



Reading and Performing *The Tempest* in a Prison: *Hag-Seed* by Margaret Atwood

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Abstract

This article aims to analyse Margaret Atwood's *Hag-Seed* as a rewriting of the educational project orchestrated by Prospero in *The Tempest*, and as a mirror of the process by which Elizabethan actors created and modified their performance in response to their own and their audiences' needs. Set in a prison and planned as both a rehabilitation for criminals and a vengeance, *The Tempest* is reenacted and adapted in a collective interpretation that reflects the inmates' inner turmoil. Unlike Felix, the theatre director, the inmates cannot leave the prison, but they dream of freedom. They will find freedom by adapting Shakespeare's characters to their world of imagination and experience. Felix will allow them to find their own way of interpreting the text, which is very different from the attitude Prospero takes throughout *The Tempest*. In the end, the prisoners involved in adapting the tale of Caliban will write a sequel, making him (and themselves) the author/s and protagonist/s of their own story. Undoubtedly functioning as a metatextual reading of the novel itself in relation to its hypotext, the Pirandellian scene allows us to see how a reader can become an author, and how a subordinate and inarticulate group of people can become confident and self-aware enough to reappropriate their own history. Then the palimpsest is rewritten, bearing the memory of an educational project, but proposing a new one that is more appropriate to our times, with new objectives and new tools.

Keywords: hypertext, hypotext, education, prison, Atwood

1. Introduction

In 2013, the Random Press formulated an ambitious project plan. The objective was to adapt Shakespeare for a new audience and a new age. A few contemporary writers were invited to participate in the project, including Margaret Atwood who contributed *Hag-Seed* (2016a). The novel retells Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, which itself draws upon a multitude of passages from Italian and English chronicles of the Elizabethan era, occasionally incorporating words from other celebrated writers. In a contribution published in *The Guardian*, Atwood provided a comprehensive account of the genesis of her novel. She proceeded to elucidate the reasons behind her enthusiasm for rewriting *The Tempest*, attracted as she was by the malleability of Shakespeare's plays, the strength of their plots, the quality

of their lines, and the versatility of their characters. These plays could be reshaped by minor alterations or the addition or subtraction of sequences. Shakespeare did not object to this practice in the past and would not have done so had he lived: he engaged in this practice throughout his lifetime (Atwood, 2016b).

Subsequently, Atwood stated that she had previously alluded to or rewritten Prospero's role in her novels and critical essays. Prospero is a magician who can conjure up stories, and he is therefore akin to a playwright, an actor, or a novelist. It is noteworthy that these artistic practices, with the addition of cinema, are evoked and described from the outset in *Hag-Seed*, which revolves around the making of a performance, a novel, and a film. In an earlier book chapter entitled "*Temptation: Prospero, The Wizard of Oz, Mephisto & Co.*", Atwood had already made clear that "Prospero uses his arts — magic arts, arts of illusion — not just for entertainment, though he does some of that as well, but for the purposes of moral and social improvement" (2009, Chapter 4, pp. 116–117).

In her later commentary, Atwood explained how she finally understood how to rewrite *The Tempest*, pointing to the heart of the plot and the verbal texture of the play:

The first thing I did when starting this project was to reread the play. Then I read it again. Then I got my hands on all the films of it that I could find and watched them. Then I read the play again. Then came the usual episodes of panic and chaos: why had I foolishly agreed to write a book in this series? Why had I chosen *The Tempest*? Really it was impossible! What was the modern-day equivalent of a magician marooned on an island for 12 years with a now adolescent daughter? You couldn't write that straight: all the islands are known, there are satellites now, they would have been rescued by a helicopter in no time flat. And what about the flying air spirit? And the Caliban figure? Calm, calm, I told myself. I read the play again, this time backwards. The last three words Prospero says are "Set me free." But free from what? In what has he been imprisoned? (Atwood, 2016b).

This is the most interesting point for us in the context of Atwood's adaptation. She makes it clear from the outset that no matter how many times she has read the play in the past, she needed to read it again. Writing in the twentieth century, she cannot forget that *The Tempest* has been adapted many times, and that her potential audience may be more familiar with those adaptations than with Shakespeare's original text. This is why Atwood watched as many films as possible, but returning to her hypotext she still felt unable to rewrite it in an age where there is no longer any unknown land. Shakespeare's characters and situations seem firmly rooted in another distant age and culture. The turning point came when she read the play backwards and was struck by Prospero's last three words, "Set me free". These words raise questions about Prospero's imprisonment and its true meaning.

