

# Playing the Fool with Shakespeare: Festivity, Falsity, and Feste in *Twelfth Night* and *King of the Masquerade*

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## Abstract

This paper examines the appropriation of a Shakespearean character within the context of twentieth-century Trinidad in the novel *King of the Masquerade*, by Michael Anthony. Although *King of the Masquerade* does not simply rewrite Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, a comparison between the two works reveals a strong resemblance between them in their treatment of theme, in their exploration of the tensions between two opposing groups and, to a certain extent, in terms of characterization. In both texts, the Shakespearean fool also cleverly brings together differing perspectives about what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behavior, high and low culture. *King of the Masquerade* is not overtly counter-discursive to the play, so the engagement with Shakespeare in the Caribbean is nuanced in different ways, and the novel's exploration of various attitudes to Shakespeare gives a broad picture of the complex relationship between Caribbean postcolonial society and what was considered a metonym of colonial greatness and superiority.

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*All the world's a stage and everybody playing a part. We are all acting, according to Shakespeare [. . .] but there's no reason why we should act the fool. (Michael Anthony, King of the Masquerade)*

C. L. Barber (1959) considers *Twelfth Night* "a festive comedy" because it includes carnivalesque elements that are implied in the very title of the play. The play does, in fact, involve many of the themes — such as heteroglossia, carnivalesque reversals, subversion of authority, masquerade, and disguise — associated with the medieval carnivals that Mikhail M. Bakhtin explores when theorizing the carnivalesque in *Rabelais and His World* (1984). There is also a symbolic battle between the many characters who represent the holiday or festival spirit of the play and the somewhat puritanical Malvolio, a battle that has been characterized in terms of a symbolic battle between Carnival and Lent in theoretical studies of the carnivalesque. The appropriation of Feste the Fool into Michael Anthony's *King of the Masquerade* (1974), another Carnival text, but one set in a completely different time, setting, and context — that of twentieth-

century Trinidad — immediately has postcolonial implications; but the short novel also explores many of the themes present in Shakespeare's play, not least the symbolic battle between Carnival and Lent. By comparing *Twelfth Night* and *King of the Masquerade*, this essay examines the appropriation of Shakespeare's Feste into the Caribbean setting of Anthony's novel, which reveals various interpretations of and reactions to Shakespeare in the post-colonial Caribbean.

Because *King of the Masquerade* is not simply a rewriting of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, it does not "write back to the empire," as many postcolonial West Indian texts have — for example, George Lamming's *Water with Berries* (1973) and Elizabeth Nunez's *Prospero's Daughter* (2006), both of which are re-visionings of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*; Derek Walcott's *Pantomime* (1980) and Samuel Selvon's *Moses Ascending* (1975), both of which rewrite Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*; and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), which challenges Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Anthony's novel is different in that its relationship with the "canonical" text derives from an appropriation of the Shakespearean fool as the costume chosen by the protagonist, Alan, which he hopes will win him the masquerade competition on Carnival Tuesday. There is in the novel a play on the phrase "playing the fool," which refers to the actual costume of the Shakespearean fool, but also reflects the condescension, snobbery, and class-consciousness of Alan's father, who despises Carnival for its associations with the rabble and with wasting time. The tension between Alan's desire to play in the Carnival band and his knowledge of his parents' disapproval is the main plot of the novel. This tension is played out in the contrast between what is "classical" and therefore acceptable, and West Indian folk elements (namely Carnival) that are condemned by the upper classes. Although *King of the Masquerade* does not simply rewrite Shakespeare's play, a comparison of the two works reveals that the novel does bear a strong resemblance to the play in its treatment of theme, in its exploration of the tensions between two opposing groups and, to a certain extent, in terms of characterization. And in both texts, the Shakespearean fool complicates ideas about what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behavior, high and low culture.<sup>1</sup>

The relationship between *King of the Masquerade* and *Twelfth Night* cannot, however, simply be described in terms of a Caribbean appropriation of Shakespeare, although Christy Desmet's definition of appropriation as a "theory of textual relations" (1999, 4) is useful because it encourages the sort of reading that accords with Homi Bhabha's concept of interstitial spaces (1994), or Edouard Glissant's rhizome theory that argues for a relational interpretation of Caribbean cultures (1997). This approach allows for a reading of the novel, of Caribbean culture, and of the textual relations as hybrid, a term "used to characterise the range of psychological [. . .] mixings generated by colonial encounters" (Loomba and Orkin 1998, 7); or as syncretic, "result[ing]

spontaneously from the natural development of contact cultures" (Hogan 2000, 330), "a creative tension built around interaction and contestation" (Dash 2004, 791). The relationship between the texts, therefore, becomes dialogic in the Bakhtinian sense (1982), moving from what Derek Walcott would call a "self-torturing schizophrenia" that "precedes the resolution of identity" (quoted in Stone 1994, 126) to "the hope of final therapeutic development of a sure identity" (Savory 1999, 229). At the same time, the commandeering of Feste in Anthony's novel is an appropriative act. Jonathan Bate argues that the term "appropriation" has strong political overtones because he sees it as a self-conscious activity "engaged in for at least *implied* political purpose" (Bate 1989, 5; Cartelli 1999, 16, emphasis in original). Jean Marsden agrees that appropriation is "neither dispassionate nor disinterested," as "it has connotations of usurpation, of seizure for one's own uses" (1991, 1). The appropriation of Feste, however, seems to be of the *transpositional* kind that Cartelli identifies as "appropriation which identifies and isolates a specific theme, plot, or argument in its appropriative objective and brings it into its own, arguably analogous, interpretive field to underwrite or enrich a presumably related thesis or argument" (Cartelli 1999, 17). Still, because *King of the Masquerade* is not overtly counter-discursive, its engagement with Shakespeare in the Caribbean is nuanced in different ways, and the novel's exploration of various attitudes to Shakespeare gives a broad picture of the complex relationship between Caribbean postcolonial society and what was considered a metonym of colonial greatness and superiority. The novel and its relationship with *Twelfth Night* allows us to see what is "mean[t] by Shakespeare" (Hawkes 1992; emphasis in original) in postcolonial Trinidadian society.

