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Shakespeare, Other Shakespeares and West Indian Popular Culture:

A Reading of the Erotics of Errantry and Rebellion in *Troilus and Cressida*

Curdella Forbes

For some readers, my title no doubt begs a question: What has Shakespeare got to do with any kind of popular culture, much less with West Indian popular culture? The question is an obvious one, given Shakespeare's identity as a tool of enculturation in England's colonial enterprise and as a symbol of elite intellectualism, the latter thanks to the mysticism with which we all too often approach the teaching of his work in our schools. There is a kind of tacit agreement that to acquire Shakespeare, even a schoolbook smattering of him, is somehow to arrive in at least the outer halls of literary respectability. Shakespeare, complete with obfuscating Arden editions and the astonishing hype of centuries of bardolatry orchestrated from outside, comes loaded with enormous mystique and status, which automatically transfer to his possessor.

Yet the average sixth form student of literature, who may conceivably be drawn by the mystique, is often impatient with the archaism of Shakespeare's language, the

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perceived foreignness of his humour and the seeming irrelevance of his concerns. Often, students have a sense that in being forced to “do” Shakespeare, they are in effect venerating the emperor’s new clothes.¹ The problem is aggravated by the fact that popular theatre in the West Indies, committed to the development of an indigenous drama, has not since mid-century had a major tradition of performing Shakespeare, although pockets of Shakespeare performance do exist in popular theatre here and there.² Apart from erratic exposure to Hollywood films and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) productions, students’ experience of Shakespeare remains largely on the page.

Shakespeare, then, hangs uneasily in the space occupied by colonial albatrosses that we have not quite mustered the will to shake off, but have not been able to assimilate and transform as we have done other “legacies”, such as cricket. In this we are not alone. Much of the rest of the postcolonial world also finds itself struggling with the terms of how, if at all, to retain and appropriate the peculiar curse or legacy that is Shakespeare. In our retention of “the Bard”, we remain participants in a dynamic network of politico-economic activity that harks back to the seventeenth century and is perhaps more alive today than it ever was, being more extensive, more comprehensive and more far-flung, encompassing not only collusive colony and ex-colony but all of Europe itself.

Brown and Fearon and Bristol have commented extensively on the extraordinary phenomenon called the Shakespeare industry, showing how it has been at different times and in various contexts manipulated by national and sectarian interests worldwide, not only as an ideological tool but, more immediately, as an economic one.³ Quite simply, Shakespeare today is one of the world’s massive income earners. It makes sense to those that rule the economic empires of the world to keep the Shakespeare mystique circulating, and it is useful to bear in mind that whatever our

1 I recall discussions from as far back as the 1970s, both here and in Britain, as to whether Shakespeare should not in fact be abolished in schools. In 1993 the British controversy took an interesting turn when the John Major government announced a new Shakespeare policy in which, in the interests of “national feeling”, not only Shakespeare but specific plays and teaching approaches were mandatory. See G. Holderness and A. Murphy “Shakespeare’s England: Britain’s Shakespeare”, in *Shakespeare and National Culture*, ed. J.J. Joughin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).

2 An example is the Theatre of Mount Hope Medical Sciences Complex in Trinidad where playwright/director/producer Davlin Thomas includes “indigenized” productions of Shakespeare in his repertoire.

3 Ivor Brown and George Fearon, *This Shakespeare Industry: Amazing Monument* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939); Michael D. Bristol, *Big Time Shakespeare* (New York: Routledge, 1996). See also Lynda Boose and Richard Burt, *Shakespeare the Movie* (New York: Routledge, 1997) and Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier, eds., *Adaptations of Shakespeare: A Critical Anthology of Plays from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2000).

motives for retaining Shakespeare on our school curricula, we serve the empires' economic ends.

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The ways in which popular taste has been exploited in this context have been well explored by Bristol, but they will be self-evident to anyone familiar with the Hollywood Shakespeares of the 1990s: Michelle Pfeiffer's *Midsummer Night's Dream*; Leonardo Di Caprio's *Romeo and Juliet*; Gwyneth Paltrow and Joseph Fiennes's *Shakespeare in Love*, scripted by Tom Stoppard; Helena Bonham Carter's *Twelfth Night*; and Arnold Schwarzenegger's unlikely *Last Action Hero*, with its *Hamlet* rewritings. And of course there are Kenneth Branagh's negotiations between the highbrow and the popular in his Renaissance Theatre's productions of plays such as *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Henry V* and *Hamlet*. What these productions have demonstrated is that Shakespeare is able, quite comfortably, to traverse the divide between literary "high culture" and what Carolyn Cooper refers to as the "vulgar body" of "low" popular culture.⁴ The Shakespeare of the literary enclave transforms into the Shakespeare of the mass market, where effectiveness of entertainment is arguably the high priest of value.

But beyond this, the box office success of the Hollywood productions reminds us of another Shakespeare, the Shakespeare of Elizabethan and Jacobean popular culture, out of which the plays were produced even as they reciprocally served to create its fabric. This culture, sidelined or erased in traditional universalist readings, infuses the play texts. Despite their myriad cultural crossings and transformations, we are still able to come face to face, even through a glass darkly, with the ghostly body of the plays' live audience during the playwright's lifetime. It is with this ghostly body – the reality of the ordinary men and women for whom the plays held a wide appeal and who (not the aristocratic intelligentsia of academic fiction) constituted Shakespeare's principal audience – that this paper is at one level concerned. (Indeed, ironically, it is largely the success of the plays among this audience that brought them to the attention of the imperial establishment as possible agents of enculturation.)

At another level, of more immediate concern to West Indian readers, the paper is also concerned with the synergies between that audience, on the one hand, and West Indian popular sensibility and performativity, on the other. The project of the paper is twofold: first, to suggest resonances between Elizabethan/Jacobean popular culture, as

4 Carolyn Cooper, *Noises in the Blood: Orality, Gender and the "Vulgar" Body of Jamaican Popular Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1994).

embodied in Shakespeare's plays and audiences, and West Indian popular culture, with which it shares a history; and second, to demonstrate that far from representing an alien culture, Shakespeare's play texts have a great deal in common with West Indian (post) modernity and West Indian modes of representation, and this in part because of the commonalities of history to which I allude above.

On the basis of this second point, as well as on the basis of a historicist approach to reading, I argue for a rethinking of our approach to the teaching of Shakespeare's plays in West Indian schools. I suggest an approach based on a concept of translation, in which translation encompasses not just the (para)/linguistic but, more importantly, the cultural aspects of reception/interpretation. Such an approach bridges the artificial aspects of the gaps between receiver in the present and text from the past, and it provides the plays with the generic requirement of which in our teaching they have been too often deprived – audiences instead of readers. It is partly as we begin to invoke the image of the audience that we not only become audiences ourselves but also begin to understand Shakespeare's connection with popular culture.

