

**“NO MORE YIELDING BUT A DREAM”: POLITICS OF FICTION
AS TROMPE-L’OEIL IN *THE TEMPEST* AND *HAG-SEED***

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Abstract: *The two Prospero(s) of this pair of literary texts authorize the history, (re)stage the tempest, play chess with the characters: by mirroring, repeating and eventually decentering, the play and the rewriting’s cyclical mechanism undermine their cores in terms of the legitimacy of power. By taking the main characters of both literary texts as prominent ruler figures, the present study aims to explore the ways in which they alter the perception of reality through a consistent mirror effect, with references to the uncanny ‘politics’ and Belsey’s appropriation of trompe-l’oeil to literary studies.*

Keywords: *Hag-Seed, trompe-l’oeil, the uncanny, The Tempest, Shakespeare*

1. Introduction

Once wandering around the streets of a small town in Italy, Freud recalls, he finds himself in a narrow street where the windows of the houses are filled with “nothing but painted women” (1919: 11). Appalled by the scenery, he takes the first turn off this street in order to escape this disturbing vision. But the labyrinth-like narrow streets, totally alien to him, lead to the same street, which he tries to avoid once more. Nevertheless, he somehow finds himself in the same street for the third time. When Freud explains the uncanniness of repeating and recurring situations by drawing a line between “that sense of helplessness sometimes experienced in dreams” towards the end of “The Uncanny,” he shares this personal anecdote to illustrate the uncanniness of ‘the uncanny’ (idem: 10). Then, he concludes: “Other situations having in common with my adventure an involuntary return to the same situation, but which differ radically from it in other respects, also result in the same feeling of helplessness and of something uncanny.” (idem: 11).

As Freud explains, one of the sources of the uncanny is the cyclical motion of returning to the point of departure and, consequently, being exposed to the same image over and over again. The aim of my paper is to argue that both Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and Margaret Atwood’s *Hag-Seed* reveal a similar kind of motion. Via mirroring most of what constitutes the subject matter of their respective texts, the play and the rewriting direct characters and audience alike towards encountering the same image. The conceptual framework in discussing the literary works will be the politics of fiction as trompe-l’oeil in the context of the uncanny. In this comparative reading, as I argue, the effect of trompe-l’oeil serves to augment the uncanny effect. The first part of my analysis will focus on the

relationship between the concepts of the uncanny and trompe-l'oeil, more specifically on how the effects of this pair of concepts are combined and demonstrated in the literary works under discussion. In the textual analysis part, the uncanny cyclical motion of Freud's statement, as I claim, finds its correspondence in the form of narration in *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed* through a consistent mirror effect and a distorted sense of reality. Both Prospero and Felix authorize the history, (re)stage the tempest, play chess with the characters: they mirror actions and characters within themselves and in their narratives. In the end, both of them get back to where they began, by completing their circular motion.

2. Slippery ground of reality: trompe-l'oeil and the uncanny

Originally being a visual art technique, the *trompe-l'oeil* is defined as "something that misleads or deceives the senses" (Merriam-Webster). Catherine Belsey (2008) introduces this concept in the fields of literature and psychoanalysis in her study "Love as Trompe-l'oeil: Taxonomies of Desire in *Venus and Adonis*". Named after the title of Louis-Léopold Boilly's 19th century painting, the technique is thought to have originated in an Ancient Greek story about two rival painters: Zeuxis and Parrhasius (Taws 2019). Zeuxis depicts the grapes in his painting in such a realistic way that even birds fly towards the picture. In response, his rival Parrhasius challenges Zeuxis with his painting of a curtain, which is depicted in such a way that even Zeuxis asks him to reveal what is behind it. In the end, Parrhasius becomes the winner. The curtain, in this respect, reflects the curiosity that the painting evokes. It becomes an object of mystery through the absence of what is behind it; in Belsey's (2008: 34) words, it "tantalizes".

