

Shakespeare after the storm:

Indigo and *Hag-Seed* as modern adaptations of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*



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Introduction

A sea storm that changes everything, a magician with a plan of revenge, and a remote island as the setting for this all: this is *The Tempest* (1611) by William Shakespeare. When a piece of literature is so far-reaching and admired as this play, as well as being hundreds of years old, it will prompt many reactions. People with different perspectives and backgrounds find what can be filled in, expanded on, or modernised in regards to the existing text. *The Tempest* has thus inspired many interpretations, retellings, and adaptations. In recent years, two literary adaptations of the play have been published: Marina Warner's *Indigo, Or, Mapping the Waters* (1992) and Margaret Atwood's *Hag-seed: The Tempest Retold* (2016). In these adaptations, the reader learns more about certain aspects and characters that feature in the original play, through a modern lens. Specifically, *Indigo* allows us to get to know an entirely new yet recognisable Sycorax and *Hag-Seed*, in a similar manner, gives us a closer look into the life of Felix, who is a counterpart to *The Tempest's* Prospero.

This thesis argues that the two modern adaptations, *Indigo* and *Hag-Seed*, problematise and expand Shakespeare's *The Tempest* by providing different perspectives and filling in gaps that are not explored in the classic play. In close-reading the modern retellings as individual works as well as comparing and contrasting them to the original play, I explore these texts and the play through the lens of (post)colonial theory of Chantal Zabus, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, John Kunat, Kelsey Ridge, Thomas Cartelli, Lisa Propst, and Thomas Bonnici. I also regard these texts from the perspective of feminist theory of Lisa Propst, Thomas Bonnici, Marina Warner, Colleen Etman, Rebecca Weaver-Hightower, and Awfa Hussein Aldoory. These theories are applicable to modern adaptations of *The Tempest*, because, firstly, in recent years some of the characters have been analysed in terms of the coloniser and the colonised (Cartelli 85). Secondly, female characters in the play are primarily presented through male perspectives and thus are denied a voice and agency (Orgel 4).

Modern versions, therefore, are likely to take such critical readings in account. Additionally, I analyse the characters as they are transformed in different settings, written by Warner and Atwood, and explore the ways in which they function differently as they are represented in the three works. This is especially interesting in the case of Felix and Miranda in *Hag-Seed* as representations of Prospero and his daughter in *The Tempest*. In *Indigo*, the counterparts of Sycorax and Miranda are central to the story and rather different from the way they are portrayed in *The Tempest*. Through the use of secondary sources and literary theory, including adaptation theory (Etman, Hutcheon, Leitch, Stam et al.), I attempt to recognise the role of Atwood's and Warner's retellings. Regarding both the original text as well as the adaptations critically and examining what new insight the adaptations offer, according to modern adaptation theory (Cartmell and Whelehan 13), is the most productive method of literary analysis in this case. This enables us to recognise the ways in which the adaptations subvert *The Tempest*: specifically, through addressing gender stereotypes and racial stereotypes.

In the first chapter, I provide context to my topic by exploring adaptation theory, looking at the history behind adapting Shakespeare as well as *The Tempest*, and analyse the reasons why Shakespeare is still being adapted today. This is crucial when discussing *Indigo* and *Hag-Seed*, as I am striving to know more about why modern authors such as Atwood and Warner are retelling Shakespeare. On top of that, I analyse postcolonial and feminist interpretations of *The Tempest*, in order to find out what makes this play such compelling source material and to explore what prompts authors to fill in gaps with regards to discussing (post)colonial themes and adding female characters. This lays the groundwork for investigating my topic and thesis statement in the next few chapters.

In the second chapter, I examine *Indigo, or Mapping the Waters* by Marina Warner as a reworking of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Through focusing on themes of colonialism and gender, Warner is able to add to the original play by providing her own perspective and

allowing various characters from *The Tempest* more space to develop. To demonstrate the way she fills in gaps and adds context, I address the juxtaposition of seventeenth-century Liamuiga with twentieth-century London, as the first era shows us colonial history and the second recounts the results of this history. Warner speaks to (post)colonial issues as well as the theme of gender through making the story less one-sided, including many different perspectives, and humanising the colonised, allowing for empathy from the reader. She expands on *The Tempest* and modernises it through broadening the inner lives of the characters.

In the third chapter, I explore *Hag-Seed* by Margaret Atwood as an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Specifically, I focus on the themes of trauma and gender. Trauma is important in this adaptation because it informs who the main character is, Felix, and what his motivations are throughout the plot (McDaid 13). Through Prospero's counterpart, Atwood creates a highly effective, detailed, and sensitive character study which grants readers the opportunity to gain sympathy for the main character. The way gender is dealt with in *Hag-Seed* is quite complicated: while some consider her female characters well-written, when looking more closely they are plot devices, have no autonomy, and their lives revolve around Felix (Etman 58). This aligns with the negative way Atwood views feminist theory, even though her work over the years has been described as feminist (Newman, Oppenheim). *Hag-Seed* is able to fill in gaps with the main character and his trauma, providing a closer look into what Felix feels and what motivates him, but the novel fails to do this in regards to its female characters.

In the conclusion, I am able to compare all of three texts to one another, in particular *Indigo* and *Hag-Seed*. In doing so, I analyse where both texts stand in relation to Shakespeare's play and how they function as adaptations or reworkings. They are certainly very different novels, published more than twenty years apart, but they do address similar

issues. While both works address the portrayal of female characters, in *Hag-Seed* this takes the shape of several different versions of Miranda, none of which actually offer particularly new or thought-provoking elements to the story. In *Indigo*, the many different female characters that Warner has placed in the foreground are incredibly lively. Her portrayal of Sycorax is especially compelling since the audience does not truly get to know this character at all in *The Tempest*: we only see her through the lens of others. Placing the emphasis on trauma is shared by both adaptations, whether this concerns the personal trauma of Felix in *Hag-Seed* or the generational trauma that several characters in *Indigo* deal with. This is not necessarily addressed in *The Tempest* itself.

In the end, *Indigo* and *Hag-Seed* are effective, though in varying degrees, in commenting on the original play through expanding the characters, specifically Sycorax and Prospero, and using themes that have great relevance today, such as (post)colonialism, gender, and trauma. They do this through modern lenses, using the setting of a prison or the 20th century tourist industry on a Caribbean island . Through these various characters, themes, and settings, they enrich the world of *The Tempest* and fill in gaps that were previously unexplored.

Chapter 1: Reworking *The Tempest*: adaptation theory, postcolonialism, and feminism

Many musical pieces, paintings, and films over the past four hundred years have all taken inspiration from Shakespeare in one way or another. Literary adaptations are quite a modern phenomenon, and the initiative by The Hogarth Press, which *Hag-Seed* is part of, aims to publish literary novels based on Shakespearean plays. The Hogarth Press is by far not the first to produce Shakespeare adaptations, but it is quite unique in its scale and range of books by a number of greatly differing authors. One of these is Margaret Atwood, writer of *Hag-Seed*. Others include prominent authors such as Jo Nesbø, Gillian Flynn, and Jeanette Winterson. Adaptations thus far have covered *The Winter's Tale*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *The Taming of The Shrew*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Othello*, *Hamlet*, and, of course, *The Tempest*. Founded by Virginia and Leonard Woolf in 1917, their original mission was to discover and publish the best new writing of their day. Yet, what is it that the Hogarth Series aims to accomplish today? In a short promotional video about the Hogarth series, the following quote is used, originating from what is perhaps the most famous Shakespearean sonnet: "So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee". In these particular lines, taken from sonnet 13, it is quite evident that the spirit of the book series is rooted in keeping Shakespeare alive, and perhaps even more broadly, keeping the classics alive. The message is that as long as people are able to read they will keep reading Shakespeare. Not only will people forever be reading Shakespeare, it will also inspire and influence new writers. One text, originating from the seventeenth century, is able to give another text life, continuing the cycle.

When regarding more specifically *The Tempest*, it is clear that this play has offered a breath of inspiration to film makers, actors, musicians, painters, and authors. The play was quoted in the hit song 'Don't Pay the Ferryman' (1982) by Chris de Burgh, the poem 'Caliban upon Setebos' (1864) by Robert Browning deals with the character of Caliban, and William

Hogarth's 'Scene from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*' (c. 1735) is the first known painting featuring a scene from Shakespeare. Marina Warner published her retelling of the play, *Indigo*, in 1992, and *Hag-Seed* by Margaret Atwood is an adaptation published in 2016. Even though they are wildly different novels, published twenty-two years apart, both are concerned with the same source material and deal with it in comparable ways. This is certainly not new, as Shakespeare is one of the most retold and adapted authors of all time.¹ Yet how and why has *The Tempest*, as well as other Shakespearian plays, been adapted into the format of a novel? What is an adaptation capable of accomplishing beyond the original play, if anything?

The central aim of this chapter is to give an overview of adaptation theory, including its history and multiple relevant perspectives (which primarily used to be negative). Rather than disregarding adaptations on the basis of certain prejudices, the current philosophy tends more toward analysis and a comparison of the source material and adaptation. With the help of this groundwork, I will look more closely at why Shakespeare is being adapted today, reasons for which include emotional universality as well as the potential for 'gaps' being filled or new perspectives being explored. Eventually, I will focus on *The Tempest* specifically and its role as a subject and vehicle for adaptations. Primarily, two of the most frequently explored themes in regards to *The Tempest* are that of colonialism and feminism, due to its presence—or lack thereof—in the play. I examine the way these themes are presented in the original and consider why they are so interesting to adapt to a modern audience. Certain characters who in the play have previously been overlooked or suppressed, due to *The Tempest* being a product of its time, can be on more equal terms or even placed in the foreground. This is especially relevant when it comes to humanising indigenous characters or adding more female voices to the story. Rewriting *The Tempest* in such a way is appealing

¹ According to IMDb, William Shakespeare has 831 'writer' credits in his name. This takes into account films, TV series, and video games, but does not include books or music. However, Shakespeare far outranks any other author on the website.

to modern audiences because it places value in representation, diversity, and allows readers to gain empathy as well as an understanding of people who are different to them.

1.1 Adaptation theory

According to adaptation theorist Linda Hutcheon, “an adaptation is a derivation that is not derivative—a work that is second without being secondary. It is its own palimpsestic thing” (9). This is a very useful definition, because it allows an adaptation to be seen in two different ways at the same time: a work that stands on its own as well as a derivation. For the purposes of my own topic, however, I will be primarily regarding the texts *Hag-Seed* and *Indigo* in their relation to *The Tempest*. Despite this, it should be noted that the modern texts can stand perfectly well on their own; the original text is certainly not needed to understand these stories or their characters.

