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Posted on 19 April 2017 By Margaret Atwood

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I have now read three of the four re imaginings of Shakespeare s plays and this is my favorite to date, by far Atwood and I have had an on and off again relationship but here she

has outdone herself *The Tempest*, a sorry of magic and fantasy, revenge and hatred performed in a correctional institute, by non violent offenders, their stage manager Felix Felix has known his share of heartbreak and loss, most recently betrayed by his assistant and ousted from a prominent position. What Atwood has accomplished here is original, humorous, magical and absolutely delightful She writes rap songs performed in the play, reimagines lines and characters, updates the dialogue and puts on a play, with a few surprises, that I would love to attend The characters are amazing, lessons are learned and friendships are made Absolutely brilliant in my estimation. ARC from publisher. After Felix, artistic director, of the Makeshiweg Festival, gets weaseled out of his job by Tony, his under cutting right hand man he moves off grid into a hillside dwelling an old rustic small shack with cobwebs, a smelly outhouse, surrounded by weeds He tidied up the inside space but despite his pathetic attempts at domesticity, he slept restlessly and woke often Both Felix's wife and child are deceased He lived with grief, yet when Felix was the artistic director of the very reputable theatre company, which slime ball Tony is now, it was Felix's memory of his 3 year old daughter, Miranda, who had recently died of meningitis, that gave him purpose in directing *The Tempest* which he never got to finish being rushed out quickly Sonow Felix has disappeared quite successfully The sorrow of the loss of his daughter is intensifying He'd tries to stay busy goes to the library, buys something at the hardware store just to hear the sound of an ordinary human voice Felix begins to wonder what's happening to him Had he begun to shamble Was he regarded as a harmless local eccentric Was he subject of tittle tattle, or did anyone notice him at all Did he even care The silence began to get to him Not silence exactly The bird songs, the chirping chirping of the crickets, the wind in the trees The flies, buzzing so contrapuntally in his outhouse Melodious Soothing So, what did Felix want What did he care about What was his purpose now After spending reprehensible amounts of time sitting in the shade in an old chair he got from a garage sale staring into space. He's clear he needs a focus and purpose Eventually he concluded there were two things left for him to do two projects that could still hold satisfaction First, he needed to get his, *TEMPEST* back He had to stage it, somehow, somewhere His reasons were beyond theatrical they had nothing to do with his reputation, his career none of that Quite simply, his Miranda must be released from her glass coffin she must be given a life Second, he wanted revenge He longed for it He daydreamed about it Tony and Sal must suffer His present woeful situation was their doing, or a lot of it was They treated him shabbily He realizes that as Felix Phillips he's a washed up has been. but as Mr Duke, he might have a chance It's been 12 years since he worked for Makeshiweg His new stage takes place inside a prison The Fletcher County Correctional Institute in Ontario A low profile job engaging with people getting back in the real world BRILLIANT Nothing better to help mend grief and grievances than to bring Shakespeare to prisoners WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE The job came his way through a teacher in the Literacy Through Literature program The woman who hired Felix was worried worried that the prisoners would not be able to

handle Shakespeare, given that many of them could barely read Felix's argument was that Shakespeare's actors were journeyman, and bricklayers, and that they never read whole plays themselves. They memorize their lines I believe in hands on, said Felix as authoritatively as he could. Hands on what said Estelle, truly alarmed now you have to respect your personal space, you're not allowed to. We'll be performing, said Felix. That's what I mean. We'll enact the plays. They'll do assignments and write essays and all that I'll mark those I suppose that's what's required. Estelle smiled you're very idealistic she said. Essays I really. Pieces of prose, said Felix. About which ever play we're doing. You really think so said Estelle. You could get them to do that. Give me three weeks, said Felix. Once inside the prison this story is TERRIFIC. Flex and the inmates enact modernized versions of Shakespeare, including The Tempest. At times hilarious often charming. and NO PROFANITY NO SWEARING well, these prisoners are criminals, so it's not a perfect science. They lose points if they use swear words not used in the script. They can't swear at any time if they are in discussion about the characters or themes of the play either or points off. Back to the drawing board, SnakeEye adds. Suck it up, dickhead says Anne Marie, or you can make your own fuckin goddesses plus no cookies. Chuckles. Swearing. Swearing. Points off says Leggs. This book becomes a play within a play. Felix is out for revenge staging a play. just as The Tempest, is about a man Prospero, staging a play for revenge. As I was expecting but was still found inspiring, Felix has a positive effect on the prisoners. Moving Along. Slime Ball Tony is now a politician in Canada and he and other VIPs will be coming to see a video taped show of Mr Duke's inmate project with intentions of doing away with the Literacy Through Literature program. Estelle knows Mr Duke is Felix Phillips she has kept Felix's secret for years and even added support of him with her own camouflage. As far as everyone else to Distinguished visitors Dr Duke is just a broken down old geezer of a failed teacher. Tony is going to have a rude awakening. Let the revenge begin or Felix might say he is simply balancing the scales. Wonderful fun funny touching teary eye at the very end. Really touching WOW I LOVED IT Thank You Netgalley, Crown Publishing, and Margaret Atwood. Click here to watch a video review of this book on my channel, From Beginning to Bookend. Felix is the Artistic Director of the Makeshiwig Theater Festival and a theatrical visionary whose outlandish re imaginings of Shakespeare's plays have both baffled and awed critics. On the cusp of staging The Tempest, a play Felix intends to make his greatest work yet, an act of unforeseen treachery relieves him of his position and strips him of professional dignity. Twelve years later, after a need to avenge himself has metastasized in Felix's heart, revenge arrives in the form of a teaching position at a nearby prison, Fletcher County Correctional Institute, where Felix will at last stage The Tempest and ensnare the traitorous men who were the cause of his ruin. How he has fallen. How deflated. How reduced. Cobbling together this bare existence, living in a hovel, ignored in a forgotten backwater whereas Tony, that self promoting, posturing little shit, gallivants about with the grandees, and swills champagne, and gobbles caviar and larks tongues and

