

**Translation and National Identity:
The Use and Reception of Mauritian
Creole Translations of Shakespeare and
Molière**

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Declaration

I, Kate November, declare that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signature:

Date:

To Jesus, my Lord and Saviour

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to find out whether theatre translation into Mauritian Creole can contribute to the formation of a national identity in post-colonial, multi-ethnic and multilingual Mauritius. There are currently fourteen languages spoken, many of which, as carriers of symbolic value, are often used as markers of ethnic identity. Moreover, the fact that they do not all carry the same socio-economic and political status has created a linguistic hierarchy which positions English at the top, closely followed by French, in turn followed by Asian languages and finally by Mauritian Creole, even though the latter is the most widely spoken language on the island.

I argue that translation into Mauritian Creole is largely an ideological endeavour, designed to challenge the existing asymmetrical linguistic power relations, and to highlight the language's existence as a shared cultural capital and as a potential force for national unity. I show how such an endeavour is closely linked to the political and socio-cultural aspects of the target society. This is done by using complementary theoretical perspectives, such as Itamar Even-Zohar's polysystem theory (1979, 2000), André Lefevere's systemic concept (2004) and post-colonial approaches to translation, and by drawing upon the case study research method, with its emphasis on multiple sources for data collection.

The thesis examines Mauritian Creole translations of six plays by Shakespeare and two by Molière. I suggest that the reasons for choosing Shakespeare and Molière for translation are highly symbolic in the Mauritian context, where the educational system, a British colonial legacy, has continued to assign a privileged position to canonized British

and French literatures; a system which contributes towards the perpetuation of colonial values. The translation of canonized texts is therefore intended to highlight the persistence of hegemonic socio-cultural values. Equally, it is designed to promote cultural decolonization and to point to the emergence of new creolized practices that offer areas of shared meaning for the Mauritian population as a whole.

I also argue that since translation is an ideological undertaking, it is essential to understand the purposes of those actively involved in its production and dissemination. Because theatre texts can function as literary artefacts and as performance scripts, I look at the role played not only by translators and publishers, but also by theatre practitioners (producers, directors and actors). I explain their beliefs and their political agendas, showing why neither translation, nor stage production can constitute a neutral activity. In the process, my examination reveals the opposing forces at work which disagree over the way Mauritian Creole should be used in the discourse of nation-building.

I then look at the intended target audiences with a view to finding out if the translations and the stage productions have had any obvious impact upon Mauritian society. My findings show that neither readers nor spectators are likely to have represented a large proportion of the population. Although this seems to indicate that theatre translation has had little direct impact so far upon the construction of a national identity, I suggest that in fact, its contribution to the Mauritian Creole literary and cultural capital should not be underestimated, as the language is very slowly emerging as an important symbol of the island. I conclude that should theatre translation be combined with other societal efforts in the future, it could still have a part to play in the formation of a national identity based upon Mauritian Creole.

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Introduction

On 12 March 1968, Mauritius proclaimed its independence from Britain. In the capital, Port-Louis, its newly designed quadri-coloured flag¹ was unfurled for the first time and its national anthem officially released. To political observers of the time, the island provided the classic paradigm of a poor third world country with its small size, its geographical isolation, its lack of natural resources and a growing population made up entirely of descendants from Europe, Africa, India and China. Whilst it remained under British rule, it existed as part of the British Empire, its members recognized as British subjects, regardless of ancestral origins. With self-determination, the complex issue of forging a national identity revealed itself as a difficult task.

In recent years, the existing diversity of languages, cultures and ethnic groups has been repeatedly used as a selling point in the island's attempt to attract holiday-makers. Underneath its touristic image of a rainbow nation, however, lies a society which, to a large extent, still defines itself along distinct linguistic, racial and ethnic lines. Baptiste (2002: 1), in fact, has argued that "to speak of Mauritius, is to speak of diaspora". For Mauritians, the conceptualization of identity resting purely on a geographical criterion is not difficult to envisage because the island of Mauritius has clearly defined physical boundaries. Identity resting on shared values, beliefs and traditions, on the other hand, is more problematic because of the populations' heterogeneity. The truth is, as Eriksen has pointed out (1998: 140-142), Mauritians may refer to their homeland as '*enn lil*' ('an island') or '*enn peyi*' ('a country'), but rarely as a nation in the Western sense of the

¹ Horizontal stripes of red, blue, yellow and green.

word, i.e. a community of citizens sharing a political state. This is because in the local context, the concept of '*nasyon*' is normally taken to refer to a black Mauritian, although it can also be used to describe a Hindu caste or a racial, linguistic or ethnic community; a term therefore, which far from valorizing a national form of identification, only serves to reveal the underlying fragmentation of the population.

Consequently, although the post-independence state policy of 'unity in diversity' has been viewed by some scholars as "a model of ethnic compromise and coexistence" (Eisenlohr 2007: 988), it is undeniable that there are, currently, discrepancies between the state discourse and how Mauritians identify themselves – as members belonging to specific groups, usually ethnic groups, rather than to the nation. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985: 209), in their book, *Acts of Identity*, have proposed that the attribution of ethnicity is often based upon several different criteria, such as phenotype, place of origins, language, race, nationality and cultural (including religious) practices. However, the formulation of ethnicity as a composite of all these attributes is problematic, as it wrongly presupposes that they all (except, to a much lesser degree, the criterion of nationality) provide clear boundaries to mark off groups from one another. They are, in fact, convenient labels used as prescriptions for social interaction and, more often than not, used on a subjective basis because the perception of what is ethnically or non-ethnically representative depends upon the individual and the social context in which he/she operates. In effect, "people *do* believe themselves to live in a world of discrete or distinct ethnic ... groups" (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985: 208, emphasis in the original text). This is the case in Mauritius, where ethnicity readily provides the term for which identities can be hung on, dividing communities between 'us' and 'them'

on the basis of one or more of the criteria mentioned above. Furthermore, to many Mauritians, an insistence on ethnic differences often includes the cultivation of ancestral and diasporic traditions.

However, ethnic differentiation, although legitimized by the State in its financial assistance to socio-religious organizations, has not gone totally unchallenged. Since independence, there have been a growing number of Mauritian intellectuals and political activists who have argued that Mauritian nationhood can be mediated through the centrality of the local vernacular, Mauritian Creole. According to them, Mauritian Creole, as the language used by the majority of the population, represents a shared symbol that can help combat ethnocentric divisions and bring people together in nation-building efforts. The trouble, however, is that as a former colony, Mauritius has inherited many of the linguistic assumptions of its colonial masters. There is a common local perception that the status of a language is closely linked to the power status of its speakers. Unsurprisingly, the metropolitan languages (first English, then French), as languages of the former colonial masters, are positioned at the top of the hierarchy, followed by the ‘ancestral’ languages, and finally, by Mauritian Creole whose position at the bottom is due mainly to its origins as the language of slavery, and to its oral and non-standardized status. It is a perception that proponents of Mauritian Creole wish to overturn, because they believe that Creole is not a dialect and that it is an important part of an authentic Mauritian cultural inheritance, which none of the other languages can claim to be.

This opinion is yet to be accepted by the majority as we can see by the lack of consensus regarding the name of the language. It is alternatively known as MC,

Morisyen (Mauritian) or Kreol. Although the term ‘kreol’ is sometimes used in the local press (for instance, the newspaper, ‘*La Voix Kreol*’), its spelling marks it out as the variant used mainly by language activists. ‘*Morisyen*’, on the other hand, has no ethnic connotation attached to it, but as Baggioni and de Robillard (1990: 41) have pointed out, opting for ‘*Morisyen*’ can be seen as an exclusionary choice since it precludes the recognition of Rodrigues’² Creole as part of the same linguistic system as Mauritian Creole. Finally, I think that the acronym, MC, does not do justice to the geographical and linguistic specificities of Mauritian Creole. For all these reasons mentioned above, I have used ‘Mauritian Creole’ throughout this thesis, often interchangeably with ‘Creole’.

Those wishing to use Mauritian Creole for nation-building purposes have faced, and still face, an arduous task. The construction of a nation depends on the ability to create internal cohesion, which in turn hinges to a certain extent on the successful invention of a cultural repertoire (Chang 2008: 135-136). In the Mauritian context, cultural efforts in Creole are not generally held in high esteem. Certainly, in terms of literary endeavours, they are often unfavourably compared to creative works carried out in more established and ‘prestigious’ languages, such as English and French. As a result, the task of translating into Mauritian Creole is not to act as a bridge between two cultures; its task is to prove the worthiness of the target language. The subordination of translational practices to ideological and political purposes is, of course, nothing new. Writing about the history of translation in the West, André Lefevere (1990: 15-16), for example, points

² The island of Rodrigues, some 500 kms to the north-east of the island of Mauritius, belongs to the Republic of Mauritius (see Section 2.1). The main languages spoken there are Creole, French and English.

out that translations from Greek into Latin were carried out by Romans not because the educated Romans needed the target texts (after all, they were bilingual Greek and Latin readers), but because translation was a means to appropriate and manipulate the Greek culture in order to enhance the greatness of the Roman empire. Likewise, for the French Classicists and for the German Romantics, the aim of translation was mainly to assimilate other languages and cultures for purposes of national and cultural self-aggrandizement (Robinson 1997: 58-62).

Clearly, this thesis is inscribed within the ‘cultural turn’ of translation studies. It is not proposing to assess the linguistic merits of the target texts in comparison to the source texts. I say this partly to pre-empt any possible criticism that two of the target texts used as data here (*Toufann* and *Misye Peng*) do not constitute ‘faithful’ translations but are in fact ‘adaptations’. Since there is no clear theoretical definition of what constitutes an ‘adaptation’ or a ‘faithful’ translation and since the criteria used to evaluate these two concepts usually differ from individual to individual, my aim (see Section 1.1.1) is not to point out the linguistic ‘inaccuracies’ of the target texts, but to look at the issues engendered by the process of translation as a socio-cultural practice. I intend to focus on the translators’ textual manipulation *and* on the gamut of processes involved in the translational event – the selection of the source texts, the reception of the target audiences, the extra-literary constraints imposed by the publishers and so forth.

I suggest that such an extensive analysis is even more appropriate for theatre translation, given that the latter can play a double role within its receiving society; double in the sense that it can be used to impart ideological signification both as textual and as stage production. However, I should like to clarify two things. Firstly, although

theatre, as a generic term, does not necessarily include the use of language (as in mime, ballet and shadow-theatre), or the use of a written text (as in improvised theatre and *commedia dell'arte*), it is intended, in this thesis, to designate a text-centred form of stage representation, which makes use of verbal elements and which is available in printed form (Aaltonen 2000a: 59). Secondly, the analysis of any theatre practitioner's involvement will be mainly related to their handling of the linguistic element of the plays and the extent to which such handling contributes to nation-building. A semiotic interpretation of theatre, in other words, the interplay between the different sign systems (such as body movements, actors' costumes, stage décors, sound effects and so forth) that characterize a *mise-en-scène* is not being proposed in this thesis³. Neither will I be joining the debates regarding the concept of 'performability'⁴ as one of the best ways of theorizing and explaining theatre translation. This is because I believe that the connection between translated text and theatre in the Mauritian context is best viewed as being determined mainly by ideological practices aimed at promoting and legitimizing the interests of those involved in this process of translation and stage production. Therefore, the question to ask here is not whether the drama text can be translated and performed, but why it is being translated and performed.

The issues raised in this introduction will provide the leitmotifs throughout the thesis, shaping the approach to be adopted and giving a definite outline to the analysis

³ For information on theatre as a system that communicates meaning through different signs encoded within the text and the performance, see Elam (1980), and Aston and Savona (1991).

⁴ Judging by the amount of criticism and literature on the issue (see Bassnett 1990, 1991, 1998, Nikolarea 2002, Espasa 2000: 49-62, and Aaltonen 2000b: 41-46), the concept of 'performability' has had a controversial impact upon the field of translation studies from the mid-1980s onwards. The main criticism of 'performability' is the fact that it is a vague concept for which there is no sound theoretical definition and which has, more often than not, been used as justification for all sorts of translational strategies, conveniently labelled as, what Aaltonen (2000b: 40) calls, "requirements of the stage".

undertaken. In Chapter One, I explain the theoretical framework within which the target texts and the subsequent stage productions are examined. I also explain why and how a case study research method has been applied in this thesis. In Chapter Two, I provide an overview of Mauritius and show that the vagaries of history have influenced the way Mauritians perceive and define themselves. I also briefly show how ethnicity still plays an important role within the political and economic environment of the island. My main focus however, is on the socio-cultural context, where I not only describe the several population groups and subgroups, but also delve into the complex role of language, used either as a way of reinforcing group boundaries or as a potential stepping-stone towards nation-building.

In Chapter Three, I explore the origins of linguistic nationalism and examine whether it is applicable to the multilingual and multicultural reality of many post-colonial societies. I consider the different ways in which several of these societies have tried to tackle the issue of multilingualism. I then look at the interplay between theatre translation and linguistic nationalism in order to understand how and why the translation of theatre texts can be used as a platform for nation-building.

In Chapters Four and Five, I analyze the target texts and some of the subsequent stage productions. In Chapter Four, I proceed from the argument that political independence for a former colony is not necessarily synonymous with cultural autonomy. Here, I look at how theatre translation is being used as a way of overcoming the influence of hegemonic views which Mauritius inherited from its colonial masters. In Chapter Five, I consider the various ways in which the translators manipulate the target texts, firmly embedding the texts within the receiving culture in order to prove the

validity of Mauritian Creole as a written and a literary language, and to promote a national identity based on the creation of autochthonous linguistic values.

An examination of the role played by translators, and other individuals and organizations that have enabled the translation, publication and stage production of the target texts is provided in Chapter Six. Here, I give an assessment of their ideological beliefs and political agendas, and show the conflicting perspectives between those for whom Mauritian Creole is the essential component in a nation-building discourse and those for whom multiculturalism is the only way to socio-political stability.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, I consider the impact, if any, of the target texts and their stage productions upon the receiving audiences. I begin by examining several important socio-cultural factors, such as literacy skills and financial considerations, to explain why the level of potential target readers is not very high. I then look at the publishing industry in Mauritius, with a view to comparing the number of published Creole texts against publications in other languages. In the third section, I focus on theatre spectators as another set of intended addressees to find out whether or not theatre attendance is a popular cultural practice in Mauritius.

The purpose of this thesis is manifold. First of all, it is motivated by personal reasons. The search for a Mauritian national identity, as is the quest for a personal identity, is closely bound with the idea of displacement and belonging. For this author, a descendant of Hakka Chinese immigrants, born in Mauritius, given a Eurocentric education, married to an English man, and living in Scotland, this thesis provides the opportunity to examine how different cultural and linguistic values inherited from her

country of birth, those of her forebears and those of her current place of residence can be reconciled.

Since Mauritius constitutes the focus of our attention in this thesis, it is obviously hoped that this research will be of interest to Mauritians themselves (academics, writers, publishers, policy planners, language activists and so forth). In the last decade or so, there have been studies on Mauritian Creole and its link with various socio-cultural domains and practices, such as secondary education (Bissoonauth 1998), adult literacy (Hills 2001), creative writing (Mooneeram 2001), primary education (Baptiste 2002) and linguistic ownership (Rajah-Carrim 2004a). However, before proceeding any further, I must mention here that, although no full-scale doctoral research has been carried out (to my knowledge) on theatre translation into Mauritian Creole, I have, since the beginning of my thesis, come across a couple of articles written by Roshni Mooneeram, whose content does, to a small degree, overlap with my own work. I refer specifically to her articles: 'Mauritius and Réunion' (2004: 405-429), 'Language Politics in Dev Virahsawmy's *Toufann*, a Postcolonial Rewriting of *The Tempest*' (2006a: 67-81) and 'Negotiating Shakespeare's Hypercanonicity in Creole: Ideological and Practical Considerations' (2006b: 331-349). All three pieces focus mainly on plays written by the author/translator, Dev Virahsawmy. Although, like myself, Mooneeram considers that those who write in Mauritian Creole do so for ideological reasons, her work is geared towards a linguistic analysis of the plays to show that creative writing can contribute towards standardization efforts. Her third article does focus more on the use of translation as a form of creative writing, but is limited to the analysis of one target text

only (*Prens Hamlet*)⁵. My own work here examines a larger corpus of translated plays, including target texts created by other Mauritian translators. Finally, I have approached the issue of translation into Mauritian Creole from a more ‘global’ point of view: analyzing the target texts, examining the participation of the many social agents involved, and highlighting the role of the readers and, in our case, that of the theatre spectators as well. While I recognize the validity and strength of Mooneeram’s work, I hope, on the other hand, that my own investigation will constitute another building-block in our understanding of the development of Mauritian Creole not only as an autonomous language that reflects the heterogeneity of its speakers, but also the various ways in which it is being used in the project of nation-building.