On the basis of this fundamental discovery, Atwood reread the play in the light of its poignant ending. In the process, she discovered that many of the characters have been prisoners at some point in their lives, and that they are certainly mentally stuck in their present neurosis or fixation. Like Prospero, they are all prisoners in their roles, longing to return to their real lives and take off their costumes. Material props on the stage represent this state of tangible confinement, such as Caliban's rock or Prospero's cell; other prisons are evoked, and we can immediately think of Ariel's cloven pine. Certainly, the island becomes a metaphor for a state of imprisonment, representing the mental block in which Prospero, Antonio, Alonso, and others are trapped. The end of the performance will give them the opportunity to stop their compulsive behaviours, including their obsessive pathways, falling back into their sins, and repeating wrong habits and actions. It is evident that the close of *The*

Tempest represents a return to mental health and a resumption of life after an extended dream state.

Consequently, Atwood elected to situate her novel within a prison setting, with a particular focus on the relationship between enslaved individuals and their masters or persecutors. The initial situation in *The Tempest*, in which Prospero embarks on a boat to leave his dukedom, is entirely reversed when he is on the island: the individuals responsible for his banishment are en route to the remote location he currently occupies. Subsequently, following the conjured-up shipwreck, he disperses his enemies on the beaches and inner places of the island. He enacts his magic, which involves making them rehearse their nightmares, utopian dreams, and past faults. His objective is to make them experience dire deeds and passions, but to stop them before they fall into acts of sin and murder. The entire play can be considered as an investigation into the identification and management of passions.

Given this synopsis, it seems reasonable to conclude that Prospero is, indeed, the director of a prison with educational purposes. This is evidenced by Atwood's creation of Prospero's double in the character of Felix. The two names both derive from Latin words meaning "fruitful". Prospero is a positive name indicating good fortune, which might evoke the character's ability to create new worlds, unite young people in marriage, and wish for prolificity. However, it does not fully represent Prospero's complex personality, or his past and status. It also fails to reflect the teacher's role he enacts with his daughter Miranda, or that he tries to perform with Caliban, and then will have when dealing with the other characters, and even when following a process of self-training.

In *Hag-Seed*, Felix, a theatre director, will assume a teaching role at a correctional facility in Canada after being replaced as the director of a prominent Ontario theatre festival by Tony, his less gifted but more manipulative assistant. Felix applies for this new position under an assumed identity, presenting himself as Mr. Duke. Like Prospero, he will be tempted by revenge, plotting to have his enemies reunited in the prison to make them suffer and repent. As with Ariel and Caliban, the prisoners whom he must rehabilitate through performance will serve as his hands and tools to achieve his primary objective. In the process, however, he is rewarded with freedom from his haunting and recurring thoughts, while his enemies, isolated and drugged in a prison cell, are released from their confinement after confessing their wrongdoings and agreeing to Felix's terms.

In conclusion, Atwood's work exemplifies a complex interweaving of meanings and narratives, reminiscent of the intricate tapestry of Elizabethan theatre, a genre that has continued to hold a unique fascination for audiences across different eras and spanning diverse geographical regions. The remaining sections of this paper will focus on an examination of Felix's pedagogical approach, which occupies the greater part of the novel's pages. It is evident that the early modern theatre had a dual objective of providing education and fostering critical engagement with diverse pedagogical approaches (Grantley, 2000, pp. 1–13). Furthermore, it is worthy of note that there is a resemblance between a traditional classroom setting and a theatrical performance (Brooks, 1994, p. 8). In both instances, the role of the leading figure is that of an actor and director, while the students assume the roles of either listeners or performers, engaging in a more interactive and collaborative form of learning. In Felix's case, this approach proves particularly effective, especially when the group of actors tasked with impersonating or writing lines for Caliban present a sequel to *The Tempest*, thereby giving the character a voice and a future. It is not surprising that Caliban, the one character that Prospero cannot redeem and who represents his personal failure in education, is the eponymous hero of Atwood's novel. The term "hag-seed" is a casual quotation from *The Tempest*, in which Prospero addresses Caliban as "hag-seed," which

means the seed of a witch. By boldly and proudly proclaiming it as a different name for themselves, the actors/inmates rename themselves and marginalised people in general as “hag-seeds”. The result of Felix’s journey is to facilitate the reintegration of the marginalised into society, a feat that Prospero failed to accomplish. By exchanging roles with the inmates and actors, Felix has become an empathetic and appreciative listener.