### Festivity

The titles of both texts evoke the festive spirit. *King of the Masquerade* directly relates to the annual Carnival celebrations associated with revelry and abandon, held in Trinidad before the Lenten period of the Roman Catholic calendar, which carries associations of fasting, prayer, and restraint. Elizabeth Story Donno points out, however, that *Twelfth Night* may not have been "specifically occasional"; as she notes, "the text contains no allusions to the actual date of Twelfth Night — that is, to the Feast of the Epiphany celebrated on 6 January."<sup>2</sup> She argues, though, that "its title was originally intended simply to evoke a festive occasion comparable to that celebrating the last of the Christmas holidays, when revelry and folly were permitted to turn the real world topsy-turvy under a Lord of Misrule" (Donno 1985, 1). These associations with festivity and holiday relate directly to the genre of comedy to which the play belongs. As Bente A. Videbæk argues, "Comedy provides an organized and socially acceptable outlet to channel potential riotous feelings into collective laughter, and the vicarious experience liberates us" (Videbæk 1996, 191). The

mention of "liberty" in Videbæk's comments also may remind us of Barber's theory of a "release to clarification."<sup>3</sup> The festive spirit of the comedy relies on our belief in its denouement, when the tangled plot will be unravelled, often through equally impossible means. The very structure of the play is therefore festive in its light-heartedness and its movement towards resolution. Videbæk's description of comedy also relates to Michael Bristol's summation of Carnival as a temporary authorized transgression that ultimately rests on binaries: "A central instance of [. . .] Carnival or popular festive structuration of politically significant narrative is the use of characteristic festive personae and the festive agon or Battle of Carnival and Lent as a narrative scheme governing both comic and serious actions" (Bristol 1996, 78). The comments of both critics, as well as the calendar relationship between Carnival and Lent in Anthony's novel, point directly to the structural and thematic opposition existing in both texts.

In the beginning of *King of the Masquerade*, the opposition between Carnival and Lent is expressed through Alan's being "in two minds" (Anthony 1974, 2) when he witnesses the Jour Ouvert band passing outside his window on Carnival Monday morning, since he desires to join them against the disapproval of his parents.<sup>4</sup> The rabble is, in fact, characterized in two ways in the novel: through the perspective of those characters who are in favour of Carnival, such as Alan and Letitia, and through that of Dr. Broomley, who is totally against the festival.<sup>5</sup> The first presentation of the Carnival rabble, however, comes from Alan's perspective. The Jour Ouvert crowd is described as "wild with ecstasy," "dancing in complete abandon," and as a "melée" (1). Water imagery is also used to describe both the crowd and the steel pan music, reflecting a certain fluidity and naturalness associated with the rabble: the music is described as "liquid and seemed to fall upon him like a shower" (1), the steel band as "surging" (3), "a bubbling, turbulent, irresistible stream" (2), and the crowd as "a mad, bubbling river," causing Anne-Marie to think of them as "sail[ing] by" (3). Dr. Broomley's perception of Carnival, first voiced in the novel by his wife, contrasts with Alan's fascination. Mrs. Broomley refers to the Carnival celebrations as a "foolish jam session" and complains, of the rabble, that "their God was Carnival" (9) and that they are "Devils in every sense of the word" (17). According to Dr. Broomley, Carnival "is a cancer" (10) that he associates with "bedlam" (11), and he describes the masqueraders as "so much like savages; drinking liquor, assaulting people, being so coarse and vulgar" (37).

The wildness and ecstasy (*ex-stasis*) associated with Carnival is constructed in opposition to the artificiality and stasis of the Broomley household. Throughout the novel, Dr. Broomley's title is used to suggest his social aspirations but also to maintain a distance between this character and the reader. The social class to which the Broomleys belong is central to the attitude of

exclusion and exclusivity that is adopted by the parents in the household. Their use of the word "savages," in particular, belies a sort of internal colonialism evident in the class consciousness and superiority complex that make these characters distance themselves from their own people, whom they consider inferior.<sup>6</sup> As such, there is a contrast between the activity outside and inactivity inside the house — the outside being associated with freedom and abandon, the inside with restriction and propriety. The movement of the Carnival crowd and the sounds emanating from it contrast with the "absolute stillness" and silence of the house: "There was not a sound in the house" (Anthony 1974, 2). The Broomley household — and Dr. Broomley, in particular — are therefore constructed as somewhat unnatural and artificial in their determination to ignore the band passing below their very window. Still, they cannot prevent the Carnival noise from "pouring into the house" any more than they can prevent Alan's interest and fascination with Carnival. The image does, in fact, seem to foreshadow Alan's involvement in the Carnival celebrations and Anne-Marie's changing attitude to Carnival despite their father's attempts to insulate them from associations with the masses.