Although the findings of my investigation will refer specifically to the Mauritian situation, this research also aims to make a contribution to the field of translation studies, in particular to the limited literature on theatre translation in post-colonial societies. In the last decade or so, several works have foregrounded the connection between theatre translation and its surrounding socio-cultural context (in particular, works written and/or edited by Brisset 1996, Aaltonen 1996 and 2000b, Upton 2000, Mateo 2002, Findlay 2004, Coelsch-Foisner and Klein 2004, Hanna 2005, and Walton 2006). There is, however, very little that relates to the interplay between theatre

⁵ However, since the submission of this thesis (June 2009), Mooneeram has published a book, entitled *From Creole to Standard – Shakespeare, Language, and Literature in a Postcolonial Context* (Aug 2009), which is an amalgamation of her doctoral thesis and the articles mentioned above. She reiterates her convictions that creative writing, in the form of theatre plays, translations and novels, can have an impact upon the standardization of Mauritian Creole (i.e. the codification and the elaboration of the language). In her book, two chapters are devoted to the stylistic analysis of Virahsawmy’s *Toufann*, *Prens Hamlet* and *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* to show the innovative ways in which translation has been used to transform the linguistic aspects of the language (syntax, lexis, registers, idiolects, etc.), with the aim to elevate the status of Mauritian Creole and to increase its corpus.

translation and nation-building for societies, like Mauritius, still trying to reconcile their existence as former European colonies, while at the same time facing the challenges of their racial and cultural heterogeneity.

Finally, the difficulties involved in developing a Creole language for purposes other than oral conversations cannot, of course, be considered unique to the Mauritian case. I am thinking, in particular, of the other Creole-speaking islands in the Indian Ocean (the Seychelles) and in the Caribbean basin⁶ which, like Mauritius, obtained their political independence during the second half of the twentieth century, and whose population landscape is also the result of European settlements, African slavery and sometimes of Asian immigration movements. For some, the resulting multilingual situation is, therefore, not dissimilar to the Mauritian linguistic environment⁷. Equally, for many of these islands, a form of colonial cultural hegemony continues to hold sway, where the Creole languages, despite their importance as the main *lingua franca*, continue to be perceived by large sections of the population as mere dialects which lack the prestige of the colonial languages (Alleyne 1985: 160-161). Consequently, it is hoped that by looking at how, through translation, a Creole language is being used as an ideological weapon in order to assert its validity, my research will be of particular interest to these Creole-speaking societies.

⁶ These are Barbados, Jamaica, Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, St Lucia, Dominica, St Vincent, Antigua and St Kitts-Nevis (Stone 1985: 17).

⁷ Trinidad, for example, is home to English, a French-based Creole, Bhojpuri, Chinese languages and an English-based Creole (Singh 2000: 97).

Chapter One – Conceptual Framework and Research Method

Introduction

In this chapter, I aim to look at the conceptual framework and the research methodology applied in the thesis. In the first section, I consider the debates regarding ‘translation’ vs. ‘adaptation’ and explain why it is a dichotomy that is not relevant for this thesis. I then look at the systemic and post-colonial approaches used. By taking the view that translation does not occur in a vacuum or in isolation of contexts, but is involved in a dynamic process of interaction with other aspects of society, these approaches allow us to study the practice of translation as a socio-cultural activity which could potentially have an impact upon the host society.

In the second section, I focus on the research method used: the case study methodology. Bill Gillham (2000: 12) has suggested that all researchers are mainly concerned with two things: theory and evidence. He also goes on to state that theory can only perform its ‘task’ if there is any evidence to be appraised and explained (2000: 35). In fact, for case studies, the researcher will usually rely on several sets of evidence and different evidence-collecting methods, which will be used to develop a more detailed analysis and, hence, build up a more comprehensive picture of the issue being investigated. In this section, I first introduce my ‘case’ and the specific context within which it operates, then I give an account of the data used and explain how they were obtained.

1.1 Conceptual framework

The approaches described below constitute the framework for this thesis. I look at the notion of ‘adaptation’, often used in opposition to ‘translation’, and explain why it is a distinction which translation theorists have been unable to agree upon. I then consider three approaches (Itamar Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory (1979, 2000), André Lefevere’s concept of patronage and ideology (2004) and post-colonial approaches), which have been chosen for their complementarity, in order to provide us with different perspectives on the issue of theatre translation in Mauritius.

1.1.1 Translation vs. Adaptation

The debates regarding the notions of ‘translation’⁸ and ‘adaptation’⁹ are nothing new. Scholars, such as Bastin (2001: 5) and Robinson (2001: 87), believe that the divide between these two concepts was first theorized by the Roman statesman, Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC), and later expanded upon by the poet, Horace (65-8 BC). Both distinguished between a word-for-word translation and a freer rendering, warning against a literal adherence to the source text and calling upon Roman writers to appropriate the latter in order to establish their own individuality. This free approach to translation, however, was countered in the first century by Jerome, the Christian theologian (c.342-c.420 A.D), whose approach has influenced much of translational

⁸ According to Roman Jakobson (2000: 114), there are three kinds of translation: intralingual (interpretation of verbal signs by other signs within the same language), interlingual (interpretation of verbal signs by signs belonging to another language) and intersemiotic (interpretation of verbal signs by signs belonging to non-verbal sign systems). Unless specified otherwise, the term ‘translation’, as used in this thesis, will refer to the second category.

⁹ Adaptation, here, refers to textual translation, unlike the wider concept proposed by the discipline of adaptation studies, which examines the process involving the transposition of a particular work using different media (e.g., novel into film, film into video game, poem into musical/song, etc...). For more details, see Linda Hutcheon (2006).

practice in the West (Lefevere and Bassnett 1998: 2). Although rejecting the strict literalism of the word-for-word method, Jerome nonetheless believed that the Scriptures were divinely inspired and should thus be transposed with as few changes as possible¹⁰ (Kelly 1979: 221-222, Rebenich 2002: 75). At the centre of this translational approach is the sacredness of the source text which constitutes the ultimate authority in determining the accuracy of the target text and to whom the translator has to remain faithful.

However, the notion of 'faithfulness' itself is open to debate. Determining the faithfulness of a translation by comparing it to the source text can be perceived as a matter of value judgement based on personal perception, since there can be no objective fixed criteria upon which such an evaluation is to be carried out (Lefevere and Bassnett 1998: 3). Faithfulness implies the need for similarity or sameness but, as Bassnett-McGuire points out (1981: 39), "there cannot be sameness between two languages since they stem from different cultural systems". What's more, a text can generate a multiplicity of readings and this means that a source text can be translated differently depending on each translator's interpretation of it.

The notion of 'faithfulness' in translation terms is, therefore, a relative concept because, unless one produces a word-for-word (i.e., syntactically distorted and unintelligible) text, all translational tasks necessitate changes and modifications. And yet, adaptation, as a translational process, has often been perceived as a form of betrayal of the source text; in essence, a 'bad' translation, a "phenomenon (of) distortion,

¹⁰ However, Jerome also proposed a less rigid approach when he argued that, except for the Scriptures, the translator should translate the meaning, rather than the words, of the text; hence, his well-known 'sense-for-sense' approach (Rebenich 2002: 101).

falsification or censorship” (Bastin 2001: 6). Perhaps this is because adaptation carries with it the implication of alterations, additions and omissions, which is not immediately obvious with the notion of translation. Over the years, there has been a call to clarify the definition of the term ‘adaptation’ (Che Suh 2002: 54, Gambier 1992: 421). Although Vinay and Darbelnet (2000: 90-92) have proposed that it is a translation technique and Bastin (2001: 6) has suggested that it is specific to particular genres (drama and children’s literature, for example), no consensus has in fact been reached, since the ways and the conditions in which adaptations are carried out generally vary from text to text.

However, in her research on theatre translation in Quebec in the 1980s, Louise Ladouceur has argued that:

(L)’analyse a révélé que les textes traduits et les textes adaptés font appel à des stratégies translatives de même nature, mais à des fréquences et à des degrés variés. Ainsi, loin de constituer un mode translatif qualitativement distinct, l’adaptation se caractériserait plutôt de façon quantitative par un recours plus fréquent à certains procédés translatifs qui ne lui sont toutefois pas spécifiques (1995: 37).

(T)he analysis has revealed that both translated and adapted texts draw upon translational strategies which are of the same nature, but which do not occur at the same frequency or degree. Therefore, far from representing a translational method that is qualitatively distinct, adaptation could be distinguished by the quantitative way in which some translational techniques are more frequently used; techniques, which are in fact not specific to it¹¹.

Yves Gambier (1992: 425) goes even further by asserting that even though the degree of alteration will differ from text to text, “toute traduction est adaptation” (“all translations are adaptations”). This is because translation is communication and communication includes form as well as content. The well-known scholar, Bassnett-McGuire, has also argued against the futility of defining adaptation as a distinct phenomenon from

¹¹ The translation of all quotations in this thesis will be mine, unless stated otherwise.

translation, calling the debate a “red herring” (1985: 93). As she and other scholars have pointed out, adaptation is in fact nothing new, as it has been carried out, often without due regard to the source texts, at different points in history. Aaltonen, for instance, has maintained that Roman playwrights (such as Terence and Plautus) often took liberties with their Greek sources, so much so that “the borderline between the indigenous and borrowed was blurred” (2000b: 20), while Salama-Carr (2001: 411), in her essay on French translational traditions, has shown how strategies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France were designed to ‘improve’ the source texts so that the target texts, which became known as *Les Belles Infidèles*, would appeal to the sensibilities of French readers. Likewise, Bassnett (1991: 101-102) has pointed out how the repertoires of London theatres in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries consisted of translated texts which had blatantly been reshaped and rewritten in order to fulfil box office criteria.

It is obvious, therefore, that systems of evaluation are inconsistent as they vary from era to era and even from culture to culture. It is also obvious that the debate in the West regarding translation vs. adaptation has proceeded from the perception of translation as an essentially linguistic matter. Since the ‘cultural turn’, however, a less prescriptive approach has emerged. Instead of using the source text as the ultimate point of reference in order to produce a priori statements about what a translation should be (‘faithful’ or ‘free’), this new approach, largely helped by the emergence of Even-Zohar’s notion of polysystems, has been geared towards examining the reasons behind translational behaviour by looking at the translated text as a literary phenomenon, which is mainly shaped by the conditions and constraints prevalent in its own culture.

1.1.2 Polysystem theory

Polysystem theory (PST), which was inspired by Russian Formalist thinking, was developed in the 1970s by the Israeli scholar, Even-Zohar. According to Even-Zohar (1979: 287-305), society can be viewed as a polysystem (or a conglomerate of systems), each working separately, but nonetheless interacting with each other. Each system is divided into separate sub-systems which also overlap and influence each other. The literary system of a given society, for instance, may consist of smaller systems (such as popular fiction, children's literature, translations and so forth). Each system is, therefore, likely to contain a multi-layered structure of components that are continually jostling for positions of power and dominance, hence creating a constant movement of change and self-renewal. In his paper, 'The Position of Translated Literature in the Literary Polysystem' (2000: 192-197), Even-Zohar proposed that PST be used as a framework for translation studies. This framework would allow the researcher not just to account for the translations as literary texts per se, but to place them within their wider socio-cultural context. In effect, this approach enables me to examine the target texts as social artefacts, which through their promotion, dissemination and reception (as texts and as subsequent stage productions), involve a wider set of socio-cultural factors.

Furthermore, Even-Zohar's use of binary oppositions, such as canonized and non-canonized, and centre and periphery, provides a useful basis for this thesis. Even-Zohar (1979: 295) suggests that since human society itself is highly stratified, literature inevitably reflects those socio-cultural inequalities. Certain elements within the literary

system will acquire a ‘canonized’ (‘high’ or ‘official’) status, while others will be seen as ‘non-canonized’; binary terms which he defines as follows:

[...] ‘Canonized’ would mean those norms and works ... which are accepted as legitimate by the dominant groups within the literary institution (while) ‘non-canonized’ would mean those norms and products which are rejected by these groups as illegitimate ... In this view, canonicity is ... the outcome of power relations within a system (Even-Zohar 2005: 6).

These power relations can in turn be described as the perpetual state of tension between the centre (associated with the canonized elements) and the periphery (associated with the non-canonized elements). Theo Hermans (1999: 119) has levelled criticisms against Even-Zohar’s reliance on dichotomies, but I would suggest that here, they provide useful reference points for an understanding of the position of Creole language in the Mauritian context. Given the negative connotations usually associated with the Creole language, and given the island’s educational system that places strong emphasis on acquiring British and French linguistic and literary values, the perception and development of Creole and its literature (including translation) is, thus, best assessed in opposition to the already well-established ‘canonized’ status of these two colonial languages and literatures.

1.1.3 Lefevere’s systemic concept

One of the main shortcomings of PST, which Hermans (1999: 118) and Pym (1998: 122) have criticized, is its depersonalized and abstract nature. As Hermans (1999: 118) puts it:

For all its emphasis on models and repertoires, polysystem theory remains thoroughly text-bound. Literature and culture in general are described as sites of conflict, but the stakes remain invisible, and the struggle is waged by competing norms and models

rather than by individuals or collectives who stand to gain or lose something by the outcome.

The merit of André Lefevere's conceptual input, which I put to use later on in Chapter Six, is his attempt to emphasize the connection between systems and human contribution. According to Lefevere (2004: 14-15), translated texts form part of the literary system within which two different groups operate. He describes the two groups as 'patrons' and 'professionals'. As the people with the required competence and authority in their field, the latter group normally functions inside the system. They include individuals such as "critics, reviewers, teachers, translators" (2004: 14). Patrons, on the other hand, operate to "further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature" (2004: 15). They exert their influence via institutions, such as publishers, schools, political parties and so forth, to ensure that their ideological parameters are adhered to. This is done by providing financial support and by bestowing recognition and prestige. Patronage and ideology, therefore, are the key control mechanisms that ensure things run smoothly within the literary system and in its interaction with other systems, even if professionals also have a choice between following their own beliefs and deferring to their patrons' wishes.

Hermans (1999: 126) has pointed out that Lefevere's understanding of ideology as "the dominant concept of what ... society should (be allowed to) be" (2004: 14) is simply too vague. In fact, scholars have generally recognized that no single definition of the term is likely to encapsulate all its complexities. Terry Eagleton (1991: 28-30), for instance, has argued that ideology could be defined in six possible ways:

1. The process of producing ideas, beliefs and values in a given society (in its most politically neutral definition).

2. The shared cognitive framework of values, beliefs and practices as interpreted by specific social groups and their members.
3. The legitimization of the beliefs and activities of specific social groups in the face of dominant interests.
4. The legitimization of the interests of the ruling groups to obtain the support of subordinate groups.
5. The use of ideas and beliefs by the ruling groups to legitimize their interests through falsehood, covert manipulation and distortion.
6. Distorted beliefs that apply to the structure of society as a whole, rather than to specific social groups.

In referring to the undertakings of the Mauritian patrons and professionals, this thesis will draw upon Eagleton's definitions, in particular his first, second, third and fourth definitions¹². Clearly, although ideology can be perceived as a set of values and ideas as held by a group or by a society, it is more than just a matter of belief systems and modes of thinking but, due to its political undertones, is also closely connected to the notion of power. In fact, Van Dijk (1998: 8), in describing ideologies as the "*basis of the social representations shared by members of a group ... (which) allow people, as group members, to organize the multitude of social beliefs about what is the case, good or bad, right or wrong, for them, and to act accordingly*" (italics in original text), has rightly identified the fact that ideologies are not only self-serving and bound up with the group's specific interests but are also used to promote those interests. Consequently, ideologies can become related to issues of power and power conflicts when such interests are challenged or opposed by other groups.