This "other" Shakespeare that I see as having links with West Indian popular culture is neither the creature of a symbolic statement nor a mere argument but a factual reality of West Indian cultural practice, with roots in the colony's beginnings. If the question "What has Shakespeare to do with popular culture?" is obvious, so too are its answers. Loomba and Orkin point to documents that show ships' crews on their way to New World colonies being inducted into Shakespeare by way of performances of *Hamlet* on board, this in an attempt to diffuse and contain energies that might otherwise be expressed in mutiny and rebellion.⁵ It is entirely likely that even if the specific instances cited by Loomba and Orkin were isolated ones, members of ships' crews (not to mention captains and passengers) generally had some acquaintance with Shakespeare. Ships' crews were often part of the ranks of poor whites with whom the slaves rubbed shoulders during the early stages of British colonization. Sylvia Wynter suggests that the contact of those early years saw the most dynamic aspect of the merging of African and European folk forms, a preliminary stage in the creation of the new "indigenous" culture of the West Indies.⁶ It requires no stretch of the imagination

5 Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, *Postcolonial Shakespeares* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

6 See, for example, her essay "Jonkunu in Jamaica: Towards the Interpretation of Folk Dance as Cultural Process", *Jamaica Journal* 4, no. 2 (1970): 34–48. Wynter replaces the popular concept "creolization" with the concept "indigenization" as a way of describing the process of Caribbean cultural development. For Wynter, "creolization" belongs to a Europeanist epistemology, in which "the dominated people adapt elements from the dominant one in order to obtain prestige or status" (p. 39). "Indigenization" is "a more secretive process by which the dominated

to suggest that the absorption of Shakespeare by the sailor-colonists may, along with other aspects of their cultural consciousness and practice, have formed part of the cultural legacy of the West Indies at the grass-roots level.

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Nunley and Bettelheim note that several nineteenth-century chroniclers allude to the incorporation of elements of Shakespeare's plays into slave masquerades on several islands.⁷ In his *Journal of A Residence Among the Negroes in the West Indies*,⁸ Monk Lewis remarks on one slave's insistence that his child (the slave's) be baptized "Shakespeare"; this perhaps indicates the kudos the name carried. More recently, Benítez-Rojo and Fayer and McMurray have drawn attention to Carriacou's still current Shakespeare Mas, which, based primarily on performance/recitation of *Julius Caesar*, is a major part of Carriacou's indigenous carnival celebration.⁹ In Fayer and McMurray's words, it is a living example of "a syncretic artefact".¹⁰ Recitations from Shakespeare plays often formed the substance of the self-aggrandizing speech making of tea meetings and the Actor Boy tradition in Jamaica.¹¹ Errol Hill suggests that the Jamaican slaves probably picked up speeches and lines as they sat in the balconies of theatres awaiting their masters and mistresses whom they had to transport home after performances.¹² As Richardson Wright's *Revels in Jamaica 1682–1838* indicates, nineteenth-century Jamaica boasted a thriving theatre which often included Shakespeare either in its own repertoire or by courtesy of visiting troupes from America.¹³

In all of this, it is useful not to forget that via the King James version of the Bible, Shakespeare's language was possibly more familiar to the churchgoing slave and later the emancipated folk population than it is to the educated classes in present-day West Indian society. And what they might not have understood in terms of literal meaning,

culture survives and resists" (p. 39). Roger Abrahams also notes synergies between English and African folk forms in the production of West Indian folk culture. See "The Shaping of Folklore Traditions in the British West Indies", *Journal of Inter American Studies* 9 (1967): 456–80.

7 John W. Nunley and Judith Bettelheim, *Caribbean Festival Arts: Each and Every Bit of Difference* (Seattle: St Louis Museum, in association with University of Washington Press, 1988).

8 Monk Lewis, *Journal of A Residence Among the Negroes in the West Indies* (London: John Murray, 1861).

9 Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James Maraniss (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Joan Fayer and Joan McMurray, "The Carriacou Mas as Syncretic Artefact", *Journal of American Folklore* 112, no. 443 (Winter 1999): 58–73 and "Shakespeare in Carriacou", *Caribbean Studies* 27, nos. 3–4 (1994): 242–54.

10 Fayer and McMurray, "The Carriacou Mas as Syncretic Artefact", 58ff.

11 Nunley and Bettelheim, *Caribbean Festival Arts*, 35.

12 Errol Hill, *The Jamaican Stage 1655–1900: Profile of a Colonial Theatre* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992).

13 Richardson Wright, *Revels in Jamaica 1682–1838* (Kingston, Jamaica: Bolivar, 1986).

they certainly understood in terms of theatre value – what might be referred to as carnival quotient, the plastic openness to remaking and fusion with other forms.

Since the propagation of Shakespeare through the education system means that he continues to permeate all echelons of our (paradoxically) fluid class system, Shakespeare remains part of a general West Indian consciousness, even if only in vaguely allusive ways. Watching Patrick Brown's comedy *Breadfruit Kingdom* in Jamaica in 2000, the mixed audiences roar with laughter at Oliver Samuels's (playing King Street) scornful dismissal of the Masked Wonder's self-aggrandizing lyricisms: "Barefoot Shakespeare!" The association of Shakespeare with the lyrical, declamatory, performative word and the potential power and ridicule in daring to imitate him are powerful in the carnivalesque West Indian imagination.

One of the most fascinating perceptions of Shakespeare in the West Indies that I have come across is an anonymous book of prints, published, it seems, in nineteenth-century Guyana.¹⁴ The collection, executed with an artist's whimsical watercolours and a cartoonist's humorous eye, enacts interpretations of single lines from more than twenty of the plays. The unknown artist punningly uses the quotations from the plays as a basis for representing scenes and typical behaviours from West Indian folk lives and geographies; the net effect is of a picaresque, often hilarious sense of the West Indies being infused with a Shakespearean sensibility. Part of what strikes us forcibly is the sense of a shared element of the plays and West Indian folk life that makes the "translation" possible: what I refer to as performativity, what Benítez-Rojo refers to as a carnival ethos.

The rest of the paper is divided into two parts. In the first, I discuss the cultural context of Shakespeare's writing and performances, and what I perceive to be the nature of his response to that context. That response, I argue, was governed by his understanding and manipulation of the generic and situational aspects of his craft, particularly as it relates to audience. The discussion highlights some specific ways in which Shakespeare's plays display their rootedness in Elizabethan/Jacobean popular culture, which are important to my perception of their resonances with West Indian popular culture. In the second, I attempt a related reading of *Troilus and Cressida*. I discuss what I refer to as the erotics of errantry and rebellion in the language and dramatic action of the play. I use "errantry" as an extrapolation from Édouard

14 *West Indian Illustrations of Shakespeare* (Georgetown, British Guiana: James Thompson, the Argosy Office; London: John Haddon and Co., n.d.).

Glissant's use of the term, which he defines as the cross-cultural imagination, the ability to accept different world cultures as networked rather than opposed, hierarchical or linear.¹⁵ I use the term to indicate a movement towards (a) individualism and (b) heterogeneity and the fusion of different cultural forms, including sanctioned and unsanctioned sources. Rebellion I use in its traditional political sense of directed opposition; and "erotics" I use to mean the exhibition (including the performance) of arousal or desire. In Part 2 also, West Indian connections are highlighted as part of my argument for a reconsidered West Indian approach to teaching Shakespeare.