The characterization of Sir Toby in *Twelfth Night* is very similar to the characterization of the uncontrollable Carnival rabble of *King of the Masquerade*; a similar contrast is constructed between those associated with the festive spirit (Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Maria, Feste, and, to a certain extent, Viola) and those against it (Malvolio and, initially, Orsino and Olivia). From the first moment we see Sir Toby, his association with misrule is obvious. Indeed, he might even be considered a "Lord of Misrule" in *Twelfth Night*. He is "a hanger-on in Olivia's household, indulging in wine and good fellowship at the buttery bar" (Brown 1957, 166). Sir Toby strongly disapproves of his niece Olivia's cloistering herself to mourn her brother's loss and declares, "I am sure care's an enemy to life" (*Twelfth Night*, 1.3.1-3), which contributes to his construction as a carnivalesque character. This scene is the first time that we see him coming in late after drinking and carousing; the exchange with Maria, who advises Toby to restrain himself, is very funny indeed:

*Maria:* Ay, but you must confine yourself within the modest limits of order.

*Sir Toby:* Confine? I'll confine myself no finer than I am: these clothes are good enough to drink in, and so be these boots too; and they be not, let them hang themselves in their own straps. (1.3.6-10)

Maria is indeed asking too much of such a character. Her suggestion imposes multiple restrictions on him impossible to heed: the words "confine," "modest," "limits," and "order" do not seem to be words Sir Toby can understand; indeed, they are words contrary to the spirit of the carnivalesque, with which Sir Toby and the Carnival rabble of Anthony's novel come to be associated. They are words, instead, that Malvolio, the Puritan figure similar to Dr. Broomley, understands completely

and pompously upholds. However, the scenes in which Sir Toby appears are full of rowdiness, gaiety, and energy — Maria calls it "caterwauling" (2.3.73) — as opposed to the paralysis, stasis, and melancholia suffered by Duke Orsino and the Countess Olivia at the beginning of the play (although they are quickly cured of their paralysis by Viola, arguably the play's "spirit of love") and the conceited seriousness of Malvolio. Indeed, the second time that Sir Toby comes in late, his declaration that life "consists of eating and drinking" (2.3.12) points not only to his rotund figure, as compared with the lean and gangly Malvolio, but also to the lower bodily stratum and its base needs. Dympna Callaghan aptly describes Sir Toby as "epitomis[ing] the corpulent excess of the carnival grotesque" (Callaghan 1996, 138). Sir Toby's freedom and carefree attitude to life contrast with Malvolio's demeanor, highlighting the symbolic battle between Carnival and Lent.

Language also reveals a contrast between the carnivalesque characters and the ones who are opposed to festivity. In both the Shakespearean play and the West Indian novel, different dialects are used. They convey a sense of social structure and could be used as a subversive means to deflate dominant discourses and hierarchical structures by contrasting one mode of speech with another. This heteroglossia also contributes to the carnivalesque potential of the texts. David Bevington distinguishes between the different types of language in Shakespeare's plays as "one of order and one of holiday release" (Bevington 1984, 5). Anthony Gilbert remarks on Shakespeare's "dramatic speech, which ranges freely from the eloquent to the colloquial" (Gilbert 1997, 1). And Lynne Magnusson also calls Shakespeare a "verbal chameleon" for his adeptness in "mimic[ing] in his writing all the street lingos around him . . . [and] the registers of conversational situations and formal occasions" (Magnusson 2001, 25).

Sir Toby's language falls into the heteroglossia and billingsgate of the carnivalesque world. It is lively and witty, as becomes apparent in his exchanges with those around him. His language, especially when directed at Malvolio, is also full of what Bakhtin terms "carnival abuse": for example, when Toby exclaims, "Go, sir, rub your chin with crumbs" (*Twelfth Night*, 2.3.120-21), "Sneck up!" (2.2.95), "O, for a stone-bow, to hit in the eye!" (2.5.49), and "does not Toby take you a blow o' the lips then?" (*Twelfth Night*, 2.5.70-71). Sir Toby also swears frequently, as when he says "a plague o' these pickle-herring!" (1.5.18-19), "Fire and brimstone!" (2.5.53), and "Bolts and shackles!" (2.5.59).<sup>7</sup> Toby flirts with Maria and engages in bawdy talk with the daft Sir Andrew, whom he is using to finance his revelry and drinking spree. Toby's mood, therefore, contrasts with the Lenten severity and puritanical decorum of Malvolio, whose smile is so rare that it becomes a target of ridicule. According to Richard A. Levin, "Sir Toby is regarded as a personification of

the holiday spirit of comedy. His opposition to Malvolio is the opposition of a Lord of Misrule to a killjoy" (Levin 1985, 130).