It is no wonder that in her acknowledgments Atwood mentions some of the prison literature she has read, notably Laura Bates’ memoir, *Shakespeare Saved my Life* (Atwood, 2016a, p. 292), whose description might be written for *Hag-Seed* itself: ‘This is a book about a prisoner in solitary confinement/ ...and how his life was changed by Shakespeare./ It is also about a Shakespeare professor ...and how her life was changed by the prisoner’ (Bates, 2013). As Neil Herold (2014, p. 5) asserts, Shakespeare’s plays evince processes of transformation, rebirth, and purgation from previous flaws, in alignment with the profound theological beliefs that were prevalent during his lifetime. Consequently, the plays have proven to be an efficacious means of habilitating¹ prisoners (2014, p. 5). Felix will at the very least provide instruction in techniques for self-control and anger management (Atwood, 2016a, p. 51), if not in how to respond to an unfair world.

2. Felix’s Method

Felix had lost his wife during childbirth, and then his daughter, Miranda, died when she was only a toddler. In Atwood’s tale, he begins to rehearse *The Tempest* to come to terms with his grief. He gives new life to Miranda on the stage, bestowing upon her the youth she could not attain in real life and training her as he would have liked to do.

This *Tempest* would be brilliant: the best thing he’d ever done . . . It was like the Taj Mahal, an ornate mausoleum raised in honour of a beloved shade, or a priceless jewelled casket containing ashes. But more than that, because inside the charmed bubble he was creating, his Miranda would live again (Atwood, 2016a, p. 17).

Meanwhile, he engages in self-education to cultivate an understanding of the value of self-regulation. This process involves an explicit decision to interpret and adapt the plot of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* in a manner that makes his role analogous to Prospero’s. In doing so, he modifies both the experience of the text and his own existence. Rather than metaphorically aligning himself with the play, he seeks to actualise the character of Prospero in his own life. This process involves the intertwining of his biographical persona with the character he will embody. The result is a living, intertextual body. Felix impersonates Prospero, but he is still Felix, and even more so at the end, when he purges himself of regret and bitterness, and releases the haunting ghost of his daughter. While the play is certainly a transcoding² of *The Tempest* in another time and place, the fact that Felix is himself, his chosen alter ego, and Prospero, all at once, adds to the novel’s intense intertextuality and underscores the profound self-discovery that he accomplishes. Felix engages in an

¹ Herold prefers the term “habilitation instead of ‘rehabilitation’ to avoid implying that inmates can be returned to a socially normative environment many of them were never able, due to poverty or family dysfunctionality, to inhabit in the first place” (2014, pp. 5–6). In *Hag-Seed*, only 8Handz will be granted an early parole and Felix is concerned with facilitating the man’s reintegration into society upon his release.

² Hutcheon’s definition of adaptation is applicable to *Hag-Seed*: “First, seen as a *formal entity or product*, an adaptation is an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work or works. This ‘transcoding’ can involve a shift of medium (a poem to a film) or genre (an epic to a novel), or a change of frame and therefore context: telling the same story from a different point of view, for instance, can create a manifestly different interpretation. Transposition can also mean a shift in ontology from the real to the fictional, from a historical account or biography to a fictionalized narrative or drama” (2006, pp. 7–8).

intrapersonal discourse with his disparate selves, passions, and desires. One may argue that through his role as director of *The Tempest* and performing as the character of Prospero, Felix engages in a process of confronting and negotiating his own identity. This process can be regarded as an immediate outcome of Felix's intention to modify the original text in a manner that reflects his personal circumstances. He will apply the same methodology to the prisoners at the Fletcher Correctional Center.