The fact that patrons and professionals, as social groups, are responsible for the publication, distribution and integration of translation in society means that this

¹² The fifth definition, where ideology is seen as a pernicious force, has negative connotations usually associated with Marxist traditions, while the last definition is unsuitable for this research whose investigation is focussed on different social groups.

framework can be used not only to determine how the output of translated drama texts (and their stage productions) is being developed, but also to show how such development is being influenced by the different interests at stake.

1.1.4 Post-colonial approaches

It is clear that the approaches put forward by Even-Zohar and Lefevere take the view that translation is not a neutral activity, since as a social practice, it is bound up with the target culture's expectations, ideologies and socio-political values. However, although scholars generally recognize their influential contribution to the 'cultural turn', some of them also suggest that these concepts do not go far enough in considering the potential force of translation as a political activity that can be engaged in the dialectic of power. Maria Tymoczko (2000: 31), for instance, considers that the discourse of translation and of power in PST is "muted", that its vocabulary is "sanitized" and, more importantly, that the opposing terms of 'centre' and 'periphery' do not give a clear indication of the power differentials between cultures. As for Tejaswini Niranjana, she argues that by ignoring the power relations that inform translation and by refusing to take into account the asymmetrical relations between languages and cultures, particularly in colonial contexts, the obsession of translation studies "with the humanistic nature of translation seems to blind writers to their own insights into the complicitous relationship of translation and the imperialistic vision" (1992: 61).

The argument that power differentials between the source and target cultures, in particular, those between colonizers and colonized, can affect the praxis of translation (Niranjana 1992, Rafael 1993, Bassnett and Trivedi 1999, Tymoczko 2000, Bassnett

2007) has largely determined my choice of post-colonial approaches for this research. Post-colonial studies, by and large, refer to the exploration of the phenomenon of colonialism and its aftermath (Robinson 1997: 17). In recent years, however, post-colonialism has been criticized for the vastness of its scope (Robinson 1997: 14)¹³ and the ill-defined way in which it has been used (Tymoczko 2000: 32¹⁴, Ashcroft *et al* 2002: 193-199). In this thesis, ‘post-colonial’ refers specifically to two modalities – time-related and geographical. Firstly, it is applied to the second half of the twentieth century, following the end of the Second World War and the break-up of European empires, as per one of the definitions provided by Robinson (1997: 13). Secondly, the related geographical territories are what Gilbert and Tompkins (1996: 6) have called “occupation colonies”¹⁵, which include India, parts of sub-Saharan Africa and some of the islands in the Caribbean and the Indian Ocean. I am aware though, that even the latter definition still involves quite a large extent of geographical space, with inevitable differences from country to country, and that my exploration of linguistic nationalism in a post-colonial context (see Chapter Three) may therefore produce some instances of generalization. However, I believe that to provide a proper context for the Mauritian

¹³ Robinson (1997: 14) rightly points out that, if simply taken to indicate political conquest and subjugation of one society by another, post-colonialism would cover the entirety of human history.

¹⁴ Tymoczko (2000: 32), for instance, criticizes the fact that post-colonialism has often been adopted by many diverse groups to describe situations that do not reflect the “specific historical, economic and cultural configurations” usually associated with nations which have been colonized per se. These groups range from “feminists to those subject to neocolonial economic manipulations.”

¹⁵ As opposed to ‘settler-invader’ (or ‘settler’) colonies, such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand. These territories were invaded by Europeans who settled there, taking over the lands by driving out the natives, annihilating them or forcing them into service (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996: 6). Neither term, however, constitutes fixed categories. For instance, although some of the Caribbean islands saw the annihilation of their indigenous population (Caribs and Arawaks) by the European invaders, they are rarely considered as ‘settler’ colonies, perhaps because the European ‘settlers’ were too few compared to the imported slaves and indentured labourers (Ashcroft *et al* 2000: 211). ‘Occupation colonies’ here, therefore, refer to those territories which were controlled by a colonial power, but whose populations were mainly composed of indigenous inhabitants and/or imported slaves and labourers.

case study without looking at the larger socio-political environment that helped shape the island would be injudicious. Mauritius, after all, is linked to India and various parts of sub-Saharan Africa through geographical, historical and socio-cultural connections whilst, as a former European colony, it shares certain similarities with some of the Caribbean islands.

Niranjana (1992: 1-35) has put forward a powerful case, showing how, in India, translation was used by the British Empire as a means of cultural coercion. Its praxis validated Western representations of the colonized 'Other', helping to confirm Eurocentric beliefs in the superiority of the West over a 'savage' East in need of European civilization, which, in turn, legitimized the cause of colonial expansion. This thesis, on the other hand, aims to show how translation is being used as an attempt at decolonization; a term, which is defined by Ashcroft *et al* (2000: 63) as a "dismantling (of) the hidden aspects of those institutional and cultural forces that had maintained the colonialist power and that remain even after political independence is achieved."

The fact that there is a perceived need for decolonization implies that inherited colonial values are seen as a form of hegemony. Extrapolated during the inter-war years by the Italian political thinker, Antonio Gramsci, as an attempt to understand why Marxism was failing to gain further ground in the West, the conceptual tool of hegemony has since entered academic discourse as a way of exploring the continued authority of colonial values over local ones, long after political autonomy has been achieved. According to Gramsci (1988: 189-221), hegemony is the success of the ruling class to persuade the subordinate groups to accept its attitudes, values and beliefs as their own. Although this ideological domination can be carried out by direct coercive control,

it is mainly achieved through the manipulation of the civil society with the help of socio-cultural organizations, such as religious establishments, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and so forth. As a result, the worldview of the dominant group is taken up and internalized by the subordinate groups, and hegemony becomes a form of domination, but one that is met with the active consent and participation of the population. In the Mauritian context, one of the most obvious signs of colonial hegemony is the continued acceptance of a linguistic hierarchy, with English at the top, even though very few people consider it as their mother tongue, and Mauritian Creole at the bottom, even though it is the only native language and the most widely used on the island.

Challenging those hegemonic values constitutes part of the process of decolonization. Decolonization itself is aimed at promoting a sense of collective consciousness and pride in autochthonous values, in particular linguistic values. In his analysis of post-colonial literatures written in English, Ismail Talib (2002: 104-117) has pointed out that following independence, many post-colonial societies increasingly questioned the continued predominance of the metropolitan language over the local ones, even if admittedly the intensity of the questioning was not uniform, as it varied from country to country. For some, the primacy of the colonial language constituted a neutral decision (see Section 3.1.2.1). For others, however, it was a perpetual reminder of colonial subjugation and an ongoing form of cultural imperialism. In fact, in some parts of Africa and in India, there were calls for a return to pre-colonial languages (Mazrui and Mazrui 1998: 129-130, Ashcroft *et al* 2002: 29, Ahmad 1992: 78). The Kenyan writer, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, a well-known advocate of such a decolonization

measure, even argued in his book, *Decolonising the Mind*, that there was no difference “between a politician who says Africa cannot do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa cannot do without European languages” (1986: 26).

This call for a return to pre-colonial linguistic alternatives is, however, not an option for Mauritians. The lack of a pre-colonial indigenous community means that there is no golden age to which they can lay claim. In this instance, given the plural nature of the local population, decolonization efforts can be examined by applying the concept of ‘hybridity’, or more specifically the concept of ‘creolization’. The term ‘creolization’ was coined by linguistics scholars to describe the nativization process of pidgins, which had developed out of contact situations between different communities without a *lingua franca* and which had become known as Creoles¹⁶ (Sebba 1997: 16, Holm 1988: 7). Its linguistic meaning has since been appropriated by other disciplines to describe the mixing of two or more discrete cultures, to the extent that it is now often used interchangeably with the term ‘hybridity’; the latter referring, in post-colonial discourse, to “the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (Ashcroft *et al* 2000: 118).

However, while it may be possible to agree that the process of creolization is a form of hybridization, or as Robert Young puts it, “an unconscious hybridity, whose pregnancy gives birth to new forms of amalgamation” (1995: 21), I would also suggest that, bearing in mind the historical and geographical specificity of the term

¹⁶ The ambiguity surrounding the etymology of the word ‘Creole’ has already been well documented. Eva M. Eckkrammer (2003: 86-93), for instance, suggests that even though the Latin root (‘*creare*’ – ‘to create’) of the word ‘Creole’ is beyond doubt, the confusion surrounding its etymology is largely due to the debate as to whether ‘Creole’ is historically derived from the Portuguese ‘*crioulo*’ (‘brought up’) or from the Spanish ‘*criollo*’ (‘a Spaniard born in the New World’). See also Chaudenson (2001: 1-4) and Allen (2002: 49-50).

‘creolization’, the latter may in fact be more appropriate for our case study. According to Edward Brathwaite (1971: 306), one of its earliest proponents, creolization is a phenomenon best understood in the context of ‘plantation economies’ or Creole societies. Although Brathwaite was referring mainly to the Caribbean basin, I would also like to include the South Western corner of the Indian Ocean, namely the island of Mauritius itself and the Seychelles. According to Brathwaite (1971: 307), creolization “is a way of seeing the society, not in terms of white and black, master and slave, in separate nuclear units, but as contributory parts of a whole”. I suggest that creolization is a more suitable tool for this thesis (although the term ‘hybridity’ is also used), given that historically, linguistically and culturally speaking, Mauritius can be viewed as a former ‘plantation economy’ and a Creole society (Eriksen 1999).

Although Brathwaite (1971: 303-305) also considers biological hybridization as part of the process of creolization, the term ‘Creole’, in fact, was initially used in colonial discourse to refer to the offspring of white European parents born in the American colonies. Its meaning has since been extended to incorporate the descendants of racially mixed ancestry¹⁷ (Eriksen 1999). Indeed, the race-colour continuum, in determining social hierarchies and prescribing identity representations, has often provided the ideological foundation of many a colonial society. This aspect of creolization is obviously of interest to us, but in order to prevent any confusion between creolization as hybridized cultural practices and creolization as racial cross-breeding, I will use another

¹⁷ However, it must be pointed out that different semantic values are attached to the word across cultures. In Réunion, for example, it designates a person born on the island, regardless of racial phenotype. In Trinidad, it encompasses all Trinidadians, bar those of Asian origins. In Suriname, a Creole is a person of African origins. In French Guyana, the term refers to anyone who has embraced a European lifestyle (Eriksen 1999).

post-colonial concept, that of ‘miscegenation’, to refer to the latter. In this thesis, miscegenation is the term used to explain why inter-racial relationships in Mauritius are seen by the translators to subvert the hierarchized order of a social system which, to a certain extent, still relies on skin colour for some form of identification.

It can, therefore, be argued that post-colonialism and its conceptual tools which I looked at above, will enable us to address the issue of cultural and national identity in Mauritius because, like many other former colonies, the island is still grappling with the consequences of colonization, slavery and indentured immigration, while facing the challenge of constructing a sense of collective consciousness despite its heterogeneity.

1.2 A case study research method

The fact that translation is an activity whose production is essentially the result of its specific context has largely determined my choice of a case study research methodology. Indeed, as Şebnem Susam-Sarajeva (2009: 32) puts it, a ‘case’ in the field of translation studies is a “unit of translation or interpreting-related activity, product, person, etc. in real life, which can only be studied or understood in the *context in which it is embedded*” (my emphasis). The “real life” case investigated here is the translation of Shakespeare and Molière into Mauritian Creole, an activity which is better understood or explored within its specific contextual environment; i.e. the development of Mauritian Creole as a symbol of nationhood in a post-colonial, multilingual and multi-ethnic setting.

Furthermore, like all case studies, this research has involved the investigation of several sub-units (individual translations of Shakespeare and Molière into Mauritian Creole, the participation of the many agents in the translation and dissemination process

of the target texts and the reception of the target audiences). This means that in order to cover all the areas taken into account, several sets of data have been used. By extension, several methods of data collection have also been used.

1.2.1 Data and data collection methods

Below, I introduce the various data used and describe at the same time the methods of data collection employed. The compilation of material for this research was carried out in Edinburgh and during fieldwork conducted in Mauritius over four separate periods: July-August 2005, August-September 2006, November 2007 and February-March 2009.

1.2.1.1 Target and source texts

Table 1 shows the target texts used. They constitute my primary data and are listed in chronological order alongside the translators, the source texts and the source authors.

<u>Target Texts</u>	<u>Translators</u>	<u>Source Texts</u>	<u>Source Authors</u>
<i>Misye Peng</i> (1990)	Krishna Somanah	<i>L'Avare</i>	Molière
<i>Otelo</i> (1991)	Richard Etienne	<i>Othello</i>	Shakespeare
<i>Toufann</i> (1991)	Dev Virahsawmy	<i>The Tempest</i>	Shakespeare
<i>Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid</i> (1995)	Dev Virahsawmy	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	Shakespeare
<i>Trazedi Makbes</i> (1997)	Dev Virahsawmy	<i>Macbeth</i>	Shakespeare
<i>Zil Sezar</i> (1999)	Dev Virahsawmy	<i>Julius Caesar</i>	Shakespeare
<i>Tartif Froder</i> (1999)	Dev Virahsawmy	<i>Tartuffe</i>	Molière
<i>Prens Hamlet</i> (2004)	Dev Virahsawmy	<i>Hamlet</i>	Shakespeare

Table 1

The dates referred to above pinpoint the year in which these works were first printed and published, except for *Prens Hamlet* which was made available only in e-book format.

However, acquiring printed copies of Virahsawmy's target texts was not straightforward. Initially, I was only able to obtain a copy of *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid*, *Trazedi Makbes*, *Zil Sezar* and *Tartif Froder*, but realized soon afterwards that they did not all carry the same spelling conventions; some, in fact, used earlier versions which he has since rejected. For this reason, I downloaded *Toufann* in May 2003, and *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid*, *Trazedi Makbes*, *Zil Sezar*, *Tartif Froder* and *Prens Hamlet* in September-October 2004 from his website because he had, by then, retranscribed them all using his latest spelling system, known as "*grafi DV/DPL*" ("orthography of Dev Virahsawmy/Diocese of Port-Louis"). These were the copies I then used for my research, mainly for the period extending from 2004 until mid-2008. However, following the 2004 report of a panel of Mauritian linguists from the University of Mauritius and the Mauritius Institute of Education (responsible for teachers' training) for the establishment of a standardized orthography (Hookoomsing 2004), Virahsawmy once again adapted his texts using their recommended system, entitled "*grafi larmoni*" ("orthography of harmony"). Since it appears that "*grafi larmoni*" has now been adopted by organizations, such as the University of Mauritius, the Catholic Church and the pre-vocational section of many Catholic schools¹⁸, I have downloaded Virahsawmy's latest retranscriptions for use in September 2008. All quotations from Virahsawmy's translations that are used in this thesis are, therefore, those that have been

¹⁸ For more details on the use of Mauritian Creole in Catholic schools, see Section 6.2.2.

taken from his most recent texts¹⁹. Here, I must mention that quotations taken from Virahsawmy's translations (and also from *Misye Peng*) can only include the act and the scene in which the dialogue is taking place because of the layout of the texts.

Quotations taken from Etienne's *Otelo*, as well as from all the source texts, will indicate the act, the scene and the line number(s).

Acquiring the source texts used by Virahsawmy was even less straightforward. Since I needed them for reference purposes and since no details were readily available on the target texts (except for *Prens Hamlet* which, as the front page clearly stated, was a translation of the 1994 Cambridge University Press copy, edited by Richard Andrews and Rex Gibson), I asked the translator himself. Unfortunately, he had not only given his copies away, but he was also hazy about the edition details (interview 29 Aug 2006). The most he could remember was that he had used copies available in the 1960s, possibly those recommended by his University tutor (he was an Edinburgh University student from October 1963 to July 1967). It was likely that he had used a Heinemann edition for *Julius Caesar* and Signet Classic editions for the other Shakespearean plays, but unlikely that *Tartif Froder* was translated from a Larousse publication (ibid.). Before attempting to obtain copies of 1960s Heinemann and Signet Classic editions of Shakespeare's plays, I first tried those editions held by the Edinburgh University library, on the assumption that they would have been available to him during his studies here. I mainly looked at texts published from the early 1960s up to 1967, the year of his departure and the list provided below (in alphabetical order) was what I found.