My method may be seen as a merging of a number of historicist and materialist perspectives. It is in understanding the plays in their own cultural context while recognizing the crucial inevitability, necessity and, above all, *legitimacy* of each audience's cultural context (which is the only means by which an effective "translation" can take place) that the artificial gaps between past and present, text and context are bridged. In this way also is opened the activist space for reinterpretation, by which the specific nature of each text's relevance (if any) is able to emerge. Much of the specific nature of Shakespeare's relevance to the West Indian audience is already known, even before we engage with the texts themselves: in so far as we remember that Columbus's "discoveries" brought Shakespeare's world into the same world space as the people of the West Indies, we begin to close the artificial gap between the history within the play texts and the history we have lived and continue to live.

SHAKESPEARE IN CONTEXT: WORKING (FOR) THE SYSTEM, PLAYING (FOR) THE POPULACE

A useful starting point is the question of what accounts for Shakespeare's fluidity – the capacity that allows him to court both king and common touch. Harold Bloom, seeing this openness to multiple interpretations as Shakespeare's capacity to portray the universally human, claims that Shakespeare invented the human, preempting Freud.¹⁶ But Shakespeare's polysemy can be explained otherwise: at one level, by the fact that he wrote plays – that is, a form of dramatic text; by the proposition that he deliberately exploited the paradoxes inherent in dramatic representation; and by the suggestion that

15 Édouard Glissant, *The Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betty Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

16 Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998).

he did this as a direct response to the strictures and contradictions of the society in which he wrote. All of these factors possibly (I say “possibly” to indicate the tentativeness of the suggestion) conjoin at a second level, which has to do with the idea that the concerns Shakespeare so skilfully exploited were the concerns of a society that in some sense was a “prototype” of modern Western and Western-influenced societies. That is, if they are “universal” at all, they are universal only in terms of their relevance to the particular types of societies that emerged in and through the West after 1500 and whose conditions were already indicated in the currents set in train by the Renaissance. It is no accident that that period is also referred to as “the early modern period”. Shakespeare’s genius, then, is mediated and produced by historical factors (as opposed to the ontometaphysical explanation implicit in universalist theories).

I want to suggest that the dramatic text exists in a unique way on the cusp of a political contention of voices and representations. This is because of the kinds of stakeholders and possible sites of meaning that are brought to dramatic production. (Of course, I am not denying the polyphony inherent in representation generally, but simply reflecting on its specifics in the context of the drama.) For one thing, the text is constructed upon the competition of voices, for it does not rest upon narrative as a third or single person speaking. Each character speaks, rather than being merely narrated, and so has the power to displace and problematize other voices in the moment of its utterance. Also, the text carries in its body the competition of yet other voices, whose liminal presence allows its entry into the future. These “other voices” are those that inhabit the acts, materials, spaces and personnel of dramatic production, all of which in the moment of enactment bring their own compliant or subversive utterance to the text.

The polyphony of the dramatic text is extended by the fact that it finds its ideal enactment upon and within bodies. In the staged performance we are confronted with the body’s subversiveness as sign and signifier, its capacity to perplex and multiply perplexity, the disruptive implications of its habitation of dual space. By “habitation of dual space” I mean it is both the body of somebody we know or potentially know (the actor) and the instrumentation of character and idea in another reality – the reality of the play’s world, which is yet coterminous with the audience’s world – is present with it in the theatre. The speaking, moving actor’s body is able to negotiate relations among multiple levels of consciousness and experience and to draw the audience into an *immediate*, dynamic relation in which all kinds of “call” and response are possible: negotiation, collusion, resistance, fulfilment, predication. In dramatic action it is kinetic energy, that is, the energy between the actor’s body and the audience’s (bodily)

presence that is exploited. Everyone and everything is capable of being changed by the play in process – which is why authorities can harbour the seemingly unreasonable fear that people can rush out of theatres into streets, in open insurrection.

All of this means that dramatic texts, even those most trammelled by a didactic intent, are texts of keenest paradox, competition and contention. Shakespeare had a very sharp sense of this quality of the drama and seems to have consciously exploited its complicating possibilities. His plays are marked by a self-conscious metatheatrical discourse which consistently explores the capacity of theatre to question, problematize and undermine essentialisms. This project is particularly focused on the comedies, which are, in my view, not primarily romantic but primarily carnivalesque, always highlighting grotesque and disallowed bodily transformations as mockeries of the essentialist sociopolitical order that prevailed in Elizabethan and Jacobean times.

Shakespeare's use of dialogue also exhibits a "free play", an opening of *différance* which, as the production history of his plays indicates, further allows for extreme differences in their interpretation. Speeches are edged with double meanings, utterances that represent a character or situation one way are counterposed against utterances that represent them in an opposite way; characters are invested with political motivations that make all utterances questionable. The actors have at their disposal an expanded range of possibilities by which to play the characters.

Thus the same plays that have been used in imperialist power projects have been used to resist hegemonies and celebrate difference. Feminists, and postcolonial critics such as Ania Loomba and Martin Orkin, read texts of "otherness" in the same plays that were valorized by post-Enlightenment/Social Darwinian Europe.¹⁷ Caribbean theorists such as Lamming and Brathwaite have seen in *The Tempest* the heart of a theory of language out of which they have elaborated Caribbean identity and the Caribbean writer's aesthetic. In other words, political projects as diverse as Nazism and cultural liberation have been fuelled by "alternative Shakespeares".¹⁸

Shakespeare's exploitation of dramatic ambiguity suggests something of the political strategist. He sought to entertain a society where playwrights, acting companies, playhouse owners and theatres inhabited a paradoxical space, which became a kind of tightrope that they had to dance if they wished to remain in business

17 Loomba and Orkin, *Postcolonial Shakespeares*. See also Thomas Cartelli, *Repositioning Shakespeare National Formations Postcolonial Appropriations* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

18 *Alternative Shakespeares* (London: Routledge) is the title of books of Shakespeare criticism, volumes 1 (1988) and 2 (1996) edited by John Drakakis and Terence Hawkes, respectively.

– and business was the operative word. They obtained legitimacy, which meant licence to practise, only through the patronage of the monarch or a lord. Further, the mandated censorship by the master of revels worked to suppress enactment of inflammatory religious or political issues, which might lead to sedition. In Shakespeare's case, economic prosperity and upward social movement resulted from the approved plays. This prosperity was achieved in part from his privileged position as chief playwright for, and part owner of, the theatres of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later the King's Men. He played at court, as actor and playwright; in a real sense he was a queen's or king's favourite.

But the theatre existed and was implicated in a society riddled with dissension and unrest, especially under James. Both Elizabeth and James sought to maintain the political system and stave off civil war using a vast arsenal of strategies, including mythic narratives such as the Tudor myth of essential, God-ordained hierarchy, which E.M.W. Tillyard unfortunately posits as the average Elizabethan's world picture.

This unrest arose from the confluence of seemingly disparate forces. Agrarian Reform left thousands displaced and homeless, creating a new breed of "masterless men" (and women, though these are not indicated in the vocabulary of the day) and leading to mass riots and public protests that had to be put down with increasingly stringent laws. The discovery of the so-called New World led to increased wars with Spain over territory and what grew into a concomitant search for imperial identity, arguably the beginnings of England's search for a concept of nationhood. War and conquest meant forced conscription and dissatisfied disbanded soldiers, a flood let loose upon London along with the increased flood of masterless men and women and young apprentices forced to seek alternatives to agrarian security.