Hired as a performing arts teacher by Estelle, a passionate advocate for prison education, Felix decides to encourage the prisoners to immerse themselves in the script, as has been done in contemporary prisons around the world. On Monday, June 7, 2013, Felix starts his fourth season as the director of the Fletcher Correctional Players. His training begins with an impressive speech that is a metatextual note on Shakespeare's art; this speech does not reveal so much about Felix's plans, but it does set a goal for everyone, which is to discover Shakespeare's message for him or herself. We can call it a motivational speech. It skilfully renames the prisoners as players, erases their faults and accusations, and promises a new life of achievement.

"Good morning," he says. "Welcome to the Fletcher Correctional Players. I don't care why you're in here or what they say you've done: for this course the past is prologue, which means we begin counting time and accomplishments right here, right now.

"As of this moment, you are actors. You will all be acting in a play; everyone will have a function, as the old hands who've done it before will tell you. The Fletcher Correctional Players only do plays by Shakespeare, because that is the best and most complete way of learning theatre. Shakespeare has something for everyone, because that's who his audience was: everyone, from high to low and back again..." (Atwood, 2016a, p. 84).

The phrase "For this course, the past is prologue" alludes to a quotation from Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*. In Act 2, scene 1, the idea is used by Antonio to indicate how all that has happened before, in the past, has led Sebastian and himself to commit an act of murder in the present (l. 258).³ This phrase assumes new nuances in Felix's speech, suggesting that the past is finished, and a new life begins. Alternatively, if we consider that the prologue summarises events that will be performed in the play, it implies that the script of the actors' lives has already been written, and that they are bound to repeat the acts of a pre-text. Next, Felix/Duke sets the boundaries of his and the prisoners' art and artistic freedom. Mr. Duke, the director, will have the final say, but they will all work together as a team. It can be reasonably deduced that the intention is for the actors to be led in a repetition of *The Tempest* in accordance with the director's wishes. It comes as a surprise, then, that Felix uses a cooperative method when leading his actors.

"But we work as a team. Each man will have an essential part to perform, and if someone's having trouble it's the job of his teammates to help him out, because our play will be only as strong as the weakest link: if one of us fails, we all fail together. So if a guy on your team has trouble reading the words, you need to help him. And you need to help each other memorize the parts and understand what the words mean and how to deliver them with force. That's your mission. We must all rise to the highest level. The Fletcher Correctional Players have a reputation to live up to, and what we create together will honour that reputation..." (Atwood, 2016a, p. 85).

³ The Shakespeare edition consulted is *The Tempest* (2005, pp. 1221–1243) edited by John Jowett, Stanley Wells, William Montgomery, and Gary Taylor.

There is undoubtedly a key word in this passage around which the other concepts are grouped together. The word is “cooperation”, which sums up the maximum effort that the director and the characters are supposed to give to be creative and to respect the team’s reputation. Working together unlocks unknown potential and enhances everyone’s individual abilities.

Remarkably, the act of cooperation is divided by Felix into smaller collaborative goals that will provide the best results. These objectives are reading the text, analysing it, memorising it, and delivering lines with force. The reading is the necessary preliminary action, followed by the interpretation and the memorisation, then the recitation, all of which imply a different level of understanding. The text is made more manageable by dividing the actors into groups. The lines of the primary characters and those engaged in their dialogue are read by each group and subsequently memorised. In this manner, Felix achieves the objective of minimising the scope of the task at hand while simultaneously mirroring the approach to interpreting the script that would have been employed by an Elizabethan actor. This approach is explicitly articulated by Felix (Atwood, 2016a, p. 52), who takes the differing educational backgrounds of his actors into account.

By filming the performance, however, Felix will deprive the theatre of its transience. His creation will have a life of its own and can be reproduced as often as the audience wishes. This detail will have a profound impact on Felix’s adversaries, who have been abducted and confined to a cell. Here, under the influence of drugs, they have confessed to their previous criminal activities and homicidal intentions in pursuit of a more elevated position. Disclosing their statements and actions could irreparably harm their reputation (Atwood, 2016a, p. 237). Despite the absence of remorse, the prospect of their misdeeds being revealed prompts them to modify their conduct and reinstate Felix to his previous role.