Malvolio's language contrasts strikingly with Sir Toby's. He is almost always sullen and serious; and while Sir Toby may joke and bandy words, Malvolio's language is more frequently used for denunciation and insult. An important example of his penchant for indictment is evident in his condemnation of Feste and of fooling in general:

I marvel your ladyship takes delight in such a barren rascal: I saw him put down the other day with an ordinary fool, that has no more brain than a stone. Look you now, he's out of his guard already: unless you laugh and minister occasion to him, he is gagged. I protest, I take these wise men, that crow so at these set kind of fools, no better than the fools' zanies.  
(*Twelfth Night*, 1.5.81-87)

This opposition to fooling, to laughter, and to the generation of laughter by fools is contrary to the spirit of the carnivalesque. Malvolio is instantly presented as a character who stands for everything opposed to the world of festivity and who is alienated and aloof. Alexander Leggatt, in fact, calls Malvolio "the most obviously solitary figure in Illyria" (Leggatt 1974, 227). Barber warns, though, that Malvolio "is not hostile to holiday because he is a Puritan; he is like a Puritan because he is hostile to holiday" (Barber 1959, 256). And this reference to hostility and holiday emphasizes the symbolic battle between Carnival and Lent in the play. It is Malvolio's combined conceit and severity that spur Maria and the rest of Sir Toby's company to force him to "play mas" — that is, to partake in the world of festivity, in the celebration of Twelfth Night. Because Malvolio is so averse to the concept of play, however, they can only do this by appealing to his pride and vanity and, in the process, make a right ass of him.

In Anthony's novel, language is also used to distinguish between the natural and the artificial. Alan reflects on his decision to play in the Carnival band; he asks, "why must I hold back me little Carnival! I is a Trinidadian" (Anthony 1974, 29). The use of Creole in his affirmation of what Edward Kamau Braithwaite would call "nation language" (Braithwaite 1995) represents a "radical dis/mantling of European codes and a post-colonial subversion and appropriation of the dominant European discourses" (Tiffin 1995, 95), especially significant in the passage that follows:

He said this in the tone and manner of the steelbandmen and the other people in the street. The people that his parents always called ordinary people, and he always marvelled at the term. [. . .] All his life he had been to what his parents would call upper class schools. So he was supposed to speak differently. [. . .] He smiled and mimicked to himself in a quaint upper-class voice, "Oh, I cannot be bothered about your Easter and your Christmastide.

They are too terribly dull and not so frightfully English. Give me a good shattering, dilapidating Carnival any day." (Anthony 1974, 29)

In the latter part of the passage, Alan imitates his parents' denouncement of the folk as "ordinary people" in the affected accent and vocabulary they assume. Robert Stam calls parody "the privileged mode of artistic carnivalization [. . .] especially well suited to the needs of oppositional culture, precisely because it deploys the force of the dominant discourse against itself" (Stam 1989, 173). Alan is exaggerating their speech here to parodic effect, but the result is both a rejection of false assumptions about superiority and an affirmation of the folk language and culture. According to Elaine Savory, "if the speaker is sufficiently colonised to desire to speak like a white person, then it is as if the mask has taken over the entire personality, as if whiteness has possessed the speaker" (Savory 1999, 223).<sup>8</sup> Letitia, the maid, also rejects their affected speech in her frustrated and unabashed Creole exclamation: "Chu Matt! These big shots! I really can't stomach them. I can't stomach this big English" (Anthony 1974, 60).

Just as Jennifer Rahim characterizes the difference between Tantie and Auntie Beatrice of Merle Hodge's *Crick Crack Monkey* in terms of laughter (Rahim 1998), in *King of the Masquerade* the characters in favor of Carnival, on the one hand, and the Broomleys, on the other, are contrasted in terms of their ability or inability to laugh. At the beginning of the novel, we repeatedly hear that the Carnival band evokes laughter from its onlookers — namely, Alan and Anne-Marie. Anne-Marie also repeats the words to the calypso, "Schooldays are happy happy days" (Anthony 1974, 3). Letitia, like Hodge's Tantie, is also very much associated with laughter, which Wilfred Cartey sees as emphasizing an alliance with "communality" (Cartey 1991, 271). Dr. Broomley, however, chastizes Letitia for laughing loudly: "Look here if you want this job please respect this house. You just can't laugh out like that in this unbecoming fashion. [. . .] There is a certain amount of dignity that people in these parts have to uphold. Stand up straight and get serious at once" (Anthony 1974, 25). Laughter therefore opposes respect, and dignity and seriousness are the preferred mode of behavior as far as Letitia's employers are concerned. Laughter is also associated with the folk and Carnival, especially when Alan reflects later that his costume should be "a bright, comic piece [because] Carnival itself was ideal for a bright, comic piece" (28). The Broomley parents, like Malvolio, are therefore constructed in opposition to all that is festive.

### Falsity

Dr. Broomley is very similar to Malvolio not only in his pompous disapproval of the spirit of festivity and his seeming inability to laugh, but also in his keen awareness of class and his fervent



attempts to assume a position or posture beyond his proper social place. According to Anne-Marie, her parents "were always talking about good breeding and respectability and about being elite." She also comments on the "prejudice they seemed to have against the masses simply because they themselves were considered upper class" (Anthony 1974, 6). This class snobbery is seen on many other occasions. Mrs. Broomley is referred to as "the lady of the house," and Letitia often grumbles about her employers' condescension. She marvels at the menu she is asked to prepare on Carnival Day: "Beef-steak and chips! All my life I know that Carnival Day is rice and peas" (18). The Broomleys' choice of food not only suggests social aspirations but also a rejection of the traditional folk food associated with Carnival.