In Belsey's account of appropriating the trompe-l'oeil, the concept is explained as the representative of a promise without fulfilment. In the context of *Venus and Adonis*, Belsey argues that the effect of trompe-l'oeil is demonstrated by "the promise of a presence that it also withholds" (ibid). Just like in Zeuxis' painting, where "the enticing picture of the grapes yields no pleasure for the stomach," Venus's desire and longing for Adonis' physical appearance remain unsatisfied all through the poem (idem: 35). In order to enjoy the trompe-l'oeil effect of the text, Belsey (34) stresses that we need to be deceived and, in turn, acknowledge our deception. In this way, it becomes possible to evaluate a text in itself as "a kind of trompe-l'oeil, moving undecidably between modes of address, and sustaining the desire of the reader in the process." (idem: 35). The sustained desire of the reader is left unsatisfied at the end by the sustained action of the narrative: after his/her willing deception, the reader is left with nothing but a spectacle that fails to gratify with an enclosing action. Thus, the narrative goes full circle with the beginning, without finalizing the action and satisfying Venus' desire. As Belsey (53) concludes: "Itself a trompe-l'oeil, moving between genres, unclosed, unfurnished with a final signified, *Venus and Adonis* sustains the desire of the reader-critic to the degree that it refuses to yield the gratification of a final meaning (...)."

As Belsey clarifies, the trompe-l'oeil in literature signifies certain characteristics of unfinalized narrative action and sustained promise on the reader's side. In this respect, the trompe-l'oeil in literature can be demonstrated as the narrative's cyclical motion by going a full circle between the beginning and the body of the action. In doing so, the narrative faces the reader with similar modes of address, with mirroring actions and characters. In these terms, the narrative turns in

upon itself through multiplying the same character traits and mirroring plot outlines: not progressively, but cyclically. This kind of cyclical motion blurs any lines between fiction and reality, while invalidating points of reference in fiction by doubling, repeating, and creating counterparts of characters and events.

3. “Ay, there’s the rub”: the mechanism of *The Tempest*

Through mirroring effects both in *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed*, this cyclical mechanism destabilizes reference points of reality in characters and actions. By the same token, the source of the uncanny is often explained as “intellectual uncertainty” since Jentsch’s (1997: 15) take on the subject. Furthermore, in Royle’s (2003: 134) clarification, the concept is associated with its “undo[ing] any certainty about what is real and what is not”. The uncanny feeling, in this respect, springs from the interweaving of imagination and reality in the narratives. By exposing the reader to similar situations in multiple characters, the play and the rewriting undermine the centrality and meaning of the main stories; thus, they lead to uncertainty and ambiguity in the reader’s experience.

My claim is that *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed* can be discussed as texts woven onto the combination of *trompe-l’oeil* and the uncanny. Naturally, this is not to attribute intentionality to their respective authors, both creators of masterpieces who cannot and should not be suspected of such theoretical designs. Nevertheless, the consistent mirroring effect in both of them, accomplished via repetitions, parallels, and equivalent situations cannot be overlooked. Marjorie Garber elaborates on the pattern of *The Tempest*, underlining that the play’s mechanism is “to repeat, with a difference, all the main events of the past (tempest, usurpation, bondage, rule of the island). As they are repeated, each is interrogated, reversed, and undone.” (2004: 862). Through this mechanism, all the characters, events, and eventually the play in itself are decentred. In *The Tempest*, all action takes place under Prospero’s wand and for the sake of Prospero’s motivations: his motivations are clarified as his wish to take revenge on his brother, be reinstated in his seat of power, and marry his daughter into power. In order to achieve his goal, Prospero the magician goes to all lengths.

The play begins *in medias res*, so that anyone who encounters the text is an imposter to the play’s mechanism compared to Prospero. Even though the play starts with the storm scene, Prospero’s authorizing their history to Miranda in act I, scene 2 turns the wheels of the play’s mechanism. He presents the story of his betrayal in a literal description, as Kott (1964: 246) contends, “with a dry precision, as if in a history text-book; it has been unfolded like a formula, like a mechanism”. In this way, it becomes possible to trace and compare this formulation in subsequent mirror stories. In this scene especially, Prospero’s telling Miranda the story of their past is a way of vindicating and shaping their current reality. His authorization of the past becomes a way to manipulate the present; and he does indeed, manipulate the present through creating a slippery ground of reality, by mirroring characters and events in the conduct of his magic. There are numerous mirroring situations and characters within the plotline which are created via Prospero’s authoritative magic: Caliban and Prospero, Caliban and Ariel, Prospero and Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian, Miranda and Claribel, Prospero and Sycorax, Claribel and Sycorax, Ferdinand and Caliban; Trinculo, Stephano and Caliban mirror Prospero and Antonio. In the images of all these doubling and mirroring characters, one can find the remnants of the other one with slight