To facilitate their integration into society, Felix must set specific tasks for each group, in addition to evaluating their written assignments. Nevertheless, the ability to gain insight into the complex nuances of a role through the medium of performance represents his primary artistic objective (Atwood, 2016a, pp. 53–54). The efficacy of Felix’s method is demonstrated by a notable increase in the literacy scores of the inmates (Atwood, 2016a, p. 54). This outcome can be quantified and represents a significant achievement. This is a result of an extended process of mediation between the participants and the textual elements of Shakespeare’s plays. Inmates consistently express disparate (and, in their estimation, more pragmatic or sagacious) responses to the challenging situations depicted in the plays with which they have engaged. Shakespeare provides an excellent opportunity for individuals, in this case the inmates, to test their abilities to survive in perplexing and adverse circumstances. At the same time, it fosters belief in the concept of fair compensation for good actions, thereby reinforcing civic virtues (Atwood, 2016a, p. 55).

As a final step, Felix introduces the more creative part of his project, which involves rewriting the play, and then the more inclusive part, with the sharing of the final product. Videos of the performance are to be viewed in the cells by inmates not involved in the play. The attendees will listen to the testimonies of their fellow participants with the same level of receptivity as if they were modern priests or teachers. It is possible that they may experience feelings of judgement or empathy; nevertheless, their involvement is an essential aspect of the training process. They too will undergo a transformation, joining their fellow actors in interpreting the reasons and passions of others. The process of education is inherently collective, involving the interaction and collaboration of multiple individuals.

“You’ll be doing some writing. You’ll be writing about aspects of the play, but you’ll also be rewriting those parts of the play you decide – we decide – could be made more understandable to a modern audience. We’ll be filming a video of our production; that

video gets screened for everyone in the – for everyone in Fletcher. Our video will be something to be proud of, as our previous productions have been.”

“Next, you’ll need to choose a stage name...” (Atwood, 2016a, p. 85).

3. Rewriting: Freeing Yourself from Your Fears, Pains and Preconceptions

Felix’s main concern is to adapt his performance to the needs and demands of a new audience, one that is confined and marginalised. In Lefevere’s words, he aims to create a refracted version of the Shakespearean play (Lefevere, 1984, pp. 217–237). By taking on new names, like great stars, the inmates assume new identities before embodying characters on stage. This fosters a sense of detachment from one’s own lived experience and enables the psychic mobility that is crucial when engaging with the Other, in this case via Shakespeare’s characters. Their stage names will also appear on the screen. The actors’ new identities will be reinforced by the inmates substituting the stage names for their first names, building on the correspondence between fictional and real characters. In Martin Buber’s words, they will be in dialogue with the new character (form), which will be an “I-you”, a relationship more than an entity (1958, pp. 12–13).⁴ At the very moment they produce a performance, they separate themselves from their artistic product and produce a new, discrete “form”. They appreciate these new creatures, the selves they have created: “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” (Atwood, 2016a, p. 58).

Felix has given them some basic instructions which he will write down on a board. But his actors are defiant. They do not want to work on a play that is like a fairy tale, with no crimes, no murders, far away from their own lives. The subjects in question demonstrate a tendency to eschew female characters or roles that are perceived as overly feminine. It is notable that Miranda and Ariel, two prominent examples of such roles, are not among those held in high regard. Felix’s strategy is to get them to “think widely” (Atwood, 2016a, p. 102), as he puts it, by helping them to recontextualise Ariel, for example, in a complete and diverse imaginary world that the prisoners can easily relate to.

“So, before sticking on a label, let’s list his qualities. What sort of a creature is he? First, he can be invisible. Second, he can fly. Third, he has superpowers, especially when it comes to thunder, wind, and fire. Fourth, he’s musical. But fifth, and most important.” He pauses again. “Fifth: he’s not human.” He gazes around the room. “What if he’s not even real?” says Red Coyote. “Like, if it’s Prospero talking to himself? Maybe he’s shaken hands with Mr. Peyote Button. Wasted out of his mind, or maybe he’s crazy?” “Maybe it’s, like, a dream he’s having,” says Shiv. “Maybe that boat sinks, the one they put him in. So the whole play happens right when he’s drowning.” One of the newbies: VaMoose. TimEEz: “I saw a movie like that once.” “Or he’s got an imaginary friend,” says PPod. “My kid had one of them.” “Nobody else sees him,” says Leggs. “They see him when he appears as the harpy,” says Bent Pencil. “They hear him,” says HotWire. “Well, yeah, okay,” says Red Coyote. “Though it could be that Prospero’s some kind of a ventriloquist.” “Let’s suppose that