It is important, for the benefit of this chapter and the following chapters, to determine how adaptation theory defines adaptations. This is especially relevant in finding out how both *Hag-Seed* and *Indigo* function as literary adaptations of a play such as *The Tempest*. The opinion held by Hutcheon, however, is not one that has always been shared by others. The field of adaptation theory is not one that has been particularly homogenous: traditionally, especially in the early twentieth century, adaptations were criticised and often seen as lesser than its original text. The common idea was that the source, usually a book, was almost deemed untouchable, and the adaptation, usually a film, was considered to be a mere bastardisation of its source. There were several factors that contributed to this negative view: it was primarily related to distrust of cinema, but may also in part be attributed to class prejudice. Making a literary classic into a film would be seen as degradation, an affront to the source text, especially by the elite. Thus the act of adapting texts was considered to be mostly a sign of moral decline (Stam 5-7). This more traditional view of adaptation, which only considers the reworking of the literary to the cinematic has a strong focus on fidelity and

values the source material above all. Copying a book directly is often not possible in the case of a film adaptation, since it is limited by its running time, where a book has much more freedom. The original text was seen as almost holy, something that could not possibly be altered; the adaptation was viewed as weak and derivative (Leitch 127).² I think it is unproductive, however, to consider any text as ‘holy’, because in doing this it puts an end to any dialogue or analysis. If it has already been decided that a text is perfect, there is no need for discussion.

Perhaps it is not entirely fair, however, to apply this view when discussing book-to-book adaptations, because it is quite different from book-to-film adaptations. The book-to-book adaptations that currently exist, such as *Indigo* and *Hag-Seed*, are a modern invention and did not exist in this way in the early twentieth century. This makes it difficult to compare the ways in which the public regarded adaptations. Still, I would assume that the majority of the twentieth-century audience or readership would have regarded literary adaptations similar to the way they saw film adaptations: the source material mattered most and any adaptation would have likely been considered ‘dumbed down’.

Current trends in adaptation theory tend to disagree with that, as can be seen from Hutcheon’s opinion on the matter. In the above quote, Hutcheon also mentions the term ‘derivative’, but in a very different way. While she does believe that an adaptation is a derivation, this does not mean that it is necessarily unoriginal or uninspired, and certainly does not subtract from its value. A work of adaptation, according to Hutcheon, is able to interact with its source text, but still has individual worth. By using the phrase ‘palimpsestic’, she is implying that the second text is still deserving of its own place in the canon of texts, not only existing to serve the previous text. As is noted by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda

²Interestingly, Virginia Woolf, one of the co-founders of the original Hogarth Press, was one of the writers who staunchly opposed the creation of adaptations: “As early as 1926, Virginia Woolf, commenting on the fledgling art of cinema, deplored the simplification of the literary work that inevitably occurred in its transposition to the new visual medium and called film a “parasite” and literature its “prey” and “victim” “ (Hutcheon 3)

Whelehan (13), the trend in adaptation theory is pointing more and more towards an analysis of what an adaptation is able to offer in terms of new insight or perspective, rather than highlight how it is lacking, how it subtracts from the original, or how an adaptation will never be able to measure up to its source text. This modern day approach in adaptation theory is also the reason I have chosen to discuss *Hag-Seed* and *Indigo* in this particular manner which aims to uncover what adaptations can add or fill in, rather than subtract. It is much more interesting to analyse what these modern novels are able to offer us that may not have previously existed in the same way in *The Tempest*, rather than dismissing it in the first place, simply for being what is referred to as a 'derivative' work.

1.2 Why adapt Shakespeare?

It is perhaps surprising, however, as Colleen Etman notes, that the way in which Shakespeare's texts are being reinvented in this case is quite literary. Since Shakespeare's plays were not meant to be read, it has over the years been much more suited to an on stage performance or even film. Etman claims that it was not until recently that his texts have been directly adapted into a book (16). This seems for the most part accurate, though some fictional works may have taken inspiration from his plays in more subtle, indirect ways. One of these books is *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, which utilises a quote from *The Tempest* as its title and features some more obscure parallels as well.

So why is it that Shakespeare's plays are still being adapted today, more than 400 years after his death? And specifically, why are these plays being adapted into novels? This may be in part due to a reason which is exemplified particularly well by Leo Tolstoy. The Russian novelist in fact criticised Shakespeare for not explaining everything in his plays, which meant that the story's meanings and intentions were left ambiguous, to be freely interpreted by anyone. Tolstoy felt, as a novelist himself, that Shakespeare was particularly lacking in explaining his character's motivations: they were non-existent (Tolstoy 15, 21, 29,

49). While Tolstoy may have seen this as a negative, in the context of adapting stories in novel form, it is for the most part simply viewed as an opportunity for writers apply their own creativity on these classics.

Perhaps one of the strengths of the play as a ‘playground’ for novelists is that it leaves so much space. The only available information lies in dialogue, stage directions, and perhaps in some cases what can be read between lines. Everything else may be interpreted in whichever way: barring monologues or soliloquies, there is a lack of space for diving deep into the internal lives of characters in plays, let alone the psychological analysis which Tolstoy may have desired. Besides this, stage direction is often lacking at crucial points in *The Tempest*, for example when regarding Antonio in the last act of the play. Prospero forgives him (5.1.130-2), yet there is no indication of any reaction on Antonio’s part, neither through dialogue or stage direction. This leaves much of the interactions as well as Antonio’s feelings to be interpreted. Gaps such as these are part of the reason a literary adaptation, specifically a novel, is particularly suited to retelling Shakespeare. The format of a novel is largely divergent from a play and therefore the author is forced to approach and write the adaptation in a very creative, innovative manner. A novel is able to be more introspective and show elements of characters and their inner lives that perhaps a play on its own is unable to do. Thus it is able to provide a new dimension.

Another contributing factor to the appeal of adapting Shakespearian plays is the way Shakespeare approaches emotion and humanity. This is supported by what Cynthia Lewis refers to as Shakespeare inhabiting the role of “the poet of human nature” (qtd. in McRobbie). Certain emotions and experiences that readers find in Shakespeare’s texts are particularly recognisable, for example feelings as intense as grief or hatred. According to Lewis, the way he writes about his characters’ experiences, while being very specific to those characters, speak to readers. At some point or another, people are able to relate his writing to their own

lives. This universality is capable of transcending time, even in the case of an extensive period of hundreds of years. I feel that this theory is especially applicable when it comes to quotations that are taken out of context to apply to various situations entirely removed from their original purpose. For example, the phrase “Hell is empty, / And all the devils are here” (1.2.214-5) in *The Tempest*, is utilised by Ariel to describe the horrors that Ferdinand and the other men on the ship experienced as a result of the storm. The phrase is now used to express displeasure or misery, usually in an exaggerated or ironic manner. It is also the name of an album by British extreme metal band Anaal Nathrakh as well as one of several popularised Shakespearian quotes used on HBO television series *Westworld*. In both these cases, the phrase is meant to sound threatening or sinister, but the real meaning has been diluted. Modern audiences do relate to Shakespeare’s writing, but the focus is more on popular fragments than the way the language relates to the characters or the story as a whole.

A similar theory focusing on emotion and relatability is also described by Adam Gopnik, who states: “If Shakespeare is our contemporary, it is not because he shares our attitudes but because he shares our agonies” (Gopnik). The way readers are still able to connect to his plays is through the intensely human (and primarily negative) emotions, which remain relatable somehow. The difference in attitudes Gopnik is referring to is the great cultural divide that lies between Shakespeare’s time and ours. He claims that, while Shakespeare’s contemporaries valued fate, order, and forgiveness, our society currently particularly values history, justice, and compassion, which are rather different priorities. These deeply ingrained differences between the time periods is part of what makes texts from the seventeenth and twenty-first century so different. It is also part of what may motivate novelists to modernise these stories. Gopnik claims that this act of modernising and adapting is done primarily through adding context, a sense of justice, and more compassion towards fictional characters while writing. Where our compassion becomes greater, however, our

vindictiveness also increases. Where Shakespeare is forgiving towards his most evil, murderous heroes, our modern society is less likely to forgive. In the case of *The Tempest*, Prospero certainly has his faults, but the ending gives him the opportunity to be forgiven, as is discussed in chapter three of my thesis. About our current time period, Gopnik states: “By contrast, we feel everyone’s pain, forgive no one’s trespasses”. In his argument, he uses the example of plagiarism, which can end careers, and sexual predators who are beyond redemption. Continuing this line of thought, he argues that current authors are less forgiving towards their characters, which seems like a big leap to take. According to this theory, these writers are quite literally applying our current values to Shakespeare’s stories. When testing this in the case of *Hag-Seed* and *Indigo*, however, it is partly accurate: while more compassion and context is added in both cases, it remains difficult to pinpoint the meaning of justice in either novels. In the case of *Hag-Seed*, the perspective mainly grants compassion and context for Felix’s character, since the reader views the world from his perspective. The justice could be considered the revenge for the way he has been wronged in the past, and the lack of forgiveness is to be found in regards to his antagonists. However, this is only the case if one can overlook—or forgive—Felix’s own mishaps. Therefore forgiveness does play a large role in the way the main character has been written in *Hag-Seed*. In the case of *Indigo*, compassion does play a large role, as Warner aims to expand the way that Shakespeare’s characters are understood. She invites the reader to empathise with characters that were not in the foreground or had little agency in the original play. In *Indigo*, Sycorax is granted her own story and one can see her not through the lens of Prospero, but as a fully formed character with her own thoughts and feelings.

1.3 Postcolonial interpretations of *The Tempest*

When one wishes to adapt *The Tempest*, there are two important issues a writer needs to grapple with: (post)colonialism and the portrayal of women. *The Tempest* has been much

discussed through the lens of postcolonial theory (Cartelli, Dolan, Zabus). Over the years, the play has been interpreted and adapted into many forms, and postcolonial theory provides a perspective to the way this story has been told. This aspect, however, is a controversial matter among literary scholars: some think *The Tempest* does not lend itself particularly well to be solely interpreted as a canvas for postcolonial criticism (Valdivieso), others do (Dolan, Cartelli), and there are also those who believe that there are ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ postcolonial interpretations of the text. One critic who aligns herself primarily with the latter statement is Chantal Zabus, who thinks the reinterpretation of the literature of colonisation, and specifically *The Tempest*, is at its worst a form of ‘parasitism’. Yet she also believes it can be incredibly effective if applied in the right way, especially when a colonial text, in her words, such as *The Tempest* is deconstructed critically (Zabus, “A Calibanic Tempest” 49).