Piracy, colonization and the slave trade meant the overseas itinerancy of members of Elizabethan and Jacobean England's vast underclass. They went as ships' crew and often came back with money to trade and a thirst for upward mobility (indicated in plays such as *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, where West Indian merchandise becomes an important metaphor for the play's engagement with England's emergent and often piratical capitalism).¹⁹ The shipbuilding and nautical instruments industry added to

19 By the third decade of the sixteenth century, Englishmen had already founded colonies, were notorious pirates on the Spanish Main and were integrally involved in the slave trade. The idea of the West Indies (with the rest of the Americas) was a major exotic and erotic fantasy in the English imagination (as seen in the contemporary iconography and literature, including travellers' tales such as those of Sir John Mandeville, quoted almost verbatim in *Othello* 1.3).

this stream of upwardly mobile persons who posed a threat to the Tudor elaboration of the body politic. Among these new arrivals was the capitalist middleman – the joint creation of the Agrarian Revolution, New World plunder, the slave trade and colonization.

Women, faced with the double stress of economic insecurity and sexual vulnerability caused by displacement from the land, joined riots, lifted up their voices in public places, and wore men's apparel both for protection and for political statement in the carnivalized riots. And thus the criminal category of "the scold" (the legally punishable version of "the shrew") was born. But women also benefited from the new capitalist initiatives and from relaxed inheritance laws which allowed daughters to inherit in order to keep property within immediate families. They appeared in Shakespeare's theatre saucily dressed in men's clothing, making statements of fashion and economic authority out of what had begun as necessity, flying in the face of sumptuary laws and the stricture that banned women from theatres. At the level of religion and ideas, the Greek and Latin texts, on which the search for a Renaissance rested, fuelled a humanism which began to privilege the individual in a society that had traditionally elided all identity into the public and the communal. The twin current of the Reformation, coming from opposite, even potentially incompatible directions, exerted a complementary influence as it emphasized the idea of the personal and private via the idea of a personal salvation/relationship with God.

This was the context in which Shakespeare had to negotiate a space for his plays. The vast bulk of his audience consisted of the commoners described above: displaced women, upwardly mobile women, apprentices full of youth and passion, masterless men, *nouveau riche*, tradesmen, the arriving and the dissatisfied, and many illiterate and semilliterate. It was an explosive audience, experienced in the ways of both open riot and masqueraded dissent, fully aware that their and the establishment's interests seldom converged. Hyland, using extrapolations from Henslowe's contemporary figures, estimates that the two main acting companies in 1595 attracted between eight thousand and ten thousand viewers per week.²⁰ Gurr suggests that by 1620, with an increased population, the figure was nearer twenty-five thousand.²¹ Gurr also estimates an average of twenty-five hundred persons at any one showing; McDonald estimates

20 Peter Hyland, *An Introduction to Shakespeare: The Dramatist in His Context* (London: Routledge, 1996), 91–92.

21 Andrew Gurr, *The Shakespearean Stage 1574–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 213.

three thousand for the Globe;²² de Witt (quoted in Gurr) a similar number for the Swan during Shakespeare's career.

The popular theatre was a fledgling enterprise. It may have depended for its licence on the nobility's patronage, but its survival and success depended on the pleasure and pennies of the commoners. The point is that Shakespeare had to write first and foremost for this class, while finding ways and means of pleasuring and satisfying monarch and noble also. Where the interests of the two classes diverged, active choices had to be made as to how the contradiction was to be handled.

It is easy to argue that the Elizabethan/Jacobean commoner liked to ape his betters, or that he was so infected by the overt and hidden discourses by which his inferiority was invented, that he was satisfied to voyeurize plays that inscribed his inferiority and kept him in awe of the nobility's splendour. This is the view embedded in the traditional wisdom that the groundlings understood only the jokes, the comic scenes. Both logic (who would stand up for three hours, often in foul weather, waiting for a few comic lines that might not arrive?) and Shakespeare's texts suggest a completely different scenario.

What the texts suggest is the political stance of the broker, the middleman, making obeisance to the conventions of form that satisfied the patron class, but using those very conventions to subvert the ideologies of that class and inscribe the challenge and concerns of the pennied class. The middleman inserts into his texts large characters and surface voices that espouse the monarchical dogmas, and small characters and under voices that speak alternative, often radical, perspectives that can easily come to dominate the play by their very positioning at the marginal edges. In his strategic shiftings of voice, gesture, entrance and exit, reportage and self-presentation, two of Shakespeare's most powerful tools of problematization, in addition to the double-edged and open-ended speech, are the cross-dressed body and the dramatization of silence. (The cross-dressed body was of course an easy tool of subversion and paradox, since the convention of males playing female parts already problematized the society's patriarchal strictures. And then, too, cross-dressing in the audience and wider society brought its own provocative resonances.)

Despite all this, one cannot unequivocally argue that Shakespeare privileges the marginal voice, since this too constantly shifts spaces, contending with the voices of the dominant culture by which it is often subverted – an endless free play of

22 Russ McDonald, *The Bedford Companion to Shakespeare* (Boston: Macmillan, 1996).

signification in which what clearly emerges, if anything, is the unfixed, negotiated and dynamic nature of power. The playwright, seeking to please all the clients, becomes a major contender in that dialogue of powers. The Puritans described the theatre as a prostitute, a fallen woman titillating desire, selling the pleasures aroused by her own titillations, aiming to please all. In *Troilus and Cressida*, the middleman, Pandarus, is also a bawd. Perhaps the text, or the playwright, becomes ironically self-referential.

In Shakespeare's society, "the marginal voice" was not necessarily a lower-class or an English one. London, among the most cosmopolitan of Renaissance cities, teemed with foreigners of every imaginable class; the influx included ambassadorial parties such as those frequently sent by the Ottoman Empire (Shakespeare's Moors) to Elizabeth's court. Within the society were visible important signifiers of difference, and these too were among Shakespeare's audience. The nobility, also part of his audience, had its bastards, its women, its seekers after monarchy (such as the Earl of Essex), its younger sons,²³ all of whom inhabited the outer branches of the top echelons and, by extension, a space for the seditious potential of the new humanist and religious ideas. And then again, members of the nobility experienced the aphrodisiac of travel, the capacity of that constructed siren, the New World, to seduce imagination, body and will with its wild promise of money, adventure, and outlawry; that is, the promise of "doing one's own thing".²⁴ Thus, like the slave master unable to resist the slave's body, members of the nobility encountered within themselves the desires that would undermine the status they sought obsessively to preserve. In practice, the pressures and pleasures of popular culture transgressed class and "other" boundaries.

There was also the paradox of Elizabeth and James's obsessive love affairs with theatre, which placed them in the anomalous position of lending their patronage to an activity that was potentially inimical to their positions. (Both, in different ways, were master "players", fully exploiting for their own ends the powers inherent in performance.) The dangerous potential of theatrical activity is exemplified in the way the people staged their own carnival "processions" whenever Elizabeth processed through London on her famous "royal progresses", ritually enacted as part of the

23 The law of Primogeniture allocated the bulk of inheritance to eldest sons, so that other sons (including bastards) had to fend for themselves, unless the father's generosity and resources allowed them a reasonable livelihood. Many, like *Jane Eyre's* Mr Rochester, came to the Caribbean in search of fortune.