suckling pigs, and attends galas, and basks in the adoration of his entourage, his flunkies, his toadies. Once the toadies of Felix It rankles It festers It brews vengefulness. Hag Seed is a cleverly constructed, satirical retelling of The Tempest, executed through Felix and his band of convicted con men staging their own fanciful and strange retelling of the play This overlap in storytelling succeeds in educating readers who have never seen the play, delighting those familiar with Shakespeare's tale of castaways stranded on a remote island plotting and scheming against one another, and being an on the nose representation of The Tempest But 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 Felix's obsession with recreating The Tempest is about than just revenge His intentions are personal and rooted in grief, which adds depth to his motives and enriches the narrative Felix wishes to memorialize his deceased daughter, Miranda whose namesake is derived from the play This Tempest would be brilliant the best thing he'd ever done He had been he realizes now unhealthily obsessed with it It was like the Taj Mahal, an ornate mausoleum raised in honor of a beloved shade, or a priceless jeweled casket containing ashes But than that, because inside the charmed bubble he was creating, his Miranda would live again. The prison is the island where Felix will don his cape and conjure a scheme designed to raise him above his enemies, to position himself as ruler and deity, implementing justice and allotting punishment where reprimand is due He never imagined he would educate cons in the slammer, but the inglorious prison is nevertheless where his scheme must unfold There's a click The door unlocks and he walks into the warmth, and that unique smell Unfresh paint, faint mildew, unloved food eaten in boredom, and the smell of dejection, the shoulders slumping down, the head bowed, the body caving in upon itself A meager smell Onion farts Cold naked feet, damp towels, motherless years The smell of misery, lying over everyone within like an enchantment. After a flashbang intro and an amusing romp through Felix's machinations, the book reaches a satiating conclusion and offers a memorable closing line with meaning that resonates Good for a laugh, enchanting for its superlative writing, surprisingly tenderhearted and sublimely constructed, Hag Seed is a ravishing literary parody. Ban ban Ca Caliban, Don't need no master, I am not your man So stuff it up your hole, gimme back what you stole, Tellin you it's late, I'm fillin up with rage, I'm gettin all set to go on a ram page Ain't gonna work for less than minimum wage Live in a shack and piss in a pail, You earn yourself money by puttin me in jail You kick me in the head, you dump me in the snow, Leave me there for dead, Cause I'm nothin to you. Ban, Ban, Ca Caliban, You think I'm an animal, not even a man Now Hag Seed's black and Hag Seed's brown, Hag seed's red, don't care if you frown, Hag Seed's yellow and Hag Seed's trash white, He goes by a lotta names, he's roamin in the night, You treated him bad, now he's a sackful of fright, Hag Seed Djimon Hounsou plays Caliban in the wonderful 2010 movie of The Tempest, starring Helen Mirren as Prospero. Felix is just too busy to notice He has his head buried in his work, directing plays at the Makeshiweg Theatre He has been

doing it so long, with such success, that in theater circles, he is in fact a bit of a legend. While he works, others plot. He is caught in the clouds of his own dreams. Well, until two large men from security appear, flanking his arch nemesis Antonio Felix. Felix is frogged, marched out to the alley, with a laughably small severance check and a few bags of belongings which are stuffed into his car by Burly 1 and Burly 2. Just like that, he is deposed, usurped, overthrown, dethroned. Felix decides that he needs to escape the city. Everything about the city just reminds him of the theater and his past glories. He finds a shack in the country, a hovel really, a cell. He tries to read all those Russian classics he always meant to read, but finds himself instead reading children books to his daughter Miranda. [view spoiler](#) She be dead [hide spoiler](#)