Viewing *The Tempest* through a postcolonial lens does provide aid in understanding Caliban’s character. Caliban is frequently interpreted, as Zabus states, in the following way: he is seen as a “readily recognisable symbol for the postcolonial subject and the inevitable “Other”” (103). Where Caliban is portrayed as the colonised, Prospero is painted as coloniser. Yet according Kelsey Ridge, Caliban himself plays a part in colonialism, as he was not originally born on the island. Therefore the true victim of colonisation, Ridge argues, is Ariel and his fellow spirits (232). While this is an interesting approach, it negates the dynamic between Prospero and Caliban, which rather significantly is based on a power imbalance between the two, an encroachment of Prospero on Caliban’s territory, and Prospero taking on the role of teacher. As Caliban exclaims: “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!” (1.2.362-64). From the start of the play, Prospero views Caliban very negatively, which is not unjustified after the reader finds out about the rape attempt on Miranda. Yet the way Prospero treats him is rather extreme and he uses the incident to de-humanise Caliban entirely. He refers to him as his

slave, and the way the audience is introduced to Caliban is through the following description by Prospero: “A freckled whelp, hag-born—not honoured with / A human shape” (1.2.283-4). He almost views Caliban as not quite human and therefore he attempts to educate and civilise him in a manner he deems wholly correct and perhaps even generous. To Caliban, however, Prospero merely represents oppression and abuse of power.

Some scholars dismiss the postcolonial reading of *The Tempest* altogether. Sofia Muñoz Valdivieso even goes so far as to claim that a postcolonial interpretation of the play undermines its oppressed main female character, Miranda. Yet, unlike Valdivieso seems to consider, postcolonial and feminist theory in regards to this play are quite difficult to separate. Intersectional feminism places great value in investigating different forms of oppression and recognises that, for example, issues such as racism and sexism are entirely interwoven (Cooper 386). This becomes especially relevant when discussing a character such as Shakespeare’s as well as Warner’s Sycorax, who is an islander as well as an important female character in *Indigo*. The intricacies of *The Tempest* and its characters thus best come to light in an intersectional viewing of the play. This is especially relevant when considering the attempted rape that takes place, where Prospero is assigned the role of protective father, Caliban that of the savage rapist, and Miranda that of the victim. Much of Prospero’s hatred and disgust for Caliban seems to hinge on this event, as he states:

Thou most lying slave,
Whom stripes may move, not kindness, I have used thee—
Filth as thou art—with human care, and lodged thee
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to violate
The honour of my child. (1.2.344-8)

John Kunat analyses this particular scene in detail, on the one hand describing the scene as a “colonial fantasy”, purely existing for the purpose of vilifying Caliban, a victim, which is supposed to justify enslaving the character (311). It is even suggested that Miranda is complicit in this plan. In this scenario, Miranda would thus be cast primarily as sexual pawn

used by Prospero in order to defame Caliban, who is deemed falsely accused. On the other hand, Kunat states that this perspective is lacking, since “reading the rape in strictly colonialist terms risks negating the violence perpetuated against women to which Miranda’s words give voice” (311). On top of this, Caliban openly admits to attempting to rape Miranda: “Thou didst prevent me—I had peopled else / This isle with Calibans” (1.2.348-9). His behaviour and disrespect towards her makes it difficult to believe that Miranda would be part of the aforementioned plan. Besides that, there is no real indication to be found in the text which suggests that she was. The complex nature related to this crucial scene, however, lends itself particularly well to being interpreted in a modern way, whether through the lens of postcolonialism, feminism, or both.

The topic of feminist interpretation will be further explored in the following section.

1.4 Feminist interpretations of *The Tempest*

Gender issues play a significant role in *The Tempest*, as they are rather problematic especially from a modern perspective. This feminist way of regarding a text, much like the postcolonial perspective, is a recent, twentieth-century development. When considering gender in regards to *The Tempest*, the issue that is immediately recognisable is the lack of female characters. The only truly present woman in the play is Miranda, and while others such as Sycorax and Claribel are mentioned, they do not appear on stage and are only mentioned in passing. Not only that, the stories of the latter two characters are told wholly through male perspectives: all the knowledge the reader has about Sycorax is primarily told through Prospero, who does not seem to have a particularly positive view of her. In a conversation with Ariel, he describes her as “This damned witch Sycorax” (1.2.264). Prospero also refers to her as a hag and reassures the audience that his power is much stronger than hers ever was (1.2.291-3). Aside from Prospero being our only source, the description given of her is quite meagre and short. The most descriptive characteristic the reader knows about her is that she is

“blue-eyed” (1.2.269), a reference to her being pregnant with Caliban in the past. The few lines Sycorax is mentioned are not enough to form a two-dimensional character, according to Marina Warner (“The Foul Witch’ 97). This is certainly true, especially because those lines are not even from Sycorax herself. Miranda, on the other hand, due to the fact that she is repeatedly utilised by her father for his profit, is much more central to the plot of *The Tempest*. The way she is juxtaposed with Sycorax is quite interesting: where Sycorax is evil and promiscuous, Miranda is virginal and innocent. This dichotomy of two extremes contributes to the portrayal of female characters as being one-sided, as well as equating sex with deviance in the case of women. Outside of this connection with Sycorax, Miranda remains her father’s pawn throughout the play (Etman 51). While some critics argue that Miranda herself holds the reins in the relationship she has with Ferdinand, and that her decision to marry him is a sign of her supposed agency (Pierce 51), the reader knows who is truly behind the marriage: Prospero. Her virginity, her honour, and her hand in marriage all serve as a commodity for Prospero to utilise when it is convenient. Prospero quite literally speaks about her to Ferdinand as if she is an object: “Then as my gift, and thine own acquisition / Worthily purchased, take my daughter” (4.1.13-14). Feminist adaptations, one of which being *Indigo*, have reinterpreted Miranda as being a more independent character and attaining a sense of agency.

Conclusion

Shakespeare’s works, and specifically *The Tempest*, have been adapted in different forms over the past four-hundred years. This is in part due to the fact that Shakespearian plays generally leave ample room for interpretation. When adapting a play into a novel, the story can transform into something entirely different and original, with a refreshing perspective. Another reason we are still adapting Shakespeare is because of his humanity and because we share ‘our agonies’ despite cultural differences.

When analysing adaptations, it is important to view the text both as derivation and as its own work. This is because it allows us to compare the adaptation to the original text, to analyse differences and similarities, but also acknowledge the thought and perspective of the author who has adapted the original play. In the end, all works of fiction are influenced or inspired by texts that came before, regardless of whether they are adaptations or not.

The two most important themes that are addressed when adapting *The Tempest* are in relation to (post)colonialism and the portrayal of female characters. The play has been extensively analysed from the perspective of postcolonial theory and gender studies, and they are also inseparable from the works of *Indigo* and *Hag-Seed*. Both works attempt to deal with the portrayal of female characters, in very different ways, and *Indigo* also places a strong emphasis on addressing the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. This will be discussed further in the following chapters.

Chapter 2: *Indigo, Or Mapping the Waters* by Marina Warner

Marina Warner's *Indigo* is far from a straightforward adaptation of *The Tempest*. Rather it takes characters, themes, and elements from the original play which are then used to create a wholly new novel. Instead of an adaptation, *Indigo* is much more often referred to as a retelling or a reworking (Weaver-Hightower 89, Bonnici 1, Ghosh 86, Williams-Wanquet 273). While an adaptation employs plot, setting, characters, and themes, that are directly recognisable from the original work, a retelling or reworking may choose to only utilise part(s) of the original and it is thus further removed from the source text. In this novel, Warner has primarily chosen to focus on the theme of postcolonialism and the presence of female characters. The first is a reaction to the way *The Tempest* has been much discussed: in a colonial context (Zabus, Fuchs, Pesta). The two different centuries that are portrayed in *Indigo* aim to emphasise and enhance the postcolonial themes. The focus on gender, secondly, is in part due to the fact that there is a strong lack of (present) well-rounded female characters with agency in *The Tempest*. Warner's novel is not only a commentary on the play, it is also a dialogue with *The Tempest*, as she brings a different life to these familiar characters. Thus, she is able to fill in gaps that exist in the play, adding to these gaps a commentary and perspective that helps to enrich the original text.

Indigo, however, was not only influenced by *The Tempest*. Warner's own family history has had a significant effect on the novel, even being the reason for her writing the story. One of her forefathers, Sir Thomas Warner, was very much involved in establishing St. Kitts, part of the Caribbean, and colonising several Caribbean islands as a governor in 1623.³ When discovering this history, Marina Warner was hesitant to write a book about the Caribbean, since, as she states herself, "my roots are tainted" (Raymond). Eventually she decided to address what she describes as exploitation and plunder in the form of a novel

³ Coincidentally, this also happens to be the year of the publication of Shakespeare's First Folio of *The Tempest*, which played a role in Warner's decision to write *Indigo*.

(Raymond). She therefore describes her book as “a reckoning with my white planter background” (Rivington). Her intention, with this reckoning, is not to make excuses or ask for forgiveness, instead she stresses the importance of confronting a history such as this one, especially for people she describes as victors (Raymond). While the island in *Indigo* is not St. Kitts, and instead named *Enfant-Beate*, the setting is incredibly similar to that of a Caribbean island. Taken from real life is also Warner’s ancestor: the equivalent of seventeenth-century explorer and coloniser of Sir Thomas Warner becomes the character Kit Everard. Warner emphasises that she has purposely portrayed the Caribbean before the British arrived as “a calm and orderly place” and Britain as “a place of strange rituals and curious superstitions” (Raymond). Thereby, she attempts to subvert colonial notions that claim non-Western countries must be made to be ‘civilised’. In the end, as Richard Todd describes, Warner “reinscribes into a total discourse those voices, often but not exclusively those of women, that have been excluded by patriarchal and colonial tradition, canon-formation and interpretation” (104).