Later, through the limited omniscient narration, Anne-Marie reflects about her father:

[. . .] he was the typical example of a Victorian gentleman. It was impossible for him to relax or bend. He would rather break than bend. He simply refused to change with the changing times. She was a little amused at the figure he cut, stiff in dinner jacket and tie and with his glinting watch-chain, and it was so funny, it made her see some connection between this and Carnival. For it was nothing short of disguise; masquerade. (Anthony 1974, 36)

Furthermore, Anne-Marie finds her parents' speech comical and "ridiculous"; she describes them as speaking "as if they were still in the Victorian era" (36). The description of Dr. Broomley as a Victorian gentleman evinces his social pretensions but also his valorization of the English. He seems to be suffering from the black skin/white mask syndrome that Franz Fanon writes about (Fanon 1991) and fits V. S. Naipaul's description of the ex-colonized as "mimic men" (Naipaul 2004). According to Savory, "the more colonised the person, the more the mask may be an attempt at white-face" (Savory 1999, 224). Dr. Broomley therefore becomes associated with what Patrick Colm Hogan calls "purgative mimeticism," where "the mimic seeks to purge every suggestion of indigenous culture from his or her thought and action" (Hogan 2000, 330). He is of African descent but tries his utmost to emulate the qualities and culture associated with the English, whom he evidently sees as representing "civilization," as opposed to the "savagery" of the Trinidadian masses.<sup>9</sup> Although Victorian England has no relation to the history of the West Indies, Dr. Broomley and his wife adopt what they see as a foreign, and therefore, superior culture. Moreover, the term "Victorian" is especially appropriate to this context because of its associations with a past era of supposed repression, especially bodily and sexual repression, that contrasts sharply with the Carnival festivities.

Even Anne-Marie admits that her father "had introduced her to classical music purely because of snobbery" (Anthony 1974, 6), since being a metonym of foreign culture, music is considered an

upper-class social activity that would give their daughter the opportunity to go abroad; listening to classical music, it is implied, is better and more acceptable for their social rank and aspirations. For the same reason, Dr. Broomley encourages Alan's love for Shakespeare, the venerated English playwright. Later, when the Broomleys attend the Carnival competition Dr. Broomley, struck by the splendor of the costumes, ignorantly asks, "And do they have anybody come down from England to advise them?" (64) — to which Letitia hotly replies, "Doc, from the very first *we* start Carnival. We make it. Nobody could come from any place and tell us how to play it" (64). Her answer humbles the pretentiousness of the Broomleys but also rejects the colonial and the foreign in favor of the folk and the local. Despite his rejection of Carnival, Dr. Broomley's daughter ironically associates him with the festival, so that the novel's title, *King of the Masquerade*, might describe Dr. Broomley as much as it does his son.

*Twelfth Night's* Malvolio is also a social upstart, the "type of presumptuous person who sometimes amused but more often annoyed Elizabethan playgoers," at whom "[c]onservative Englishmen laughed [. . .] loud and scornfully, but perhaps a trifle nervously" (Goldsmith 1955, 80). Malvolio seeks to change his fortunes by marrying the Countess Olivia, who is far above his station. According to Mark Thornton Burnett, such characters "touch upon anxieties about upward and downward social mobility" (Burnett 1997, 93); "[t]he most frequently articulated anxiety is that stewards and gentlemen ushers will overstep the boundaries they themselves were enjoined to maintain, thereby damaging the household's symbolic role and precipitating it into practical confusion" (181). The play therefore "hints at the potential for an abuse of the domestic power network" (161). However, as Leonard Tennenhouse observes, "the carnivalesque [that is, Sir Toby and company] operates in concert with the interest of an idealized aristocratic community to punish the figures opposing that ideal" (Tennenhouse 1986, 67). The forged letter prepared by Maria outlining outrageous behavior from Malvolio towards Olivia therefore "swerves" Malvolio's improper treatment of his superiors in another direction, to his downfall and his embarrassment.<sup>10</sup> He makes a fool of himself by assuming a ridiculous mask. In the play, the assumption of a mask emphasizes the absurdity of this pretense, just as it does in the case of Dr. Broomley.

Malvolio's donning of the abhorred yellow stockings, his adoption of cross-gartering, and his constant smiling all amount to a masquerade that he is duped into believing will win him Olivia. The masquerade is especially ridiculous because the part he is made to play is so incongruous with his inherent character. Malvolio is tricked into participating in a situation where he can justly claim, "I am not that I play" (*Twelfth Night*, 1.5.181). Persuading Malvolio not only to play what he is not, but also to play the very thing of which he disapproves — the beaming, buoyant, and foppish lover

— is Sir Toby and company's ultimate revenge. As Brown puts it, Malvolio "chooses the fool's head" (Brown 1957, 170). This masquerade theme, which continues into the dark-room scene, in which the carnivalesque company pretend that Malvolio is mad and possessed by the Devil, is also consistent with the Carnival-Lent theme. Here, the *Puritan* is possessed by the *Devil* and locked up for his madness to be *exorcised* by Feste *masquerading* as Sir Topas. The whole ruse, then, culminates in the carnivalization of the Lenten character.