24 For an interesting range of representations of this desire, see J.M. Cohen, ed. and trans., *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969); Anon., *The Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (London: Penguin, 1983); and Stephen Greenblatt's discussion of what he terms the Renaissance culture of wonder in *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

wondrous spectacle of monarchy, by which its divine institution was made apparent.²⁵ The carnival procession may have yearned after the mystique of monarchy, but it also subversively mocked and emptied out that mystique in parodic play. That the London authorities were in a perennial state of unease with the theatre's audience and potential is reflected in the forced relocation of public play-acting to the city's margins and in the eagerness with which pretexts to close theatres were seized.

Without erasing the crucial differences between West Indian and English Renaissance society, or the unique complexities of different historical moments, it is easy enough to see the connections with Caribbean slave and colonial society as well as with present-day Caribbean society, which retains many of the modes of resistance and representation developed on the plantation. Theatre – that is, performance as disguise – is the natural *métier* of societies with oppressed underclasses and rigid policing of behaviours. It is also the natural *métier* of societies with very young populations and societies under stress of rapid change, especially where such change involves deep clashes between accepted and new forms of identification or where the change involves resistance to rigidly policed behaviours.

The first condition was true of both West Indian slave and post-emancipation society, different aspects of the second are true of Shakespeare's England and present-day West Indian society. Theatre in such situations often knows no divisions between stage and street, life and play-acting. Suspension of disbelief becomes an impossible conceit. Shakespeare's audience saw represented on the stage their own lived aspirations and subversive forms of impersonation.²⁶ The parallels are clear: making use of "play days" and "days of Jubilee" granted by the master, the West Indian slaves created their own theatre, an extension of their secret, masqueraded lives lived on the plantation under the master's voyeurizing eye. The ex-slaves continued that tradition in their "jamette" carnivals on post-emancipation streets, much to the discomfiture of the plantocracy, which noted with consternation the ex-slave bodies, "herds of male and female" in carnival display, flouting police, law and order.²⁷ Throughout the

25 See Roger B. Manning, *Village Revolts Social Protest and Popular Disturbance in England 1509–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

26 See Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1980); Stephen Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Power and Play in Renaissance England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995); and Stephen Orgel, *Impersonations: The Performance of Gender in Shakespeare's England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

27 See Andrew Pearse, "Carnival in Nineteenth Century Trinidad", *Caribbean Quarterly* 3 and 4 (May–June 1956): 175–93. The quotation is from page 188.

nineteenth and early twentieth century, the carnival was continually banned or suppressed.²⁸ The carnival mode, the mode of Shakespearean, popular-based comedy, is now a common trope for Caribbean popular culture.²⁹ Bakhtin's polyglossic carnival body, which he identifies in the context of Renaissance popular behaviours, meets with Benítez-Rojo's polyrhythmic carnival body, by which he describes the behaviours of the Caribbean.

And yet, if Shakespeare lends himself to reworking as syncretic masquerade in the West Indian folk carnival, it is not only because of the plastic nature of carnival in a general way but also because of the plastic nature of Shakespeare's "fork'd tongue" drama in its own particular way; a praxis rooted in a parodic, paradoxical and performative relation to language. The playwright's double-edged dialogues find an astonishing resonance not only in particular carnival performances where linguistic virtuosity plays a major part but in the general Caribbean veneration and practice of performative speech as part of everyday reality: speech as self aggrandizement, as challenge, as subversion, as disguise, occlusion and circumvention, as sheer provocative play.

But the connections between Shakespearean/Elizabethan/Jacobean disguise and Caribbean modes of resistance are not mere parallels: Jacobean society was the society that in part produced the West Indies. There almost everyone, as Orlando Patterson points out, was the object of property, that is, in some sense a slave, and one could lose a life for stealing an inkwell.³⁰ The ideologies and modes of repression with which Shakespeare's mass audience had to contend were transported to the West Indies in cruelly exaggerated form, and thus obviously shaped similar responses among the slave and folk population.³¹

My final argument here, then, is that Shakespeare's texts are set in a society not unlike West Indian popular society at certain points in its history: seething between the tensions of established order and anarchy, submission and rebellion, errantry and regulated promenade. It is the representation of this reality that I wish to explore in

28 See Gordon Rohlehr, *Calypso and Society in Pre-Independence Trinidad* (Port of Spain, Trinidad: G. Rohlehr, 1990).

29 See, for example, Earl Lovelace's 1979 novel *The Dragon Can't Dance* and Lawrence Scott's 1994 novel as literary examples, and Benítez-Rojo's *Repeating Island* as a theoretical example.

30 Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982).

31 An example of transported forms of control was the governor's progress, modelled on royal progresses such as those of Queen Elizabeth I. These were military parades by which each newly arrived governor patrolled the entire island in full regalia. The aim was to impress the populace with the splendour and power of Empire, against which they were "well advised" not to rebel.

Troilus and Cressida, and which in the context of that play I describe in terms of erotics, errantry and rebellion located in Shakespeare's dramatic language and the cues it gives for the deployment of bodies.

TROILUS AND CRESSIDA: PERFORMING ALTERNATIVES, MASQUERADING DISSENT

Troilus and Cressida, Shakespeare's satirical demystification of the tradition of epic heroism associated with the siege of Troy, is an excellent example of the type of masqueraded rebellion and subversion I have discussed. In this play, the carnival mode in which subversion is accomplished takes on a particularly erotic edge, reminiscent of the aspects of post-emancipation carnival spectacle that might have troubled those who expressed their outrage over "herds of men and women alike" parading naked in the streets.

The play may be of particular interest to West Indian audiences as part of its "erotics" is the desire expressed in the subtexts of language for the merchandise of the West Indies.³² This merchandise was at the very heart of individual and class rebellion, for it was to become the main plank of capitalism, which in the Renaissance helped to erode the myths of divinely ordained monarchy, fixed identity and state power. (It is also at the heart of Renaissance contradiction, since capitalism also worked to create its own monolithic hegemonies, which eventually dovetailed into the old ones.) Thus the play discursively links us with the very conditions and representations that spawned West Indian modes of popular resistance.

The reference to the West Indies comes in a speech made by Troilus: torn by his desire for Cressida, whose capitulation to his overtures of "love" her pimping uncle has been unable to secure, Troilus exclaims:

Her bed is India;³³ there she lies, a pearl
Between our Ilium and where she resides

32 The textual reference is to India, which in Renaissance texts implies both the West and East Indies. Others of Shakespeare's texts in which such allusions appear include *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. The latter's allusions to Bermuda and "Indians" are often overlooked by critics who see postcolonial readings of the play as purely allegorical and the play's possible engagement with the Americas as existing only in its sources.