The following sections will focus on the ways Warner addresses and expands on colonial and gender-related issues through her retelling of *The Tempest*. Since these are the two topics most prominently focused on in her novel, this chapter has a two-part structure: one exploring Warner’s use of the theme of postcolonialism and the other which analyses the way gender is addressed in *Indigo*. Warner uses the dichotomy between the seventeenth-century island and the twentieth-century London to show a colonial timeline, showing a clear similarity, but also utilising language and structure to emphasise the difference between the two time periods. Through giving a voice to oppressed and indigenous perspectives, Warner is able to alter the way one views certain characters from *The Tempest*. The primary way Warner’s female characters differ from Shakespeare’s is that they are present. On top of this, they are at the very centre of *Indigo*. Sycorax, who only exists in the background in *The*

Tempest, is a main character and perhaps the most important one due to her agency and impact over the story. Miranda, whose life in the original play is primarily controlled by her father, is able to rebel and gain independence during her twentieth-century life. Ariel, a spirit and servant to Prospero in *The Tempest*, is a female character in *Indigo* and plays a role in subverting colonial tropes.

COLONIALISM

2.1 The seventeenth century versus the twentieth century

The structure of *Indigo* is a notable aspect since it divides the novel into two parts: seventeenth-century Liamuiga and twentieth-century London. The sections are related as they feature members of the same family tree, albeit with hundreds of years in between. Pre-colonised, seventeenth-century life on the island is described as being harmonious and calm, whereas London is much more chaotic and strange. Warner herself states: “I’ve tried to portray Britain as a place of strange rituals and curious superstitions, and the island before the British arrived—as a calm and orderly place in which a practical life continues. Which is then violently disrupted and broken open” (Raymond). Sycorax describes her work of making indigo, listening to the sea, and taking afternoon naps in the hammock by her house (91). While she has been shunned by the other villagers, she is able to find her own peace together with the two children she decides to take in and care for. It is only after Liamuiga is taken over by the colonisers that the atmosphere changes for the worse: “There was nothing on the island that Sycorax feared; but incomers were expected from the sea” (91-2) is an ominous foreboding that points to the coming change. The clear distinction between the two sections encourages the reader to recognise parallels and contrast between the time periods. It also draws a direct line between colonialism and the effects or consequences of colonialism, as well as the ways individual characters deal with these consequences. An example of this is the

way the island is exploited over time: in the seventeenth century, this is through plantations, by the twentieth century, hotels have been built to profit from the tourist industry. One can see that this is simply a continuation of the colonial business that has existed for hundreds of years. *The Tempest* has a much more linear timeline and does not deal with different time periods. However, there is a contrast between two worlds that is very present: the world of the court and the world of the island that they currently inhabit. The difference between these two environments is so large that court rules do not apply: “Hence! What cares these / roarers for the name of king? To cabin! Silence! / Trouble us not” (1.1.16-18). The boatswain implies here that the title of king has no meaning in the natural world.

The dichotomy between the two periods in *Indigo* is further emphasised through the use of language. Where the writing in the modern period consists out of short sentences and simple words, the phrasing with regards to the earlier century is much more complex and ornate. For example, even when emotions run high, Dulé, in the seventeenth century, speaks to his adoptive mother in a formal manner: “Curse them, Mother. Use your arts, change their condition with your skills; alter their shape, as only you know how. So that they learn to fear us and do not stay. They use our water and eat our substance, they’re not welcome” (*Indigo* 102). Characters such as Miranda and Xanthippe, who live in the twentieth century, however, often use casual slang and sentences that are not always entirely correct (e.g. 234, 280, 272). Lisa Propst claims that the marginalised characters of Warner are assigned the most stylised manner of speech for a reason. She explains that this would “call attention to the necessary role of the author in creating characters and the lack of historical documents from the indigenous people of St. Kitts” and that “the novels present the muted subjects of history as author figures” (Propst 340). This means that Warner plays a role in enabling marginalised voices to be heard through the use of fiction. On top of this, she gives her characters a platform to act as mouthpiece for those voices who were silenced many years ago, and they

are able to be on the same level as an author figure in part because of the language they use.

Shakespeare also uses language in a somewhat similar manner, specifically when Caliban ruminates on the nature surrounding him:

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)

This speech is particularly revelatory, because it shows the reader how connected Caliban is to his home, the island. It also allows the character to rise above the ways he has been labelled by other characters: monster, slave, hag-born. In this scene, he is more than merely a usurper who has decided to overthrow Prospero: he is believable, sincere, and incredibly eloquent. Much like in *Indigo*, the island is where this kind of ornate language materialises. In this case it is even incited by the island itself, as Caliban contemplates its overwhelming beauty.

Another parallel between the two time periods in *Indigo* are the characters of Sycorax and Serafine, whom Bonnici describes as two halves of the same coin. In Bonnici's theory, they are placed opposite from one another, Sycorax "within the colonialist project" and Serafine "at the front of community building" (2). He also refers to Serafine as "Sycorax rediviva" or Sycorax reborn, and analyses both characters from the perspective that they are both incarnations of the character Sycorax in *The Tempest*. While Serafine is a less obvious character based on Shakespeare's Sycorax, since she lives in twentieth-century London, her roots are in the Caribbean. She is wise, knows many folklore stories, and there are several parallels between her and Warner's Sycorax. Neither are European, both live in some sort of exile or seclusion, and both are in a position where they are able to pass on folk tales to children (Bonnici 7). In the case of Sycorax, the children are Dulé and Ariel, and Serafine

tells her stories to Miranda and Xanthippe. The character of Sycorax is explored further in section 2.3.

2.2 Postcolonialism and empathy

Warner reacts to *The Tempest* with her novel in order to address colonial issues and place the characters in a more postcolonial context. This is apparent in the text within different aspects: altering a previously one-sided perspective from a coloniser to include many perspectives, and humanising the colonised which allows for the reader to empathise as well as understand. These elements all culminate in giving the indigenous and colonised a voice.

As Rebecca Weaver-Hightower argues, Warner manipulates the perspectives through showing Kit Everard write letters to his family about his stay on the island. He talks about the success of the colony to his fiancée, describing how peaceful the island is and how the inhabitants are in dire need of reform. He also boasts about his own grandeurs. As the reader, one can easily see how the reality differs from the one he prefers to recount to his fiancée. He writes to her: “The people here are glad to be of service to us and treat us with courtesy in which not a little deference is admixed” (152). But only a chapter before this one, he prays to “save me from this place” and reflects that “he had truly been forsaken today (...) he had never before done so much violence to anyone” (150). Yet these kinds of letters are generally studied as official accounts, as Weaver-Hightower reminds us, which contemporary scholars and historians use to reconstruct events from the past (96). Once again, Warner is commenting on the suppression of certain voices through the use of these characters, and one should remember that the victor is always the one who writes history. The narratives that exist, thus, will need to be rethought and re-invented. Warner does this with her characters in *Indigo*: she gives us the perspectives of characters such as Dulé, Sycorax, and Ariel. Such perspectives are not present in *The Tempest*, since there are no monologues or soliloquies from the characters of Caliban or Ariel.

On top of this, some passages, such as the following, exist to draw emotion and sympathy from the reader as it shows the brutality of how people are treated:

The slaves pressing their tintacks into the tree whisper:

- their love of a man, their love of a woman
- their love of a child
- their hopes of reprieve from punishment
- their thanks for surviving punishment
- their fear of being burned alive on a barbecue like the young slave who ran away last week and was caught and tried and sentenced to death by this method
- their terror of having a foot chopped off for stealing (some of them have been stealing)

(Warner 211)

As becomes starkly clear from this passage, the slaves, praying to Sycorax many years after her death, are horribly abused. The people who are enslaved are dealt different kinds of punishment on a regular basis, including being burned alive and having their limbs chopped off. On top of this, they beg that their children do not have to endure the same torture that they have endured. This undeniable horror is able to bring out empathy from the reader and thus forces the reader to attempt to relate. While the language style in the seventeenth-century sections of the book is usually very verbose, the words used here are completely bare, because there is no possibility to hide the pain within flowery phrases.

There is also a difficulty that comes along with attempting to represent a group that has not previously been given a voice, simply because the records do not exist. Through her writing, Warner uses her fiction as a substitute for the facts that we do not have. Propst argues that there is a sense of otherness that increases when attempting to tell stories about those who have never had a voice. It is known one cannot trust the existing documents, but no one knows what genuinely happened. Therefore the effort is “an abnegation of authority, the acknowledgment of a lack of control over the stories the novels seek to commemorate” (Propst 331). As a result, Warner is attempting to establish some sort of control and meaningful narrative through *The Tempest*'s characters.

GENDER

2.3 Sycorax

Sycorax in *The Tempest*, according to Prospero, is the embodiment of evil. The reader does not know if this is true: she is incomplete as a character because she is only described through another character's eyes. Warner's Sycorax is written very differently. Much like Prospero calls her a 'witch' and a 'hag' in *The Tempest*, the villagers in *Indigo* also call Sycorax names, but the reader knows in reality that this Sycorax is wise, practical, and skilled with medicine (Raymond). One of Warner's aims in the novel, as Warner explains in an interview, is to "demythologise Sycorax and the people of her island" (Raymond). According to Bonnici, Shakespeare enhances the difference between the European and the native by othering Sycorax entirely. Examples of this appear throughout the play, one of which being the dismissive and negative terms Prospero uses to describe her, another being the emphasis both Prospero and Caliban place on her ugliness, as mentioned in a previous section. While both Prospero and Sycorax are portrayed as having some kind of magic, this power reflects very differently on each character: Prospero has 'white magic' and Sycorax has 'black magic', turning the latter very clearly into a villain (Bonnici 3).

Since *The Tempest's* Sycorax only features in the text as a reference and is therefore a very minor and silenced character, it is difficult to compare Warner's version to Shakespeare's. The gaps within her narrative also mean that Warner was able to form Sycorax through only a few sentences from *The Tempest*. She changes a mysterious myth into an influential character in *Indigo*.

