Prospero's morally dubious demeanour is the banquet with Ariel, dressed as a harpy, in Act 3 scene 3 who confronts the "three men of sin" and claims to have made them mad. This scene is especially important in the development of Antonio, Sebastian and Alonso¹²⁰. Prospero's created an illusionary purgatory in which the noblemen "are desperate", as commented by Gonzalo, "their great guilt like poison given to work a great time after, now 'gins bite the spirits" (3.3.105-107). Alonso is especially moved by Ariel's performance and interprets the loss of his son, Ferdinand, as a divine punishment for his previous crimes:

ALONSO

Oh, it is monstrous, monstrous
 Methought the billows spoke and told me of it,
 The winds did sing it to me, and the thunder,
 That deep and dreadful organ pipe, pronounced
 The name of Prosper. It did bass my trespass.
 Therefore my son i' th' ooze is bedded, and
 I'll seek him deeper than e'er plummet sounded
 And with him there lie mudded (3.3.95-102)

Since the shipwreck, Alonso is devastated by the idea that his son has drown and died. He is genuinely repentant and prepared to accept his fate. The king of Naples's deep grief and repentance differ from Antonio and Sebastian's impassable attitude towards Ariel's moral discourse. This scene suggests that experiencing overpoweringly strong emotions associated

¹¹⁶ Kirsch, A., *op. cit.*, p. 345.

¹¹⁷ Belton, E. (1986), 'When No Man Was His Own': Magic and Self-discovery in *The Tempest*. University of Toronto Quarterly, 55 (2), pp127-140. p. 128.

¹¹⁸ Corfield, C, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁰ King, C., *op. cit.*, p. 168.

with the idea of death can induce the traitors' conversion and self-awareness.¹²¹ In Alonso's case, "insight into the nature of self and world is enabled by a confrontation with death."¹²² The play does not only depict the different limitations between illusion and reality, it also investigates the boundary between life and death by representing characters who either believe that they are on the verge of dying or think that their relatives have perished.¹²³ Alonso's repentance and Antonio's conspiracy toward the king of Naples show that Prospero's magic reveals their true identity: Alonso appears as a good and loving father who is aware of his own faults whereas Antonio is a corruptive, manipulative villain guided by his greed. Prospero's ultimate "project", "the avowed purpose of all his showmanship, is to help all his subjects to achieve self-knowledge"¹²⁴ Belton explains that Prospero's chief goal was to release each character's true and hidden self through a dream inducing an abnormal mental state.¹²⁵ Gonzalo remarks that on the magic island "all of us" found "ourselves when no man has his own" (5.1.212-213). Since Prospero provokes other characters' release of their individual true condition, it raises the question whether himself experience a similar self-discovery. As described in the previous sections, the most significant self-awareness development in *The Tempest* is that of Prospero himself.¹²⁶ At the beginning of the play, as Belton points out, his sense of his own identity is still incomplete.¹²⁷ Prospero's own awareness of himself as a representative of divine power on the island is contradictory with the conflict in his mind (between Ariel and Caliban, see chapter 1), his oppression of Caliban, his irritability and the inappropriateness of his vengeance plan.¹²⁸ Whether it be by his influence on his enemies' imagination to hurt them or making Caliban endure physical pain, he is far from the impartial specialist of "white magic" who would employ his art for the benefit of others.¹²⁹ In other words, "While Prospero is clearly demonstrating to us his earthly ties, he is, to an equal and opposite extent denying them to himself."¹³⁰ Prospero appears as an isolated figure that has lost contact with the external world to his total absorption with the enlightenment of others.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*.

¹²² *Ibidem*.

¹²³ King, C., *op. cit.*, p. 169.

¹²⁴ Belton, E., *op. cit.*, p. 128

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁶ Egan, R., *op. cit.*, p. 180.

¹²⁷ Belton, E., *op. cit.*, p. 129.

¹²⁸ Corfield, C., *op. cit.*, p. 43.

¹²⁹ King, C., *op. cit.*, p. 173.

¹³⁰ Corfield, C., *op. cit.*, p. 45.

However, as King suggests, “if the play is interpreted on the subjective level, as an allegorical study of Prospero’s inner conflicts, we witness a moment of self-indictment in which he acknowledges his own dark side.”¹³¹ This pivotal moment is Ariel’s persuasive appeal to Prospero’s humanity in Act 5 scene 1. Emphatically, Prospero is far from his daughter’s innocence and Gonzalo’s good nature. They are able to forgive instinctively but he cannot. When Ariel reports on his enemies’ torment before he adds that he would feel sorry for the poor noblemen if himself was human. He is prompted to forgiveness by Ariel, but the play does not allocate its chief character an unconditional love for his fellow men.¹³² Prospero’s new compassionate impulse is conveyed through his speech that conveys his inner conflicts:

PROSPERO

And mine shall.

Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself
(One of their kind, that relish all as sharply
Passion as they) be kindlier moved than thou art?
Though with their high wrongs I am struck to th' quick,
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part. The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance. They being penitent,
The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
Not a frown further. Go release them, Ariel.
My charms I'll break, their senses I'll restore,
And they shall be themselves. (5.1.20-32)

With this decisive speech, Prospero speaks of the conflict between his fury and his reason. He acknowledges here his inner struggle between his desire for revenge and his ordeal to forgive. His renouncement to his initial purpose of retaliation suggests that his new goal is a “required metamorphosis to the ‘rarer action’ – ‘virtue’.”¹³³ Corfield describes this speech as the critical instant during which Prospero experiences self-admission of his own conflict and his humanity that induces softening toward his enemies.¹³⁴ Despite their crimes that still anger him, Prospero sympathizes with his enemies due to his spirit servant’s affecting account of their agony. Kirsch remarks that “it is particularly significant that it should be Ariel, associated throughout the play with Prospero’s imaginative power, who prompts this movement”.¹³⁵ He also suggests that *The*

¹³¹ King, C., *op. cit.*, p. 175.

¹³² King, C., *op. cit.*, p. 175.

¹³³ Corfield, C, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

¹³⁴ Corfield, C, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

¹³⁵ Kirsch, A., *op. cit.*, p. 345.