HAG-

SEED

MARGARET

ATWOOD

Hogarth & Spink

bluntly, Atwood's last two have sucked. Yeah, this one's included here's why the premise of *The Tempest Retold* is masterful with the prison standing in for the island and the master portrayed as a theater director the temptation to bring a 400 year work from the best English writer of all time into our contemporary one deserves much applause And follow through Instead, we get almost exactly where we thought that all of this was going this, despite never having read this Shakespearean play myself the prisoners that make up the players have no individual personalities, and sound rather too articulate Where's the grit There's zero plot involving what the prisoners would REALLY act like, given the chance to express themselves in art *Hag Seed* has all the readability and high-ish literature you will ever likely find in a Margaret Atwood novel But like *The Heart Goes Last*, it seems she just rushed the ending The plot ends prematurely, the rest is this lit appreciation We get many points of view about what the whole play means, after the plot of the novel itself expires Like what I do not care to read transcripts from a creative writing literature class in a work of fiction Not in this format the expected masterpiece that finally lets you down Oh dear I think that Margaret Atwood and I are just not meant to be With the exception of *Cat's Eye*, every time I read one of her books, I admire her cleverness her wry intellect and dry wit but I just can't connect *Hag Seed* gave me the same experience all over again Part of the Hogarth Shakespeare Project, *Hag Seed* is a modern retelling of *The Tempest* It features Felix a fallen director from a thinly disguised Stratford Festival who plots his revenge through a staging of *The Tempest* at a jail where he teaches literacy through theatre Felix's story mimics *The Tempest*, making this somewhat of a play within a play It is undoubtedly clever Besides the structure, Atwood builds in many humorous details, especially in the way the inmates reimagine *The Tempest* And there's an element of surprise, because while we know revenge is on its way, the form it will take is only revealed at the end, with intended and unintended consequences But I never really felt drawn in, awed or affected by Atwood's rendition of *The Tempest* I felt like a distanced observer of a clever spectacle I do expect this one will work for many readers I just don't seem to be able to fall in step with Atwood's mind or sensibility Thanks to the publisher and Netgalley for an opportunity to read an advance copy. |Free Ebook ? Hag-Seed ? When Felix Is Deposed As Artistic Director Of The Makeshiweg Theatre Festival By His Devious Assistant And Longtime Enemy, His Production Of The Tempest Is Canceled And He Is Heartbroken Reduced To A Life Of Exile In Rural Southern Ontario Accompanied Only By His Fantasy Daughter, Miranda, Who Died Twelve Years Ago Felix Devises A Plan For Retribution Eventually He Takes A Job Teaching Literacy Through Theatre To The Prisoners At The Nearby Burgess Correctional Institution, And Is Making A Modest Success Of It When An Auspicious Star Places His Enemies Within His Reach With The Help Of Their Own Interpretations, Digital Effects, And The Talents Of A Professional Actress And Choreographer, The Burgess Correctional Players Prepare To Video Their *Tempest* Not Surprisingly, They View Caliban As The Character With Whom They Have The Most In Common However, Felix Has Another Twist