⁴ Alexa Alice Joubin and Elizabeth Rivlin utilised the same pages from *I and Thou* by Buber to explain what appropriation is. They understood the relationship to be that which exists between the rewriter or reader and Shakespeare. “Second, Buber captures the dialectic in which appropriations engage, between passivity and action, and between responding to a persona called ‘Shakespeare’ and fixing that persona in a form that is no longer him but still entertains some representative relationship to him. Shakespeare seems to speak directly to the appropriator, and that speaking is integrated into the new work” (2014, p. 4).

Ariel is real in some way,” says Felix. He’s pleased: at least they’re talking. “Suppose you’d never heard of this play, and all you knew about this being called Ariel was what I told you about him. What kind of a creature have I just been describing?” Mutterings. “Like, a superhero,” says Leggs. “Fantastic Four. Superman kind of thing. Except Prospero’s got the kryptonite or whatever, so he’s got the control.” “Star Trek kind of thing,” says PPod. “He’s an alien, like, he’s had some kind of spaceship accident, he ended up on Earth. He’s trapped here. He wants to take off, go up to his home planet or whatever, like in E.T., remember that one? That could cover it, right?” (Atwood, 2016a, p. 103).

By transforming Ariel into something alien yet familiar, the prisoners can imagine the part and act it out. Otherness has always been invented by people as a way of coping with difference. To the Elizabethans, the supernatural was part of their lives, with good and evil spirits affecting their lives and causing good and bad events to happen. The macro sequences of these popular tales have been adapted for different ages because they are still meaningful to us today, and they help to soothe our fears. Aliens from otherworldly places have replaced ghosts and witches, but they are still the embodiment of good and evil at work on Earth⁵ while they desperately want to be free. “Before sticking on a label”, as Felix says (Atwood, 2016a, p. 102), you must deconstruct the character into its main characteristics. The result is the discovery of the permanence of types and functions. This task facilitates the detachment of prisoners from their own preconceptions, enabling them to recognise the limitations of their assumptions. By gaining insight into their own responses to the play, prisoners can also adapt the performance to align with their personal frame of reference.

Discussing the characters’ reactions to events is an important part of Felix’s training sessions. All groups take part in this debate, explaining their point of view, and justifying or disagreeing with the choices made by the characters. The prisoners come to define the main characters in contrasting ways and then to understand that there is no single answer or interpretation when dealing with Shakespeare’s texts. Such awareness gives rise to the undertaking of rewriting activities, which are conducted in accordance with a set of precise rules that prohibit alterations to the plot (Atwood, 2016a, p. 56). However, there will be no limits to the actors’ creativity when they start writing an afterlife for their characters.

Each session begins with key notes given by Felix to orientate the inmates/actors. He does not, however, interfere with the inmates’ creation of the afterlife, which he will listen to when the performance is over and he returns to celebrate the success of the production with his cast. The written reports given during this festive meeting try to give voice to the least vocal characters in the play: Ariel, Miranda, Antonio, Gonzalo and, of course, Caliban.

Each of the afterlife stories fills an empty space in the dramatic text, sealing the final interpretation of the characters for the performers. Ariel thus becomes a holographic projection, appearing and disappearing, but always helping others. The group has come to accept that their initial reaction to the ghost in the play was unfair, and that he may also have been misunderstood by Prospero, his master. In the post-show report, Antonio maintains his dark side or, as the inmates say, he sticks to the real world, where there is little room for remorse. Worried about his impending condemnation as a traitor, he and Sebastian suffocate Alonso on the ship returning to Italy, kill Ferdinand, stab Prospero, and rape Miranda, while Gonzalo, terrified by their appearance, suffers a fatal stroke. Finally, after raping Miranda in their wake but trying to save her for his sexual pleasure, Caliban meets the same death at their

⁵ “Bad behaviour and even stupid behaviour were punished and virtue was rewarded, more or less. With Shakespeare it was always more or less, as he took pains to point out” (Atwood, 2016a, p. 55).

hands. It is significant that Anne-Marie, the only professional actress among the Players and not an inmate, wants to give her account of Miranda. She completely reverses the usual portrait of this character: she is not weak, not innocent, but strong-willed. Team Gonzalo wants to test the goodness of this character and give him the chance to lead the Republic of the Kingdom that he has dreamed of.