Tempest's major concern is human imagination.¹³⁶ It is only through Ariel's description of the noblemen's misery that Prospero is able to imagine what his antagonists feel and to sympathize with them. He is also reminded that he is "one of their kind" and understands what he has in common with them.¹³⁷ It seems that the imaginative power in *The Tempest* is associated with moral improvement and compassion. Imagination, thus, have a salutary effect on human mind.¹³⁸ The play associates its consciousness of the force of human imagination and Prospero's achievement of compassion. This imaginative sympathy makes Prospero realize that power was an obstacle to his humanity and he hence decides to "break my staff" and to "drown my books" (5.1.50;57).¹³⁹ His magic becoming irreparably harmful through his corrupted project, Prospero abjures his magic a few lines later. By using the phrase "rough magic" in his soliloquy of abdication, he admits that he has become "a prey to his own weakness, to those impurities that constitute his human limitations."¹⁴⁰ Prospero hence cast away his supernatural power:

PROSPERO

But this rough magic
I here abjure, and, when I have required
Some heavenly music, which even now I do,
To work mine end upon their senses that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound
I'll drown my book. (5.1.50-57)

Prospero's abjuration of his magic does not mean that he rejects his "potent art" but that he acknowledges his own roughness and he realizes his failure as a human being.¹⁴¹ The consciousness of failure that leads to his renouncement of magic also contribute to a higher degree of self-awareness. In this context, "magical fall is in part, then, a fortunate fall."¹⁴² The acceptance of his fall also prompts him to acknowledge Caliban as his, which requires him to accept himself as a flawed human being.¹⁴³

¹³⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹³⁸ Kirsch, A., *op. cit.*, p. 345.

¹³⁹ King, C., *op. cit.*, p. 175.

¹⁴⁰ Corfield, C, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

¹⁴¹ Corfield, C, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

¹⁴² Corfield, C, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

¹⁴³ Corfield, C, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

Prospero evolves from his projects of vengeance to one of reconciliation through the power of human imagination embodied by Ariel. Imaginative forces and illusoriness seem to morally influence human being in a “more refined (less ‘rough’)”¹⁴⁴ approach. It is interesting to note that Miranda, witnessing the shipwreck scene, demonstrates her imaginative sympathy for the victims of the storm.¹⁴⁵ Prospero is only able to emulate her at the end of the play. The play’s depiction of the powers of the invisible world emphasizes the influential role that imagination plays in human ideas.¹⁴⁶ Snider writes that Prospero’s “spiritual activity is mostly confined to as special form of intelligence, that form which embodies its content in pictures and symbols, namely, the creative imagination.”¹⁴⁷ He adds, moreover, that the protagonist is capable of resolving his conflict as an individual through the power of imagination in human spirit.¹⁴⁸ Prospero’s journey to self-acknowledgement from the beginning to the end of the drama is characterized by the sympathetic illusion of the theatre and of life.¹⁴⁹ He learns human compassion through theatrical imagination: he completes a process from the real world, passes through the green world full of shapes and images and returns to the world of experience as a human creature. The play only depicts the second phase in the ideal world.¹⁵⁰ In other terms, “Prospero, being forced to abandon the practical world on account of his devotion to his books and his art, solves in his theoretical domain all the contradictions of finite existence, and thus returns in triumph to the practical world.”¹⁵¹ The forgiveness of his former enemies and the abjuration of his art symbolize his reunion with the external world. Snider suggests that the play’s depictions of Prospero’s evolution represents the ability of the human mind to heal its own wounds and to cancel its own negative features.¹⁵² Prospero’s mind is able to overcome its conflict to achieve inner harmony. By finding and redefining himself, he also acknowledges his finite experience and the fact that life and time is limited.¹⁵³

It could be argued that Prospero also realizes, in the process of self-discovery, his own confinement in the green world. Abrams speaks of the sense of imprisonment to the “bare island” that emerge from Prospero’s epilogue.¹⁵⁴ The magician is not only limited by his own

¹⁴⁴ Corfield, C, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

¹⁴⁵ Kirsch, A., *op. cit.*, p. 350.

¹⁴⁶ Kirsch, A., *op. cit.*, p. 348.

¹⁴⁷ Snider, D., *op. cit.*, p. 195.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibidem.*

¹⁴⁹ Kirsch, A., *op. cit.*, p. 348.

¹⁵⁰ Snider, D., *op. cit.*, p. 215.

¹⁵¹ *Ibidem.*

¹⁵² *Ibidem.*

¹⁵³ King, C., *op. cit.*, p. 175.

¹⁵⁴ Abrams, R., *op. cit.*, p. 61.

illusionary world, but he is also “confined because the script has run out.”¹⁵⁵ The epilogue could also signify Prospero’s self-awareness of his status as a theatrical illusion that is prepared to vanish suddenly “into thin air” when the play is over, which echoes his “Our revels now are ended” speech. The audience is symbolically given his supernatural power of controlling illusion by dismantling “the baseless fabric” of *The Tempest* itself with the investment of their imagination (4.1.148-51).¹⁵⁶

To sum up, Prospero’s journey of self-discovery is a process that encompasses three steps; from the real world to the world of imagination then back into reality. First, Prospero does not seem to be aware of his own status at the beginning of the play. After losing his dukedom, he brews revenge and employs his “rough magic” to bring his enemies to his mercy. He elaborates machinations of illusionary experiences for the shipwrecked noblemen and manipulates his own daughter to realize his objective. His purpose of vengeance eventually reveals the other characters’ true self. Through the creation of a world of dreams, Prospero gives his usurpers the opportunity to release their true identity. Despite his status of original creator in the play, he also experiences significant self-discovery. When Ariel tells his master that his “affections would become tender” (5.1.18-19) if he saw his enemies’ distress, Prospero is prompted to consider his inner conflicts and solve them “through spirit in the form of Imagination.”¹⁵⁷ The reconciliation with the usurpers, and himself encourages him to abjure his art at the same occasion. His regained humanity is associated with the development of imaginative sympathy. Prospero’s inner harmony helps him accepting his human limitations, such as his finite existence. To complete his development, Prospero has to return to the real world, which is what he intends to do with the epilogue. He asks the audience to symbolically set him free from the green world that he created and to send him back to Naples. By asking for freedom, Prospero is also referring to his status as a dramatic character trapped in the play.

3.2. The self-discovery and confinement of Felix in *Hag-Seed*

As explained in Chapter 2, Felix’s self-discovery is achievable in his created green world. He is released from his psychological and emotional chaos after his experience in the illusionary world. His self-awareness and identity at the end of the novel is the result of an internal process that involves his identification with Prospero and his acting performances in

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibidem.*

¹⁵⁷ Snider, D., *op. cit.*, p. 196.

real life. His constant struggle for identity is illustrated throughout the novel by his changes of role, like an actor.

First, the analysis of Felix's behaviour as the artistic director at *Makeshiweg Theatre Festival* at the beginning of the novel gives considerable insights into his lack of self-knowledge. After having lost his wife and his three-year old daughter Miranda, he is absorbed with his new production of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which is Felix's equivalent to Prospero's books. His plans are thwarted, however, by Tony Price, his festival partner in charge of administrative matters, who persuades the board of directors to fire Felix and to cancel the production. Felix delegates the bureaucratic tasks "to concern himself with higher aims" (*Hag-Seed* p. 11). Just as Prospero neglected his dukedom to study magic, Felix disregards his responsibilities to attend public events or search for funding. Through his conversation with Tony, we also learn that the critical "reviews of late [has] been ... mixed" (*Hag-Seed* p. 21) and that Tony has to hide them from Felix:

"I kept the bad [reviews] away from you," said Tony. "They were numerous. I have them here in my briefcase, if you'd care to take a look."