In Mind, And His Enemies Are About To Find Themselves Taking Part In An Interactive And Illusion Ridden Version Of The Tempest That Will Change Their Lives Forever But How Will Felix Deal With His Invisible Miranda S Decision To Take A Part In The Play Old Hat, New Hat It s just over 400 years since Shakespeare s death How can we ensure his continued relevance The publisher s answer was to commission a series of Shakespeare Retold novels Atwood s answer was to demonstrate exactly how to cultivate understanding of and enthusiasm for the Bard to modern and potentially unenthusiastic students low literacy prisoners Picture Do you have anything new by Shakespeare Atwood has a clear agenda Shakespeare was and is for everyone, literacy matters, and rehabilitation of criminals is possible She is also anti establishment especially politicians , and has mixed feelings about pretentious theatricality. Plot Felix Phillips is the Artistic Director of the Makeshiweg Festival, renowned for radical and very creative adaptations of the Bard After losing his wife and then small daughter, he throws himself into staging his beloved Tempest, only to be sacked and replaced by a friend, in league with another friend and colleague Felix retreats to an anonymous and solitary life, a hermit on a metaphorical island A decade later, he takes on the running of a literacy and theatre course at a prison In the fourth year, they do The Tempest That production is the main story The book ends with new beginnings for some but also shadows That strange mixture of nostalgia for the past mixed with joy for the future the joy of others. It helps if you re familiar with Shakespeare s original though perhaps not if you adore it , but the story stands on its own, explaining parallels where necessary, and there is a plot summary at the back. Triumvirate of Themes Grief, Revenge, and Pedagogy Although it repeatedly claims to be about revenge, it s at least as much about coping with grief, and about inspirational teaching Grief Felix lost his wife as she gave birth to their daughter, Miranda her name is no coincidence for Felix, or Atwood , who then died of meningitis when she was only three He rattles off a list of lost daughters in Shakespeare, noting that some of them were found Putting on The Tempest is not just a distraction, but a kind of reincarnation What he couldn t have in life he might catch sight of through his art. When that is taken away, he has nothing left Grief drives him to the brink of madness, maybe over the edge He is haunted by Miranda, and wants only two things The Tempest, and revenge, though he makes little attempt to achieve either Felix has no Caliban or Ariel, and his Miranda is a ghostly memory of his little girl, ever present, but aging with the passing years She is visible in twilight, an intravenous drip Just enough illusion to keep you alive He never had to worry about her She was beyond harm It would have been a shock to her, to learn that she did not exist Or not in the usual way. Years later, he is finally able to cross the threshold of a toy shop, only because she would have been too old to be interested by then, a world of damaged wishes, forlorn hopes So bright, so shining, so out of reach for him Revenge Felix monitors the careers of Tony and his fellow turncoat, Sal O Nally, as they move from theatrical success, to political office He follows them through the vibrations of the Web, playing spider to their butterflies. Although revenge is often

mentioned, Felix seems motivated by angry obsession until an opportunity presents itself for him to conjure a tempest of his own. And then it all gets rather silly.

Pedagogy

How to be a spectacular teacher. This was the most captivating and unexpected aspect for me. The book would be good for teachers of English lit and drama, and for their students, after they have read, seen, or performed the play. It's mostly set in a prison literacy class, where they do one Shakespeare play per course. Felix has no experience of teaching or prisons, but he's very aware of who he is dealing with. He's sensitive to possible anger and depression, and determined to make the daunting prospect of Shakespeare accessible, educational, and above all, enjoyable. He picks plays that involve disputes and betrayal the men can relate to, where bad behaviour is mostly punished, and there are new beginnings for many: Julius Caesar, Richard III, and Macbeth. It conjures up demons in order to exorcise them. Adopting a stage name is a new beginning in itself. Felix looks up the crimes of his students, but deliberately and consistently calls them actors, rather than prisoners or inmates. Before each course starts, he gives them a synopsis, with notes, character analysis, and glossary. In class, they can only swear using Shakespearean terms hence the title, *Hag Seed*, applied to Caliban, the witch's child. They are encouraged to adapt the words, as long as they don't change the plot hence rap lyrics. The performances are recorded, scene by scene, and eventually broadcast as a single show on the prison CCTV. Finally, they have to imagine what happens next for all the main characters. They have some radical ideas, well argued. Could Prospero be Caliban's father, and wrestle with difficult questions. Is goodness always weak. The course is a huge success with the actors, the audience, and thus the authorities. The limelight shone briefly and in an obscure corner, but it shone. For once in their lives, they loved themselves. But conjuring enthusiasm for *The Tempest*, with fairies and no battles, is a much bigger challenge. Felix leads them to consider superhero and alien alternatives, and gives them the challenge of finding the nine instances of imprisonment in the text, giving prisoner, prison, and jailer for each. p125 and p274. This aspect reminded me of other inspirational teachers, specifically, Hector, Irwin, and Mrs Lintott in Alan Bennett's *The History Boys* which I reviewed [HERE](#) and John Keating Robin Williams in *Dead Poets Society*. *Matryoshka Doll*. The island is a theatre. Prospero is the director. As are the the prison and Felix. Stories within stories have always been around. *The Tempest* is one such, but there seems to be a current vogue for multi-layered tellings like this: a play, within a play, within a novel, whose characters have many parallels with those in the central play. In fact, there are two versions of the central play, and even the real framing narrative is occasionally ambiguous about reality. [view spoiler](#) Felix's daughter is dead, but he is possibly not the only one to be aware of her presence. [8Handz](#) hears something a couple of times, and when his landlord family disappear at the end, one wonders if they ever existed outside his own mind. [hide spoiler](#)

A contemporary retelling of *The Tempest*, Atwood's novel is part of Hogarth Shakespeare Series that celebrates the Bard's 400th anniversary and, in my humble opinion, it than succeeds in preserving his timeless, thought provoking genius.