Although both Malvolio and Dr. Broomley are exposed as fools in their respective texts, there are obvious differences between them. Although there is a certain self-hatred manifested by his espousing of English values, Dr. Broomley is at the top of the social hierarchy in Trinidad while Malvolio, accused by Olivia of being "sick of self-love" (*Twelfth Night*, 1.4.99), is a servant dissatisfied with his social position. While Dr. Broomley masquerades as an English gentleman from the beginning of the novel and only towards the end begins to show some interest in the folk culture, Malvolio is tricked into assuming a mask. They are both, however, "playing the fool," and their masks reveal the absurdity of their false values.

### Feste

Alan's choice of the Shakespearean Fool as his Carnival costume is, of course, what directly links *King of the Masquerade* with *Twelfth Night*. The Fool is lifted out of his Shakespearean context and placed in the Trinidad Carnival celebrations. Because Shakespeare, a metonym for the English, is considered "classical" writing by the Broomleys, Alan's parents therefore are pleased at his interest in the bard. They do not associate Shakespeare with the Carnival revelry that occurs outside their window; rather, they approve of reading the plays as a foreign, and therefore civilized, occupation. They see Shakespeare as "more than a literary figure, becoming established as an icon of Western culture" (Marsden 1991, 2). This is why Dr. Broomley uses a Shakespearean quotation to criticize Carnival: "Alan's always saying, 'All the world's a stage.' Shakespeare. All the world's a stage and everybody playing a part. We are all acting, according to Shakespeare [. . .] but there's no reason why we should act the fool" (Anthony 1974, 10-11). Dr. Broomley's ignorance, however, is evident in his assumption that Shakespeare lacks the carnivalesque elements of subversion and revelry. His comment is especially important since it is the fool that his son decides to play—a genuine character from the Shakespeare that Dr. Broomley reveres and dissociates from the Carnival rabble. The use of the Shakespearean Fool as Alan's third costume (the first two are the Devil and the Bat, both of which are traditional Carnival costumes in Trinidad), effectively complicates the binary opposition, suggested by the Broomley parents, about what is savage behavior and polite decorum, about the folk and the civilized.

This tension between Shakespeare and the folk is developed further when Anne-Marie assumes that Alan is lost in his book and oblivious to the festivities in the island: "What's on, boy — big Carnival Tuesday and you studying Shakespeare?" (Anthony 1974, 48). She suggests that the two are incompatible, just as she finds it difficult to practice her piano with the Carnival music pounding in her head. Although she is more open to Carnival than her parents, Anne-Marie still seems to distinguish it from what is socially deemed classical, even if she can appreciate the difference between them. When Letitia voices a Creole proverb, she too dissociates the folk from Shakespeare: "'Long rope for mangy horse' or something. This is not Mr. Shakespeare now" (23). It is significant that she often refers to "*Mr. Shakespeare*," again revealing the distance she feels from his work and all associated with it. Alan seems to be the only one who recognizes a familiarity in the Shakespearean character and its possibility as a Carnival costume. He understands that the character is derived from a different culture and a different time, but he is able to "lift the fool straight from Shakespeare and put him in local colour" (33). As Dr. Broomley observes during the parade, "every expression was a genuine expression from Shakespeare. From *Twelfth Night*, if he recalled rightly. Sometimes the expressions weren't exact, but turned and twisted to suit this place and this time" (67).

Alan's choice of the fool is also a careful one and, in his eyes, suits the spirit of Carnival: "the more he re-acquainted himself with the fool it was the more he felt like playing the fool. Besides, the fool was a clown, and quite apart from hilarity which had to be natural to a clown [. . .] a clown was one of the prettiest things one could play — if you knew how to handle it" (Anthony 1974, 30). Although Anthony uses the words "fool" and "clown" interchangeably, the fool in Shakespeare was different from the clown in that he was less of a common rustic and more of a professional entertainer, the jester. Through his sometimes scathing wit and subtle manipulation of language, the fool created a carnivalesque atmosphere without the boorish type of slapstick comedy that was usually associated with the clown. Singing, usually associated with fools and with Feste in particular, was a form of entertainment that would have appealed to all sectors of the audience, thus creating a sense of community in the theater. Fools also did jigs sometimes and performed other antics that would have delighted the audience and increased the festivity of watching a comedy.

There is a play on the words "playing the fool" that is consistent with Dr. Broomley's view of Carnival as an excuse to act in a ridiculous and unbecoming manner, but it is also in the tradition of Carnival of playful enjoyment without too much care about decorum. Alan also chooses the fool because it promises to be both a beautiful and entertaining costume that the general public could relate to. This is, in fact, the reason he decides against playing another comic character, such as Sir Andrew: "A few scholars sitting in the stands might know him and would appreciate it, but in any

case Carnival is not for any few scholars — Carnival is for the people. The people sitting in the stands wouldn't know Sir Andrew. Power to the People" (Anthony 1974, 30). This final statement is a celebration of the common man and reflects the idea in the novel that binaries imposed by social classes are not definite. It also is consistent with the characterization of Carnival as a celebration of the people by the people.

In *Twelfth Night*, as in many Shakespearean comedies, the fool creates a carnivalesque dimension to the plays. The fool in Shakespeare's play also straddles the boundaries between "high" and the "low." Although he is in the employ of a Countess, he is not a "high" character. Although he proves himself witty and clever — indeed, cleverer than his mistress in claiming that she is the fool for mourning her brother when she believes he is in Heaven — he does not belong to the same social class as she does. At the same time, Feste is also not a "low" character. He, like Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Viola — who also complicate (or defy) categorization in terms of "high" and "low" — seems to move easily between the social classes. No wonder, then, that Alan is attracted to this character for his Carnival costume.