Warner handles the character of Sycorax in a way where she is humanised as well as given the voice she does not possess in *The Tempest*. One of the ways in which she is shown to be human by Warner is through her interaction with other characters. For example, she saves Dulé, the equivalent of *The Tempest's* Caliban, after his mother has drowned and raises

him as her own child. While she lives separately from the rest of the community, she is shown to be empathetic and caring towards Dulé as well as Ariel, who she adopts later in the story. On top of this, Warner's Sycorax is able to tell her own story, which is exemplified in an important line in the novel: "Hear me now" (*Indigo* 212). This is part of a scene which could be seen as a parallel with Prospero's very last moment in *The Tempest*, in which he also asks the audience to give him what he needs: freedom (Ghosh 91). The play ends with the following lines:

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. (5.1.331-8)

While the reason for this appeal is very different, he is addressing what he considers to be a higher power, as he mentions 'prayer'. In a more metatextual interpretation, he asks the audience to grant him the freedom from his crimes, but in the context of the story he is praying to be saved by an invisible entity. Sycorax is asking something else, perhaps to be heard and to be understood, but they are both making a demand for what they think they deserve. As Propst explains, Sycorax's line is written as an outcry towards her gods (336). As neither characters receive a reply from their respective higher powers, interpreting both appeals as a direct call to the audience or to the reader becomes very likely. Sycorax's lines remind the reader to re-evaluate the real meaning of the text, as it could be interpreted as self-referential: Sycorax, or perhaps even Warner, is requesting that the reader realise the significance of not only hearing but genuinely listening to a story, especially a story about those who have been othered for a long period of time. Thus, she reminds us that this is more than merely a fictional portrayal. *Indigo* and its characters are, after all, in part based on her own family history and the real islanders who lived on St. Kitts (Propst 336).

2.4 Ariel

In *The Tempest*, Ariel is forced to serve Prospero after he has been saved from the tree in which he had been imprisoned by Sycorax. He is reminded of his debt regularly, especially if he asks Prospero for his freedom, which gives him this answer “Dost thou forget / From what a torment I free thee?” (1.2.250-1). Through manipulation Prospero serves his own interests and is able to have complete control over Ariel. By scholars such as Frances Dolan, he is considered the ‘good servant’ to Prospero and can thus be considered as a foil to Caliban, who is usually seen as the ‘bad servant’ (Dolan 322). Ariel’s way of dealing with an oppressive power is acquiescence.⁴ This particular role is entirely transformed in Warner’s *Indigo*, as the character of Ariel does actively resist oppression, through the use of her sexuality. Once Kit Everard is confronted with Ariel on the island, she gains control over him because he desires her. More than just control, this gives her a sense of joy: “Ariel tasted a certain triumph in his weakness; she found cruelty a reward . . . she began to enjoy denying him, then permitting him again” (Warner 167). These roles are unexpected, since sexuality is often used as a weapon by those in power. Weaver-Hightower describes this act as a reversal of the ‘colonial rape trope’, since Ariel utilises his desire and her own sexuality in order to resist and control him. She states:

Sexuality in this case becomes a weapon for the indigenous woman, not for the conqueror. By showing indigenous people as actively resistant to colonization, the text helps to undermine stereotypes of simple victimhood ensuing from those original historical narratives of conquest. (Weaver-Hightower 90)

The fact that Warner chose to transform Ariel into a female character as well as give her this kind of power is very meaningful. Not only does it subvert these stereotypes of victimhood, it also challenges the legitimacy of the position of the person who is ‘supposed’ to be in control, Kit Everard.

⁴ Martin Luther King listed three ways people meet oppression, applicable to various situations: 1. acquiescence, 2. violence, and 3. non-violent resistance. Ariel acts much like the first and Caliban is more likely to gravitate towards the second (King 206-7).

Interestingly, another difference between Ariel in *The Tempest* and *Indigo* lies in gender. Ariel in *The Tempest* is characterised as rather androgynous and has been played by both men and women over the years, regardless, he is assigned male pronouns (Button 21). In *Indigo*, however, Ariel is a woman. Changing Ariel's gender further emphasises the feminine focus of the novel.

2.5 Miranda and Xanthippe

The differences between the character of Miranda in *Indigo* compared *The Tempest* is primarily a matter of agency. In *The Tempest*, Miranda is portrayed as a virtuous and obedient daughter to Prospero as well as the ideal future wife to Ferdinand. He describes her as "So perfect and so peerless, are created / Of every creature's best" (3.1.47). In this world, she is the perfect woman according to patriarchal values. Warner's Miranda is rather different: she is idealistic, political, and values her independence. Most importantly, as readers we can follow her thought processes and are aware of her intelligence as well as the words she holds back. This last quality as well as her independence shines through when she receives a rather sexist comment from a male character and she reacts thus: "Miranda let it pass, though his assumption (...) rather riled her" (261).

Yet, as Propst argues, the character named Miranda is not the only woman in *Indigo* inspired by Shakespeare's Miranda. Xanthippe, who is Miranda's younger half-sister as well as her aunt, is utilised to show another side of the character. The two sisters are incredibly different: for example, Miranda has a strong connection to her heritage due to her island-born grandmother while Xanthippe is emotionally entirely removed from the Caribbean and is only invested when it comes to the tourist industry on the island (Propst 335).

Shakespeare's Miranda is especially recognisable in Xanthippe in her relationship to her father Sir Ant. He is incredibly controlling and jealous towards his daughter, to the point where Xanthippe ruminates on the following: "I'm grown up now, I'm not his little woman

any more. You know, Poppa would have liked to marry me himself. (...) Under lock and key, lock and key, in the tower for ever” (Warner 329). In some ways, this description is reminiscent of the controlling relationship between Prospero and Miranda in *The Tempest*, although he is actually attempting to marry her off to Ferdinand. Prospero states the following, ending the scene in the play: “So glad as they I cannot be / Who are surprised withal, but my rejoicing / At nothing can be more” (3.1.93-5), reaffirming what he says earlier in the play: “It goes on, I see, as my soul prompts it” (1.2.420-421). ‘It’, in this last quote, refers to Prospero’s plan of bringing Ferdinand and Miranda together. Hereby he confirms to the audience that this has been his plan all along and reminds the audience, more than once, that he is the one in control. The way Xanthippe examines the overbearing behaviour of Sir Ant reads as a commentary and criticism of Prospero’s actions. Xanthippe, or Miranda, thus indirectly and symbolically rejects her father.

The character who is actually named Miranda in *Indigo* embodies a very different version of the original character. She is a modern heroin with strong beliefs who is trying to find her own way while growing into a young adult. Her father has a plan for her, but she does not want to conform. She eventually ends up in a relationship with George Felix, who is an equivalent of Caliban, and has a child she names Serafine in reference to her nanny. While Xanthippe does not survive the story, Miranda is granted a happy ending. Williams-Wanquet explains this: “As in a fairy tale or a Victorian novel, Miranda is rewarded by love, marriage, and inheriting all Xanthe’s wealth. She is rewarded for her openness to the other and for feeling responsible for the past yet managing to overcome it” (277).

Conclusion

In the end, some of the most striking elements in the novel *Indigo* are connected to theme of colonialism. Warner, in part due to her family background, is taking steps to address wrongdoings that have been done to very real people. The novel places great emphasis on

granting voices to those who have not had the chance to tell their stories before, especially in the case of characters such as Sycorax, Dulé, or Ariel.

This aim of enhancing quiet voices is also relevant in relation to gender. Where *The Tempest* only really has one central female character, *Indigo* showcases a variety of women with different stories to tell. In fact, these characters are at the centre of Warner's novel, specifically Sycorax, Miranda, Ariel, Serafine, and Xanthippe.

Chapter 3: *Hag-Seed* by Margaret Atwood

In October of 2015, Hogarth Shakespeare published the first of a series of Shakespeare retellings. Since then, various novels have come out that each tackle one of Shakespeare's plays, written by different authors such as Jeanette Winterson, Anne Tyler, and Howard Jacobson. One of these novels is *Hag-Seed*, published in 2016 by Canadian author Margaret Atwood. This is an adaptation set in present time that focuses on a character named Felix, a counterpart to Prospero in *The Tempest*.

In the following chapter, *Hag-Seed* is analysed through examining two particular elements of the story: trauma and gender. The first half of this chapter deals with Felix and his trauma, which follows him throughout the novel. Atwood's adaptation of *The Tempest* is particularly interesting and limited at the same time because it places Felix at the centre. This is of course similar to Prospero in *The Tempest*, but *Hag-Seed* only provides one perspective and one mind through which this fictional world is seen. While the book is written in third-person, it is not omniscient and focuses primarily on Felix's inner life. It is therefore a skewed and subjective perspective, simply because it is the only one present, but it also allows the reader a close look into the psychology of the main character. This is very different in *The Tempest*, because the play does not allow for more information aside from the characters' actions and speech. Not only does this mean that the audience does not know exactly what is going on in Prospero's mind, though they do learn something from his monologues, this also means that the story is presented from a more distant and objective standpoint. In this way, the novel and the play have very different effects on a reader. *Hag-Seed* is presented through Felix's narrative and the reader is consistently exposed to the feelings and motivations behind his actions. This makes it easier to gain sympathy for Felix than to feel the same way about Prospero in *The Tempest*. Felix's actions and emotions throughout the novel point to the fact that he is very much influenced and shaped by his past, something he is unable to escape. The

trauma he experiences before the story truly begins, mainly due to the death of his child and wife, has a ripple effect throughout the novel. Atwood shows this by highlighting and exploring certain re-occurring themes, character traits of Felix, and creating conflicts between characters which eventually lead up to a climax in which the tension is resolved. Since the story is driven by Felix's trauma, I examine the adaptation through this particular lens for the first part. His need for revenge, the apparitions of his daughter, and the way he treats the prisoners who act in his play: these are all elements that can be traced back to Felix's traumatic experiences, which partly occurred before the novel has even begun.

The second half of this chapter deals with the way in which Atwood handles gender in *Hag-Seed*. This is important in part because some of Atwood's previous works, especially novels such as *Alias Grace* and *The Handmaid's Tale*, are deeply connected to gender relations. She frequently utilises themes of power and oppression, and tends to place female characters in a central spot. However, this does not mean Atwood has chosen the same approach with *Hag-Seed*: in fact, it is entirely different in the case of this novel, as will be discussed later. Another reason why it is hardly possible not to mention gender is because of Atwood's own opinions on the matter. She is frequently questioned and perhaps even pressed for an answer to matters such as "Are you feminist?" or "Is this book feminist?" (Oppenheim, Newman). This is not strange considering the content of her novels, but her negative reaction to these questions is especially telling. Her personal views may provide a perspective on the way she has chosen to write the female characters that appear in *Hag-Seed*. Aside from Atwood's own views, some scholars have noted that the way *Hag-Seed* plays with gender is subversive, specifically because she uses the character of Miranda in different ways. *The Tempest* does not have many female characters and the ones that do exist are lacking in agency and personality (Aldoory 58). Yet it is not entirely the case that Atwood succeeds in subverting this trope, since some of the women in the novel are rather passive, in the case of

Miranda, or function only as devices to drive the plot forward, in the case of Estelle.