Instead of narrowing down the complexities of the original play, Atwood embraces them all, adding further layers of ambiguity that open up multiple levels of understanding of the plot and subplots, creating a play within a play in a Russian doll narrative structure. Like in Shakespeare's play, the shifting forces between forms of freedom and imprisonment are at the core of the story. Accordingly, Atwood sets the action in the Fletcher County Correctional Institute, an actual prison in Canada where a motley array of criminals play the parts of the famous characters directed by Felix Phillips, our Prospero and former acclaimed theatre director. Betrayed by his financial manager Tony, Felix has to wait for twelve years before he is ready to scheme a revenge that will harbor hilarious situations and heart-breaking moments seducing all kinds of audiences, from the most skeptical to the less demanding reader. Irreverently humorous, eclectic, and subtly mordant about the roles of institutions and politicians on prison policies and social reintegration, Atwood is at her best weaving wit, depth and teasing in this adaptation. The Bard's fierce literacy blends naturally with the slang, modern language used by the inmates with a touch of impish glee that is most sparkling when Felix persuades the actors to use only curse words that are present in the original text in exchange for smuggled cigarettes. Improbable expressions like "Scurvy awesome", "Way to red plague goor", "What the pied ninny is this", "sense", making all the convicts not only endearing but also irresistibly funny. An inventive tribute to the Bard that I bet he would have approved of. In spite of the fast-paced, almost casual style of Atwood's storytelling and the light-hearted teasing between the somewhat clichéd cast of characters, nothing is only one way in *Hag Seed*. Everything comes in layers of double and triple meaning. Felix is both victim and oppressor, masterful playwright and prisoner of his own text; the actors are potentially dangerous criminals but also dissenters in a corrupt, unfair system. The play itself, like the island or the prison, goes back and forth between illusion and truth, vengeance and forgiveness, confinement and liberating force, like a shifting reflection on a mirror that splits up the light rays into a prismatic rainbow. The last chapters of the novel are climatic, but they also invite the reader to careful meditation. Atwood seems to be asking whether we can ever get free from the inner prisons we build for ourselves. Grief for his lost baby daughter shackles Felix for twelve years, but her Ariel-like spirit whispers to him amidst the vast oceans of time and possibility, making the implausible real than reality itself. She seems to say that if you can suspend disbelief and allow the sprites and the goblins eavesdrop into your secret hopes and fears, the poison might slowly turn into sweet wine. But until when? What ultimately differentiates the villain from the hero is the courage to let go of those you retain at your side, to gather enough stamina to set them free, to send them back to the elements, to the magic of timeless limbo and bid them a well-meant farewell from our lonely shores, and keep on walking at a steady pace towards the place we belong.

Margaret Atwood reinterprets *La tempestad* de William Shakespeare en su *Semilla de la bruja*. Os pongo en situación enero de 2013, el señor Duke aparece en escena. Es un cincuenta que se entretiene montando funciones de teatro en el centro

correcional de Fletcher con los reclusos Siempre elige a Shakespeare, y ese a o toca La tempestad Qu buen hombre, verdad Los guardias incluso lo miran con benevolencia y vete t a saber si hasta con l stima Lo que no saben es que el se or Duke no existe Ese hombrecillo sonriente aficionado al teatro es en realidad Felix, cargado de odio, resentimiento y dolor Y de palabras, c mo duelen, a que s No s si ser n m s peligrosas que una pistola, lo que s s es que esta venganza va a explotar Normalmente me gusta echarle un ojo a las cr ticas de los libros que leo Coincidir n con las m as Qu aspectos destacar n m s Habr alg n personaje favorito Pero en esta ocasi n, no he tenido tiempo de mirar nada As que no s si La semilla de la bruja ha sido odiada, amada o ambas Quiz s un punto intermedio Tampoco s si la gente la compara con otros libros de la autora o si creen que no est a la altura del resto No s nada, lo que tengo claro es que a m me ha flipado Me ha parecido extra amente musical, no pod a dejar de pensar en una extensa partitura con Felix como int rprete, cu nta pasi n Mi experiencia ha sido como la de retrasar un orgasmo con un final apote sico Sud , sufr y dese tanto la venganza como l Siempre he admirado a las escritoras capaces de hacer que la gente se ponga del lado de la venganza, la ira, el odio, el lado oscuro de la humanidad Seamos justos, no est bamos todos deseando que Felix les diera una enorme patada en el culo Qu puedo decir, la venganza siempre ha sido mi plato favorito Supongo que soy peor que un escorpi n.

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