alterations. As Nicholas Royle (2003: 183) discusses the uncanniness of experiencing *déjà vu*, by referring to Havelock Ellis' definition on the subject:

the feeling of *déjà vu* involves 'the impression that the present reality has a double'. *Déjà vu* is the experience of the double *par excellence*: it is the experience of experience as double. There can be no uncanny, perhaps, without some experience of this duplicity. (183)

Thus, the notion of having doubles of the present reality undermines the "sense of familiar ground" in acknowledging the play (idem: 178). In encountering resembling cases in various characters, the reader experiences that peculiar feeling of *déjà vu*, in Freud's words, "of having had the same experience once before or of having once before been in the same place" (qtd. in Royle 2003: 181). In this respect, being exposed to the same image over and over again without finalizing any individual matter adds to the play's cyclical mechanism. Only after Prospero tells the story of his past, are the other stories introduced as a way of making parallels between characters. In this way, to give an example, Antonio's way of usurping Prospero's dukedom becomes strangely equivalent to Prospero's seizing control of the island from Caliban. On the other hand, Prospero's control over the island and its subjects through his magician-rulership mirrors Sycorax's administration in the past. Through all these mirrors, the play continuously offers counterparts, decentres itself and shifts its focus.

Another step in Prospero's creation of a slippery reality for the characters is through their senses. In order to operate his magic, Prospero distorts the way characters perceive themselves and each other. Miranda, who has never seen another human being except for her father and Caliban, mistakes Ferdinand for "a spirit" (I.2.410); Ferdinand, who has been cunningly placed on a different part of the island and 'directed' to fall in love with Miranda, exclaims in wonder: "Most sure, the goddess / On whom these airs attend!" (I.2.423-424). Ariel, by being able to raise tempests and control elements, is Prospero's "brave spirit" who is motivated by the hope of freedom (I.2.205). By the same token, in order to keep Ariel under his control, Prospero, the author of the story, refreshes Ariel's memory about Sycorax's evil nature and her misdoings in the past, by underlining what a wicked witch she was. Caliban, on the other hand, has been turned into a manual worker by the force of Prospero's magic, because they "cannot miss him" (I.2.311). Prospero never ceases to remind Caliban of his true nature consistently throughout the play, saying "A devil, a born devil on whose nature / Nurture can never stick" (IV.1.188-189). Thus, he manipulates Caliban's grasp of himself and his environment to the point where he is made incapable of perceiving any other treatment by others or an alternative force to function. To illustrate this, when he meets Trinculo and Stephano, Caliban can only conceive of himself and Ariel through their relationship to Prospero: "*a spirit of his*, and to torment me / For bringing wood in slowly." (emphasis added; II.2.15-16).

In parallel with these examples of perception, there is an ambiguity in the characters' sense of reality: all throughout the play, this ambiguity is constantly demonstrated via the dichotomies between consciousness/sobriety and sleep/drunkenness. As Prospero puts it in the unforgettable "our little life / Is rounded with a sleep", the play's circular shape is girdled with the state of sleep (IV.1.157-158). This notion connects to Garber's (2004: 861) observation that "the whole play takes place during the mariners' dream, the dream of the uninformed,

and the uninvolved". Thus, *The Tempest* mingles reality with imagination and the notion of reality gets contaminated by delusiveness. From the moment Prospero enchants Miranda to sleep after authorizing their history to her, the play enters the realm of that strange mixture of delusive reality. As in numerous scenes in the play, in Miranda's sleep (I.2), in the sleep of the nobles (II.1), and the drunkenness of the fools (II.2, III.2), the state of loose consciousness becomes a way for Prospero to work his magic and put his plan into practice. Immediately after Miranda's enchantment, Ariel arrives and delivers his updates on the storm. During the nobles' sleep, Antonio and Sebastian plot against Alonso's life and kingdom. Also, in their considerably less than sober state, Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano decide to get control of the island by overthrowing Prospero, thus recreating the previous usurpation act in Prospero's life. Caliban advises his allies to depose Prospero in his sleep: "Why, as I told thee, 'tis a custom with him, / I' th' afternoon to sleep. There thou mayst brain him, / Having first seized his books" (III.2.85-87).