"Why in hell did you do that?" said Felix. "Keep them away? I'm not an infant."

"Bad reviews make you irritable," said Tony. "Then you take it out on the staff. It's bad for morale."

"I am *never* irritable!" Felix shouted. (*Hag-Seed* p. 21)

The person that he was before his fall appears to be arrogant and short-tempered. Felix's last line in this passage sounds quite ironic in this context, which supports the fact that Felix is ignorant of his own personality. The text does not present him as a genuine victim of Tony's ambitious plan. But his dismissal appears as a rational consequence of Felix's loss of his "contact with reality" (*Hag-Seed* p. 20) after the tragic death of his wife and daughter. His assertive attitude towards the staff is illustrated by his desire to replace the co-workers who do not meet his expectations:

"Let's make this short," Felix had opened, as was his habit. [...] "My list for today: number one, we need to replace the lighting guy, he's not giving me what I need." (*Hag-Seed* p. 18)

If the productions bring "mixed" critical reviews, Felix does not put his own actions or artistic competence in doubt, but blame it on the staff instead. Felix here implies that he considers himself as the supreme ruler of his team, and the other members of the staff must comply with his vision or risk being displaced. He has to be in control of everything and his vision must be

implemented exactly the way he sees it. His collaborators can only ensure that his mental representation of the performances is accordingly completed. After Tony announces to him that the Board has voted to terminate his contract because “he is losing his edge” (*Hag-Seed* p. 20), Felix’s reaction demonstrates of his erroneous image of his role in the festival and in general:

Without me, the whole festival would go up in flames! The donors would flee, the actors would quit, the upscale restaurant and the gift shops and the bed-and-breakfasts would fold, and the town of Makeshiweg would sink back into the obscurity from which he’d been so skilfully plucking it, summer after summer, because what else did it have going for it besides a train-switching yard? Train-switching was not a theme. You couldn’t build a menu around train-switching. (*Hag-Seed* p. 19-20)

According to Felix, he is at the centre of the festival’s organisation although he admitted having delegated the socializing and administrative parts of the job to his assistant.

The mental misrepresentation of his own role in the festival makes his dismissal, coupled with the loss of his daughter, seem like a real emotional dismay. His “fragile ego” (*Hag-Seed* p. 154) is destroyed and his entire identity collapses; he is neither a father, nor a stage director anymore. He does not have any other characteristic to define himself. His loss of identity manifests itself in Felix’s unfulfillment. Watching his belongings, he feels that he is looking at “things left over from what had once been a complete life” (*Hag-Seed* p. 32). Felix is denied his individuality. He feels incomplete; he “feels a weakness within himself, a dejection, a fissure in his will, a faltering” (*Hag-Seed* p. 107). The narration conveys his feeling of void and dispossession of his identity through metaphors:

All dark within, no light at the window. Almost he knocks, but who would answer? He has a sudden cold sensation, as if from news of a boundless loss. He opens the door. Empty. Devoid. No presence. Inside the shack it’s chilly. (*Hag-Seed* p. 107)

In this extract, the deserted cottage in which Felix lives can symbolize his inner situation. The dark and cold building reflects his mental state which is also characterized by emptiness. Felix’s mind, comparable to his home, does not possess any “presence” in it. Destitute from his identity, Felix is unable to evolve in “the rest of his life” (*Hag-Seed* p. 28). Furthermore, along with the “boundless loss” (*Hag-Seed* p. 107) of his identity and daughter, he has also lost the significance in his life:

How long that time had once felt to him. How quickly it has sped by. How much of it has been wasted. How soon it will be over. (*Hag-Seed* p. 29)

His life is nothing more than a transitory phase before death. From that moment on, Felix's subjacent purpose is to reconstruct himself.

His quest for himself and identification with fictional characters was already demonstrated by the utilisation of Lear's line "Howl, howl, howl, howl," to refer to his own misery and incapacity to express himself. Felix also turns to literature and drama to manage and rationalize his sense of loss and grief. Although language is not always sufficient to express human emotions, works of fiction can produce a beneficial effect on mental or emotional conflicts. Atwood's novel reflects on the role of fiction in real life as well as its role in human's perception of reality and identity. Felix often resorts to literary and dramatic references to understand his environment. For example, he tries to associate the neighbouring family with characters of *The Tempest*:

For a time, Felix tried to amuse himself by casting Maude as the blue-eyed hag, Sycorax the witch, and Walter as Caliban the semi-human log-hauler and dishwasher, in his own personal *Tempest* – his *Tempest* of the headspace – but that didn't last long. (*Hag-Seed* p. 37)

The phrase "his own personal *Tempest*" illustrates his appropriation of the Bard's play. Felix employs fiction not only to discover himself but also to frame his entire reality. He realizes, however, that fiction is not enough to ease his traumatized mind; "none of it fitted" (*Hag-Seed* p. 37). Struggling with the deconstruction of his individuality and his emotional wounds, Felix becomes obsessed with his vengeance that he qualifies as a "thirst for justice" (*Hag-Seed* p. 45). As demonstrated in chapter 1, he meets his bestial side when his mind is only governed by his resentment and his sadistic impulse. His extreme anger reveals his aspiration to fill his inner void and ease his sorrow by all possible means:

Ah yes. He can see how it could unfold: Tony and Sal, surrounded by goblins. Herded by them. Menaced by them. Reduced to a quivering jelly. *Hark, they roar, he thinks. Let them be hunted soundly. At this hour / lies at my mercy all mine enemies.* (*Hag-Seed* p. 131)

In this excerpt, he refers to his vengeance by using Prospero's line, which shows his identification with Prospero. His search for a new identity leads him to identify with *The Tempest*'s main character. By directly quoting parts of the play, it becomes clear that he considers himself as a version of the deposed duke of Milan and self-consciously enacts the magician's part. Imitating his counterpart's plan of vengeance, he coordinates an "artistic immersion" (*Hag-Seed* p. 233) for his enemies that exposes them to considerable emotional

traumatic experience. He re-creates the play's harpy scene with the "terrifying" shadow of a bird on the wall (*Hag-Seed* p. 225). He also adapts Ariel's speech to reflect his own backstory:

You are three men of sin
Where'm I gonna begin?
You've been so bad
It makes me sad,
As a result, you're going mad!
Felix was ruined by you,
Exiled into the blue;
Sal's lost his son,
That's no fun,
And your woes have just begun!
You must repent and say you're sorry
If you want a good end to this story:
This...means...you! (*Hag-Seed* p. 225-226)