¹⁹ For more information on Virahsawmy's different spelling conventions and on "*grafi larmoni*", see Section 4.2.1.

<u>Source Texts</u>	<u>Editions</u>
<i>Macbeth</i>	Arden (1962)
<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>	No 1960s edition available
<i>Julius Caesar</i>	Arden (1965), Kittredge Shakespeares (1966)
<i>Tartuffe</i>	Larousse (1966)
<i>The Tempest</i>	Arden (1961)

Table 2

The Larousse copy of *Tartuffe* located in the library was duly excluded, but a comparative analysis between Act I of the Kittredge and the Arden copies and their respective target texts was carried out; an analysis which revealed several differences²⁰. For *Toufann*, the differences were inevitable since the translator had appropriated the source text (*The Tempest*) and recreated a new play²¹. For *Trazedi Makbes* and *Zil Sezar*, they referred mainly to stage directions that had been removed or repositioned, to changes in the setting at the beginning of certain scenes and to the exclusion of some minor characters. However, differences of the same kind were also found upon comparison between the target texts and the Signet Classic editions of *Macbeth* (1963) and *Much Ado About Nothing* (1964), and the Heinemann edition of *Julius Caesar* (1962). The only copy of *Tartuffe*, which was published within the date range I was

²⁰ I am not referring to actual verbal differences which could be ascribed to the translational strategies of ‘nativization’ and ‘modernization’, where lexical items specific to the source cultures and contemporaneous to the source authors are replaced with items specific to a twenty-first century target context (see Section 5.2, ‘Embedding the target texts’).

²¹ For more details on the numerous changes (storyline, characterization, setting and so forth), see Section 4.1.

working with and which I was able to get hold of, was the Bordas edition (1965)²².

Since any of the differences mentioned above could have been carried out deliberately (after all, Virahsawmy referred to most of his translations as translations/adaptations, which suggests that his intention was not to provide ‘faithful’ equivalents), I decided in the end to retain the editions he thought he had utilized.

1.2.1.2 Data from face-to-face interviews

In accordance with Lefevere’s view (2004: 11-25) that patrons and professionals can impact a given society through the works they produce, I opted to interview some of those literary and theatre patrons and professionals who had been involved in the textual and stage productions of the translated texts. I wanted to find out first-hand their views on Mauritian Creole, its usage as a written language, its current low status and its role as a unifying factor for the country. I also wanted to discuss their works, their reasons for promoting Mauritian Creole (if they were promoting it) and their assessment of the target audiences. The aim was to find out how, why and to what extent these individuals and organizations, through their beliefs and their activities, were attempting to formulate a nation-building narrative based on upholding Mauritian Creole as the national language. The interviews which took place during my trips to Mauritius²³ in 2005, 2006 and 2007 were conducted on a “semi-structured” (Gillham 2000: 65) basis, in that the questions asked were mostly open ones in order to give my interviewees scope for elaboration and clarification. I believed that such a method would be more productive in

²² Out of curiosity, I compared the Bordas edition with the 1966 Larousse edition available at the Edinburgh University library. The main differences between the two texts are the use of different punctuation for certain sentences and a more ample use of stage directions in the Bordas edition than in the Larousse one.

²³ Except for one which was held in London in 2007. See Section 6.1.

terms of information gained, verbal and non-verbal. During those interviews, my role mainly consisted in asking the questions and in allowing the interviewees to respond; hence, my own opinion was rarely voiced so as not to influence them. The interviews were all tape-recorded and transcribed shortly afterwards for content analysis. More information on my choice of interviewees, the set of questions asked and my respondents' beliefs are detailed in Chapter Six and parts of Chapter Seven.

1.2.1.3 Press reports

Local newspaper articles have also been used as material for this thesis. The idea of consulting press reports is derived from Sirkku Aaltonen's (1996: 183) view that newspapers constitute a "recoverable form of contemporary 'public opinion'". Aaltonen (1996: 185) also suggests that by reporting an event and evaluating it, a newspaper is, in fact, revealing something of the society in which that event is taking place. In this thesis, I have consulted the press mainly as a way of collecting information regarding the theatre productions of some of the target texts, since they were staged before my interest in Creole drama was developed and before the start of my current academic occupation. What I wanted to explore was the reaction of the local newspapers and their assessment of the public response to the fact that the above stage productions were Creole translations of canonical plays. Bearing in mind that critics, like everyone else (including this researcher), cannot escape their political views, socio-cultural background, gender and the wider context within which they operate (Aaltonen 1996: 184), these reports have been treated with circumspection, although I would add that

potential lack of neutrality does not necessarily nullify their legitimacy and validity as sources for research.

The target texts which have been produced on stage are listed in Table 3.

<u>Target Texts</u>	<u>Dates produced</u>
<i>Misye Peng</i>	Sept 1992
<i>Otelo</i>	Aug 1992
<i>Toufann</i>	July 1995
<i>Trazedi Makbes</i>	Aug 1998
<i>Tartif Froder</i>	Oct 1999/Aug 2002

Table 3

Consultation of press reviews regarding the above productions was carried out at the National Library during all four trips to Mauritius. It included analyzing the coverage from the two most important dailies, *L'Express* and *Le Mauricien*, and from the main weeklies, *L'Express Dimanche*, *Week-End Scope*, *Week-End*, *5 Plus Dimanche* and *Le Défi Plus*. These were chosen because they are usually targeted at readers from all communities. In order to get a fuller picture of the impact of the Creole translations via the theatre, a selection of newspapers with limited circulation, but with a specific target readership, was also looked at. These consisted of *La Vie Catholique* (for Catholics, and by extension, for members of the 'population générale'²⁴), *Le Militant* (the mouthpiece of the left-leaning *Mouvement Militant Mauricien* – MMM – political party, intended for

²⁴ See Section 2.4.1 for details on different population groups in Mauritius.

its sympathizers, generally perceived to be from the Muslim and the Creole communities), *Mauritius Times* (generally considered, by many, to appeal to supporters of the local Labour Party, and by extension, to Hindu communities), and *Impact News* (generally understood to be targeting a Muslim readership). However, the productions were not covered in equal proportion, mainly because some of the newspapers mentioned above were not established until the mid 1990s (i.e. *Le Défi Plus* in 1996 and *Impact News* in 1993). Finally, I would like to add that articles in Mauritian newspapers do not always show the name of the journalists who penned them. In this thesis, therefore, referencing for press articles may either point to the journalist or to the newspaper itself.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I first looked at the debates regarding ‘adaptation’ vs. ‘translation’. I suggested that such debates essentially stemmed from a linguistic perspective that considered the source text as the absolute point of reference, so that an adaptation was often perceived as an ‘unfaithful’ copy because of the degree of manipulation usually associated with the term. However, in my opinion, all translational procedures involved some form of manipulation, with modifications and adjustments to the source text inevitably being carried out. I explained that as a result, this thesis was not concerned about how ‘faithful’ the Creole target texts were; the aim instead was to investigate whether the praxis of translation could have any impact upon Mauritian society.

Then, I looked at the main theoretical approaches used in the thesis. I explained that Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory viewed society as a heterogeneous network of systems

which were interconnected. Each system in turn encompassed a network of sub-systems, also actively interacting with each other. For translation studies, the usefulness of PST was that it considered translation not merely as the reproduction of another text, but as an activity that was part of a wider cultural movement, influencing and being influenced by what was taking place within the receiving society.

Lefevre's approach, on the other hand, was defined by its emphasis on human agency. According to him, a literary system contained a double control mechanism consisting of individuals or organizations, otherwise known as 'patrons' and 'professionals', whose ideological role in the process of translation and its dissemination, including in our case, the theatre production of the target texts, could not be underestimated. I also explained my understanding of the term 'ideology' as used throughout this thesis.

I also examined the post-colonial concepts of hegemony, decolonization, creolization and miscegenation. I explained my choice by suggesting that a post-colonial framework was useful to draw attention to the continued domination of former colonial cultural and linguistic values over autochthonous ones, and to highlight local attempts for cultural autonomy and for internal cohesion.

In the second section of this chapter, I indicated my choice of a case study research methodology as a way of investigating not only the 'case' itself (i.e. the translation of Shakespeare and Molière into Mauritian Creole) but also its surrounding real life context to which it was inextricably connected. Inevitably, several sub-units of investigation were also proposed so that a bigger, more compelling picture would emerge. The fact that this research would involve the examination of different sub-units meant that

different sets of data and different methods of data collection would be required.

Accordingly, the materials used for this thesis, how and where they were obtained were then introduced.

This chapter has described the conceptual framework and the methodology used. Theory and method have been chosen so that an altogether more comprehensive view of my findings could be provided. However, these findings cannot as yet be presented since the contextual backgrounds need to be established first. In the next chapter, I will therefore be introducing the Mauritian context by looking at the historical, political and socio-cultural situation of the island.

Chapter Two – An Overview of Mauritius

Introduction

In this chapter, I will give an overview of Mauritius; a process of contextualization where I discuss relevant aspects of Mauritian society in order to provide a foundation for understanding how and why theatre translation into Creole is being used for purposes of nation-building.

In the first section, I give a brief outline of the geographical setting of the island. Next, I provide a historical survey to illustrate why the history of Mauritius as a former colony has made the concept of national identity as shared language, culture and traditions problematic. I then briefly explore the island's political and economic environment, and explain the role played by ethnicity in these two contexts.

In Section 2.4, I look at the socio-cultural environment in Mauritius by first exploring the island's population heterogeneity and its linguistic plurality. I then consider language use within the local political context where English, French and Creole predominate, and within the educational domain where concerns have been raised regarding the benefit of some of the State's linguistic policies for the Mauritian child. Finally, I give an account of local literary, translational and theatrical practices with particular reference to language use.

2.1 Geographical setting

The island of Mauritius, which belongs to the Republic of Mauritius²⁵, is situated 20° south of the Equator in the south-western part of the Indian Ocean²⁶, some 890 kilometres east of Madagascar. Its nearest neighbour is the island of La Réunion, a French *département*, about 200 kilometres to the west. The island of Mauritius itself only covers an area of approximately 1860 km². Half of the population²⁷ resides in the urban areas of the island which include the capital, Port-Louis, and the main towns of Beau-Bassin, Rose-Hill, Quatre-Bornes, Vacoas, Phoenix and Curepipe, found in the district of Plaines Wilhems²⁸.

2.2 Historical background

This section will outline the island's past, first as a Dutch, then French, then British colony, and finally, its road to independence some 370 years later, in order to provide a better understanding of the current political, economic and socio-cultural situation of the island.

The Dutch were the first known inhabitants of the island, taking possession of it in 1598 and naming it in honour of their prince, Maurice of Nassau (Addison and

²⁵ The Republic of Mauritius also comprises the outlying territories of Agalega Islands, the Cargados Carajos Shoals (also known as St Brandon Islands) and the island of Rodrigues (see Appendix II). However, this thesis will be looking solely at the island of Mauritius since Agalega merely has a population of about 300 people, the Cargados Carajos Shoals are coral atolls with no permanent settlement, and Rodrigues' population is smaller and ethnically less diverse than the population in Mauritius. For more information on these islands, see the Mauritian government's website at <http://www.gov.mu/portal/site/Mainhomepage/menuitem.cc515006ac7521ae3a9d5ea5e2b521ca/>. Accessed 23 Mar 2009.

²⁶ See Appendix I.

²⁷ See data from the 2000 Population Census from the government's Central Statistics Office at <http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/cso/report/natacc/demo07/pop.pdf> (page 30, table 1.9). Accessed 23 Mar 2009.

²⁸ See Appendix II.

Hazareesingh 1993: 3). Although there were several attempts at colonization from 1638 until their final departure in 1710, none proved successful. Their departure paved the way for the French possession of the island in 1715 and Mauritius became known as '*Isle de France*'. Slaves were imported from India, the Malay Peninsula, West and East Africa, and Madagascar to cultivate the land (Arno and Orian 1986: 28-29), which suggests that it was during the French occupation, with the influx of French settlers and slaves from different ethnic groups and different countries that the multilingual and multi-ethnic landscape of the island began to take place. However, as the island grew, it also developed as a seafaring colony, often used as a base for French ships during the Anglo-French fight for control of India. This prompted the British government, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to invade and capture the island (Addison and Hazareesingh 1993: 37-43). On 3 December 1810, *Isle de France* surrendered to British troops.

According to articles seven and eight of the capitulation treaty signed on 3 Dec 1810, the new administration agreed to safeguard the laws, customs and religion of the French settlers (Arno and Orian 1986: 56). This accommodating approach meant that although English became the language of administration, French continued to be widely used, especially as the few British families who settled in Mauritius were absorbed into the Franco-Mauritian population (Rajah-Carrim 2004a: 17). The decision to abolish slavery in 1835, however, brought profound changes upon the very fabric of society. The reliance on cheap labour in the sugar-cane plantations dictated the ensuing vast importation of indentured coolies from India. Abdool Kalla (1986: 167) notes that as early as 1853, 51.4% of the population was already identified as Indians by origin, even

if religiously, linguistically and ethnically, they often constituted different groups.

Indian immigration which continued apace until the beginning of the twentieth century was followed by small successive waves of Chinese traders. The influx of Asian and Far Eastern immigrants, thus, irreversibly impacted the island's demographic and socio-linguistic landscape.

Following the end of the Second World War, the British administration initiated profound constitutional changes with the establishment of adult universal suffrage in 1958 (Addison and Hazareesingh 1993: 93). This meant the end of Franco-Mauritian control and the beginning of Hindu domination in the island's political sphere. During the 1967 general elections, a majority of 55.1% of the population voted for independence (Bowman 1991: 41). To a large extent, the independence issue was fought along racial and ethnic lines. The Muslims and most of the Hindus formed an unusual alliance under the banner of the Independence Party²⁹, and were opposed to the Tamils, led by the Tamil United Party, and the Franco-Mauritians and the Creoles³⁰, led by the *Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate*³¹. Independence was declared on 12 March 1968, despite riots and fighting between Creoles and Muslims in January. Twenty-four

²⁹ The Independence Party comprised the Labour Party (created in 1936 to represent the working classes but, which, in due course, came to be identified with the Hindus), the *Comité d'Action Musulmane* (the Muslim Committee for Action) and the Independence Forward Block (Hindu-dominated).

³⁰ In Mauritius, Creoles are generally understood to be the descendants of African and Madagascan slaves, although individuals not associated with slavery can also be included in this grouping, as I will discuss later on in the chapter.

³¹ The PMSD in particular, openly played the racial and ethnic card, first with its slogan "*malbar nou pa oulé*" (Dukhira 2002: 163 – "We do not want any Malabars"; a Malabar being a pejorative term for a Hindu in Mauritius) to frighten minority groups of a possible Hindu dominated government, and then, by changing its slogan to "*Hindou, mon frère*" ("My Hindu brother") to try and attract Hindu voters against independence (Selvon 2003: 483).

years later, the constitution was amended and constitutional monarchy came to an end when Mauritius became a Republic.

2.3 Economic and political environment

In the section below, I give a brief overview of the local economic and political domains where membership to a specific ethnic community is seen as important, and where events can be interpreted in ethnic terms and interests articulated to maximize ethnic benefits.

Since the economic boom of the 1980s, the traditional perception of the Mauritian division of labour, usually viewed through the lens of ethnic categorization³², has undergone some changes. This is because the establishment of foreign companies and the rules of international economic competition have fostered a capitalist system of production that relies more and more upon meritocratic criteria for recruitment (Eriksen 1998: 184-186). Nevertheless, membership to a specific community and economic position are still perceived by the population to be interconnected. In recent years, for example, '*le malaise créole*' has been used to explain the growing dissatisfaction of the Creoles, who unlike the other communities, have not benefited from the island's economic growth. In fact, Carroll and Carroll (2000: 36) believe that the 1999 riots, which had initially started out as a form of protest against police brutality but which soon developed into attacks against police stations and other governmental agencies (commonly perceived to be Hindu-dominated), were linked to a sense of collective

³² Such categorization views the Chinese as shop owners, the Franco-Mauritians as sugar estate owners or financial executives, the Hindus as agricultural labourers or civil servants, the Muslims as retail traders, and the Creoles as purveyors of unskilled labour if uneducated, or involved in journalism and teaching if educated (Eriksen 1998: 13).

grievance from the Creole community. These riots, which degenerated into looting and finally into ethnic confrontations between Creoles and Hindus, served as a reminder of the fragility of the island's social fabric.