During all these moments of 'unconsciousness', the play opens a way for disarranging reality and power. A significant moment for observing the transformation of Caliban to his former self via intoxication and the continuation of the cyclical motion occurs when Stephano makes Caliban drink wine to get him under his control. Thus, Caliban's sense of reality is altered, although his subordinate position would continue, albeit under a different master. Stephano mimics Prospero's pattern of behaviour towards Caliban at the beginning. Just like he served Prospero at his best, showed him the sources of water, picked up berries, and gathered wood for him, Caliban offers to transfer his services to the new master (II.2.153-157). This notion echoes Caliban's speech in act I, scene 2, stating Prospero's well-treatment towards him when he first came to the island (I.2.332-334/336). These parallel scenes demonstrate how easily the rule can change hands when one manipulates reality and follows some particular paths in acquiring and legitimizing power. Especially in the plot scene, when Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban conspire against Prospero's rule of the island, the play once again undoes and decentres itself by introducing a parodic double of *The Tempest* story. Hence, by representing an alternative, comic version of Prospero in the character of Stephano, the play opens a way to criticize and mock the story and revenge plan of Prospero. This mock coup d'état plan against Prospero mirrors other plans of overthrow in the play, e.g. Prospero's dispossession of Caliban, Antonio's taking over his brother's dukedom, Sebastian and Antonio's strike against Alonso's sovereignty, and Prospero's final taking back his dukedom from his brother, in alliance with Alonso. By mirroring, repeating, and eventually parodying, the play's cyclical mechanism undermines its core in terms of the legitimacy of power.

4. "Who's there?": the mirror(s) of *Hag-Seed*

In terms of representation of the slippery reality, the scope of Atwood's rewriting carries its "vertical heritage", coming from the original play (Maalouf 2000: 86). By placing *The Tempest* mechanism all over the plotline and in different layers of the main character, the play's story is grasped by and scattered about the narrative. While we can elaborate on Prospero's character as a magician-ruler figure, Atwood represents Felix's character as a poly-Prospero in the rewriting. There are multiple Prospero(s) in the character of Felix: one can take him as a direct counterpart of Prospero as the conductor of the storm in the Shakespearean

text, but, at the same time, as both the director/instructor and the actor of *The Tempest* in the rewriting.

Atwood's rewriting of the play, *Hag-Seed* tells the story of *The Tempest* in all its layers. Just like the original play, the novel begins *in medias res*, with the prologue of the production with Fletcher Correctional Players. Felix, the main character, conveys the story of his past in fragments and in the narrative present. He is described as a lonely man who lost his wife, and then his daughter, Miranda. Felix used to be the artistic director of experimental productions, especially Shakespearean plays. When personal misfortune strikes, his closest colleague, Tony, offers to take the burden of dealing with the administrative jobs on Felix's behalf. While preparing for a production of *The Tempest*, Felix is deposed from his position under the fabricated pretext of having lost touch with reality. Behind this deposition plan are Tony and Sal O'Nally, the director of the Festival. While leaving the building, Lonnie Gordon, (the counterpart character of Shakespeare's Gonzalo in the narrative) gives the props of Prospero's character to Felix "as a memento," in a gesture evocative of Gonzalo's supplying magic books and instruments to Prospero for his survival and power (Atwood 2017: 26). After this, Felix starts putting together his elaborate revenge, which also serves as a means of resurrecting his daughter.

After leaving his job at the theatre, Felix finds himself an abandoned house. He takes a new identity, as Mr Duke, for the sake of "hav[ing] an alter ego (...) without his own melancholy history," and rents the place; he then spends his next twelve years with the ghost of his late daughter (idem: 37). During that period of time, he follows Tony and Sal online and initiates his laborious revenge. On his ninth year, he takes the job of drama teacher of the Fletcher Correctional Players at the prison, with the help of Estelle, the professor who supervises the programme. On his twelfth year, learning that that year's performance, *The Tempest*, will be attended by Tony and Sal, who have become Minister of Heritage and Minister of Justice, respectively, he considers this performance the perfect setting for putting his revenge plan into practice.