This "fairly terrible poem" (*Hag-Seed* p. 226) employs the same construction and themes as Ariel's harpy speech. Due to the drugs that Felix injected in their drinks, Tony, Sebert and Sal hallucinate and experience a bad trip. The anxiety induced by the psychotics is particularly violent:

Sal is curled up in a corner of the room, clutching his knees. Tears are running down his cheeks; he's diagram of woe. He seems to be having an interactive experience with the floor. "It's dark, it's dark down there," he's saying. "Why's it so dark? I need to go there, where it's all dark, I need to find him!" Tony's batting at the air. "Back! Back!" he's shouting. "Stay away from me!" Sebert appears to believe he's covered with insects, or some other form of many-legged life. "Get them off me!" he's babbling. "Spiders!" (*Hag-Seed* p. 228)

Although Felix intends to imitate Prospero's plan to bring his usurpers to repentance, he eventually becomes a perpetrator himself by torturing the "three men of sin". He misuses of his position as a stage director at the Fletcher Correctional to manipulate his troupe of actors and to carry out his own morally dubious revenge plan. The violence of his actions also suggests that he is unable to control his passions. Felix is nonetheless conscious that he needs to regulate his impulse. If he wants to perfectly incarnate Prospero, he knows that he has to stay in control; "careful, he tells himself. Hold it together. Prospero's always in control" (*Hag-Seed* p. 160). Since the magician is the supreme ruler of his narrative, Felix knows that he has to stay in command in order to embody the "Prospero" of his own world.

In the same vein, Felix also imitates Prospero in his relationship with his daughter. Felix attempts to resurrect her in different methods. He first tries to reconstruct a “setting for his reborn Miranda” (*Hag-Seed* p. 15) with his production of *The Tempest*, which was supposed to serve as “a kind of reincarnation” (*Hag-Seed* p. 15). In this production, Felix’s desire to play Prospero’s part confirms his identification with the character:

Felix himself would be Prospero, her loving father. Protective – perhaps too protective, but only because he was acting in his daughter’s best interest. And wise, wiser than Felix. (*Hag-Seed* p. 15)

Enacting Prospero offers him the opportunity to regain his status as a father, i.e. to incarnate Miranda’s parent again. Moreover, it also allows him to turn into an improved version of himself that is more sensible or astute. Theatre and acting provide the occasion to express an enhanced form of himself and to reclaim his fatherhood.

Secondly, his real-life “piece of acting” with his constructed Miranda also aims to pretend that he still has a child. He helps her with her homework or teaches her to play chess, which is a recurrent motif in the original play. Additionally, his projection of Miranda is distinctly inspired by the character of Miranda in the play. He describes her as a sweet and innocent fifty-year old girl, who, just as her alter-ego, is unfamiliar with the external world, or the “brave new world”:

Yes there she is, in the back seat, over in the corner: a shadow within the shadow. She’s sad to have seen the last of all those wondrous people inside their brave new world. “’Tis new to thee,” he tells her. (*Hag-Seed* p. 276)

This extract refers to a dialogue between Miranda and Prospero:

MIRANDA: O, wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,
That has such people in’t!

PROSPERO: 'Tis new to thee. (5.1.181-184)

The representation of Miranda as the innocent and pure maiden is the principal source of inspiration for Felix’s idealised daughter. Similar to her counterpart, Felix’s Miranda is gentle and compassionate, especially with her father. Being one of his creation, she is shaped according to Felix’s wish; she is subordinated to her father. The idealised and naïve Miranda is the archetype of the pure and innocent daughter:

She scolded him gently when he didn't eat enough. Finish what's on your plate, she would say to him. Her own favourite was macaroni and cheese. (Hag-Seed p. 46)

Miranda doesn't like it when he's away so much, during the months when he's giving the course. Also, she frets: she doesn't want him to wear himself out (Hag-Seed p. 62)

Miranda doesn't like it when he's depressed. It makes her anxious. (Hag-Seed p. 108)

Hag-Seed draws a direct parallel between the two Mirandas, with Miranda's projection being a copy of the original Miranda of the play. Atwood's contemporary interpretation of the submissive daughter who follows her father is only a constructed ghost, which highlights the problematic nature of Miranda for present-day adaptation as a compliant woman. It suggests that Prospero's daughter might only be adapted, nowadays, by creating an idealized illusion of a reassuring and docile presence. "Through Felix's ghost daughter, Atwood makes the point that characters like Miranda – meek, obedient, virtuous and existing only in relation to the men around them – are not real, existing only as the products of patriarchal fantasy."¹⁵⁸

The projection of his daughter which is a docile imitation of Miranda, and Felix's identification with Prospero "creates a veritable hall of mirrors, with each character in the novel being a double for one of Shakespeare's."¹⁵⁹ Atwood explains her theory on the double in the second chapter of her essay *On Writers and Writing*.¹⁶⁰ She writes that she "grew up in a world of doubles."¹⁶¹ According to Atwood, "the double is more than a twin or sibling. He or she is *you*, a you who shares your most essential features."¹⁶² The association of Felix with Prospero highlights the construction of human identity through identification. It is possible to interpret Felix's obsession with *The Tempest* and Prospero as his own method to find his true inner self. He constructs himself as Prospero's double to regain his identity but loses his contact with reality in the process. He has to convince himself that he has not lost his mind and asserts Prospero's sanity to refer to his own mental state; "No, Felix, it isn't, he tells himself firmly.

¹⁵⁸ Boyce, Tillie (2016, December 19). *Forgive and Forget*. Retrieved August 02, 2019 from <https://thefword.org.uk/2016/12/hag-seed-by-margaret-atwood-review/>.

¹⁵⁹ Abrams, Rebecca (2016, October 28). *Hag-Seed by Margaret Atwood review – The Tempest retold*. Retrieved August 02, 2019 from <https://www.ft.com/content/a07b7940-9a93-11e6-8f9b-70e3cabccfae>.

¹⁶⁰ Atwood, M. (2003). *On writers and writing* (p.xv-xxii). London: Virago press. pp. 25-50

¹⁶¹ *Ibidem* p.27

¹⁶² *Ibidem* p.35

Prospero is not crazy” (*Hag-Seed* p. 144). The other character, however, are aware of his irrationality:

“There’s someone in here who’s crazy. Crazy as a full-moon dog. Thinks he’s Prospero. No, I mean really. He’s re-enacting *The Tempest*, and you’re Ferdinand.” (*Hag-Seed* p. 215-216)

In the context of this extract, Anne-Marie is supposed to lie to Frederick to convince him to play Ferdinand’s part. However, her remark comes out as especially adequate to Felix’s madness and identification with Prospero. During their final confrontation, Tony, too, points out Felix’s lunacy:

“You’re crazy,” says Tony

“That’s beside the point,” says Felix.