The political system in Mauritius is a parliamentary democratic system. The President is the head of state, but constitutional power rests upon the Prime Minister and his cabinet. The Parliament or National Assembly consists of 70 members. However, over the years, the Mauritian system has increasingly been criticized for institutionalizing communalism through its 'best loser system'³³ (Nave 1998: 19-26). In theory, this system is intended to ensure that all ethnic groups are represented in Parliament. In reality, it validates ethnic division because candidates running for Parliament *must* state their community membership. This encourages the use of ethnicity not only as a means of self-identification, but also as a means to cultivate a specific voting behaviour by appealing to the communal instincts of the electorate. As Eriksen (1998: 174) points out, the 'best loser system' makes it "difficult for anyone to be simply Mauritian. One virtually *has to* belong to a community"³⁴ (emphasis in original text). Furthermore, political parties³⁵ in Mauritius are commonly perceived as divided along ethnic lines (even if no such policy is ever openly acknowledged and

³³ Of the seventy members of Parliament, eight are runners-up chosen from unreturned candidates belonging to under-represented ethnic groups with the highest percentage of votes.

³⁴ During the last elections (2005), a small party, *Rezistans ek Alternativ*, refused to enter the ethnic appurtenance of its candidates on the electoral registration documents. The Electoral Supervisory Commission, however, challenged the legal validity of its documents and the matter was brought to the attention of the Supreme Court, who subsequently ruled that it was a constitutional requirement for all candidates to declare their ethnic membership (*L'Express* 11 Nov 2005).

³⁵ The current four main political parties are the Labour Party, the *Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien* (both with a strong Hindu electoral base), the PMSD and the MMM. There are other smaller political groups which represent various communities (for e.g. the Rajput Socialist Party) and a couple that are based on class ideologies (for e.g. *Lalit* and *Rezistans ek Alternativ*).

promoted) and votes are often cast according to that perception, because Mauritians generally believe that the election of a member of their ethnic group to high office is a guarantee that their interests are being looked after³⁶ (Hollup 1996: 293).

Although the correlation between ethnic groups and specific forms of livelihood has become less clear-cut, it can still be argued that ethnicity continues to play an important role in the unfolding of events within the local political and economic sectors.

2.4 Socio-cultural environment

This section focuses on the socio-cultural situation in Mauritius. It first shows that the State's classificatory system, which officially divides the population into four categories, does not represent the full extent of the island's cultural and linguistic pluralism. Then, language use within the local political context as well as the civil context (namely, education, literature, translation and theatre) is investigated.

2.4.1 Population make-up

The population of Mauritius currently stands at around 1.1 million (Bundhoo 2001a). Officially, the Mauritian Constitution recognizes four distinct categories (the Hindus, the Muslims, the Sino-Mauritians and the General Population), even though the criteria used for this classificatory system are inconsistent – two religious, one ethnic (or geographical) and one which Eriksen calls “a residual category” (1998: 15), because “every person who does not appear, from his way of life, to belong to one or other of those 3 communities shall be regarded as belonging to the General Population” (The

³⁶ However, as Lau Thi Keng (1991: 24) has rightly pointed out, political parties, in actual fact, cannot rely on the sole criterion of ethnicity even if it is useful as a political ideology, because the Hindus (the largest population group) do not constitute a monolithic bloc and no other ethnic group is sufficiently big to single-handedly garner enough votes to form a clear majority government.

Constitution 1968a, Article 3(4). In the last³⁷ census-taking to make use of this classification system (1972³⁸), it was found that the Hindus constituted 52% of the population, the General Population 28.5%, the Muslims 16.5% and the Chinese 3%³⁹.

Although hiding a multiplicity of subgroups within its taxonomy, this four-fold classification constitutes a convenient frame of reference for exploring the differences between the various groupings; differences which have often been used to hamper the formation of a more integrated society.

2.4.1.1 The Hindus

The community labelled by the Constitution as ‘Hindus’ does not constitute a single monolithic group, even though its members may be descendants of immigrants originally from the same subcontinent. In fact, according to Rajah-Carrim (2004a: 19), the general term ‘Hindus’ refers to diverse ethnic groups which are divided mainly by religious practices and linguistic differences⁴⁰: the Hindus (40%), the Tamils (7%), the

³⁷ Its use in census-taking was abolished in the early 1980s by the MMM government in an attempt to foster a greater sense of national unity.

³⁸ The census returns for 1983, 1990 and 2000 made no mention of the community to which a household belonged, but unofficially, it was still possible to establish the respondents’ ethnic background, because questions on religious practices and language use were maintained, and ethnic affiliation was (and still is) largely based upon linguistic criteria and religious convictions (Hookoomsing 1987: 59).

³⁹ These statistical findings, even though long outdated, continue to be used by the State in allocating funding to socio-cultural associations and for determining parliamentary representation in the ‘best loser system’ (Dinan 2003: 75).

⁴⁰ Prior to the July 1983 census, for instance, several notices from socio-cultural organizations appeared in the local press. One such notice was from the National Telegu Federation who advised its sympathizers to fill in columns 11 (on religion), 12 (on ‘ancestral’ language) and 13 (on language usually spoken) as follows: *Tous les Télégus de Maurice sont priés en ce qui concerne le nouveau recensement de la population 1983, d’inscrire dans les colonnes 11-12-13, Télégus- Télégus- Télégus. Merci.* (Hookoomsing 1987:60 – emphasis in original). (Regarding the new 1983 population census, all Mauritian Telegus are invited to enter ‘**Telegu, Telegu, Telegu**’ in columns 11, 12, 13. Thank you).

Telegus (3%) and the Marathis (2%). Furthermore, the Hindu⁴¹ group is also divided into five castes: *Brahmin/Maraz*, *Baboojee*, *Vaish*, *Rajput* and *Ravived* (Bhujun 2004). Although the caste system here is not as important as it is in India, still, each caste is represented by an organization which, when necessary, will act as a political lobby (Bedacee 2007).

2.4.1.2 The General Population

The term ‘general population’ was created for the 1861 census (Dinan 2003: 9) to incorporate the disparate group of Franco-Mauritians (the descendants of French settlers) and the Creoles. The former group forms a very tightly knit community, and like its ancestors, adheres to the Roman Catholic faith and prefers an endogamous approach to marriages (Eriksen 1998: 124-125). The latter group refers to two specific subcategories: the descendants of black slaves and the descendants of mixed racial relationships who, because of their lighter skin, have often redefined themselves as “*gens de couleur*”; a way of differentiating themselves from the other Creoles.

Historically, these ‘coloured people’ were regarded as free men who had access to education and who were, therefore, more likely to be candidates for social mobility. On the other hand, the descendants of black slaves, otherwise known as the ‘*ti-kreol*’ (‘little Creole’), or sometimes even by the injurious term ‘*mazambic*’⁴², are considered the most marginalized component of Mauritian society, and are found mostly in the poorer areas of the South-East and South-West and specific suburbs of the main towns. According to

⁴¹ Unless stated otherwise, ‘Hindu’ or ‘Hindus’ will henceforth refer to the umbrella term as officially used by the Constitution.

⁴² A ‘Mozambican’ is a term used to insult a Creole whose phenotype bears strong resemblance to a black African.

Eriksen (1986: 62), the '*ti-kreol*' group has long admired Western culture, especially French culture, and considers their own as substandard. Most Creoles, like the Franco-Mauritians, are Catholics. In recent years, there have been attempts to valorize Creole culture, including, for instance, the term 'Creole' being relabelled as Afro-Mauritian (even though Creoles of mixed descent may not necessarily have African diasporic origins).

2.4.1.3 The Muslims

Mauritian Muslims, like their fellow Hindu indentured labourers, originally came from India. As a distinct religious group, the Muslims have, however, been keen to dissociate themselves from the Hindus, although many came from the same rural districts of Uttar Pradesh and western Bihar in northern India. Historical records show that quite a few Muslims were also originally from Gujerat, on the western coast of the sub-continent (Toussaint 1977: 71). These Gujeratis were divided into Kutch Memons and Surtees. Although Dinan (2003: 62) has noted the existence of five separate religious subgroups⁴³ within the Muslim population, Hollup (1996: 288) reports that from the 1960s onwards, there was a trend towards religious homogenization, as more and more Muslims began to refer to themselves simply as Muslims. The process of 'sunnification', as it is called, has strengthened the Muslims' sense of ethnic solidarity and despite internal differences, they are seen as a fairly homogenized group with a strong group identity. The Muslims generally form an endogamous community whose focal point is the mosque.

⁴³ Sunni Hanafi, Sunni Shafi, Ahmadi (locally known as Quadiani), Shiite and Bohra.

2.4.1.4 The Chinese

The Chinese, unlike the Muslims, do not constitute as strict an endogamous group, but have nonetheless retained many facets of their own culture, as evidenced by the establishment of a Chinatown in the capital. They still have strong kinship ties, which are activated in specific situations, such as in times of financial need, and which, at the same time, provide them with a sense of belonging and group identity (Eriksen 1998: 66). This community was traditionally split along linguistic lines into clearly defined subcategories, such as Hakka and Cantonese speakers, but it is a distinction which in recent years has gradually diminished in importance.

Section 2.4.1 has highlighted the heterogenization of the population. Although labels such as Franco-Mauritians, Sino-Mauritians, Indo-Mauritians and Afro-Mauritians are sometimes used nowadays, I suggest that they actually reinforce the geographical, racial and ethnic origins of the different communities so that the attempt to promote a Mauritian identity only seems to convey a sense of accidental afterthought.

2.4.2 Language situation

The language situation in Mauritius, as can be imagined, is not simple and straightforward. In this section, I look at the languages used on the island and explain the complexities of a situation where languages do not merely serve as vehicles of communication, but also act as markers of identity; where the term ‘ancestral languages’ does not only denote the original languages of the immigrants, but is also understood as a statement about ethnic membership.

The exploration below of the linguistic situation in Mauritius has made use of figures provided by the Mauritian Government's 2000 Housing and Population Census (Bundhoo 2001b). These figures constitute the most up-to-date data available but, as with any statistics, they have been handled with caution. From these data (see Appendix III), I have drawn a list of 14 languages which Mauritians say they speak. I have discounted 'Other Oriental', 'Other European' and 'Other Chinese' because of their imprecise nature. On the other hand, the presence of a separate Chinese language (in addition to Hakka, Cantonese and Mandarin) is questioned and reasons are provided in the relevant section below as to why it is not included in my list of languages currently in usage in Mauritius.

If a Babelian analogy (Eriksen 1998: 17) aptly illustrates the multiplicity of languages in a small island such as Mauritius, the concept of a three-tiered structure may perhaps be more suitable when analyzing the power and importance accorded to its languages. This division, which I have touched upon in the introductory section, positions the European languages, with English at the pinnacle followed closely by French, in the top tier. Asian languages are integrated within the middle stratum, while Mauritian Creole lies at the bottom.

2.4.2.1 European languages

- English

Like many former British colonies, Mauritius, upon independence, chose to retain the use of English for official purposes. Although an official status for the language is not expressly formalized in the Constitution (which, as expected, is written in English), it is

nonetheless accepted as a fact by the great majority of the people. It is the language of administration and finance, and the medium of instruction in education, but constitutes the first language of very few Mauritians, and is, therefore, rarely spoken by choice. Only 0.3 % of the population say that they use it as their main home language (see Appendix III).

- French

French, the other European language, is a more popular choice than English; it is widely regarded as a language of culture and refinement, and many Mauritians view its mastery as a matter of prestige. In fact, the economic boom of the 1980s and early 1990s, the geographical proximity of La Réunion, and the French government's involvement (via educational and cultural aid) have made French the language of choice for the expanding urban middle-class. Reporting the growing number of users amongst the Chinese and the Hindu groups, Baggioni and de Robillard, however, maintain that for many of the new speakers, French continues to symbolize "*la blanchitude et ... ce qui est perçu comme ses attributs: richesse, éducation*"⁴⁴ (cited by Rajah-Carrim 2004a: 36); a racial undertone, which is not totally unexpected given the association of the language with the largely white Franco-Mauritian group.

However, whilst it is true that economic success has created a new breed of French-speaking professionals, the statistics (see Appendix III) reveal that only 3.6% of the population report the use of French as their main language at home. This percentage includes those who speak French in combination with other languages.

⁴⁴ "whiteness and ... what is seen as its attributes: wealth and education".

2.4.2.2 Asian languages⁴⁵

- Arabic

Although Arabic is, strictly speaking, not an ‘Asian’ language, its inclusion here is based mainly on its perception as an ‘ancestral’ language by those of Islamic faith in Mauritius. Compared to many of the other languages, Arabic is, in fact, a late ‘arrival’ on the Mauritian linguistic scene. The 2000 census records a small minority of Mauritians who claim Arabic as an ‘ancestral language’, and yet, it is highly unlikely that Muslim immigrants from India would have spoken Arabic (Eriksen 1998: 80, Hollup 1996: 291). Not mentioned in any census until 1983, its emergence coincided with the development of pan-arabism and marked a noticeable shift in the Muslims’ geopolitical allegiance from Pakistan to the Middle East. Both Eriksen and Hollup explain this shift in terms of recreating the past and constructing a new improved identity. But, according to Rajah-Carrim (2004b: 366), this identity is also based upon religious criteria as its main use seems limited to times of prayers.

- Bhojpuri

The language that most Muslim immigrants spoke upon arrival in Mauritius was, in fact, Bhojpuri, a dialect normally heard in the northern Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Historically, therefore, Bhojpuri speakers included both Hindus and Muslims (Stein 1983: 99). The Muslims’ rejection of Bhojpuri as a symbol of their identity has ironically created a “hinduization” (Eisenlohr 2004: 64) of Bhojpuri, as socio-political

⁴⁵ What is referred to as an Asian language in this thesis is commonly known in Mauritius as an ‘ancestral language’. The term, ‘ancestral language’, however, is a misnomer, since technically-speaking, French could also be considered as one. This is why I have chosen to use the more neutral term ‘Asian languages’.

groups operating on the island have claimed it as a specific part of Hindu heritage and traditions. It is the mostly widely used Indian language in Mauritius, having often served as the intra-ethnic lingua franca.

- Chinese (Cantonese, Hakka, Mandarin)

The Chinese languages have been grouped together for two reasons. The first one is to bring attention to the classification used by the Mauritian Central Statistics Office in their latest census. According to their report, the Chinese speakers in Mauritius are divided into four categories – Cantonese, Chinese, Hakka and Mandarin. Various studies on Mauritian multilingualism (Baker 1972: 15-17, Stein 1982: 95, Hookoomsing 1987: 72), however, make no mention of the existence of Chinese as a separate linguistic entity, distinct from the other three. Based on my own personal background and knowledge, the likelihood of other Chinese languages, apart from Hakka, Cantonese and Mandarin, in current usage in Mauritius is quite minimal. The second reason for grouping them together is that linguistic differentiation within this ethnic community does not appear to constitute a threat to its group identity.

- Gujarati

Gujarati is the language spoken by descendants of immigrants from the state of Gujarat in north-west India. According to Baker (1972: 15), the number of Gujarati speakers is small and limited mostly to wealthy Muslim trading families.

- Hindi

The distinction between Bhojpuri and Hindi was first reported in the 1983 government census. Since then, Hindi, as the standardized ‘prestigious’ language, has gained in importance, serving as a reference point for identity purposes. Eisenlohr (2004: 65)

even asserts that Hindi is not a language spoken on a daily basis but is restricted to religious domains, while Baker (1972: 16) notes that in the Mauritian context, it is, in fact, a form of literary Hindi. Hindi, therefore, is unlikely to be the first language of many Hindus, the majority of whom were descendants of illiterate Bhojpuri peasants (Eisenlohr 2004: 74). Nonetheless, its inclusion in census-taking shows that Hindi continues to be perceived as an ‘ancestral’ language by many Mauritians of Indian origins.

- Marathi

It is the language spoken by the descendants of immigrants from the Indian state of Maharashtra, where it constitutes one of the official languages.

- Tamil

Tamil speakers have often been keen to distance themselves from the users of other Indian languages, regarding themselves as a separate group with its own distinctive linguistic and cultural traits (Eriksen 1998: 92).