Feste, however, is a curious character in that although he provides much of the entertainment and laughter in *Twelfth Night*, his somewhat melancholic song that closes the play complicates the genre of comedy. Despite many of the characteristics associated with Shakespearean comedy that are present in *Twelfth Night* — such as the unravelling of the complicated plot, the multiple marriages, and the sense of restoration and harmony at the end of the play — Feste's final song about the transience of things and the presence of sadness in the world ("It raineth every day") ends the play on a sober note. In many ways, then, Feste dissolves binaries that exist in the play.

Feste is also involved in disguise (as is Viola), further complicating the issue of identity in the play. He masquerades as Sir Topas in the exorcism scene, which also characterizes him as a trickster. This again provides a point of comparison with Alan, who also behaves Anansy-like,<sup>11</sup> employing Leititia to keep his surreptitious involvement in the Carnival celebrations secret. The trickster figure in West Indian literature was very popular, as it symbolizes the necessity of the oppressed to use their wit to survive and to deal with the oppressive authoritarian figures and models of the colonizer — in this case, represented by Dr. Broomley and his outdated and foreign ideas of what is acceptable and proper. Trickster characters therefore represent not only a plebeian insistence on self-recognition and self-assertion (albeit in indirect and more subtle ways), but also a triumph of wit and survival instincts in a repressive environment. Alan, considered by Leititia to be a "university man," like Feste complicates the binaries in the text by straddling the world of the

upper class and the educated, and the world of the less privileged and the folk. The shape-shifting of both Feste and Alan, achieved through disguise, facilitates their success.

In *King of the Masquerade*, the contrast between the educated upper class and the folk also finds expression in the difference between classical and Carnival music. This is made feasible in the novel because Anne-Marie plays the piano and dreams of attending the Royal School of Music in London. She finds it difficult to play when the Jouvert band is parading outside her window and reflects, "who could practise a rhapsody of Brahms with all the confusion and the colour and the music of Carnival still in one's head?" (Anthony 1974, 4). She appreciates its difference but also its beauty, and her attitude therefore contrasts with her parents': "So why can't it be a thing of the masses and still be beautiful? It *is* beautiful. I mean, is only classical music beautiful? You think only Beethoven and Bach and Brahms beautiful?" (6; emphasis in original). Letitia, though, finds the playing of classical music on Carnival Day to be a mad mixture: "Just imagine Beethoven on Carnival Day. And you want to tell me those people ain't mad?" (22). Dr. Broomley refuses to listen to and appreciate the Carnival music blasting right outside of his window until towards the end of the novel, when Anne-Marie and her mother encourage him to attend the Carnival competition, at which he is forced to admit, "I prefer steel" (65). His initial reaction to the music, however, is: "And this thing they call the steelband — that is music too? Tell me, you call that music? Going down the road, making ruction beating old tins and drums — that is music? [. . .] Now compare that with you sitting at your piano!" (38-39). Not only the music and musical instruments, but also the manner of execution are contrasted — going down the road beating drums is behavior associated with the rabble, while sitting primly at the piano suggests, in his eyes, respectability and decorum.

The surface contrast between classical music and Carnival music is complicated, however, when Anne-Marie detects the sound of the guitar pan, which sounds like a piano in the steelband. While the sound may suggest beauty only because it produces the same sound as the "classical" instruments, I prefer to regard this detail as an instance in which binary oppositions are challenged in the novel. The division between classical and Carnival music is not as straightforward and clear-cut as first appears, in the same way that the Shakespearean fool complicates the great divide the Broomleys perceive between "classical" literature and the Carnival celebrations of which they disapprove.

Both the Shakespearean play and the West Indian short novel also end on an ambivalent note, with no real sense of resolution. Although at first glance there seems to be the triumph of Carnival over Lent at the end of *Twelfth Night* in the successful humiliation of Malvolio, this is not clear-cut. Harry Levin's comment can, therefore, be slightly misleading and needs to be approached with caution:

Shakespeare loaded his dice on the side of carnival, in that hungover hanger-on Sir Toby, as against the lenten Malvolio, that prince of wet blankets. But Shakespeare was writing a comedy — and, what is more, a comedy written in defense of the comic spirit. He could commit himself, in this case, to the wisdom of folly and to the ultimate foolishness of the conventional wisdom. (Levin 1976, 141)

Bristol's argument on the thrashings of both Carnival and Lent at the end of *Twelfth Night* seems more discerning: "the pattern of festive agon is not compatible with asymmetrical, one-sided, and conclusive outcomes. The combatants, Carnival and Lent, each have certain obligations, in particular the obligation to be thrashed" (Bristol 1996, 80). Sir Toby's revels stop at the end of the play, and his thrashing comes at the hands of Sebastian; we have a brief glance of him bleeding before he is taken offstage. Malvolio, of course, suffers deep humiliation, and his swearing of vengeance as he exits the stage — "I'll be reveng'd on the whole pack of you" (*Twelfth Night*, 5.1.380) — is heavy and ominous in the midst of the unravelling of the imbroglio. As Bristol observes, "The battle of angry Carnival and sullen, vindictive Lent is not concluded in the represented world of Illyria, nor is it ever concluded in the world offstage" (1996, 81). The presumed victory of Carnival over Lent becomes even more problematic with the resumption of order and hierarchy in the play, although it is consistent with the definition of Carnival as a short respite. The multiple marriages at its denouement also suggest order as the characters are neatly swept into couples. That the party is over is further suggested by the poignancy of Feste's final song.

