

SHAKESPEARE FOREVER

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"DEEP DOWN IN DEJUNGLE" : RE- ARTICULATING GLORIA NAYLOR'S *MAMA DAY* AND SHAKESPEARE'S *THE TEMPEST*

Dr. A. ROSELIN MARY

There is a dynamic interplay of texts in African American Literature. A literary piece is not an autonomous, free-standing edifice but intertextually, it "talks" with and to other texts. J. Hillis Miller characterizes a literary work as "inhabited...by a long chain of parasitical presences, echoes, allusions, guests, ghosts of previous texts" (446). Similarly, Roland Barthes describes the text as a "multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash...a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of cultures" (146). Several African American critics, including Robert B. Stepto and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., have discussed textual affinities between works and their African American precursorial models; Susan Willis and Michael Awkward have undertaken an exclusive study on inter-textuality of black women writers.

In delineating a specific type of intertextuality termed "signifyin(g)", Gates explains the revisionary impulse of black writes: "It is clear that black writers read and critique other black texts as an act of rhetorical self-definition. Our literary tradition exists because of these precisely chartable formal literary relationships, relationships of signifying" (290). The Signifying Monkey who dwells 'deep down in dejungle', is an African