In the plotline of the rewriting, *The Tempest* mechanism is activated in the main character's different layers of composition, with Felix reflecting Prospero, in an excellent, creative example of the *mise-en-abyme* technique. Before the span of the narrative, the reader is indirectly informed by the narrative voice that Felix had lost his daughter while he was preparing for the production of *The Tempest*. His own Miranda, is thus figuratively lost in *The Tempest*, besides being literally lost to life. This loss triggers a desire to bend the rules of reality and resurrect the dead; the narrative voice announces that "He would create a fit setting for this reborn Miranda he was willing into being." (idem: 15-16). By restaging *The Tempest* in the following years, Felix aims to bring his daughter back to life, as well as to take revenge; this bears a strong similarity to Prospero's conducting the storm so as to give his daughter the life that she deserves and to avenge himself. Felix is betrayed by Tony, his most trusted, when he least expects it, just like Prospero is deprived of his position by his very brother, while engaged in his study of magic. Eventually, just like Prospero's life in the enchanted island, Felix loses his former position and is reduced to live in an abandoned house, under a fake identity. In planning revenge on his enemies by restaging *The Tempest*, Felix benefits from the identity of Mr Duke and is served by an inmate, 8Handz, with the technical illusory effects and Estelle with the bureaucratic issues; together they form the rewriting's composite Ariel.

The second layer of Felix's character composition is related to his being the director of the play both at Makeshiweg Festival and Fletcher Correctional Players and hence the conductor of the storm both in his personal and professional life. In the third layer, he is the actor of *The Tempest*, giving life to Prospero with the help of his prison acting company. Thus, the rewriting mixes the reality of the original play with illusion at different levels of Felix's character. Thus, on the one hand, Felix's character is wholly integrated into Prospero's within the scope of the rewriting, and he truly reflects Prospero's story at any given particular layer. On the other hand, the narrative's way of interweaving the play's story at different levels of Felix's character disturbs any "familiar ground" in the perception of his story (Royle 2003: 178). When the reader looks for the main body of the rewriting in terms of a direct counterpart to *The Tempest* story, that counterpart shifts its place all the time. Likewise, whenever one intends to grasp the story of the original play in the rewriting, it slips away and changes its place.

In line with this explanation, Jan Kott's analogy on the nature of Shakespearean drama corresponds to the mirroring mechanisms of the play and its rewriting:

Shakespearean dramas are constructed not on the principle of unity of action, but on the principle of analogy, comprising a double, treble, or quadruple plot, which repeats the same basic theme; they are a system of mirrors, as it were, both concave and convex, which reflect, magnify and parody the same situation. (Kott 1964: 237).

In this respect, the mirrors in the play and the rewriting can be evaluated in two distinct principles of convex and concave mirrors. Prospero's mirror is a convex mirror: by placing Prospero and his magic at its centre, it reflects the whole world of Prospero by enabling the audience to have a wider view of the island and its components as strange equivalents to each other. This convex mirror of Prospero's gives a broader view of the environment, as it enables one to see everything that encircles the one at the centre. In this case, the one at the centre, Prospero himself, is the constructor of the view with the help of his magic. In the image he constructs, all the other participants also mirror each other. On the other hand, Felix's mirror is a concave mirror: his mirror enables the reader to view his multi-layered character at an extremely close range. This kind of layering in Felix's character blurs the lines between imagination and reality in the narrative. Thus, Felix intertwines his character at the theatre and in real life by undoing any certainty in perception and reversing the points of reference in terms of the reality of his story. The more closely one looks at his image, the more the layers in his character get mixed with each other. In this way, the images he represents become indistinguishable from one another, and so do the various layers of character composition.