Examining *Hag-Seed* through the lens of gender may be of importance in order to gain an understanding of the text on its own but it is also vital as an adaptation of Shakespeare.

Comparing *Hag-Seed* and *The Tempest* while keeping the aforementioned elements of trauma and gender in mind leads to a methodical yet analytical way to compare the two texts. Aside from this, through this structure, I am able to analyse *Hag-Seed* not only as a Shakespearean adaptation, but also as a character study and a text that plays with gender roles from the original play. *Hag-Seed* is a novel with an emphasis on one person's perspective, which means certain gaps are filled: it not only shows us all sides of the character of Felix, and thus Prospero, but also gives him more of a background which allows the reader to feel empathy for the character.

TRAUMA

3.1 Felix, Prospero, and Revenge

Felix's ghost(s), literal in the case of his daughter and figurative in the case of the way being wronged by Tony haunts him, have been shaped by trauma and this ultimately leads to him desiring revenge. Prospero similarly desires revenge, due to being his banishment by Antonio, but there is less emphasis on the cause for his plotting in *The Tempest*. It is part of the way Atwood manages to add to the play: this is done through exploring her main character's motivations and feelings behind the plan of revenge as well as the mental repercussions that Felix faces because of his past. These consequences for his mental wellbeing are explored further in 3.3. Not only does his child die when she is at a very young age, he also loses his wife, and in the beginning of the novel Felix is fired from a job that is incredibly important to him. Jessica Ann McDaid argues that before these losses it seemed Felix's life was perfectly in order (13). On top of this, the hardship in his life has been much

greater compared to that of Prospero, which makes it difficult to compare their reactions to events in a way that is exactly parallel. The way Atwood views Prospero's behaviour is especially interesting in this context, because she states in an article: "One of the questions that's bothered me about *The Tempest*: why would Prospero, having been betrayed by his evil brother once – an evil brother who does not repent, even when he's been forgiven – throw away his magic weapons and then climb onboard a ship with that very same evil brother? What might happen then?" (Atwood, *A Perfect Storm*). Her surprise about Prospero's supposedly forgiving nature inspired her to write Felix's character. Yet on top of Prospero's already existing trauma, being betrayed by his brother, unlike Felix, he does not have to bear the loss of a child. While these two events in Felix's life were not caused by the same source, it seems they did both occur in a short space of time. On top of this, Felix suspects Tony of taking advantage of his period of grief by slowly taking over parts of his job: "*Let me do this chore for you, delegate that, send me instead*. What a fool he had been. His only excuse was that he'd been distracted by grief at that time" (Atwood 11). So perhaps these two significant events in his life are so closely tied together that they would inevitably culminate into something much bigger: a mixture of rage, loneliness, and trauma. This then leads to Felix's illusions, his almost compulsive need for revenge, and destructive behaviour.

Atwood utilises Shakespeare's often employed structure in order to build to these pivotal occurrences; the novel is divided into five acts. The accumulation of tension towards the fourth act is tangible through her main character: as Felix devises his plan of revenge, he takes it slowly at first but after a while becomes impatient. It also seems as if the more he feels he is losing control, the more he finds solace within his own illusions.

As the novel comes closer to an end, Felix's greatest wish is fulfilled: to take revenge on Tony who fired him years before. Felix uses his play with the inmates to brutally terrify Tony and his co-workers. Much like Prospero, though figuratively, he raises up a storm, he

sets a plan in action and lets it play out; thus the story becomes a play within a play, unbeknownst to Tony and his men. In the end, this performance is not *The Tempest* as he has practiced it alone with the inmates and Anne-Marie. The participation of Tony is what makes it truly complete to Felix, since he is the element which allows Felix to take revenge. Through manipulation he manages to convince his actors to cooperate, convincing them that the reason for his spite is that Tony and the others are about to cut the program. When discussing ‘Prospero’s goblins’, Felix is amused by the notion that the actors will be functioning as his goblins when the time comes: “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” (131). Even when the end is not near yet, he has already decided all that these actors mean to him. They are simply pawns as they exist only, unbeknownst to them, to aid his plan, much like the goblins from *The Tempest*: they are unimportant, anonymous, and merely function to serve. Yet, by the end, Felix’s reasoning does not match up with his initial plan. According to McDaid, “the purpose of this production is for the enemies to suffer as Felix did, for Felix to be granted his position back at Makeshiweg, the program to maintain afloat and funded, and finally, for 8Handz to be given early parole for all his help” (23). Despite Felix’s need for vengeance, the years he has lived alone have not entirely hardened him. He may be manipulating the prisoners in order to achieve his goals, but he has also grown to care for them in his own way. Especially 8Handz who plays Ariel, Prospero’s right-hand man in *The Tempest*, is trusted by Felix.

The revenge, in the end, is entirely achieved through being aided by the actors. The way Felix achieves this willingness to help him is through gaining their trust as a teacher. He makes the class fun by allowing them certain swear words, smuggles cigarettes inside the prison, and even introduces a woman to the cast. In section 3.4, the consequences of this gained trust as well as Felix’s use and abuse of his power will be examined in more detail.

3.2 Imprisonment versus Freedom

Imprisonment, in its various forms, appears in the novel as a consequence of the trauma that Felix has experienced, as he is confined by his past. It is also part of the setting he utilises for taking revenge: the prison. The theme of imprisonment and freedom thus appears in *Hag-Seed* both literally and figuratively; Atwood shows through her characters the ways in which Shakespeare employs this theme. This is enhanced by the fact that this novel takes place in a prison for the majority of the time. The inmates at Fletcher County Correctional Institute are, while in prison, instructed to list the ways in which prisons exist within the story of *The Tempest*. The important element in this exercise is the prison they leave out and is revealed by Felix at the end of the book; the ninth prison is the play itself (Atwood 275). While Prospero is the one character who is the cause of others' lack of freedom—Ariel's, Caliban's, Miranda's—what Felix considers most important is the prison Prospero inhabits according to him. He points out that the ending of the play leaves Prospero's fate open; if the audience claps he will be freed and able to leave the island, but if they do not clap he will not be able to go. At the very end Prospero addresses the public directly:

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. (Shakespeare 5.1.334-8)

This speech not only refers to the audience's power in deciding Prospero's fate, it also states Prospero's guilt over his actions quite clearly; he refers to his deeds as 'faults' and 'crimes' to be pardoned. By searching redemption, he acknowledges his role as anti-hero, whether this would include his actions towards Antony, Caliban, Ariel or Miranda, he is aware of his mistakes. It is significant that Felix in *Hag-Seed* emphasises Prospero's remorse and wish for redemption so strongly, since he is Prospero's counterpart. This sentiment, spoken in the last chapter, implies that Felix perhaps feels similarly about his misdeeds and attempts to ask his

audience, in this case the inmates, for forgiveness. However, Felix remarks that Prospero never reveals why exactly he feels remorse and then states: “*The Tempest* is a play about a man producing a play—one that’s come out of his own head, his ‘fancies’—so maybe the fault for which he needs to be pardoned is the play itself” (Atwood 274-5). This line of speech is easily applicable to Prospero as well as Felix, perhaps more literally so to the latter. While Prospero orchestrates the events that occur in *The Tempest* by brewing up a storm and having Ariel spy and manipulate others, Felix is quite literally directing an adaptation of *The Tempest*. The prisoners do not quite understand the reason why Prospero would need to be punished and thus they would likely excuse his crimes. In this way, Felix is also excused. Yet as an audience these inmates are not entirely objective in their judgment; a group of prisoners are deciding who should go to prison, which is ironic in a way. Because of their own crimes, they may not be deemed fit to judge others. Also part of Prospero’s prison is the absence of Miranda; she has been married off to Ferdinand and will certainly leave the island. The fact that Felix is acknowledging Prospero’s loss may be a sign he has finally acknowledged his own daughter’s loss. This is reaffirmed in the epilogue when he realises the following: “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” (283). Once Felix is finally able to free her, he is also free. His own imprisonment takes form as an illusion, which has in turn been caused by trauma. This will be explained in the following section.

3.3 Illusions, Ghosts, and Holding on to the Past

Atwood adds certain elements that are not necessarily explored in Shakespeare’s play, especially in regards to character psychology. For example, a tension exists between reality and illusion, as Felix imagines his daughter is alive and with him at all times - even though the reader is informed she has passed away at a very young age. This tension is caused by the

trauma that Felix has experienced partly as a result of losing her. While at first sight it may be assumed that the daughter, naturally Miranda, is indeed dead and his mind is simply playing tricks on him, it is only later that one may consider a supernatural element. This uncertainty, wavering between ghost or illusion, leads to other problems: what is actually real in the story and what is not? What takes place in Felix's mind and what does not?

After Felix is fired from his job, he moves away to the countryside, and after a while starts considering what his next step will be, it is slowly revealed to the reader that he feels the presence of his daughter Miranda as if she were not dead. At first, he does not truly believe she is real and reminds himself of this to stay grounded: "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 a conceit, a whimsy, a piece of acting: he did not really believe it, but he engaged in this non-reality as if it were real" (Atwood 45). At this point in the story he seems entirely self-aware, but he does express a sense of fear because the difference between a simple daydream and a solidified belief is not that large. On the other hand, this passage could also be interpreted as a denial from Felix; he is claiming not to believe in the existence of his daughter, yet in reality, as the novel progresses, this delusion only becomes stronger. The line between reality and illusion blurs even more as Felix thinks of Miranda later in the novel. He remarks things such as "Miranda doesn't like it when he's away so much" (62) or "she remains simple, she remains innocent. She's such a comfort" (62). The first sentence seems to imply here that his daughter Miranda is an actual, autonomous human being with real thoughts and feelings of her own. This segment also reveals his desire to be important to her and to be needed. The latter segment refers to Miranda growing up and yet staying the way exactly as Felix would like her to be. He compares her to other teenage girls who are, according to him, much inferior to his 'little girl'. This implies not only that he wants her to stay young forever, which means he therefore would never have to actually let go of her, it

also means that he, in a way, much prefers his delusional version of who he thinks Miranda is rather than who a real Miranda could have been if she had not passed away. He prefers this version because he can control it, much like Prospero controls his own daughter Miranda throughout the play. A real teenage girl would have autonomy, agency, and might not always agree with her father; she would therefore not be perfect. It seems as if this autonomous Miranda, while her character is real and not imagined in *The Tempest*, does not exist in Shakespeare's play either. Although she seems to be making her own choice by loving Ferdinand, this is in fact all orchestrated by Prospero beforehand as it is part of his larger vengeful plan.