- Telegu

Telegu, the official language of Andhra Pradesh in India, is actively promoted by the National Telegu Federation in Mauritius.

- Urdu

Before the ‘arrival’ of Arabic, the aspiration of many Muslim Bhojpuri speakers to be differentiated from their Hindu counterparts was symbolized by their identification with Urdu. Like Arabic, Urdu is rarely used outside the religious context (Rajah-Carrim 2004b: 366-368), reinforcing again the notion that linguistic identity for the Muslims is mostly a religious identity.

2.4.2.3 Mauritian Creole

Mauritian Creole, with the largest number of speakers, is the language that Mauritians speak “*malgré eux*” (“despite themselves” – Eriksen 1992: 97). An investigation of this paradox is essential for our understanding of the role of Creole within its wider socio-cultural context.

During French colonization, the need for verbal interaction between masters and African slaves, and amongst the slaves themselves first created a form of pidgin, which in time evolved into what is known today as Mauritian Creole. Baker (1982: 825-827) argues that the pidgin acquired by the first batches of slaves became a Creole language (that is, no longer part of a continuum with French) with the subsequent arrival of more slaves and the increase of locally born slaves who had less contact with their French owners. He rests his argument on one of the earliest mentions of Creole as a language, published in a local newspaper advertisement in 1773, regarding a missing 13 year old slave, “*Comme ce jeune noir s’est probablement égaré et qu’il n’entend pas la langue créole, il n’aura pas pu dire le nom de son maître ni retrouver sa maison*”⁴⁶ (quoted by Baker 1982: 829).

The power of identity politics has made Mauritian Creole an easy target for its detractors; partly because of its origins within a slavery context, and partly because of its close association with the Creole group, in particular with the ‘*ti-kreol*’ who, according to Eriksen (1986: 59), are perceived by other groups in Mauritius as “lazy, backward and stupid”. However, in the 1970s and early 1980s, attempts were made by a small section

⁴⁶ “As this young Black slave is probably lost and does not understand Creole, he will not have been able to give the name of his master nor find his house.”

of the population to reappraise the value of Creole. Bolstered by the report of a 1977 survey conducted by a French firm, in which 66% of the population were supposedly in favour of Creole as the official language (Foley 1992: 362), the MMM government who came to power in 1982 steered a linguistic course different from their predecessors. Their slogan was “*enn sel lepep, enn sel nasyon*” (“one people, one nation”), but their attempts to valorize Creole (by introducing this language for the main evening news on national television, for example) were met with resistance by the population and contributed, amongst other factors, to their downfall the following year. Their successors went back to embracing linguistic and cultural pluralism. The idea of “officializing” the status of Creole was dropped, rarely broached since by policymakers or mainstream politicians.

Still, despite its low image, Creole has, in numerical terms, been steadily gaining in popularity. Two separate trends seem to validate this progression – firstly, the growth of Creole at the expense of the Asian languages; a trend which was noted by Stein (1982: 614) and confirmed by Atchia-Emmerich (2005: 189-191). Secondly, the growth of Creole bilingual speakers shows that the local vernacular, which features as the language with the highest rate of combination, is the most widely used inter-ethnic vehicle of communication (see Appendix III).

Although I have divided the fourteen languages into three neat categories, it goes without saying that real life situations are never that simple and tidy. In fact, given the local multilingual approach to education, it is common for many Mauritians to speak, with various degrees of perfection (or imperfection), a combination of two or more languages, switching from one to another depending on social factors involved. The

following section is an examination of existing patterns of language use in different situations. The domains investigated have been chosen because they represent areas of social interaction where linguistic patterns can be more readily discerned and also, because several of them have direct relevance to our research question.

2.4.3 Language use within a political context

Although statistics show that there are fourteen languages present in Mauritius, I suggest that within a political context, especially at governmental level, the languages most frequently used are Creole, English and French.

The popular, but erroneous, belief that English is legally the official language partly stems from the fact that one of the criteria for membership to the highest governing body of the land, the National Assembly, must be the ability to “speak and ... to read the English language with a degree of proficiency sufficient to enable him (the member) to take an active part in the proceedings” (The Constitution 1968b, Article 33). The law also stipulates that “the proceedings and debates of the Assembly shall be in the English language, but a Member may address the Assembly in French” (Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly 1995, Article 5). It is interesting to note that although French is allowed during the debates, no proviso is made regarding the level of competence required in this language. However, as Hookoomsing (1987: 33) rightly implies, such an emphasis on linguistic skills shows the discriminatory nature of the law, since the latter automatically disqualifies large sections of the population who speak neither French nor English, and whose first language is likely to be Creole.

No mention is made of Mauritian Creole in the Constitution. In an analysis of debates in Parliament carried out in 1982, Cziffra (quoted by de Robillard 1985: 147) claims that 81.6% of the debates are carried out in English, 14.6% in French and a mere 4% in Creole. This prompted de Robillard (*ibid.*) to query the low percentage of Creole interventions, pointing out that insults and facetious comments, most likely conducted in Creole, would have been eliminated from official reports which are published in English. An account of a parliamentary session at the beginning of February 2005, published in the local newspaper, *L'Express* (see Appendix IV), seems to support de Robillard's claim. The article shows that there is, in fact, a constant code-switching between English, French and Creole during the debates, and that the use of Creole is therefore more widespread than reported through official channels.

Outside of Government House, ministers and MPs, in their official capacity, will normally address their audiences in English. French will also be used, as will, but less frequently, ethnic languages when specific communities are being targeted⁴⁷. In nationwide addresses, such as the annual Independence Day celebration in March, the President and the Prime Minister will be expected to use the more widely accessible Creole. Were they to speak outside of their official duties, say as politicians trying to win votes, again it would be expected of them to speak Creole.

⁴⁷ See, for instance, the two speeches given by the Mauritian President in 2008 at the opening ceremony of the Divali celebrations in October and at an exhibition organized by the *Arya Sabha* association in September. Available on the President's website, http://www.gov.mu/portal/site/president/menuitem.54cea71c5991f83c65942b200bb521ca/?content_id=7d4090476fd10210VgnVCM1000000a04a8c0RCRD. Accessed 24 Mar 2009.

2.4.4 Language use within a civil context

This section looks at whether the hierarchized nature of the linguistic situation on the island can be seen in its classrooms and in cultural practices such as literature, translation and theatre productions.

2.4.4.1 Education and literacy

As a former British colony, Mauritius has inherited an educational system that is quite similar to the metropolitan one. Children usually start school at the age of five with six years at primary level, followed by five years until ‘O’ levels at 16 and two more years until ‘A’ levels at 18. Although at primary level, the curriculum and examinations are organized by the Mauritian State, at secondary level, the syllabus for ‘O’ and ‘A’ levels is normally prepared in collaboration with the University of Cambridge International Examinations and exams are set and assessed by the latter. This section will look at two specific classroom practices: the use of English as medium of instruction and the multilingual policy as carried out within the educational system.

According to a governmental white paper on Mauritian education in 1997, “language policy is a very sensitive and a very controversial issue; it arouses considerable passion and emotion” (Pillay 1997). The reason for this is the importance accorded to education by most Mauritians as the means for social mobility. It is a common perception that better-paid jobs are often granted to those with a good command of European languages, especially English (Baptiste 2002: 208). Consequently, since educational success is believed to be regulated by the linguistic skills acquired, education has become the

battleground where the languages taught and the choice of the medium of instruction take on an inflated value.

Controversies regarding educational linguistic policies are nothing new. Throughout the nineteenth century, English was slowly, but steadily, imposed upon a hostile and recalcitrant Francophile population; a struggle, which culminated in the political compromise of 1891 and which acknowledged the importance of French within the school curriculum (Tirvassen 1985: 190). Concurrently, controversial attempts were made, in particular by Governor Higginson in the 1850s, to provide some form of education for the Indians in their vernaculars, but fears of linguistic ghettoization and possible problems of integration meant that they were discontinued and not revived until 1954 when Asian languages were introduced in schools (Bunwaree 1994: 85).

This inherited policy of multilingualism has been upheld in post-independence Mauritius. At primary level, compulsory languages are English, French and one Asian language taken from Hindi, Tamil, Telegu, Marathi, Arabic, Urdu or Mandarin Chinese (Lam Hung 2008: 62, 68). At secondary level, the importance of French and English, together with the possibility of studying an Asian language, is also maintained. It can be argued here that the inclusion of Asian languages within the school curriculum has 'ethnicized' the issue of language acquisition, giving the various ethnic communities a firm base on which to claim their linguistic identities. As Baptiste points out (2002: 210), the main criterion in selecting an Asian language class for a child is usually based on his/her ethnic background. This, consequently, teaches the child that he/she belongs to a specific community, rather than to the nation as a whole. Although this multilingual policy has proved popular with some sections of the population, it has also been

contested by others, in particular by members of the Creole group, many of whom cannot lay claim to any ‘ancestral’ language and who, understandably, feel discriminated against⁴⁸.

Although the creation of a citizenry proficient in multiple languages is very laudable, the execution of such a policy, however, has raised serious concerns within certain pedagogical circles in Mauritius. There are two major problems associated with this educational approach – firstly, the burden of having to learn three languages, which, to many Mauritian children, are mainly foreign languages (except for Franco-Mauritians to whom French could be considered a mother tongue), and secondly, the requirement of English as the medium of instruction. Studies have explained (Rajah-Carrim 2004a: 29-30, Bunwaree 1994: 215) that teachers, when faced with a child’s incomprehension, are likely to switch to French, or more often than not, to Mauritian Creole to facilitate learning. Although such a practice is recognized and allowed by the State (Dansinghani cited by *Ledikasyon Pu Travayer* 2007: 123), it has also been criticized for being a source of confusion for the child, since he/she will then have to ‘translate’ what has been taught back into written English or French. The oft-quoted figures of 35%-40% (Hilbert 2004, Ah-Choon 2006, Louis 2008) of children who leave school still illiterate after six years (or seven depending on whether they resit the CPE⁴⁹ exams) of schooling lend

⁴⁸ According to Baptiste (2002: 212), in some schools, Creole children who have no ‘ancestral’ language lessons are labelled “*zenfan anba pie*” (“children under the trees”) because lack of classroom space means that they have to go and sit quietly under the trees, and are not allowed to play for fear of causing disturbances for other children.

⁴⁹ The Certificate of Primary Education which is awarded after the final year exams for primary school children.

support to the argument that the exclusion of Creole has not benefitted the Mauritian child⁵⁰.

The exclusion of Creole from Mauritian classrooms is slowly being reassessed by the Catholic Church, who have, since January 2005, introduced a three-year programme entitled ‘*Prevokbek*’ in some of their secondary schools. *Prevokbek* uses Creole as the language of teaching, and is geared toward children who have failed their CPE exams and who are therefore not allowed into mainstream secondary education. Although *Prevokbek* is only available in 12 Catholic secondary schools⁵¹ and is aimed at a small group of children, those from the age of 12 to 15, its implementation can be seen as a highly significant move towards the development of a standardized written language and the valorization of Mauritian Creole itself.

2.4.4.2 Literature

According to Peter Hawkins (2001: 151-160), literary production in Mauritius is fragmented into different components that are defined by distinct linguistic criteria, in

⁵⁰ James Meade, the Economics Nobel prize-winner, reporting on the educational system in Mauritius, was stating, as early as 1968, that “children leave the primary schools in large numbers without having acquired anything worth calling literacy in any one language, though they have spent an intolerable amount of time dabbling in all three” (1968: 209).

⁵¹ There are 18 Catholic secondary schools altogether (data provided by Jimmy Harmon, co-ordinator of the *Prevokbek* programme, in an email dated 10 Mar 2009). For comparison purposes, there are 70 state secondary schools, 44 of which offer a pre-vocational stream, but there are also 4 other state-run secondary schools that are purely for pre-vocational students. Data available from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources’ webpages at http://www.gov.mu/portal/site/education/menuitem.0e6db76912517504631e691048a521ca/?content_id=a6746db43363110VgnVCM100000a04a8c0RCRD and http://www.gov.mu/portal/site/education/menuitem.2e5a61392ac97504631e691048a521ca/?content_id=27dbea7217a78010VgnVCM100000ca6a12acRCRD. Accessed 25 Mar 2009.

particular English, French, Hindi and Creole⁵²; a fragmentation which is unsurprising considering the linguistic situation of the island.

- English

The contribution of English writing to literary production in Mauritius is small compared to Francophone writing (Hawkins 2001: 157-159). Few of these writers, unlike their French counterparts, have managed to make their mark beyond Mauritian shores. The one exception to the rule is Lindsey Collen⁵³, two times winner of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for *The Rape of Sita*⁵⁴ (1993) and for *Boy* (2004).

Furthermore, a survey of English-writing authors provided by Jean-Georges Prosper (1978: 307-309) shows a very high proportion of Mauritians from the Hindu communities. Michel Fabre (1980: 123) suggests that these writers prefer to distance themselves from Parisian literary traditions in order to encourage a Mauritian literary production that is not an extension of French literature. However, local academics, such as Hookoomsing (1987: 40) and Ramharai (1998: 105), argue that these writers' choice of English as medium of expression is more likely to be a result of the traditional antagonism between Hindus and Franco-Mauritians; an antagonism which predates

⁵² Although literary productions in Asian languages, such as Marathi, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu, do exist (Bowman 1991: 62, Chintamunnee and Ramdhony 1993: 73), it is acknowledged that Hindi literature, in terms of volume of production, is by far the most important. As for Chinese literature, the local writer, Joseph Tsang Man Kin (1993: 79-80) notes that there are very few Mauritian Chinese writers and those who write, do so in French and English. He attributes this scarcity of literary production to the smallness of the Chinese group and to the fact that, unlike the Hindus, the Chinese do not feel compelled to defend any linguistic ideology. In my opinion, the possibility of reaching a wider audience with French and English would also play an important role in their choice of language.

⁵³ Lindsey Collen is actually South African by birth, but her inclusion here is based on the fact that she has lived in Mauritius for several decades now, is married to a Mauritian, is actively involved in the local socio-political scene and her books (some of which are written in Creole) are usually embedded in Mauritian realities.

⁵⁴ This book caused a furore in Mauritius because of its title which referred to the Hindu Goddess, Sita. It was accused of offending ethnic sensibilities and was accordingly banned by the authorities in 1993 (Ramharai 1998: 110).

independence, at a time when both sides were competing for socio-economic and political power, and when the Hindus wanted to become equal to their former masters. In this context, the use of English stands as a symbolic reaction against the French language.

- French

According to Jean-Louis Joubert (1993: 38), Francophone writing in Mauritius, compared to English, Hindi and Creole writing, is “*une vieille dame*” (“an old lady”). In fact, local Francophone writing, which began in the early nineteenth century, was originally launched as a reaction against British colonization by French settlers as a statement of their cultural identity and their attachment to France (Ramharai 1998: 100). The fact that the Franco-Mauritians were the ones with the financial means to pay for printing and publishing also ensured that literary production in French continued to flourish. Prosper (1978: 12) estimates that from 1803 until the late 1970s, there have been 225 authors producing some 700 French literary works in fiction, theatre and poetry.

However, Ramharai (1998: 105-111) argues that in the 1950s and after independence, those who wrote in French showed a lesser concern about belonging to France, but moved towards a literature that was more open to the multicultural realities of the island. Many of these authors, with their works published by French publishing houses, have made a name for themselves in France⁵⁵. This has prompted some critics, such as Hawkins (2001: 153), to rightly point out that the success and legitimacy of

⁵⁵ Some well-known Mauritian Francophone writers are Robert Edward Hart, Malcolm de Chazal, Marie-Thérèse Humbert, Edouard Maunick, Ananda Devi, Carl de Souza, Nathacha Appanah-Mouriquand and Shenaz Patel (Ramharai 1998: 99-111).

Mauritian literary production in French is, more often than not, dependent upon metropolitan consecration and that such consecration has largely obscured the existence of Mauritian writings carried out in other languages.