In line with the original play, the rewriting further maintains that slippery ground of reality through particular points in the plotline, as well as in its form of narrative. Different from Prospero's direct authorization of the history at the beginning of the play, Felix's past is conveyed to the reader through his fragmented account and an ambivalent omnipresent narrative voice, and with the help of analeptic and proleptic leaps. In the plotline of the rewriting, Felix's life in the abandoned house is accompanied by the ghost of his daughter. However, his way of apprehending Miranda's ghostly-figure is reflected accurately and down-to-earth, to the point of de-mystification and ambiguous treatment. This

representation of Miranda's dubious presence evokes the uncanny, as Jentsch (1997: 11) underlines, in its relation to "doubt as to whether an apparently living being is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate". The animism aspect of the uncanny that Jentsch points out arises in the rewriting with the help of Felix's attributing a kind of liveliness to his daughter's ghost and is further supported by the narrative voice. In this way, the narrative voice does not vindicate or refuse Felix's attitude towards the figure of Miranda; therefore, the degree of uncanniness in her presence increases via this voice. As the narrative voice says: "He turns: Miranda's sitting at the table, a little pensively because she won't be seeing much of him now that it's January and the spring semester is about to begin." (Atwood 2017: 61). By conveying the description of Felix's environment as well as inner voice, the narrative voice neither explains nor rejects Miranda's ghostly presence, thus augmenting the uncanny effect. Through this voice, Miranda's ghost gains visibility, emotional capacity and physical motion: "Once he's tucked in and turned out the light, Miranda coalesces in the darkness. "Goodnight," he says to her. Does she brush the air above his forehead lightly with her hand? Surely she does." (119).

The slippery ground of the plotline reality is supported through each character's taking his role extremely personally in the production. Felix puts his vested interests to the forefront as his starting point in the production: taking revenge and resurrecting his daughter. To put his plan into practice, he chooses Anne-Marie Greenland, the actress selected to play Miranda in the previous production: "Through her, his Miranda would come back to life." (16). Thus, thorough Anne-Marie, Felix attributes a body to his daughter's ghost. Being the only female actress in his acting company, Anne-Marie is protected by Felix, in a fatherly manner. In the rehearsals of the acting company – similar to Prospero's shielding Miranda from Caliban or setting boundaries between Ferdinand and her before marriage – Felix worries about Anne-Marie's romantic relationships and intends to protect her from the potentialities of "[v]arious Calibans, scowling and muscular: earthy, potentially violent" (84). As she observes: "You're in character already," says Anne-Marie, grinning. "Playing my overprotective dad." (141). Felix's way of mingling imagination/theatre and reality here is beyond the concept of artistic immersion, due to his motivations and his way of holding onto reality. In Anne-Marie, he finds the lost body of his Miranda; and she is "released from her glass coffin... given a life." (41).

Also, Felix's way of connecting with his role is not limited to his profession. From the beginning, as the narrative details, there is no line of demarcation between his playing the role of Prospero in real life and in the theatre. Furthermore, in directing the play, Felix is ever-anxious about controlling each and every aspect of the production, plagued by the fear of possibly losing control; consequently, the piece of drama he puts on stage is not about demonstrating his professional talent, but about the very meaning of what he shapes his life around: revenge and resurrection. In this respect, his work in prison goes far beyond – or below, depending on the perspective of the critic - the purpose of rehabilitating the group of prisoners. Due to a slight alteration coming from his actors, Felix feels like his control over the play, hence his life, is slipping through his hands: "Ha. He's cutting me out, thinks Felix. Elbowing me aside. Making a bigger part for himself. How appropriate for Antonio." (155). Through this example and many others, he supports his way of merging his character with the textual identity of Prospero.

In view of all the above-mentioned examples of identification, the rewriting makes the line between life and theatre, reality and illusion, indistinguishable. Rather than decentralizing reality through offering parallels and counterparts in the plotline, as is the case with *The Tempest*, the rewriting accomplishes the reversal of the sense of reality through interweaving the play's story within the character of Felix and his world at different levels. Consequentially, one cannot discern the essence of the character independently from the play's mechanism. If we are to take *The Tempest* story as the main reference point of reality in the rewriting, *Hag-Seed* shifts its focus, decentres, undoes, and deconstructs that concrete ground by offering multiple stories as equivalent to *The Tempest*, without really creating and representing a counterpart story.