The conclusion to *King of the Masquerade* is also left open to interpretation. Although the Broomleys exhibit a more accepting attitude toward Carnival by the end of the novel, the revelation of the identity of the masquerader who wins the competition sends Dr. Broomley into a faint. There is therefore no real conclusion drawn at the novel's end, although Letitia seems to think that showing Dr. Broomley that, unbeknownst to him, his own son has been playing Carnival is a triumphant moment. Still, Alan's father does not recognize him and thinks the masquerader's embracing of his wife is unacceptable behavior. It is all a case of misunderstanding.

Both *Twelfth Night* and *King of the Masquerade* show the complexities of the societies in which they are set, revealing tensions between social classes and between high and low cultures. They both explore the possibilities of the carnivalesque, but it is important to recognize that their depictions can be contradictory, compromising, and shifting. They reveal the multiple meanings of masks — the ability of masks to dissociate and alienate one from a sense of identity and belonging, but also to transcend boundaries and to create a deeper understanding of the self and a stronger sense of communality. Both works reveal that playing the fool, engaging in the transforming festival spirit

of the Carnival can therefore be a path to self-recognition and understanding. It is hardly surprising, then, that the poet Wayne Brown compared twentieth-century Trinidad to the Elizabethan period, especially in relation to Carnival modes:

The society is Elizabethan. In its exuberance and volatility, its ribaldry and ostentation, above all in its turbulent love affair with language — language as self-creation, as in the *Midnight Robber*; language as scourge, as in the tents; language as proof of, and resistant against, the ultimate absurdity of the human condition, as in that promiscuous derision and rage of punning which constitutes an Old Mas band — in these it recalls the flair and angst of Shakespeare's world. (Brown 1991; quoted in Stone 1994, 1)

However, despite the similarities between two works, "colonial literatures could grow to resemble [English literature] closely but could never be considered its legitimate heir," as Walcott cautions (1999, 28). Instead, *King of the Masquerade* may be seen as a local creative response to a literary tradition that was long established in colonial societies: "by the writer's making creative use of his schizophrenia, an electric fusion of the old and the new," Anthony creates in his text what can be better described as the "courtesies of exchange" (Walcott 1999, 16, 27). The creative engagements with Shakespeare, variously interpreted in the postcolonial Caribbean context, transform Shakespeare into a locally manufactured production and an expression not only of individual identity (as in the case of Alan), but also of national and cultural identity.<sup>12</sup>

### Notes

1. See Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (1988).
2. There is, however, reference to the "twelfth day of December" (*Twelfth Night*, 2.3.85) in Sir Toby's song.
3. Northrop Frye also asserts that "Comedy is [. . .] the name of a structure, yet it has a predominating mood which is festive [. . .] The normal action of a comedy moves from irrational law to festivity." Frye's analysis, however, becomes increasingly complicated as he cautions that comedy is not usually wholly festive but only so in the majority. See Northrop Frye, *A Natural Perspective: The Development of Shakespearean Comedy and Romance* (1965), 49, 115.
4. Jour Ouvert, French for "open day" but pronounced "jouvay," is the name given to the morning of Carnival Monday, when the two-day Carnival celebrations officially begin.
5. Mrs. Broomley echoes her husband's feelings about the festival at the beginning of the novel.



6. Paradoxically, the superiority complex that these characters seem to exhibit actually suggests feelings of inferiority in relation to the colonial ideals they perceive in Shakespeare and classical music.
7. For more on swearing in Shakespeare, see Frances A. Shirley, *Swearing and Perjury in Shakespeare's Plays* (1979).
8. Although Savory's comment is useful here, I do see problems with the assumption that all white people speak the same and that whiteness itself is not also a construction.
9. Although this is not confirmed by the text of the novel, the illustrations of Alan show a young man of African descent.
10. Stephen Greenblatt observes that through "swerving," which he describes as "one of the central structural principles" in the play, the sexual relationships that tend toward homoeroticism and the social order that seems threatened by Malvolio take their "natural" course and are, in the end, left intact. See Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988), 68, 72.
11. Perhaps the most important model figure in literature for the West Indian trickster comes from the Anansy stories brought to the West Indies by African slaves in the colonial period. The folk character Anansy was a spider man from Akan folklore who took many forms in the West Indian setting (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2002, 35). Anansy stories resemble American Brer Rabbit tales in that the least likely member of the creature world is able to use sheer wit and ingenuity to escape difficult and almost impossible situations. The Anansy figure became especially important and popular to the early West Indians because the trickster figure symbolized their own plight, first as underprivileged slaves and then as a struggling people to assert an identity as West Indian peoples. According to Joyce E. Jonas, "his survival in folk imagination surely has to do with his capacity to transform disruption, discontinuity, brokenness, and defeat into triumphant new configurations of possibility" (Jonas 1988, 347).
12. Ania Loomba, "Local-manufacture made-in-India Othello Fellows" 1998, 143-63.

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