According to Felix, his mental state is irrelevant. His identity-construction project does not aim to recover sanity but his individuality. Felix is convinced that by re-enacting Prospero’s vengeance, he will regain his identity. However, his revenge completed, Felix does not feel as satisfied as he expected. His mixed feelings are expressed by his Miranda’s silence that conveys that “the endgame of his obsession” (*Hag-Seed* p. 283) was not his vengeance but the restoration of his identity:

Only silence. Where is his Miranda? What is she trying to convey? (*Hag-Seed* p. 239)

Why does it feel like a letdown?

The rarer action is / In virtue than in vengeance, he hears inside his head. It’s Miranda. She’s prompting him (*Hag-Seed* p. 239)

He realizes that that imitating Prospero’s vengeance did not allow him to fully regain his identity. His veritable purpose should not have been revenge but Prospero’s process of self-discovery on the magical island. As Felix states to the prisoners, the island “is a kind of mirror... a reflection of his inner self” (*Hag-Seed* p. 115). The use of Prospero’s lines on vengeance and virtue in this context illustrates Felix’s change of focus. As his Shakespearean double, Felix modifies his project of vengeance to one of reconciliation. His development echoes Prospero’s evolution towards human empathy.

It is important to observe that his sense of morality progressively evolves throughout the novel. Before losing everything that was valuable to him, Felix considered himself as the “*the Felix Phillips*” (*Hag-Seed* p.196) as if he had a type of divine quality. His journey of self-

discovery teaches him that he “no longer rates a *the*” in front of his name (*Hag-Seed* p. 196). Another example of Felix’s evolution occurs when Anne-Marie confronts Felix with his previous merciless methods:

“You’re ruthless! That’s unethical,” he said
“Don’t preach, I learned from the best. Everything for the play, right? That’s how you put it twelve years ago. As I recall.”
That was then, Felix thought. Would I say it today? “I’ll talk to him,” said Felix. “Straighten things out.” (*Hag-Seed* p.184)

Felix questioning himself “would I say it today?” shows that his ethos has significantly changed. He has acquired a sense of fairness and ethics in his job that he did not have twelve years ago. It is, however, erroneous to assert that Felix has learnt virtue after Miranda’s intervention to ease his enemies’ agony. He is only reconciling with his enemies, however, on a few conditions. After his revenge’s success and the realization of his demands, Felix realizes that his own identity will be accomplished if he makes peace with his demons. The ending reveals that the final outcome of his obsession was his personal healing and development. The aim of his identification was not to carry out his retaliation but to find himself, as Prospero discovers himself in *The Tempest*.

The novel indicates that fictional representations play a significant role in human’s construction of identity and reality. It is possible to interpret Atwood’s novel as an examination of the human brain’s innate tendency for narrativity, i.e. storytelling. In an interview named *Why we tell stories*¹⁶³, The author states that narrative art, i.e “the ability to tell a story” is at the core of human existence. In Nancy Huston’s essay *The Tale-tellers: A short study of Humankind*, the Canadian author discusses the fictitious nature of human identity.¹⁶⁴ Reality is intrinsically empty of any meaning. It only acquires signification through human imagination. Human beings cannot understand the world of experience without applying fabricated meanings and stories.¹⁶⁵ By writing a character who identifies himself with the protagonist of a fictional text, Atwood supports the idea that human beings create their individuality and understand their existence through stories. Identity is established through identification.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, the construction of Miranda in Felix’s mind also supports the power of human thoughts, emotions

¹⁶³ Atwood, Margaret, (2010, 21 September). *Why we tell stories* (Max, Miller, interviewer) Retrieved 2019, 5 August from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2FsnPzgZJw>.

¹⁶⁴ Huston, Nancy, (2009). *The Tale-Tellers: A short story of Humankind*. Toronto: McArthur & Co.

¹⁶⁵ Huston, N., *op. cit.*, p. 98.

¹⁶⁶ Huston, N., *op. cit.*, p. 161.

and imagination and their influence on the natural world. Felix's acting with his self-created illusion" (*Hag-Seed* p. 45) supports the idea that that human being shape can model reality according to their imagination. The signification of the external world can be altered since it finds its meaning in human constructions and representations. Felix consciously chooses to apply his own wishful vision on reality. He decides to imagine that his daughter keeps him company:

Was there a small girl listening to him? No, not really. But it was soothing to think that there was. (*Hag-Seed* p. 45)

Furthermore, Felix enacting of Prospero in his off-stage life implies that theatre and acting can solve identity crisis. The theme of theatre in *Hag-Seed* represents Felix's quest for identity by pretending to be a character on a stage. He seems to be performing his own character in his everyday life; "he smiles: the illusion of a smile. Pretense, fakery, but who's to know?" (*Hag-Seed* p. 9). Human beings are comparable to actors with masks and pre-defined roles. As Shakespeare wrote in *As you like it*, "All the world's a stage/And all the men and women merely players" (*As you like it*: 2.6.139-140). Acting in real life is explained in David Thomson's essay *Why acting matters*¹⁶⁷, which is mentioned in Atwood's acknowledgements of *Hag-Seed*, as the fact of "creating" one's character "as an assurance that we exist"¹⁶⁸. He says that humankind has to perform real life acting "because in the increasing crowd self-awareness may be our defense against fears of anonymity."¹⁶⁹ In other terms, "people pretend to be someone they're not" (*Hag-Seed* p. 167) to re-assert themselves. Felix, who as lost his identity, must reclaim his inner self through the process of acting.

Although his identification with Prospero has helped him to fill the void within himself, he also discovers the limitations of enacting another character. As Thomson explains, "there is a further problem: as an actor takes on more and more characters, the inner self may be like a room to rent – a space where every successive tenant brings his own furniture and color scheme, his own definition of being 'at home'."¹⁷⁰ Consequently, Felix have to abandon his identification with Prospero otherwise his true inner self will remain empty. When Atwood started her rewriting, she particularly focused on Prospero's epilogue; "the last three words

¹⁶⁷ Thomson, D., (2015). *Why acting matters*. Van Haven: Yale University Press.

¹⁶⁸Thomson, D.,*op. cit.*, p. 150.

¹⁶⁹Thomson, D., *op. cit.*, p. 149.

¹⁷⁰ Thomson, D., *op. cit* p. 150.