33 As above.

Let it be called the wild and wandr'ing flood
 Ourself the merchant, and this sailing Pandar
 Our doubtful hope, our convoy, and our bark.³⁴

SMALL
 AXE

The brothel housing Cressida as sexualized merchandise is imaged in the conflation between East and West Indies, the sea route of Prince Troilus's imagined access. The sea, "the wild and wand'ring flood" replicates the tumult he says reigns in his heart, but it also connotes the uncontrollable female tide, the juices of Oshun by which Benítez-Rojo describes what appears to the outsider's eye as the arcane mysteries and the super-fecundity of the Caribbean. This is treacherous desire indeed, a promise of wealth and adventure that eats at the heart of England's known conception of itself. And because in the concept of history being used here we move backwards and forwards, problematizing the notion of anachronism, a multitude of sixteenth- to nineteenth-century ghosts is invoked: the treacherous "otherness" of the female slave upon whose fecund body the wealth of the Caribbean was produced, but who in the process infiltrated the psyche and identity of the master; the treacherous "otherness" of wealth earned in sweaty capitalist endeavour, rubbing shoulders with unsanctified crew, eroding the dignity of old money gained as inheritance under title; the treacherous "otherness" of the "femininity" of feeling, at war with the masculine identity that dictates that the hero go to war. ("Why should I war without the walls of Troy / That find such cruel battle here within?" [1. 1.2–3]); the "otherness" of a new conception of self, the true parameters of which were escaping the authorities even as it was being assiduously studied and "contained" – an otherness in which England and "West Indies" are linked by a desire as unsanctioned as (Jamette) carnival itself.

Perhaps the two most "speaking" characters in Shakespeare's carnival portrayal are Thersites, the playwright's own Pitchy-Patchy invention, and Ulysses, the Greek hero of Homeric legend. Ulysses appears as an agent of satire, his legendary politician's tongue turned not against the Trojans but against his own "community of kings". The principle of the fifth column, the traitor within, symbolized in Homer by the Trojan Horse, thus acquires a powerfully seditious edge. The traitor within is a ventriloquist, with a double/forked tongue, whose underside is the "marginal" voice of popular dissent. We first meet him flattering the leader Agamemnon, who is greatly concerned as to why, after seven years, the Greeks have been unable to defeat the Trojans.

34 William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, New Arden edition, ed. David Bevington (London: Routledge, 1998), 1.1.94–100. All references to *The Tempest* are to this edition, and subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.

Ulysses' flattery, balanced upon an argument that the core problem is Achilles' disrespect for Agamemnon's authority, performatively displays the Tudor myth, which he enacts only to subvert. Under the cloak of conformity, Ulysses seeds rebellion, yet he is also arguably anti-rebellion – that is, caught in a kind of Elizabethan schizophrenia.

This appears in the structure of his argument. First there is an extended sequence rehearsing the “divinely sanctioned” rationale for preserving the hierarchical body politic. Ulysses argues that the Greeks' failure to bring the protracted war to an end is the result of a disease in the camp – boils of insubordination on the body politic. This he says stems from the example of Achilles, who

Having his ear full of his airy fame
Grows dainty of his worth and in his tent
Lies mocking our designs.
(1.3.144–46)

Ulysses' description of how Achilles spends his days, orchestrating derisive mimicry of Agamemnon and the other heroes, covers fifty-six lines, only twenty-two less than the conformity sequence. *Significantly, the description is not narrated, but performed.* It does not take long to see that Ulysses is creating for his riveted, silent/silenced audience a spectacle of their own discomfiture, in which they collude by allowing him licence to speak. Ulysses' gusto in performance betrays his underlying malice, thinly masked under the earlier mouthings of conformity. His orgasmic pleasure in the subversion in which he joins Achilles is marked in the exclamatory sexual language at the point where he describes Achilles' response to “his male whore's” (meaning Patroclus's) performance of Nestor “arming to answer in a night alarm”:

And at this sport
Sir Valour dies; cries, “O, enough, Patroclus,
Or give me ribs of steel!
I shall split all
In pleasure of my spleen!”
(1.3. 175–77)

But the entire speech is riddled with this sexual language, indicating both Ulysses' pleasure in the subversion and his envy of Achilles, who has “firsted him” in this subversion, leaving him to literally “play” second fiddle. Ulysses' envy and admiration are metaphorized in his obsession with Achilles' male organ, the signification of potency he desires. This appears in lines referring to Achilles' reception of his male lover's performance, such as

At this fusty stuff
The large Achilles, on his pressed bed lolling
From his deep chest laughs out a loud applause
Cries . . . !
(1.3.162–63)

The mix of malice and admiring voyeurism is pointed by the repeated variations on the theme and the detailed focus on Patroclus “with him . . . upon a lazy bed, the livelong day”.

Ulysses’ hunger to participate in Achilles’ rebellion is re-troped as desire for the subversive effects of theatre, the Puritans’ arch-prostitute. Not only the performative nature of his discourse but his own metaphor, maliciously and admiringly describing Patroclus’s performances: “like a strutting player, whose conceit / Lies in his hamstrings” (1.3.153–54) points the connection. We are reminded that Elizabethan/Jacobean England’s popular insurrections cloaked themselves in the disguise of theatre, in carnival riots, in pageantry as mimicry.

But Ulysses’ self-pleasuring in subversion is already displayed in the subtext of the cloaking “body politic” speech. The utterance of conformity occupies the same space as the utterance of rebellion: first, the official hierarchy is rehearsed in negative terms – that is, in terms of resulting calamity when it is flouted, rather than in terms of harmony when it is embraced. The form of the utterance empties out the privilege. The effect is reinforced by analogies made with eating, which connote the Trojan representation of sex as food and focus a sense of the polity carrying within itself the seeds of its own subversion. A similar duality is seen in his mock-deferential salute to Agamemnon: “Thou great commander, nerve and bone of Greece”, emphasizing, like Thersites, the general’s boneheadedness and unwieldy bigness as symbolic of the outdatedness of the sociopolitical system he directs.

Ulysses’ disapproval of Achilles is in part a disapproval of licence turned rebellion – the sanctioned individualism by which the community creates its champions gone out of control where the knight errant refuses to await the pleasure of the kingmaker. But the kingmaker is self-appointed. Ulysses’ desire to supplant Agamemnon and the entire hierarchy expresses itself in his later attempts to oust Achilles, replacing him with his own puppet, Ajax. Ulysses has skilfully manoeuvred himself into a triple role: commissioned strategist of the monarchic coalition, queller of rebellion, reinstater of sanctioned, controlled errantry (errantry here as permitted individualism). But his undercover allegiance is only to himself, the arch-individual afraid of and quelling all rulerships and rebellions but his own.

It is significant that Ulysses is a representative of the Jacobean upper class. The underground nature of his linguistic subversions, cloaked in performance, symbolizes the unsanctioned subculture of dissent, *the popular, heterogenizing currents in the society*, that had infiltrated psyche and subconscious in all classes and had gone underground in the society's love of theatre. Theatre was the ground of pretended pretence. Theatre became the society's unconscious and its metonym. Here rebellion (opposition directed at a particular target) shades into errantry, which is arguably more dangerous, since it comes from an impulse of spirit that in a sense predates/preempts the narrowness of opposition.