Felix does not seem to be consistently aware of his misapprehension in regards to Miranda, but he knows he has immersed himself in a world that is not entirely real. Interestingly, halfway the novel Felix remarks about Miranda: "She shouldn't fritter herself away on a world of illusions—of vanishing rainbows, of bursting bubbles, of cloud capped towers—the way he himself has done" (Atwood 168). Though this line is in reference to another delusion that has nothing to do with Miranda, still it seems to imply that Felix remains somewhat self-aware even though he has grown attached to the ghost in his mind. While he recognises the illusion of his own absorption in Shakespeare's play and perhaps even his obsession with revenge, he does not see that his problem goes much further than that. In the quote, he addresses the fact that he believes that his daughter Miranda wishes to play Miranda in his interpretation of *The Tempest*, which he then warns her against. Since she is a manifestation of his own mind, this only contributes to his own delusion.

3.4 'Hag-seed' and a Dark Side

Another element that Atwood uses from *The Tempest* is the title of her novel: *Hag-Seed*, which is meant to describe not only Felix's dark side as a result of his trauma, but it also refers to the way he manipulates the people around him in order to achieve his goal. The

phrase ‘hag-seed’ is first mentioned in the book when the inmates of the prison discuss which curse words they are allowed to use. The prisoners, taught by Felix under the alias of Mr Duke, are instructed to only use swear words that appear in the play they are studying, with the intent of greatly limiting as well as broadening their vocabulary. Especially since their everyday vernacular differs greatly from Shakespearian language, their language almost becomes oxymoronic, using casual as well as archaic words: ““Yeah!” says 8Handz. “You did it! F...I mean, scurvy awesome!”, “Way to red plague go!” says PPod” (Atwood 99).

One of the swear words that is acceptable for use is that from the title of Atwood’s novel; this is hag-seed. This slur is used in *The Tempest* by Prospero to insult Caliban, and refers to his mother Sycorax. In an article written for *The Guardian*, Atwood states specifically that there is a reason why she has named her novel after Caliban instead of Prospero (Atwood, A Perfect Storm). She does not reveal why, but it seems she implies this mystery can be uncovered through reading the novel.

According to Awfa Hussein Aldoory, the phrase ‘hag-seed’ in the title of Atwood’s novel is meant to refer to Felix’s enemies. She describes a ‘dark side’, which is represented by different characters that surround Felix. On top of this, Aldoory also points to Felix functioning as his own enemy, driven by his hate, anger, and need for revenge (59).

Another possibility is that it could be that Atwood uses this title, naming Caliban rather than the central figure of Prospero who is represented by Felix, in order to make an important point very clear. On the one hand, it could certainly be true that she uses this slur, originally employed by Prospero to insult Caliban, to highlight the dark side of this story as Aldoory claims. However, it seems to me that the most sinister aspect of this novel is not the prison nor the inmates, and maybe not even the people who have driven Felix to his revenge: it is instead Felix himself who is the character with the darkest side in this novel. Thus instead of indicating the darkness of what is around him, the title could instead simply be referring to

his own hatred, especially considering that the word is not simply a neutral reference to Caliban. In *The Tempest*, it functions as an insult meant to demean and belittle, and on top of this, it is not only insulting to Caliban himself, but also indirectly to his mother. Even if Prospero is not aware of the full meaning, it is still clear he wants Caliban to know that he is inferior in some way:

Hag-seed, hence!
 Fetch us in fuel; and be quick, thou'rt best,
 To answer other business. Shrug'st thou, malice?
 If thou neglect'st or dost unwillingly
 What I command, I'll rack thee with old cramps,
 Fill all thy bones with aches, make thee roar
 That beasts shall tremble at thy din. (Shakespeare 1.2.365-371)

In this fragment, Prospero calls him 'malice' as well as 'hag-seed' and orders him to perform certain duties. He is threatened with violence in case he fails to be successful in his task, implying that Prospero is practically his master. Prospero claims he would hurt him so badly that his screams would frighten away the animals. The names he calls Caliban merely function as punctuation for his violent speech and perhaps at first sight do not have any other significance. However, Prospero has previously referred to Sycorax, Caliban's mother, at this point in the play, and not in an entirely positive manner. He calls her 'foul witch' (1.2.257), 'blue-eyed hag' (1.2.269), claiming she had "mischiefs manifold and sorceries terrible" (1.2.265). Perhaps the knowledge he thinks he has of Sycorax makes the contempt he feels for Caliban even stronger. This makes the meaning of the term 'hag-seed' greater since its significance is deeper than just a way to demean a character Prospero deems to be his slave. Yet this use and abuse of his power over another person is paralleled in the novel *Hag-Seed*, where Felix also makes use of other characters in order to achieve his goals. This especially emphasises his dark side, because it shows he is not in the least concerned about any consequences that others may face. Revenge is the only thing he is able to think of, simply because any pain he can cause others may relieve his own pain and trauma. The inmates

simply function as characters in his play which is actually a revenge plan in disguise, Estelle is utilised to cover for him and does so gladly, and even Anne-Marie goes along with his plan. Felix manipulates the people around him so that his revenge may be completed and he will regain the power that he has lost. Where Prospero uses the word 'hag-seed' to exert and underline his power in order to achieve what he wants, this concept is encompassed by Atwood's novel. 'Hag-seed', in this way, represents not only Felix's need for revenge but also his trauma, which drives this need.

At the root of Felix's trauma lie his three losses: that of his daughter, wife, and career. These events are what shape the main character of the novel, causing him to make decisions, whether subconscious or not, which prompt manipulation of people around him, delusions in which his child is still alive, and eventually the act of revenge which is mentioned above. Not only is this trauma what drives Felix, but it also guides and dictates the entire novel. This is very different compared to *The Tempest*, as Prospero's motives for his actions are kept rather unclear throughout the play.

GENDER

3.5 Three Miranda's and An Ariel

Aside from trauma, another element which stands out from *Hag-Seed* is the way the female characters are written. Miranda, specifically, is a character which can be looked at in different ways. Aside from this, Atwood's own confusing opinion in regards to how feminism works and her reluctance towards the movement are worth examining. This is because they are contradictory to the what she has written, especially considering her previous novels.

Felix's illusion, in which he imagines that his child is still alive, is striking because it splits Miranda into two different versions: one that used to be real but has since passed away and one that is a complete fabrication of his own mind. Aside from these two different

Mirandas, there is also the actress Anne-Marie which he hires to be Miranda in his play. Yet why does Atwood employ this many different forms of Miranda? What function do these different representations serve in *Hag-Seed* and how is it different from the way Miranda is portrayed in *The Tempest*? And, crucially, what are Atwood's own views on gender and her presentation of female characters?

Not only does Atwood reveal a thought-provoking analysis of the way she views *The Tempest*, she also creates a world in which she makes the characters her own. With previous novels such as *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Alias Grace*, Margaret Atwood is generally heralded for her focus and depth in regards to the rich inner lives of her female characters. Atwood's views on feminism have always been puzzling, but I focus on her most recent statements in order to avoid confusion. In a recent article from *The Independent*, she wonders about her novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*:

Is *The Handmaid's Tale* a "feminist" novel? If you mean an ideological tract in which all women are angels and/or so victimized they are incapable of moral choice, no. If you mean a novel in which women are human beings—with all the variety of character and behavior that implies—and are also interesting and important, and what happens to them is crucial to the theme, structure and plot of the book, then yes. In that sense, many books are "feminist." (Newman)

In another article from 2017, she states:

"So, if we mean, should women as citizens have equal rights, I'm all for it and a number of advances have been made in my lifetime regarding property rights and divorce and custody of children and all of those things," Atwood said. "But do we mean, are women always right? Give me a break! I'm sorry, but no! Theresa May is a woman, for heaven's sakes!" (Oppenheim)

These interviews demonstrate that Atwood's perspective on feminism is deeply flawed. She avoids the actual topic, resorting to generalisations and logical fallacies, such as her idea that equal rights between the sexes leads to thinking that women are 'always right'. Not only in this interview, but also in other articles, she approaches the question about feminism with suspicion and almost hostility. It seems she thinks someone is attempting to trick her into saying she is something she is in fact not. It also seems that she fears there are many

definitions of feminism around which she cannot control and which do not fit her notion of what the word means. However, her first supposed definition in the quote almost describes the opposite of what feminism is supposed to represent. No feminist wants all female characters to be angels or to always be right, because this entirely goes against the definition of a well-rounded, multidimensional character as well as the definition of feminism. Feminism is defined, generally, as a goal to achieve or define complete equality between the sexes, whether this is in terms of social, economic, personal or political equality (Hawkesworth 25-7). Its goal is not and has never been, as Atwood seems to imply, to regard women as superior to men. In the past, feminism in relation to literature has been concerned with female authorship, the inclusion of female characters, and representing female characters in a balanced and non-stereotypical manner (Tyson 107-108). In third-wave feminism, the focus has been on inclusion of minorities and intersectionality (VanNewKirk 12). Feminism is certainly very broad, and has advocated for many things, but it has not claimed that women are 'always right', as Atwood seems to think. Overall, her statements on feminism seem entirely disconnected from feminist theory. Moreover, the tone and content of these interviews are perhaps difficult to unite with her writing, which seems so unapologetically feminist. Especially a dystopian novel such as *The Handmaid's Tale*, which she mentions in one of these interviews, is generally regarded as a feminist classic. However, *Hag-Seed* is a very different novel from both *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Alias Grace*: a male character is placed at the centre, the story takes place in the present in a world that seems a lot like ours, and, most crucially, it is based on an already existing text. All these elements do not at all prevent *Hag-Seed* from being a feminist novel, but it does impact the way she portrays her female characters. Perhaps Atwood's distorted views on feminism fit more neatly with *Hag-Seed* than with any of her other novels.