4. Team Caliban

After his daughter's death, Felix considered staging a new production of *The Tempest* in order to reincarnate the character of Miranda. This entailed not only considering how to bring new life to each character, but also how to portray them in a way that reflected his personal experiences and observations. He envisioned Caliban as an incapacitated black or native character: "a scabby street person", as he put it. The character's traits that he wished to emphasise are his marginalisation (which is made evident by his three liabilities, namely his colouring, his homelessness, and his disability), as well as his inability to move freely on the stage.

In the context of the actual performance, when Felix requests that the actors select their desired group, most of them choose Team Caliban. This outcome is unsurprising, given the popularity of impersonating Caliban among the prisoners. This character is often associated with several traits, including a lack of mobility and segregation, which are reflected in their condition. A considerable number of actors expressed an interest in portraying the role of Caliban. However, the number of characters who could be considered his allies is comparatively low in *The Tempest*, as Leggs keenly observes (Atwood, 2016a, p. 263). Indeed, it could be argued that Caliban is effectively alone. Prospero, who has attempted to educate him, apparently abandons him. Trinculo and Stephano, who were previously thought to be his friends, have proved to be unreliable. Moreover, he is an orphaned child of a mother whom he must have held in high regard and whom he likely loved dearly. And he must have been equally loved by her.

However, as Felix had advised them not to dwell on the past, the inmates are not overly concerned with the details of Hag-Seed's past, but rather with his anticipated future after his imprisonment on the island, a detention that is characterised by mistreatment and abuse at the hands of Prospero and other characters. In accordance with some of the threads they have identified, the inmates add their sequel to *The Tempest*, focusing on Caliban's fate. Several potential endings are proposed, including scenarios in which he is left on the island or joins the characters sailing for Italy. However, it is evident that his status will not improve (it is observed that one cannot be a king without subjects); Antonio rapes Miranda and kills Prospero, but Caliban is unable to assist them because he has been trapped on the ship. In this second possible sequence, Caliban dies, having experienced the same sort of mistreatment he endured on the island. The prisoners are disinclined to embrace this tragic narrative and its foreboding outcome. All the characters had a second chance, so why should Caliban not have one too? (Atwood, 2016a, pp. 263–265)

5. A New Finale for *The Tempest*

The Tempest is centred on the character of Prospero, not Caliban. Yet Caliban can put his own experiences into words, and he tells us about the encounter with Prospero from his own perspective (Act 1, sc. 2, ll. 333–375). However, having failed to usurp Prospero's power, he disappears from the stage. In the final scene, he is defined by Prospero. Not even disputing Prospero's definition, he says he will seek mercy from his master (Act 5, sc. 1, ll. 298–301).

Losers do not write history books. Nor do they write plays. Here, however, the Hag-Seed team wants to give Caliban the chance to write his own future: a sequel to *The Tempest* that does not silence his voice.

The prisoners' first interpretation along these lines is a claim of paternity against Prospero. Caliban is his son, and perhaps he will become a page in Milan. A gifted musician, he will make his father proud. This interpretation is all about restoring Caliban's voice, and his way of expressing himself. In Act 1, Sc. 2, Caliban says that Prospero has taught him language, but then silences him harshly. Trinculo and Stephano mock him as he explains who he is and what his plans are to overthrow Prospero's rule over the island (Act 2, sc. 2) In *Hag-Seed*, however, in the chapter entitled "Our revels", Leggs, one of the actors of the Hag-Seed team, surprises Felix by telling him they are writing a musical, centred on Caliban:

"Yeah, about what happens after the play's over. Doing that report got us thinking: why shouldn't Caliban have a play to himself?"