On the Jacobean stage, Ulysses' performance would also have pointed the ways in which the act of production was part of a complicating paradox, since the actors who imaged/psychically inhabited Ulysses' upper-class desire were erstwhile "masterless men", commoners wearing the king's or noble's livery offstage, and the clothes of the nobility onstage.³⁵ More than this, the audience who participated in the negotiation were predominantly their social equals. The paradox works in reverse, since the upper-class character of Ulysses here exhibits desire that in others of Shakespeare's plays belongs to the lower echelons. The actor is then, in a sense, taking back, re-inhabiting his class's own desire. The crossing of psychological space through the pleasures of the theatrical medium becomes a site of errantry and rebellion. Apparently, as the histories of West Indian creolization/syncretization show, the masses never stay in their places, and neither do the upper classes.

Ulysses is not an anomaly in the camp – rather, he is the composite of its tensions and contradictions. The other warriors, to varying degrees, exhibit the same contradictory desire. All are repelled, yet obsessively attracted by Thersites, the motley bastard/tacitly licensed "Fool" who bombards, abuses and entertains them with a ruthless carnival of curses. Thersites' language links rebellion and insurrection with the theatre. As bastard, the progeny of unbridled, unsanctioned desire, Thersites inhabits the fringes of the noble company. As perceived clown, the carnival's rump, he inhabits the licensed, condemned space of the Elizabethan theatre. Both are spaces of acceptance and rejection, rebellion and containment – places of paradox. Thersites traverses every

35 Players were expected to display the coat of arms of their patron (for Shakespeare's company, the Lord Chamberlain for the latter part of Elizabeth's reign, and King James thereafter). Despite sumptuary laws regulating dress according to one's class, players wore on stage the real clothing of the nobility, which they bought second-hand from the master of revels. Thus, even costuming was a powerful sign of the possible dissolution of boundaries of control.

scene and every act, whether by his physical presence or by his commentary. He is both theatre (here synonymous with carnival) and the larger principle of which theatre is a sign – Anancyism, the dangerous underground pleasures of the Elizabethan sociopolitical world, the masked face of popular culture.

But the paradox of Thersites is doubly complicated: where Ulysses speaks undercover, hiding his slackness from culture,³⁶ Thersites speaks openly. His theatrical performance needs no mask because the identity of clown, like slave, is already his mask, even as Trojans and Greeks are already Shakespeare's mask. (The impression of Thersites as a collection of patches and rags, with his own motley linguistic range, words and registers tumbling over each other in carnivalesque abandon, image the clown's uniform, the Midnight Robber, Pitchy-Patchy in the Jonkunnu dance.)

Thersites' open speaking, his bitter celebration of his Fool's/theatre's licence, unmasks language. But he does so under the stereotyped mask of various disapproved Elizabethan concepts of woman: shrew, scold, woman of the stews. Thersites adopts this composite woman's language, her raucous excess, her paroxysmic desire to raze the city, her open mouth spewing rebellious curses that seem to elicit only dilatory laughter. But the men have cohabited with her, and therein lies her power to raze the city – she, too, is the fifth column within. Thersites' ability to seduce (elicit pleasurable laughter) without his subversions being discerned again highlights the presence of a will to errantry, marooned in the Greek/Elizabethan unconscious and collective underworld. We are reminded of the patronizing but absolutely fascinated voyeurism of nineteenth-century planter journals such as Lady Nugent's, which recorded minute observations of the slaves' masquerades on play days, naively glossing their openly displayed undercover subversions as "childish pleasures"; and Monk Lewis's, which recorded in equally minute, titillated but unanalysed detail the various antics of the slaves as they play-acted naively in a kind of ironically transparent cloaked mockery of their master's categories. Like those of Thersites, the carnival subversions of the slaves remained unseen precisely because the master saw in them no possibility of a serious humanity. Dismissal becomes the most powerful aid to insurrection.³⁷

36 The allusion is to Carolyn Cooper's *Noises in the Blood*, chapter entitled "Slackness Hiding from Culture: Erotic Play in the Dancehall", 136–73.

37 This is not, of course, to deny the fact that some planters eventually became uneasily aware that the masquerades were used as opportunities to plan uprisings.

Thersites, arguably the voice of the play, admits no allegiance to Greek, Trojan, rebel or ruler: all indiscriminately come under his curse. For he recognizes the reality that is pointed in the play's ending: because all the contenders for imperial power – Greek, Trojan, upper-class rebel and upper-class ruler – lack moral integrity, the creative edge of dissent is corroded; all are “tickled wi’ th’ itch” of the twin demons of public image and capital. Public image and capital, not the hierarchy's legitimacy or moral right, empty out subversion and equalize all. In a sense, Thersites' marginality and class indeterminacy link with his discerned yet undiscerned critique to make him the popular voice *par excellence*.

Thersites's verbal cross-dressing and implied motley appearance link with the spectacle of Ulysses' body re-presenting Achilles' private plays. In this sense, both may be seen as part of Shakespeare's use of “grotesque” bodily transformations. Ulysses' constant references to wrong, wronged and diseased bodies is part of this Bakhtinian performance, which may be effected visually as well as linguistically. It is interesting that Ulysses and Thersites are, paradoxically, on opposite sides of the political fence, yet they use a similar strategy – performative undermining – and exhibit a similar desire – to raze the city. The paradox inheres in the double nature of Ulysses' desire to raze but still inhabit the city. A desire that images the desire of those on the outer edges of Jacobean society's upper echelons and is also not dissimilar to the attitude of free coloureds and later the middle classes in West Indian society. The issue highlighted is the constant tension between independence from and desire for the hegemonic ideology.

Our sense of the political machinery unwittingly working to undermine itself is reinforced in the Greek obsession with Trojan women and the complicated network of their blood relations with the Trojans. On the one hand, Troy is the visible, named enemy. It stands for the ruthlessly suppressed sites of rebellion in Shakespeare's England: individual desire (symbolized in Troilus's inability to act outside of his feeling for Cressida); shrewish/scolding women (Cassandra's uninvited, interruptive prophecy of the destruction of the masculine, military machine, her disarrayed body “grotesquely” inserted into the men's war council); nobles who question the status quo (Hector arguing that integrity of reason supersedes male pride and the state's image based on show). On the other hand, their prosecution of the war as the visible sign of control blinds the Greek camp to the other enemy, the one within – their own aroused blood, which appears in these three main indices: the titillated delight in Thersites' performative cursings, the obsession with women's body parts, and the licentious obsession and blood relation with the Trojans. Here is revealed an unconscious desire

for the things they expel, even as the expulsion reveals a pernicious obsession with the opposites of what is expelled. But the suppressed desire is for something that will not go away, since it is already part of them. Agamemnon, the general, is the first to kiss the Trojan Cressida (whose symbol is the veil) when she enters the camp as booty, even as Elizabeth patronized and played the theatre and James embraced the Lord Chamberlain's Men as he ascended the English throne. In similar ways, the plantocracy found the carnivalesque slave (and later folk) culture, as well as slave bodies, irresistible.

There are other sides to the coin of power. Both Thersites' inability to stop haunting the warriors for his own pleasure, and the Trojan's reciprocal desire for the Greeks, image ways in which in Elizabethan/Jacobean England the carnivalesque play exhibited a reciprocal lower-class desire for the positions and power(s) of the nobility. What for a West Indian audience may also be connoted are the ways in which the carnivalesque performativity of West Indian society suggests relations of negotiation, fusion, mutual desire and sometimes collusion, rather than the unitary opposition or the Prospero-Caliban/oppressor-oppressed dichotomies posited in much of Caribbean nationalist theorization.