According to Aldoory, *The Tempest* does not allow the character of Miranda any freedom whatsoever. She is irrelevant to the plot, which Aldoory states would still be perfectly functional without her, and she is controlled entirely by the male characters surrounding her. As Aldoory puts it, she is “ready to be removed from one masculine hand to another” (60). It is true that her life is ruled by patriarchal values: she never argues against her father, lets him call her his ‘foot’ without protest and she is ‘given away’ when Prospero sees fit. Aldoory claims that Atwood’s feminist approach allows the character of Miranda to break free from these patriarchal values in a way that she is unable to in *The Tempest*. In *Hag-Seed*, Miranda is the reason behind Felix’s motivation. He initially wants to direct and perform the play because he thinks it is the only way he can reincarnate his daughter. He later realises this is not the case, as mentioned in a previous paragraph in 3.1, but regardless of this realisation she still has great impact on Felix throughout the book. However, it is uncertain whether she is truly the ‘motivator of action’ that Aldoory claims she is. On the one hand, it is true that Felix heavily relies on her: “They began having their meals together, which was a good thing otherwise he might sometimes have forgotten about meals. She scolded him gently when he didn’t eat enough. Finish what’s on your plate; she would say to him...when he was sick she tiptoed around him, anxious....” (Atwood 46-47). Yet it seems as if he is driven by something darker than just the love for his daughter when he sets up his plan for revenge. While Miranda may play an important role in Felix’s decisions and actions, one must not forget that she is not a real character in this novel: she is a figment of Felix’s imaginations. Because of this, she is not given a ‘body’ or any another space in which she is able to function or gain any agency. She is stuck as a ghost in her father’s head. Therefore, it is doubtful whether she is truly set free as a character in the way Aldoory claims she is. She certainly drives the plot to a great extent, much more than Miranda does in *The Tempest*, but she does not seem like a well-rounded and fully formed character. Rather, she functions as a symptom of Felix’s trauma and

what may even be interpreted as mental illness. Due to the fact that he is unable to process the death of his child, he has begun to imagine a version of her that does not exist, which has been discussed previously. Colleen Etman also believes Miranda is not a fully formed character in the way Aldoory may claim that she is, stating that Atwood's version of Miranda is much more like Prospero's Sycorax than *The Tempest's* Miranda (58). The reader only sees her through Felix's eyes, much like we only see Sycorax through Prospero's eyes. She has no voice of her own, and neither does Sycorax.

A third Miranda comes into play, literally, when Anne-Marie is cast by Felix. She is the only one outside of the prison, because none of the inmates are willing to play a female character. ““None of them was willing to be a girl,” he said. “You can see why not.” “I know, right? I don't blame them,” she said with a hard edge to her voice. “Being a girl is the pits, trust me”” (Atwood 96). In this case, when Felix seems to be stating that it is obvious why none of the actors would want to play a female character— because it is a risk within the prison environment—Anne-Marie takes this to mean something entirely different. She does this on purpose, judging by the “hard edge to her voice”. She agrees with his statement initially, and then subtly turns the words around to make it clear to him what she thinks. While this is significant in terms of her character, her reaction also refers to the experience of being a woman and the danger of assault or harassment that comes with it.

It becomes clear that the inmates are not actually afraid to play a female character when they also display anxiety about Ariel's character, who is male. Rather, it is femininity and thereby the automatic loss of masculinity that they truly fear, since Ariel is portrayed as rather androgynous in the play. This loss of masculinity may lead to verbal and perhaps even sexual abuse: “Any man playing her would lose status in a disastrous way. He'd become a butt, a target. Playing a girl, he'd risk being treated as one” (Atwood 87).

Unlike the Miranda inside of Felix's head, Anne-Marie is a real character and perhaps the sole three-dimensional female character in the novel. She seems incredibly sure of herself and is unafraid to function in a male-dominated environment. Yet she is also embittered about not having the job in acting she would like to have and works as a waitress in order to get by. Her enthusiasm for Felix's play, on the other hand, is almost childlike: she still knows the lines and quickly agrees to participate. She's physically strong; one of her hobbies is knitting; she's considered beautiful; during practice she becomes friends with the inmates. In short, her character is not a stereotype and she is clearly layered. Perhaps Anne-Marie exists to contrast Miranda: where she lacks autonomy, Anne-Marie exhibits confidence and independence. In this way, Anne-Marie certainly adds an important quality to the novel that may otherwise have been lacking.

A less three-dimensional character in the novel is Estelle. She has a high education: she is "a professor at Guelph University and supervised the Fletcher course from a distance. She also sat on various advisory committees, for the government" (49). Yet her actions do not make her seem as intelligent as this description suggests. She trusts Felix almost blindly and assists him in every way he requires of her. She is only part of the story to serve as a pawn and, while not even aware, to aid Felix in his revenge. He utilises her connections to get Tony and the others to come to the prison, but he does not let her in on his plan, the revenge he feels is necessary, or even the loss he has experienced. Felix views her as insignificant, and the book itself largely does too. Even Estelle herself notes: "Think of me as lubricant, I'll make things run smoothly, guaranteed" (Atwood 205). In the end, Felix uses Estelle to reach a goal that has nothing to do with her: she solely serves as a plot device.

Based on this analysis, the female characters in *Hag-Seed* are not multidimensional, instead including, but not limited to, a non-autonomous ghost in the case of Miranda and a plot device in the case of Estelle. On the other hand, Anne-Marie, as another Miranda added

to the cast of characters, seems to be a complex and unpredictable woman, not defined by simply one characteristic. However, Atwood's scepticism of feminism does align with the way she has written her female characters in *Hag-Seed*; especially Felix's daughter Miranda has no real agency, and Atwood certainly fails to transform the character in her adaptation in the way a critic such as Aldoory claims she does.

Conclusion

In the end, many points in the novel, including themes of imprisonment, illusion, and revenge can be traced back to Felix's trauma. These themes, while they may be touched upon in *The Tempest*, are explored in depth by Atwood and shown to have sprung forth primarily from Felix's mind. This is also shown through the title of her novel: *Hag-Seed*, which represents Felix's dark side and thus also his trauma. This exploration of trauma and explanation of Felix's motives is very different from *The Tempest*, because Prospero's motives are more vague. Both Felix and Prospero wish for revenge, but due to Atwood's writing, it is much easier to understand Felix's feelings about the matter than Prospero's. The effect of this is that the reader is more likely to relate to Felix as a character.

Other elements of the novel are relevant in terms of the way gender is handled: the combination of Atwood's own views with the depiction and adaptation of female characters in *Hag-Seed* culminate into a complex matter. On the one hand, *Hag-Seed* is much more interested in exploring the lives of female characters than *The Tempest* is. The character of Miranda, for example, is portrayed in multiple ways: the real Miranda who has died, a Miranda fabricated by Felix's mind, and the actress who plays Miranda. This makes the character(s) seem very complex. Generally, however, the novel is not quite as subversive with gender as some critics seem to think, since many of the women who are present are written as plot devices or are only there to serve the main character's arc. This writing fits with Atwood's own negative views and mistrust of feminism.

Eventually, the two overarching topics reveal that the focus on Felix and his demons has taken away from the ability to enrich and expand on certain female characters. Much like Shakespeare's focus on Prospero, Atwood has chosen to place Felix in the centre of the story. The focus of Felix's trauma adds to our understanding of Prospero: his banishment was likely traumatic in a similar way and, while not explaining away his actions, it does reveal part of his character and motivation.

Conclusion

In the end, the two adaptations, both *Indigo* and *Hag-Seed*, expand on Shakespeare's *The Tempest* fill in gaps in different ways. Specifically, this is done through providing new perspectives and through offering a look into the thought processes of characters that the audience does not have full access to in *The Tempest*. This is possible due to the fact that these adaptations are novels based on a play: the genre, in this case, allows for more insight into characters' thoughts and feelings. On top of this, historical context is incredibly influential when it comes to all three texts, as the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have given us a different perspective on all matters. This also means that Marina Warner and Margaret Atwood see the world very differently from the way William Shakespeare did. This certainly impacts the way themes such as postcolonialism and feminism are handled in all works, since those theories stem from modern evaluations and criticisms. Due to the fact that the adaptations are present-day products, they deal with modernised versions of *The Tempest*, which in these two books includes: adding more female characters, studying the psychological repercussions of trauma, and having indigenous voices be brought to life.

The two adaptations both heavily feature the theme of trauma. While in *Hag-Seed*, it concerns the personal trauma of Felix who has lost his child, wife, and job in a short span of time, *Indigo* is arguably also about generational trauma.⁵ On top of this similarity, the two texts also share a strong focus on characters and character development: in the case of *Indigo*, we get to know the character of Sycorax very well, and in the case of *Hag-Seed*, the spotlight is entirely on Felix. They are humanised and given context which allows the reader to

⁵ It has been found in research that transgenerational epigenetic inheritance can occur when a group of people experiences a large trauma. This means that trauma as a consequence of colonialism or exploitation of indigenous peoples can be hereditary. Yet the research, so far, is mostly a result of animal models and many questions still remain about the process. See: Kowal, Emma. "The Promise of Indigenous Epigenetics." *Discover Society*, 4 Oct. 2016, <https://discoversociety.org/2016/10/04/the-promise-of-indigenous-epigenetics/>. Accessed 16 May 2018. Walters, Karina L., et al. "Bodies don't just tell stories, they tell histories: Embodiment of historical trauma among American Indians and Alaska Natives." *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 8.1 (2011): 179-189.

empathise with them, because both authors have given the character more space to develop. Another way the two works could be seen as similar is the way that their authors come from a similar perspective. Warner and Atwood are both white, female authors who tend to focus their fiction around female-centric plots. But this is also where the two novels differ. *Hag-Seed* is not necessarily an example of a text with a focus on women, and in fact, it seems to fail to do justice to its female characters. On the other hand, *Indigo* places great importance in following women's narratives at every turn: both in the plot that takes place in seventeenth-century Liamuiga and twentieth-century London. Warner is very clearly aware of the lack of female characters in *The Tempest* and subverts this by putting forward Miranda, Serafine, Sycorax, and Ariel. Their narratives are not entirely controlled by male characters, as Sycorax's narrative is in *The Tempest*, but they are written as rounded characters with agency. Another difference between the two works is that *Hag-Seed* more likely falls into the category of adaptation, while *Indigo* is often described as a reworking or retelling of *The Tempest*. Atwood follows a rather linear narrative, most main characters can be paralleled with those from the play, and it all leads up to a climax that is very similar to the one in *The Tempest*. Warner, on the other hand, takes more liberties with her story, jumping from one time period to another, between characters that are further removed from *The Tempest*.

Both works, although they are very different, in the end, do broaden the world, themes, and inner lives of the characters created by Shakespeare through filling in gaps and modernising the story.

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