Prospero says are 'Set me free.' But free from what? In what has he been imprisoned?"¹⁷¹ As demonstrated in chapter 2, Prospero had to be freed from his self-created green world by the audience to escape his confinement in the play itself. The author refers to this interpretation in her novel when Felix explains the last prison of the play to the inmates:

"It's in the Epilogue," says Felix. "Prospero says to the audience, in effect, *Unless you help me sail away, I'll have to stay on the island* – that is, he'll be under an enchantment. He'll be forced to re-enact his feelings of revenge, over and over. It would be like hell." [...] "You don't say 'set me free' unless you're not free. Prospero is a prisoner inside the play he himself has composed." (*Hag-Seed* p. 275)

His approach of Prospero does not appear as a simple examination of the epilogue but as a self-conscious analysis of himself. By investigating Prospero's last speech, Felix also provides key elements for his own development. He is confined in the character that he has attached to himself. He has entrusted himself with to role of Prospero's double. He has to abandon his identification with the magician if he wants to be freed of "all those vengeful emotions" (*Hag-Seed* p. 275). He has to "kiss his former self goodbye" (*Hag-Seed* p. 116) otherwise he will be restricted to feel anger and resentment endlessly. He decides to enact the symbolic action of throwing his costume of Prospero in the ocean:

The aura it once held for him is dimming, like holiday lights at noon. Soon it will be nothing but a souvenir. [...] It's no longer a magic staff, it's only a wooden stick. Broken. Should he bury it certain fathoms in the earth? [...] "Farewell," he says to it. "My so potent art." (*Hag-Seed* p. 283)

At this moment, Felix becomes aware of another form of confinement: the role that he has been playing with the ghost Miranda. His creation, which does not preserve the presence of his beloved daughter, also imprisons him into a fictional character that he can no longer incarnate. The acknowledgement of his self-confinement in the role of Prospero and ghost Miranda's creator allows him to liberate himself from remorse and grief.

It comes over him in a wave: he's been wrong about his *Tempest*, wrong for twelve years. The endgame of his obsession wasn't to bring his Miranda back to life. The endgame was something quite different (*Hag-Seed* p. 283)

¹⁷¹ Margaret, Atwood (2016, 24 September). *A Perfect Storm: Margaret Atwood on rewriting Shakespeare's Tempest*. Retrieved 2019, 06 August from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/sep/24/margaret-atwood-rewriting-shakespeare-tempest-hagseed>.

Felix's self-discovery and identity construction are finally complete when he accepts that his daughter is "lost in the past" (*Hag-Seed* p. 238), i.e. the dark backward and abyss of time (2.1.50). While Prospero had to accept his human imperfections, the human limitations that Felix has to recognize is mortality. Felix's acceptance of his daughter's death is the ultimate outcome of his journey of self-discovery. Similar to her magical equivalent in *The Tempest*, Miranda needs to be freed from her father's imagination at the end of the novel. He is now aware of the fact that he needs to "leave the full poor where she's been trapped with him" (*Hag-Seed* p. 238). His identity reclaimed, he must abandon his former identification with Prospero and his real-life performances with Miranda in order to express himself outside of the play's restricted frame. He releases his self-created daughter "to the elements" (5.1.318). He frees himself, in the process, of his grief, anger and of all of his former restraints.

In sum, *Hag-Seed* depicts its chief character's struggle to regain his identity and his journey of self-discovery. This process encompasses four steps. First, prior to his exile from the theatre festival, Felix appears as short-tempered, irritable and assertive person. He does not respect his staff and considers himself as the supreme ruler of his creative space. He ends up neglecting his responsibilities as artistic director. Consequently, his representation of himself as the supreme leader is erroneous. The second phase of his journey is related to the deconstruction of his identity. His dismissal and the loss of his child completely annihilate his sense of individuality. Felix does not know who he is anymore. The features that once defined him as a person has been taken from him. His loss of identity also shows that human being's inner self is fragile when it is not coupled to an accurate self-awareness. The annihilation of his inner self results in a sense of emptiness and loss. He, in the third phase, resorts to literature and drama to enclose his reality. In his attempts to reconstruct himself, he identifies with Prospero. Since he is reduced to anonymity, he tries to incarnate a version of Prospero and behave accordingly. His identification and re-enacting of the original play take place both on and off-stage. His real-life performance of Prospero is expressed through two central features of the novel: his obsession with vengeance and the creation of a ghost to replace his daughter that is the representative of both Miranda and Ariel. In these two aspects of his life, he performs a real-life piece of acting by employing Prospero's lines. He creates himself an alternative identity by becoming Prospero's double. Atwood explores the process of identity construction through stories. Narration and storytelling, which are fundamental human treats, are humankind's methods to apply meaning to the world and to construct identity. The power of human imagination is thematized in *Hag-Seed* through two features; Felix's identification with

Prospero to fulfil his loss of identity and the creation of his ghost Miranda to alter the meaning of his reality. Felix's construction of identity is not only marked by his identification process but also by his enacting of the character in real life. Acting represents a way, for Felix, to pretend to be someone when he has lost his inner self. He is convinced that accomplishing his revenge, as Prospero does in his own narrative, will permit him to recover his individual self. His retaliation, however, does not satisfy his quest for individuality. He realizes that his ultimate project was not his vengeance but his self-discovery. He also becomes aware of the fact that the identity that he created for himself is similar to a counterfeit. Enacting Prospero can only be a temporary solution to his identity loss. The last step of his journey to self-awareness is his release from the false role that he performed in his real life. He cannot incarnate Prospero endlessly otherwise he is condemned to feel his vengeful emotions permanently. While he leaves his Prospero-self, he also liberates himself from his projection of Miranda. Felix's self-discovery implies his acceptance of his child's death, the healing of his traumatic feelings and the reconstruction of himself as an individual.

Conclusion

In 2016, on the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, the Hogarth Shakespeare Series invited contemporary novelists to adapt some of the Bard's plays for a present-day readership. Atwood reinterpreted *The Tempest* into a modern rewriting in the context of 21st century Canada, *Hag-Seed*. She decided to focus her novel on Felix, which is her adaptation of Shakespeare's most enigmatic character, Prospero. She transformed the magician preoccupied by his retaliation into a theatre director obsessed with vengeance. The novel appears as self-aware of its adaptation status by focusing on Felix's own adaptation of the original play *The Tempest*. In addition, the author changed the original plot by including Miranda's death in her narrative. Although Felix's daughter is dead, he comes to half-believe that the spirit of his precious child accompanies him. Felix's narrative depicts his journey of healing and self-discovery after his dismissal as artistic director and the traumatic loss of his daughter.

The aim of this dissertation was to compare Atwood's Felix with Shakespeare's Prospero. For this purpose, it was necessary to analyse the duality between Ariel and Caliban in the two works, with an emphasis on the allegorical reading of these two characters. Secondly, the examination of the representation of theatre in *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed* offered considerable insights on the role of art and the distinction between illusion and reality in the two texts. Finally, Prospero's journey of self-discovery was compared to Felix's achievement of self-awareness.