The play concludes on a double note. On the one hand, it is open-ended: the warriors on both sides in disarray, both proclaiming victory but neither proven victorious. This is in keeping with the strategy of shifting the struggle between orthodoxy and deviance within the same mouth, from mouth to mouth, from voice to voice and back again in obscure circles that privilege none but show tensions of possibility – a poising on the edge of all contraries.

On the other hand, the last speaker is the bawd Pandarus, bewailing his sexually diseased body and mocking what he declares is the similarly diseased, merchandise-pimping audience, in an astonishingly iconoclastic epilogue. Pandarus's epilogue fulfils the play's cynical overvoice: the endemic capitalist desire overrides those positives of early modern insurrection that appear in the play. It may be that Shakespeare prophetically saw the infection of capital and its movement out of paradox into legitimization. Yet the play's ending remains rooted in paradox: in the dialogic complication between the bitter triumph of capital on the one hand and, on the other, Troilus's eruption onto the stage just before the epilogue, declaring the possible triumph of another kind of passion in a war that is still not over.

In *Troilus and Cressida*, then, we are looking at the complex interplays between the public face and underside of Elizabethan England's struggles into modernity, which are also the struggle between a heterogenizing popular imagination and repressive

ideological norms, which may inhabit a single person's psyche simultaneously. It may be that what appears is the obscure transgressions between a Great Tradition and a Little Tradition (to borrow Kamau Brathwaite's phrase), which make mockery of the former's superiority. But it may simply be Shakespeare's middleman's tightrope dancing, safely covering all sides of the class divide. Whatever the case, I suggest that, contrary to Glissant's view, the England we are seeing is one akin to the carnival face of West Indian modernity rather than a mere fault line of errantry. The play is more powerfully subversive than mere errant fissures, its paradoxes more akin to Glissant's transversality (*Caribbean Discourse*) than to his idea (*Poetics of Relation*) of a one-dimensional, linear root in European fictions such as those produced by Shakespeare.

Caribbean thinkers have spent some energy critiquing a view of England's history and English texts that it suited the colonial establishment to import. We run the danger of accepting that view as the history itself and the texts themselves, or as the only possible view of them. The consideration here of another possible way of reading Shakespeare also points to another way of reading our history and the histories of the world in canonical texts. I want to emphasize, however, that this perspective is intended not as prescription but, on the contrary, exactly this – a perspective, and one among possibilities. Beyond this, the focus here on performance, particularly with regard to audience, and on the concept of translating performance into the audience's modes (neither of which is an original thought), points to some possibilities for bringing the play alive to a West Indian school audience. Even at very simple and obvious levels, that the unsophisticated student can understand the resonances of so many of the characters with familiar Caribbean psychologies, carnival forms and paradoxes already suggests possibilities for music, stage set and costuming. And a character such as Ulysses can be played as anybody: for example, as planter, as free coloured, as male browning or black middle-class aspirant, as Anancy or Brer Tiger in disguise – it all depends on whether and how one wishes to emphasize the underside or the surface of his double tongue. Part of the wonderful paradox of Ulysses is that he is a true hybrid, inhabiting multiple selves.

The entire play can be dramatized in ways that insert the intersecting history that enters the text with Troilus's allusion to the West Indies. Trevor Nunn's 1999 production, in which he exploits the play's ethnic tensions by staging the Greeks and Trojans as whites and blacks respectively, suggests how powerfully such a project can be managed (though it is unlikely that Nunn's neoliberal Englishman's dichotomy would work in the creolized/syncretized/hybridized Caribbean). The invocation of the

history on stage can serve, for example, to push the focus away from merely allegorical readings (powerful though those can be) and place attention on the characters as psychologies of and within the imperialist/capitalist structures that simultaneously spawned the colonies and shaped Shakespeare's England.

The indigenizing of setting immediately suggests the indigenizing of language. In the same way that Hollywood has discovered that Shakespeare often ignored the strict confines of the pentameter and has found ways of inserting American vernacular rhythms into that space of (para)linguistic openness, it becomes possible to articulate Shakespeare's dialogue in Caribbean rhythms. There would also be no harm, and certainly enormous delight, particularly with Thersites' scenes, in translating the play into Creole. For those concerned with preserving "exactly what Shakespeare wrote", it might be worth remembering that not everything in the plays is what Shakespeare wrote, and there is no reading without some form of translation. African and Asian audiences and producers read Shakespeare in parallel versions (English and the mother tongue) and enact him in (literal) translation and adaptation. For centuries, Europe has done the same. The Caribbean has its own precedents, both in academia and in the folk culture.³⁸

In an often befuddled comment on *uMabatha*, Welcome Msomi's powerful rendition of *Macbeth* into Zulu cultural terms, Fischlin and Fortier nevertheless make the following insightful comment: "[W]hat makes *uMabatha's* place in the history of adaptation noteworthy is the degree to which it exposes the uses of adaptation as a complex series of cultural negotiations, appropriations, and mediations that define the relations between colonial and colonized cultures. Importantly, *uMabatha* decolonizes Shakespeare as a vanguard for colonial values."³⁹

38 Canonical European texts that have been "translated" (in the sense of "reimagined in indigenous terms") by Caribbean writers include *The Tempest* (transmutations too numerous to mention); *Jane Eyre* (Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*); Sophocles' *Antigone* (Kamau Brathwaite's *Odale's Choice*); Aeschylus's *Electra* (Dennis Scott's *The Crime of Annabel Campbell*); Homer's *Odyssey* (Derek Walcott's *Omeros*). For bibliographies and an anthology of adaptations in other cultures see Fischlin and Fortier, *Adaptations of Shakespeare*.

39 Fischlin and Fortier, *Adaptations of Shakespeare*, 165. Msomi's play was published in Pretoria by Via Afrika/Skotaville Publishers in 1996 and reproduced in Fischlin and Fortier's volume. Fischlin and Fortier also sound two warning notes which are useful in the context of this paper. They comment on the frequent recuperation of postcolonial Shakespeares into Western narratives of universality (this in reference to the use of *uMabatha* as one of six flagship plays used for the Globe Theatre's symbolic reopening and the subsequent flood of critical acclaim for the play as an example of Shakespeare's "universality"). They argue from this that any adaptation "risks having its distinctive features subsumed into the dehistoricized contexts of contemporary popular culture" (p. 166). Fischlin and Fortier also remind us that the possibility of translation in the sense used here is not a given – the cultural specificity of a particular form can resist the hybridization implied in translation (pp. 13–14).

The point is not to force particular interpretations but to make connections that are valid, and meaningful to students' experience. It is to invite ourselves into the kind of experiment in which we transform the classroom into the open stage that is so much a part of our students' cultural experience, and to which Shakespeare so naturally lends himself. Rather than sending our students off to the cinema to view "other" translations of Shakespeare into Hollywood popular terms (educational and necessary though this is), we might begin to consider more seriously the kind of collaboration between university and school in which the former assists with translations and directions for translation in indigenous and other modes, for teachers and students alike.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Brian Heap has done important work via workshops for teachers of Shakespeare and student productions at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica. He has also contributed invaluable to my own students' understanding of the plays via his guest appearances at lectures.