"Go on," says Felix. "Okay, so, it begins at the part where Stephano and Trinculo put him in a cage and show him off for money. But in the musical, he gets out of the cage. That's this number we did – where he gets out, and he says he's not doing any more slave work or living in a cage." Boom boom boom, the Hag-Seeds start the beat. Leggs chants:

Freedom, high-day! High-day, freedom! Freedom, high-day, freedom!
Got outta my cage, now I'm in a rage –
No more dams I'll make for fish,
Nor fetch in firing at requiring,
Nor scrape trenchering, nor wash dish;
Ain't gonna any more lick your feet
Or walk behind you on the street,
Ain't gonna get on the back of the bus,
And you can give our land right back to us!
Ban-ban, Ca-Caliban,
Don't need no master, I am not your man!
So stuff it up your hole, gimme back what you stole,
Tellin' you it's late,
I'm fillin' up with rage,
I'm gettin' all set to go on a ram-page!
Ain't gonna work for less than minimum wage –
Live in a shack and piss in a pail,
You earn yourself money by puttin' me in jail!
You kick me in the head, you dump me in the snow,
Leave me there for dead,
'Cause I'm nothin' to you.
Ban, ban, Ca-Caliban. (Atwood, 2016a, pp. 270–271).

As an experimental director, Felix cannot help being fascinated. Caliban has found his voice. He has escaped from the play and no longer needs a master or a playwright. Felix was successful in the end, much more so than Prospero. The prisoners have joined him in the intertextual game to the point that they can imagine a different ending to Caliban's story. More importantly, Shakespeare's lines have created a new story in which Caliban is the main protagonist, fully in control of his destiny. There is no Prospero to hinder his progress towards freedom and self-determination (Atwood, 2016a, p. 272). In Shakespeare's play,

Caliban wants to be free but chooses bad allies; in this musical, he succeeds and, mixing new words with Shakespeare's lines, he claims his right to be free.

Moreover, Felix has not taught the actors his own language. He has allowed them to discover their own words and rhythms to tell their own story. Their lines, like Prospero's opening story to Miranda, are a doleful tale. But they are also an account of the real lives of the prisoners, of the conquest of America, of the cruelty of colonisation and its consequences. Marginalised and oppressed communities have been rescued from historical oblivion by their new ability to articulate their own histories in their own terms. They have discovered the power of their agency in taking control of their own lives. In fact, inmates are the main characters, at least in their musical.

6. Conclusion

For over four centuries, *The Tempest* has been the subject of numerous adaptations, each of which has sought to address perceived shortcomings or misguided aspects within the original text. As is the case with many of the most significant works of literature, the play has also generated a substantial corpus of intriguing critical discourse, which has selected a few excerpts from which to construct its own interpretation of Shakespeare's script. Among the numerous proposed readings, Atwood has undoubtedly selected one which highlights the educational purpose that sustains Prospero's actions, a purpose which cannot be restricted to mere revenge.

The character of Felix challenges the educational objectives set out by those in authority throughout the course of Atwood's novel. To gain the approval of the relevant authorities, he introduces tasks and evaluation procedures. Driven by a desire for vengeance, he formulates a strategy of his own. However, the educational value of theatre is evident in its capacity to effect positive changes in all the characters, including Felix's rivals. Despite reservations about the educational objectives underlying Felix's project (Atwood, 2016a, p. 205), Sal, a friend who betrayed Felix and is now the Minister of Justice, will be transformed by the fear of having lost his son. Tony will disclose the details of his criminal activities. Both characters will comply with Felix's instructions to reverse the consequences of their misdeeds, although Tony does so reluctantly and under duress. In response to Felix's prompting, Sal will provide ministerial approval of the artistic immersion he has experienced, considering its potential for educational benefit (Atwood, 2016a, p. 233).

Atwood's work can be seen as a metatextual interpretation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, while also celebrating the positive outcomes of the educational process. Inmates have gained insights into themselves and developed the requisite skills to navigate their future as autonomous beings with the capacity to shape their own destiny. In doing so, the author celebrates the potential of theatre, when situated within the context of a modern prison setting, to facilitate a mode of artistic expression that exceeds the liberties afforded to characters in Shakespearean plays. Felix, a bereaved father, has created a group of playwrights who, through their own theatrical performances, can heal their traumas and come back to life, just as he did. By allowing them to see their lives from a distance, he has empowered them.

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