Hag-Seed and *The Tempest* present the development of their respective chief character by insisting on the same division between Ariel and Caliban. The allegorical reading of the play suggests that the two servants are two opposite parts of Prospero's mind, the bestial side and the angelic counterpart. Atwood included that aspect in her main protagonist's psyche by integrating Caliban's character within Felix and constructing the airy ghost of his deceased daughter to replace Ariel. This interpretation offers a plausible justification for the reference to Caliban in the novel's title despite his absence in the narrative. On the one hand, in *The Tempest*, Prospero tries to suppress his lower instincts, incarnated by Caliban, and aspires to Ariel's divine status. On the other hand, the novel shows Felix's fall into the corrupted sphere of human existence by portraying his destructive obsession with his amoral vengeance plan. Felix's dark obsessiveness is explained by his emotional wounds. Felix's humanity is preserved through his self-created Miranda who acts as the voice of virtue in his mind's chaos of resentment and

vengeful feelings. His half vision of desire and hallucination takes on the role of Ariel in the novel. His constructed Ariel represents his traumatic emotions due to the loss of a child and his capacity for compassion towards his enemies. Just like his Shakespearian counterpart learnt compassion thanks to his airy spirit, Felix indeed ceases his antagonists' agony after he hears her whispering "I would, sir, were I human" (5.1.19). The main character's change of plan at the end demonstrates the ability of human beings to forgive and empathize in the two works. Prospero's final acknowledgment of his human limitations is adapted in *Hag-Seed* by Felix's acceptance of death. Felix imitates Prospero's liberation of his airy spirit and he releases his projection of Miranda and liberates himself from his grief at the same time. The allegorical reading of the duality opposing Caliban to Ariel illustrates the conflicts between vice and virtue within the human mind. Atwood nuanced this depiction of "good" and "bad" with Felix's traumatic backstory, which supports the idea that the human beings who are governed by their destructive instincts often have emotional justifications.

In addition to the dichotomy between their inner bestial and angelic sides, Prospero's and Felix's development are also related to the notion of theatre which is depicted as the medium that creates new worlds. The two characters are both illusionist figures who elaborate illusionary dimensions to convey their vision of the external world. On the one hand, Prospero shows a world, through the masque and Ariel's performance as a harpy, that is governed by pure concepts such as chastity and repentance. On the other hand, Felix imagines a world, with his production of *The Tempest*, in which mortality does not exist. Their respective aims, however, differ in the sense that Felix does not wish to influence his antagonists' morality. He is motivated by his vengeful emotions towards his enemies and, most importantly, by the devastating loss of his daughter. Every artistic enterprise that he undertakes aims to resurrect his lost Miranda, whether it be by his production of *The Tempest* or by his "piece of acting" with the self-created projection of his child. In the light of this, it is more appropriate to ascribe Felix's motives to his desire to influence reality itself, i.e. bringing his child back to life. In their respective worlds of art, the two illusionists are supreme rulers who manipulate the events and cast the other characters into specific roles. Both narratives are focused on the creative power of humankind and portray the influence of art on the human mind. With his art, Prospero intends to improve the sense of morality of his antagonists. Felix, however, does not display the same noble motivations. His project of immersive theatre is characterized by his corrupted desire for retaliation and the torment of his enemies. Considering this, Atwood inquires whether theatre, or art, can really help to enlighten human darkness. Even though Felix's motives are

morally questionable, his production does have a beneficial effect on the prisoners who use acting to explore and enlighten their darker self. Consequently, illusionary worlds are a place of metamorphosis and self-discovery.

The two works do not only depict the creation of alternative and illusionary worlds, they also explore the indistinct boundary between illusion and reality. Human imagination can be influenced by illusion, which leads to confusion between falsehood and authenticity. In *The Tempest*, Prospero is the almighty creator of all illusionary events experienced by the other characters and distorts their senses. Furthermore, the play's epilogue, in which the magician directly addresses the audience, erases the distinction between the play-world and the world outside the stage. Atwood develops this idea in *Hag-Seed*; the actors, who constantly play in and out of their character, seem to be lost between the play-world and the real world. The two spheres influence each other; the actors' role affects their real emotions and actions, and vice versa. Atwood creates real doubles who act and speak as if their attitude were conditioned by their alter-ego in the original play. Moreover, the limitations between performing and authenticity are also concealed by Felix's creation of an illusionary ghost to replace his daughter. Felix completely engages in this self-constructed illusion and performs a piece of acting in his real life as if his child were still alive. His projection of Miranda eventually allows him to accept the ephemeral nature of human existence. He refers to "our revels now are ended" to accept the briefness of illusion and reality, which leads him to accept the loss of his child.

In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare portrays Prospero's acceptance of his human limitations, which is the result of a journey of self-discovery. The magician attempts to transcend his own humanity by manipulating his fellow men, using supernatural powers. He does not seem to be aware of his true own human condition; he is convinced that he represents the divine authority on the enchanted island and imposes his moral vision on the other characters. By submitting his enemies to a powerful emotional confusion in the harpy scene, Felix brings about the expression of their true self. Ariel's intervention, however, incites him to change his vengeance plan and encourages him to reconsider his erroneous perception of himself at the same time. Prospero realizes that he is nothing more than a man that usurped God's privilege to judge human beings. The play shows his achievement of self-awareness due to the influence of human imagination, which is incarnated by Ariel. In her adaptation, Atwood related her main character's journey to self-discovery to a process of healing. Felix, just like his Shakespearian counterpart, does not have a correct representation of himself; he considers himself as the almighty ruler of the theatre festival and imposes his artistic vision on his troupe of actors and

the technical staff. His fragile ego is reduced to emptiness when Tony usurps his job. His dismissal, coupled with the loss of his family, provokes the complete destruction of his identity. He tries to fill his lack of inner individuality by identifying himself with Prospero. In his attempt to recover his identity, he imitates the magician's revenge plans. His identification with Prospero goes beyond his obsession with vengeance; he attempts to re-enact Prospero's part in his real life by using the play's lines. In his quest for identity, Felix becomes Prospero's double. In addition to pretending that he is a version of the magician, he also constructs a ghost to compensate for his daughter's absence and considers it as the equivalent of Ariel in the play. He confines himself into a self-constructed world of illusion in which he performs little pieces of acting; he plays Prospero's part and Miranda's father in his real life. However, after he exacts revenge, he realizes that pretending to be Prospero's double cannot fulfil his identity loss. On the contrary, it confines him into a false identity that forces him to feel his vengeful resentment endlessly. Consequently, he has to free himself from his self-constructed role as Prospero. Atwood imitates the play's epilogue, in which Prospero requests the audience to release him from the frame of the play itself. By abandoning his identification with Prospero, Felix also comes to the realization that his self-constructed ghost cannot take the place of his real daughter and imprison him in an illusionary world. He liberates himself from his grief and remorse by renouncing his self-constructed illusion. In *Hag-Seed*, Felix's self-discovery is linked to the acceptance of human limitations in the sense that human existence is limited in time. The acknowledgment of mortality helps him to accept the loss of his daughter.