The aspect of *trompe-l'oeil* in terms of offering a promise without accomplishment is relatable to the play's and the rewriting's supplying a slippery ground of reality and not concluding the action in their respective texts: thus, they both lead their readers towards a kind of "intellectual [un]certainty," in Jentsch's (1997: 15) definition, in relating the mirroring characters and events in the plotline to a conclusion. On the audience's side, the mechanisms of the narratives lead to a certain feeling of *déjà vu* which defamiliarizes the reality of the image that they encounter. Eventually, like "the enticing picture of the grapes, yielding no pleasure to the stomach" in Zeuxis' painting, both narratives arrive at their points of departure (Belsey 2008: 35). Both Prospero and Felix deconstruct the ground of reality of themselves and other characters in order to be restored to their former power; however, they also both return to where they begin their journeys. In the end, the argument goes back to *trompe-l'oeil*, by the main characters' and finally the narratives' drawing a full circle.

In Prospero's case, his being the author of history shifts the characters' reality sense for his own sake - taking revenge by restoring himself to his powerful state. However, he ends up by mirroring his former betrayal by his brother. His collaboration with his enemy Alonso thus becomes a 'recoup,' rather than an act of revenge. Just like Antonio did in the past, he recoups his dukedom and loses his daughter, in parallel to Alonso's pseudo-loss of his son. Also, he signals his near-future death, saying "thence retire me to my Milan, where / Every third thought shall be my grave." (V.1.310-311). His return to Milan will not only bring him back to the point of departure, but also underlines the endlessness of the cyclical motion. Felix, on the other hand, ends his narrative by being restored to his former position in the Festival. However, neither the production nor reacquiring his status as festival director can resurrect his Miranda from the storm. The narrative voice expresses this sentiment at the end: "He gets his dukedom back, but he's not very interested in it any more. So, he wins, but he also loses." (273). The revenge plans of Prospero and Felix, in this respect, become "an intractable passion" like Venus' desire (Belsey 2008: 36). In line with this suggestion, staging the history of the world within textual spans, no matter how elaborate, signifies nothing. There is no appetite left either for the characters, or for the audience. After the willing deception, the reader is left with nothing but a spectacle that fails to vindicate and enclose the action.

5. Conclusion

In considering certain aspects of the two texts that have been the focus of this paper, my argument was to combine the concepts of the uncanny and literary *trompe l'oeil*. *Trompe-l'oeil*, in my argument, serves to explain the uncanny view of reality in *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed*. Through their mirroring mechanisms, the two texts decentre reality by exposing their audiences and characters to the same recurrent images. In terms of the conceptual combination between the uncanny and *trompe-l'oeil*, *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed* are brought together through their consistent mirror effects. In *The Tempest*, characters and events mirror each other: the play repeats and restages histories of the characters. In *Hag-Seed*, *The Tempest* story is mirrored within the character of Felix. In this way, the mirror effect in itself leads to experiencing the uncanny: therefore, characters and events shift their point of reference, and consequently, the line between reality and illusion/imagination gets blurred. Both the play and the rewriting, in this respect, gain a dream-like quality, in which both the characters and the spectator/reader cannot find their way out until Prospero's "charms are all overthrown," and he "sets [them] free" (V.1.319/338).

In this vicious circle, his magic decentres the play's universe, destroys any concrete ground of reality, and traps the characters and the audience to encounter the same image all the time. Prospero and Felix, as the prominent ruler figures of their texts, authorize history and reshape truth for their own vested interests. The image of the circle in these narratives, in this respect, eliminates the characters' free will. In this context, any possible allegiance to the main story events becomes impossible due to the impositions dictated by the protagonists. There is of course, a painful similarity here to the ever-changing and slippery ground of the modern world, where reality is sold to people by those who author history, pre-packaged and ready for consumption. Thus, the people of the modern world cannot hold on to a concrete reality except for that which is induced, imposed to them. In connection with the worlds that are created by Prospero and Felix, the rest of the characters, including us, as the audience, cannot grasp the familiarity of things as we used to. The sense of reality in *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed*, in this way, becomes a way to approach our modern world reality: it is for us "to leverage their restless interrogation and reimagine them for our own world." (Smith 2019: 319).

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