- Hindi

The development of a Mauritian literature in Hindi owes much to the growth in political power of the Hindu majority and their awareness of their cultural rights in the 1940s; a decade of social unrest, marked by the great strikes of 1937 and 1943, and fomented in part by many trade unionists and politicians from the Indo-Mauritian group (Addison and Hazareesingh 1993: 84-89). Originally, most creative efforts were poured into Hindi newspapers such as the *Janata* and the *Zamana*. The few literary works, which were produced, were mostly works by Basdeo Bissoondoyal and Brajendra Bhagat (Chintamunnee and Ramdhony 1993: 71). The former, a political activist, is largely credited with initiating a Hindu socio-cultural and religious revival, whilst the latter, to whom the first collection of Hindi poems is attributed, established the *Hindi Pracharini Sabha*, the Society for Propagating Hindi, together with his brother (Dukhira 2002: 142). Literature in Hindi was, therefore, born out of and associated with an ethno-political struggle to valorize Hindu traditions and culture. Nowadays, the most well-known Mauritian Hindi writer is Abhimanyu Unnuth, a prolific novelist, poet, historian, playwright and biographer who has been published in India. Apart from Unnuth, however, very few authors who write in Hindi are known abroad and those whose works are printed locally are likely to target only their specific community.

- Mauritian Creole

The first known literary text in Mauritian Creole, *Les Essais d'un Bobre Africain*, was written in 1822 by a Franco-Mauritian, François Chrestien (Hookoomsing 2004: 3). Ramharai (1993: 59) maintains that during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, a few Creole works were published, mostly authored by Franco-Mauritian writers, amongst others Charles Baissac (*Le Folklore de l'Ile Maurice* in 1886), Pierre Lolliot (*Poésies Créoles* in 1855) and Descroizilles (*Navire Fine Engagé* in 1867). For these authors, writing in Creole was a way of casting a nostalgic and paternalistic, even condescending, eye towards the days when slaves were still attached to the big sugar plantations, and when Creole could still be considered as a French-derived language spoken by “*le bon vieux noir et la bonne nénéne*” (“the good old black servant and housemaid” – Hookoomsing 1987: 97). However, to some of these writers, Creole never constituted a proper language; it was fit for caricature, not for ‘serious’ literature (Hookoomsing 2004: 4).

The post-independence years saw a turning point in the development of Creole literature. Those who wrote in Creole did so out of ideological conviction, strongly believing in the language as an integral part of Mauritian cultural identity and in its ability to cut across inter-ethnic rivalry. Their use of Creole as a weapon to display a nationalist and militant stance meant that Creole literature became linked to political activism, in particular to the MMM party. Ramharai (1993: 57-58), in his survey of post-independence Creole literature, notes that at the height of the MMM’s popularity between 1977 and 1982, 75% of literary production (mostly poetry and theatre) was in Creole. However, the party’s resounding electoral defeat in 1983 and its subsequent

decision to exclude language issues from its electoral manifestoes coincided with a decline in literary efforts, despite attempts towards a less militant and more pragmatic approach to creative writing (Mooneeram 2001: 29).

2.4.4.3 Translation

This section on translation concentrates mainly on textual movement to and from Mauritian Creole, given that it is the role of Creole in the elaboration of a national identity that constitutes the core of this thesis⁵⁶. The role of Creole translation in the literary production of Mauritius is not recent. In the nineteenth century, several authors, such as François Chrestien, drew inspiration from European sources for their Creole writings. In the 1880s, the gospel, *L'Évangil selon Sèn Mathié*, was translated by an Anglican priest (Hookoomsing 2004: 20), presumably intended for the Christian Creole population, although it is highly unlikely that the readers would be educated Creoles since the latter would have been literate in either French or English. Around the same period (in 1888), a collection of folktales, transcribed into Creole and translated into French by Charles Baissac became the basis for his bilingual version of *Folklore de l'Île Maurice*.

The practice of bilingual, and sometimes trilingual, versions has persisted to this day. According to Hookoomsing (1987: 129-130), the first Urdu-Creole bilingual version of the first chapters of the Koran was published by Hussein Nahaboo in 1976. In 1982, the

⁵⁶ While carrying out quantitative research on textual production in Mauritius (see Section 7.2), I came across a couple of publications that have been translated from Hindi into French. However, there appears, generally speaking, to be very little in terms of textual translation which uses a combination of languages and which excludes Creole. The best information is perhaps found in an article written by Chintamunnee (2000: 108-109), which gives a brief survey of translations carried out from French into Hindi, and from Hindi into French and/or English.

latter also published a bilingual Arabic-Creole copy of the Koran. That same year, a Bhojpuri-Creole version of the Bhagavad Gita, part of the Hindu sacred scriptures, was produced by Basant Rai, then minister of commerce and industry.

Translators in Mauritius are generally divided into two broad categories – those who write in Creole and subsequently translate for a wider audience, and those who translate from a ‘major’ language into Creole, generally using well-known canonical works as their source texts. For those whose Creole works are translated into an international language, published and made accessible to an overseas audience, translation brings in its wake two forms of affirmation – the recognition of their literary skills and the acknowledgement that Creole is no mere patois. For instance, Lindsey Collen’s *Boy*, which has been mentioned before, is a translation of her original text, *Misyon Garson* (1999). However, for both groups, translation fulfils an important role: the development of Creole as a linguistic system and as a language of ‘equal’ value to any international language. As Dev Virahsawmy (cited by Tranquille 2000: 102) puts it, “translation is the advanced stage of the cultural campaign that I have been waging for the promotion of *Morisien*⁵⁷.”

2.4.4.4 Theatre

It was the historian, Antoine Chelin (1954: 12), who claimed that, although the first theatre was not built until 1805 in Port-Louis, theatrical performances had probably been taking place in Mauritius from as early as the 1730s. During the French and, later, the

⁵⁷ Virahsawmy has always maintained that Mauritian Creole should simply be known as ‘*Morisien*’ (‘Mauritian’) because “it is only legitimate that it should be given the name of the people to whom it is now a criterion to define their national identity” (cited by Tranquille 2000: 101).

British occupation, these performances were given essentially for the elite, with a bias for French comedy and lyrical drama.

Although the first English play, *Douglas*, was staged in 1823 (Chelin 1954: 27), the development of an English-speaking theatre did not take place until the establishment of the Mauritius Dramatic club in 1934. Like its French counterpart, it was an elitist form of cultural entertainment, with productions of plays by Oscar Wilde, Noël Coward and George Bernard Shaw amongst others. Few Mauritians were cast in these shows (Labonne 1997: 192).

The 1970s, however, saw the emergence of what Roshni Mooneeram called “a theatre of protest” (2001: 102) performed mostly in Mauritian Creole. In that highly politicized post-independence era, a new generation of left-wing intellectuals sought to define the specificity of Mauritian culture and validate the Creole language through their theatrical activities. The main plays that reflected these nationalistic ideas and beliefs were Henri Favory’s *Tras* (1983), Azize Asgarally’s *Ratsitatane*, and Dev Virahsawmy’s *Zeneral Makbef* (1981) and *Li* (1977), all of which were inspired by the socio-political realities of the times. In the mid-1980s, the militancy advocated by the ‘theatre of protest’ gave way to a less aggressive approach so as to focus on the creative and aesthetic functions of Creole instead (Mooneeram 2001: 194).

Concurrently, state-sponsored theatre productions have also been taking place in Mauritius. These events take place on an annual basis, although their format has drawn criticism from individual theatre directors, such as Henri Favory (one of the theatre practitioners interviewed for this thesis), who object to their competitive nature. Participating groups are gradually eliminated until there are only three left for the final

round. More details on these drama festivals will be provided in Sections 6.2.4 and 6.3.1.

Creole is now accepted as a stage language, but whether its use in theatre does truly constitute an act of democratization designed to unify the country, as some of its proponents would like us to believe, will be looked at later on in this thesis.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a fairly comprehensive overview of Mauritius by looking at its geographical, historical, political, economic and linguistic situations. I showed that the vagaries of history have shaped the way Mauritians identified themselves; an identity that, more often than not, was rooted in the traditions and values of where their ancestors came from. In my brief exploration of the political culture and economic development of post-independence Mauritius, I showed that ethnic self-identification was the norm.

In Section 2.4, I provided an overview of the socio-cultural context in Mauritius. I first surveyed the heterogeneity of the Mauritian population by taking into consideration the various groups and subgroups. I then gave an account of the languages currently in use on the island and observed that although Mauritian Creole was statistically the most widely used language, it also suffered from a poor image due mainly to its historical origins and to its connections with the Creole ethnic group.

In sub-Section 2.4.3, I investigated the linguistic situation in the political sphere where English, French and Creole were the main languages used. However, in exploring language use in the educational domain, I explained that a multilingual discourse reinforced ethnic differentiation rather than promoting the cause of nation-

building, and furthermore, that the use of English as medium of instruction had, over the years, not necessarily proved to be beneficial to the Mauritian child. I revealed that a major step had been taken to introduce Creole as medium of instruction in some Catholic pre-vocational schools. Finally, I looked at literary, translational and theatrical productions in Mauritius with reference to the languages used. I noticed that post-independence, the use of Mauritian Creole in all three socio-cultural activities was often inscribed within an ideological framework designed to valorize the language.

This chapter, in highlighting the complexities of the linguistic situation in Mauritius, has paved the way for the next chapter, where I aim to discuss the issue of linguistic nationalism and the way in which it can be promoted through the practice of theatre translation.

Chapter Three – Linguistic Nationalism and Theatre Translation

Introduction

The aim of Chapter Three is to explore the relationship between linguistic nationalism and theatre translation in order to find out how the concepts of ‘nation’ and ‘identity’ can be constructed and disseminated in a given society.

In Section 3.1, I explain that the concept of linguistic nationalism usually introduces the idea that a nation is the result of a shared culture, in particular a shared language. However, as Homi Bhabha has argued (1990: 291-297), nations are not horizontal and homogeneous cultural spaces, each bearing a specific univocal national identity. Migration movements, largely due to the colonial ambitions of Western Europe throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, have redefined our conventional understanding of nation, especially within a post-colonial context. Then, I look at some of the challenges faced by many former colonies where the linguistic situation is anything but homogeneous. I explore the complexities of multilingualism and the ways in which some post-colonial societies have dealt with it through linguistic and language-in-education policies. Assuming that identity is not a fixed, unchanging entity, I suggest that for some post-colonial societies, the emergence of new creolized linguistic and cultural values as shared values may potentially contribute to the cause of nation-building.

The second part of this chapter focuses on theatre translation. I explain why the examples provided here are not all taken from the post-colonial perspective that underpins this research. I suggest that theatre translation has been used before as an

interventionist platform by some translators and writers to contest the dominant Eurocentric cultural norms prevalent in their communities. I show that it has also been used to assert autochthonous linguistic values and to provide a form of linguistic and cultural nourishment for the target society. I explain that the manipulation of theatre texts, as a form of cultural intervention, is due mainly to the political agendas of the translators. Finally, in Section 3.2.3, I suggest that the target audience constitutes a fundamental link in the process of theatre translation if linguistic and cultural self-determination is to be developed in the host society.

3.1 Linguistic nationalism

The notion of ‘linguistic nationalism’, a term taken from Benedict Anderson (2001), is believed to have originated from Western Europe in the nineteenth century during the Romantic Movement. The main concept behind the ideology of linguistic nationalism was proposed by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) who established the link between nation and language. Herder believed that “every distinct community is a *nation*, having its own national culture as it has its own language” (1969: 284 – emphasis in the original text). A nation is, thus, defined by its individual cultural values, regardless of other nations’ criteria, and membership to that particular nation rests upon a common language. In fact, Herder argued that it is language that enables the process of socialization within a community, making possible not only the interaction between individuals but also the transmission of specific cultural values from one generation to the next:

What a treasure language is when kinship groups grow into tribes and nations! Even the smallest of nations in any part of the globe, no matter how undeveloped it may be,

cherishes in and through its language, the history, the poetry and songs about the great deeds of its forefathers. The language is its collective treasure, the source of its social wisdom and communal self-respect! (Herder 1965: 165)

Historically therefore, socio-political movements, acting within this framework, have striven to encourage a sense of national unity and collective identity by emphasizing the value of the main vernacular and its associated socio-cultural symbols, and by developing its linguistics and lexicography through translation and through the creation of an autochthonous literature. Although this call for linguistic homogenization has, to a large extent, promoted the suppression of minority languages, Europe in the nineteenth century was, nonetheless, “a golden age of vernacularizing lexicographers, grammarians, philologists, and litterateurs” (Anderson 1983: 69), whose activities were geared towards nation-building. Indeed, as the post-colonial scholar, James Snead (1990: 235) points out, this form of European nationalism, which was based upon purely cultural criteria, was mainly designed to “provide a kind of generalized coverage”, to insure a group’s identity against external or internal threats, and to differentiate between those who belonged and those who didn’t.

3.1.1 What is a nation?

But, what exactly is a nation? The commonly held traditional view (even if the consensus among theorists is that it is a difficult term to conceptualize) is that a nation is composed essentially of three elements – territorial, political and cultural. It generally consists of a large group of human beings living in a territorial space bordered by specific boundaries, possessing common political institutions, and sharing a common ancestry and common linguistic and cultural values (Smith 1991: 9-10). The latter idea

of a nation bound together by its roots – lineage, language and culture – is akin to modern definitions of an ethnic community (Smith 1991: 21). By extension, nations have frequently been perceived as enlarged ethnic communities, united by an awareness of their collective character which demarcates them from the Other.

However, it is also widely believed that the perception of a national identity based on shared roots and ancestry, even if held with deep psychological certainty, is precisely that – a perception (Connor 2002: 56). To put it more bluntly, it is a subjective belief that cannot be substantiated for many, if any, nations throughout the world. Ernest Gellner (1997: 74) calls it a “plausible background myth”, one that has historically justified the calls for cultural homogenization and suppression of various smaller groups. According to Renan (1990: 14), for instance, the Jacobin ideal of “*La République, une et indivisible*” exemplifies the drive, from the French Revolution onwards, to turn “Celtic, Iberic, and Germanic” France into one cohesive political nation. The mythical nature of roots and supposed shared cultural heritage show, therefore, that representations of a nation are more ambivalent than traditionally suggested.

3.1.2 Constructing a post-colonial nation

In fact, going beyond the concept of nation where past, present and future are always gathered around a motherland with homogeneous cultural values, Bhabha (1990: 291-320) proposes that nations are actually not set entities whose development proceeds in a linear fashion, and at a smooth, continuous pace. He points out that cultural formations within nations constantly fluctuate and that identities, therefore, are not unchanging. As he puts it:

The 'locality' of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen simply as 'other' in relation to what is outside or beyond it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new 'people' in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning ... (1990: 4)

This is particularly true for many post-colonial countries today, where heterogeneous populations and internal ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences are often the norms, and where the narratives of nation as a cultural space have become sites of contestation and negotiation. This, ultimately, suggests that the idea of a fixed and distinct national identity is somewhat problematic.

Furthermore, Timothy Brennan (1990: 58-60), writing about the role of contemporary literature in helping to establish the construct of nations, has suggested that the problem for many a post-colonial nation is that despite the political act of separation from Europe, the terms and rules of independence have in fact been set down by the latter. Colonial dependency, for instance, remains as a result of the perpetuation of state administrative structures and apparatuses which, bequeathed by the metropolitan centre, cannot provide a safeguard for effective independence, cultural independence included. Nevertheless, as Brennan further proposes, although the concept of nation, in the Western Romantic sense of the word, may not be suitable for many post-colonial societies today, the idea of voicing a collective identity through a broader understanding of the nation cannot be dismissed, because "solutions to dependency are collective, and the territorial legacies of the last 200 years provide the collectivity no other basis upon which to fight dependency" (1990: 58).

In the following four sub-sections, I focus specifically on one of the main challenges facing many post-colonial societies: multilingualism. I show that the issue is

compounded by the domination of former European languages over local ones and the hostilities between different linguistic groups fighting for power (or survival). For many of these nations then, the task of nation-building rests not only upon their ability to manage the countries' linguistic diversity in a peaceable way, but also in responding pragmatically to their need to have non-native languages (i.e. European languages) when communicating with the international community. In many cases, their reliance upon European languages has informed their educational policies; policies which, I believe, are unlikely to contribute to national integration. Finally, I also suggest that for many Creolophone post-colonial societies, an acceptance and a recognition of the emergence of their specific Creolized linguistic practices may play a part in nation-building.