Atwood's novel copies the "play within a play" of *The Tempest*. She embarks on the role of fiction in real life. She insists on art's capacity to create alternative worlds that influence the human mind, especially in post-traumatic situation. In *Hag-Seed*, theatre is not only limited to actors acting dramatic roles on a stage; it is also correlated to the performance of one's own character in real life. The illusionary aspect of acting allows human beings to explore their inner depths and to enlighten their interior darkness. According to Atwood, art allows humankind to achieve self-awareness. Art offers a solution to identity crisis through the use of drama outside the play-world and the identification with fictional characters. One can veritably gain one's individuality through pretending and acting. Moreover, the author also depicts humankind's faculty to interpret reality through narration and storytelling. Reality has a meaning only through human beings' imagination.

This dissertation attempted to demonstrate that Atwood nuanced Shakespeare's portrayal of his main character in *The Tempest*, by including the depiction of emotional wounds

and the acceptance of death. It is necessary, however, to mention that this dissertation was principally focused on the analysis of Prospero and his modern re-writing, Felix on a limited number of themes. Atwood's reinterpretation of the play also displays considerable insights on the role of literature in prison. A study on the teaching methods presented in the novel could also be conducted in order to examine the influence of theatre on the learning process. It is important to bear in mind that, as Atwood's protagonist states, "the thing about Shakespeare [...] is that there's never just one answer" (*Hag-Seed* p. 56).

Bibliography

1. Primary Literature

- Atwood, M., (2016). *Hag-Seed*. London: Hogarth.
- Shakespeare, W., Vaughan, A., T., & Vaughan, A., T., (Ed.) (2010). *The Tempest*. London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare.

2. Secondary Literature

1. Books

- Atwood, M., (2015). *On Writers and Writing*, London: Virago Press Ltd.
- Frye, Northrop (1990). *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gibson, R., (2004). *Cambridge Student Guide to The Tempest*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Hazlitt, W. (2009). The Tempest. In J. Lobban (Ed.), *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (pp.92-98). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hulme, P., (1992). *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1472-1797*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Hulme, P., Sherman, H. W., (2000) *The Tempest and Its Travels*, London: Reaktion Books.
- Huston, Nancy, (2009). *The Tale-Tellers: A short story of Humankind*. Toronto: McArthur & Co.
- Palmer, D.J. (Ed.). (1968), *Shakespeare: the tempest*, Glasgow: Macmillan
- Thomson, David, (2015). *Why acting matters*. Van Haven: Yale University Press.

2. Scholarly Articles

- Abrams, R., (1978). "The Tempest" and the Concept of the Machiavellian Playwright. *English Literary Renaissance*, 8(1), 43-66
- Bergeron, D. M., & Egan, R. (1977). Shakespeares Artistry. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 28(3), pp. 371-373.
- Berry, E. (1979). Prospero's "Brave Spirit". *Studies in Philology*, 76(1), 36-48.

- Blanchard, J. (2009). Marlowe's and Shakespeare's Late Masterpieces: "such stuff / As dreams are made on". *South Atlantic Review*, 74(1), 165-180.
- Corfield, C. (1985). Why Does Prospero Abjure His "Rough Magic"? *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36(1), 31-48.
- Davidson, C., (1975). The Masque within "The Tempest". *Notre Dame English Journal* 10(1/2), pp. 12-17.
- Davidson, F. (1963). "The Tempest": An Interpretation. *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 62(3), pp. 501-517.
- Egan, R. (1972). This Rough Magic: Perspectives of Art and Morality in The Tempest. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 23(2), 171-182.
- Griffiths, T. (1983). 'This Island's mine': Caliban and Colonialism. *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 13, pp. 159-190.
- Hawkins, S. (1968), The two worlds of Shakespearean comedy. *Shakespeare Studies*, 3, pp. 62-80
- King, C. (2015). Learning To Feel, Self-Discovery and the Quest for God in Shakespeare's The Tempest. *International Journal of Language and Literature*, 4 (1), pp.167-175
- Kirsch, A. (1997). Virtue, Vice, and Compassion in Montaigne and The Tempest. *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 37(2), 337-352
- Lupton, J. (2000). Creature Caliban. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51(1), 1-23,
- Mebane, J. (1988). Metadrama and the Visionary Imagination in Dr. Faustus and the Tempest. *South Atlantic Review*, 53(2), 25-45.
- Phillips, J. (1964). The Tempest and the Renaissance Idea of Man. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 15(2), 147-159.
- Snider, D. (1874). SHAKESPEARE'S "TEMPEST". *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 8(3), 193-215.
- Vaughan, V. (1985). "Something Rich and Strange": Caliban's Theatrical Metamorphoses. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 36(4), pp. 390-405,
- Walter, J., (1983). From Tempest to Epilogue: Augustine's Allegory in Shakespeare's Drama. *PMLA* 98(1), pp. 60-76.
- Wright, N. H. (1977). Reality and illusion as a philosophical pattern in "the tempest". *Shakespeare Studies*, 10, 241-270.
- Zimbaro, R. (1963). Form and Disorder in The Tempest. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 14(1), 49-56.

3. Online Articles

- Atwood, Margaret (2016, September 24). *A perfect storm: Margaret Atwood on rewriting Shakespeare's Tempest*. Retrieved March 14, 2019, from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/sep/24/margaret-atwood-rewriting-shakespeare-tempest-hagseed>
- Awad, M., (2016, October 14). *Review: Margaret Atwood's Hag-Seed is an insightful retelling of The Tempest*. Retrieved August 03, 2019 from <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/book-reviews/review-margaret-atwoods-hag-seed-is-an-insightful-retelling-of-the-tempest/article32360859/>.
- Broad, L., (2017, January 1). *Review: Hag-Seed*. Retrieved 03, 2019 from <https://theoxfordculturereview.com/2017/01/01/review-hag-seed/>.

4. Websites

- "Hogarth Shakespeare". *Hogarth Shakespeare* [Online version]. Retrieved May 10, 2017, from <http://hogarthshakespeare.com>.
- "The Next Chapter: Audio Interview with Margaret Atwood." *CBC Listen*, October 10, 2016. <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2695699874>
-

UNIVERSITÉ CATHOLIQUE DE LOUVAIN
Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres

Place Blaise Pascal, 1 bte L3.03.11, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgique | www.uclouvain.be/fial