3.1.2.1 “Asymmetrical multilingualism”

Prior to political independence, many former colonies had encouraged nationalist ideologies which were easy to embrace in their simplistic contrast between colonizers and colonized. Post-independence, their plurality, hitherto subsumed under a common goal for self-determination, has proved to be a challenge.

It can be argued that for many of them, the multiplicity of local languages, exacerbated by the continued presence of colonial languages, has not made the task of nation-building easier. As Michael Clyne suggests (1997: 306), the co-existence of the vernaculars with the metropolitan languages has, in fact, created a form of “asymmetrical multilingualism” which has helped to perpetuate the hierarchization of social structures. The European languages, mainly by virtue of their global currency, are often positioned as the state languages for use in official domains and integrated into the

national discourse of power. For instance, on the African continent, within the 53 African countries, 21 have adopted French as their official language, 19 English, 10 one or more African languages, 9 Arabic, 5 Portuguese and 1 Spanish (Bamgbose 2005). Also, those African languages which share joint official status with the colonial languages, occupy in reality an inferior status to their counterparts. Parallel to this unequal relationship is the continued marginalization of ‘unofficialized’ vernaculars to minority status⁵⁸. This marginalization of local vernaculars can equally be observed in many of the independent Creole-speaking islands of the Caribbean basin. Where multilingualism is the norm (Trinidad for instance), a European language is usually the sole official language (Alleyne 1985: 178-179).

In some cases, however, the complexities of multilingualism have meant that the promotion of European languages to official status, despite being non-native languages, has been actively supported by some segments of the population who do not necessarily see them as the symbols of foreign powers. This is because European languages are considered as possible solutions to linguistic conflicts in areas where local languages are jostling for power (Daoust 1997: 444). A case in point is the 1965 Madras student demonstrations, protesting against ‘Hindi imperialism’. According to Baldrige (2002), anti-Hindi feelings were so strong that slogans such as “Hindi never, English ever” were chanted. The virulence of their opposition and that of the Dravidian South in general contributed to the compromise that retained English as the official language; a position which has since been downgraded to that of ‘associate’ official language. Baldrige

⁵⁸ Minority status here is not defined on the basis of numerical strength, but refers to the subordinate cultural and political position of certain languages and their users within a given society (Venuti 1998: 135).

(ibid.) suggests that despite this compromise, Southern India generally continues to offer the strongest support for English whilst maintaining the strongest opposition to Hindi.

3.1.2.2 “Vernacularization” and/or “internationalism”

The terms ‘vernacularization’ and ‘internationalism’ are taken from Daoust (1997: 444) to illustrate two models of language planning and policies⁵⁹ pursued by some post-colonial societies in their attempt to deal with their multilingual status, while at the same time taking into account their linguistic needs as countries which form part of a globalized world, pursuing economic growth and technological modernization. However, it must be made clear from the beginning that, although these two terms are looked at separately here, they are not necessarily implemented in an ‘either/or’ scenario, but have been used together in many cases for pragmatic reasons.

‘Vernacularization’ is the process aimed at giving an official status to an indigenous language (or to more than one as it happened in places like India). According to Naz Rassool (2000: 388-389), such a process was attempted in the 1960s in certain parts of Eastern and Central Africa, such as Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya, as a form of cultural decolonization intended to fulfil a highly symbolic function, that of representing the people under a linguistic label not associated with their colonial masters, but one that was native to their homeland. ‘Vernacularization’ is mainly concerned with the process of ‘improving’ and ‘restoring’ the vernacular, and of enhancing its status⁶⁰, mainly through the creation of dictionaries, grammars and a literary corpus. In some instances,

⁵⁹ Bamgbose (2005) makes the point that in many African countries, language planning and policies are not explicitly spelt out in print, but that lack of documents (due to many factors, including political instability) should not lead us to conclude that there are no policies as such, since “an absence of policy [...] usually implies a continuation of an existing policy or practice.”

⁶⁰ Known respectively as ‘corpus planning’ and ‘status planning’ (Daoust 1997: 448).

when the vernacular in question is an oral language without a formal script, it is also carried out through orthographic codification. For example, a standardized orthography using Roman script was devised for Somali in 1972 (Mazrui and Mazrui 1998: 7) and for Seselwa Creole in the Seychelles in 1978 (Bollée 1993: 90).

However, it would be misleading to construe vernacularization as a smooth, unproblematic process. If the specific vernacular that is promoted belongs to the dominant ethnic group, as is often the case, its promotion may elicit suspicion from other ethnic groups fearful of socio-political marginalization and of linguistic assimilation, as we have already seen with the Madras protests. Vernacularization may, therefore, exacerbate feelings of differentiation and exclusion, causing the goal of national cohesion to become even more of a challenge.

As an alternative to ‘vernacularization’, ‘internationalism’ believes that contact and exchange between countries are necessarily made easier through European languages, and that the need for economic growth, scientific modernization and technological development is best fulfilled via these languages. The focus after independence for many post-colonial nations has been geared towards a discourse of modernity and giving priority to an international *lingua franca*, even if the latter has little to do with national identity. A country that displays an ‘internationalist’ strategy is one that chooses at least one metropolitan language as an official language to be used mainly in governmental, business, legal and educational circles. The promotion of a non-native language may, however, generate feelings of exclusion from other speakers whose knowledge of the international language may be limited. In fact, critics, such as Mazrui and Mazrui (1998: 101), have argued that for countries in sub-Saharan Africa, an ‘internationalist’

approach actually runs contrary to their interests, because their reliance upon European languages promotes the use of foreign expertise and exacerbates “Western penetration of Africa”.

3.1.2.3 Linguistic policies in education

The reason for looking at language policies in the educational domain is because schooling provides one of the main mechanisms for enforcing state ideologies. Through the languages used and through its content (established syllabuses and set texts), education plays a crucial role in instilling values and beliefs which a given state considers important and wishes to transmit. Edward Brathwaite, writing about the Caribbean educational system in the colonial era, for instance, laments the implementation of a system that maintained “the language of the conquistador, the language of the planter, the language of the official, the language of the anglican preacher” (1995: 310), so much so that Caribbean children did not have “the syllables, the syllabic intelligence, to describe the hurricane, which (was their) own experience (but could instead) describe the imported alien experience of the snowfall” (ibid.).

Ashcroft *et al* (1995: 425) have argued that such patterns of education have persisted in many post-colonial countries, with the formulation of educational policies still largely resting upon the system established during the colonial period. In sub-Saharan Africa, most of the educational systems are still “predicated on the supremacy of European languages as media of instruction, and some of which completely ignore indigenous languages as worthy topics of educational study” (Mazrui and Mazrui 1998: 6). This approach to education is also still in evidence in many Anglophone Caribbean islands,

where “the assumption underlying this language education policy was that those who entered the education system were, in fact, native-speakers of English” (Devonish 1986: 102). Reporting on the specific case of Trinidad, for example, Ishtla Singh (2000: 106) maintains that, because it is not adapted to the local environment, such a policy has resulted in poor academic performances, high failure rates in English, some psychological humiliation (since their native language, Creole, is being ignored) and a lack of motivation with regards to academic learning.

The continued emphasis on the use of former metropolitan languages has also been perceived by some scholars as an obstruction to the project of nation-building, because it only benefits a small portion of the population. Indeed, Bamgbose (2005) suggests that the entrenchment of colonial practices in many contemporary African educational systems has been due to the urban elites who, having taken over from the former colonizers, are reluctant to change them since they constitute the main beneficiaries. Furthermore, although the use of a European language has encouraged a form of horizontal integration amongst ‘educated’ people of different linguistic backgrounds in some parts of Africa, educational practices have, in many other instances, widened the gulf between the urban elites and the rest of the population (Mazrui and Mazrui 1998: 103, Platt *et al* 1984: 27). Therefore, as schooling is related to the discourse of power, the lack of access to a European language for many post-colonial citizens is, in effect, a form of disfranchisement, which limits their access to the country’s political, judicial and legal systems. Certainly, in several sub-Saharan African countries, not only is the usual vehicle of communication in government buildings, legislatures and judiciaries a

European language, but the Constitution and the laws are primarily expressed in one too, which render them unintelligible to many (Mazrui and Mazrui 1998: 6).

State educational policies may, therefore, contribute to socio-political disparities, which obstruct the development of vertical integration necessary for some form of national cohesion and identification to take place.

3.1.2.4 Creolization at work

It is obvious, then, that for many post-colonial societies, the construction of a communal identity involving distinct linguistic and cultural groups has been a difficult task to carry out. However, according to Hailemariam, Kroon and Walters (1999: 482), there is no evidence to show that national unity and social cohesion cannot be achieved for multicultural and multilingual societies. Nations, as I have already said earlier, are not fixed entities whose construction can be achieved once and for all, but are, in fact, dynamic phenomena which are in a continuous process of formation, resulting, in the case of plural societies, in the emergence of new cultural practices. As Bhabha (1994: 2) suggests, the idea of a cultural space defined by separate fixed categories is untenable. Instead, identity is created by constant interfacing that involves complex negotiations and renegotiations between multiple parties, since “it is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated” (ibid., italics in original). Such a notion not only allows individuals to make their voices heard within the dominant discourses, but also ‘reworks’ boundaries between constituent parts into potential commonalities.

The idea of identity as a fluid entity finds particular resonance in many post-colonial Creole-speaking societies; ‘newly’ independent islands in the Caribbean Sea and the south-western Indian Ocean region⁶¹, whose socio-cultural transformations were mainly triggered by their specific experiences as former European colonies. Although the “moments, modes and expressions of creolization” (Eckkrammer 2003: 97) did not and do not proceed at the same pace or in a similar fashion among these Creolophone societies because of historical, geo-political and cultural differences, it can still be said that their experiences of creolization shared the same roots: migration and dislocation, oppression and discrimination, hybridization and miscegenation.

What then are those transformations? Are they practices and values that can help in the construction of a communal identity? Robert Chaudenson (2001: 194-302), in a detailed analysis of the cultural interpenetration between European, African and Asian customs of (French-based) Creole-speaking islands of the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean, suggests that it is mainly through music, dance, cuisine, folk medicine, oral literature and language that such an identity is being crafted. Here, I would like to focus specifically on the Creole language. As the main medium of communication between different speech communities, it has generally involved several, if not all, strata of society, thus facilitating the process of creolization itself. Furthermore, to many of its supporters, the fact that Creole, as a native language, is rooted in the specific historical, geographical and socio-cultural realities of its environment, gives definite shape to notions of belonging and identity.

⁶¹ See Introduction for more details on these islands.

Proponents of Creole have tried to promote its unifying potential (Devonish 1986: 88). The intention is to amalgamate discrete communities into a national construct that they could all potentially claim as theirs. Viewed in multilingual and multicultural contexts, such an approach is designed not only to maximize the importance of a shared common practice, but also to minimize cultural differences in order to tie the nation together. Although writing about Caribbean islands still under Dutch control (the Netherlands Antilles), Eckkrammer (2003: 102) could not have made the link between linguistic creolization and a communal identity any clearer:

Our search for the very essence and unifying factor of Creole identity pointed us directly to Papiamentu, the Creole language of the Netherlands Antilles. Thus for the N.A. it is obvious that the formation of a solid creoleness would have been much more difficult without the Creole language, maybe even impossible.

The truth, though, is that Creole languages still face deep-rooted prejudice on account of their hybrid nature (code-switching, lexical borrowing, adaptation of referential contents, etc.) and of their genesis, even by Creole-speaking communities themselves (Sebba 1997: 235). According to Eckkrammer (2003: 104), what the latter need to have is a greater awareness of the potential of their language, seeing it as an expression of “cultural creativity and resistance” (ibid.) rather than an object of derision. There are several ways to achieve this, including the teaching of Creole in schools, linguistic research, and more importantly for us, the promotion of translations from/into Creole in literary and non-literary domains. Although she was writing specifically about the need to reinforce the position of Papiamentu in the Netherlands Antilles, Eckkrammer’s words could equally have applied to the former colonies of the Caribbean Sea and the South-Western Indian Ocean:

Translations, at first widely considered to be the result of the inefficiency and incompetence of the Creole language, have to be regarded as an accepted ingredient in the process of linguistic elaboration. If the same prejudice is directed at the culture in general, the creation of an accepted identity and positive awareness becomes impossible. Even translating Papiamentu into other languages without fear of inferiority and of being misjudged on a universal level is only possible once all sense of inferiority has disappeared. (ibid.)

The use of translation as a discursive practice to validate a language, as already mentioned, is not new. The following section of this chapter will, therefore, be an exploration of the way in which theatre translation has been used to promote linguistic self-affirmation and to redress asymmetrical cultural power relations.

3.2 Theatre Translation

Translation has often been considered as a weapon of empowerment, which is underscored by “pragmatic, political and ideological dimensions” (Tymoczko 1999: 17). The aim of Section 3.2 is to show that through theatre translation, modes of representation can be challenged and new ones negotiated for the host society. Such interventionist purposes inevitably reveal the significant role of the translators who, by manipulating the target language, can inscribe their own beliefs and value systems onto the texts. However, it also becomes clear that any messages conveyed in the texts can only be effective if they reach the target audiences.

In the last decade or so, several post-colonial approaches to translation studies have been productive in theoretical and analytical terms. For instance, Bassnett and Trivedi’s collection of essays (1999) is an exploration of the theoretical and practical aspects of translation as an activity involving asymmetrical power relations between texts, authors and/or cultures. Also involving a varied range of contributors, Simon and St-Pierre’s

work (2000), which views the post-colonial world in terms of cultural and power relations at a global level, examines specific translating situations covering geographically and linguistically diverse areas, such as Ireland, China, India, Canada, Indonesia and the USA. Other volumes include Tymoczko's (1999) analysis of translation as a political undertaking which helped shape Irish history in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Mehrez's (1992) exploration of North African writers' attempt to walk a cultural and linguistic middle ground, when they refuse to submit to Western literary conventions and/or local traditional models, and Jacquemond's (1992) examination of translation and cultural hegemony, with particular reference to French-Arabic translation in Egypt. However, the existing literature on theatre translation which relates specifically to the post-colonial context informing this thesis is rather limited (see Introduction), and for this reason, some of the examples provided below have been drawn from a non-post-colonial perspective.

3.2.1 Site of intervention

In this section, I look at how theatre translation, in countries where linguistic power differentials are the norm, has been used as a platform to challenge existing cultural and literary hierarchies, to validate indigenous languages, and to enrich local literary and theatrical repertoires.

3.2.1.1 Counter-discursive representation

As previously suggested, the legacy of a colonialist education used to instil and consolidate metropolitan values which, very often, do not reflect local realities, is still pervasive in many post-colonial societies. In most cases, this can be seen not only

through the continued importance given to the European languages as mediums of instruction, but also through the choice of European canonical texts in the school syllabus and the cultural value assigned to them (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996: 16). Consequently, translators have often been tempted to 'rewrite' European canonical works by presenting 'counter' texts. The aim is to dismantle the assumptions regarding the canonical status of the European works and divest them of their 'authority'. As Gilbert and Tompkins (ibid.) put it, "counter-discourse seeks to deconstruct significations of authority and power exercised in the canonical text, to release its stranglehold on representation and, by implication, to intervene in social conditioning."

In this context, the works of Shakespeare are prime targets for counter-discursive rewritings. In colonial India, for example, Shakespeare was introduced as a way of "upholding the 'humanistic' ideals of British 'civilization'" (Bhatia 1998: 99). His work was an important object of study not only for those within the educational system, but also for those wishing to join the Indian Civil Service. Similarly, Rob Nixon (1987: 560) has suggested that for many other former colonies, "Shakespeare ... (was) something like the gold standard of literature." However, he has also argued that although for the English,

Shakespeare ... could be a source of pride and a confirmation of their civilization, for colonial subjects (he) often became a chastening yardstick of their 'backwardness'. The exhortation to master Shakespeare was instrumental in showing up non-European 'inferiority', for theirs would be the flawed mastery of those culturally remote from Shakespeare's stock. A schooled resemblance could become the basis for a more precise discrimination, for, to recall Homi Bhabha's analysis of mimicry in colonial discourse, 'to be Anglicized is *emphatically* not to be English'. And so, in colonial circumstances, the bard could become symptomatic and symbolic of the education of Africans and Caribbeans into a passive, subservient relationship to dominant colonial culture. (ibid., italics in the original text)

One well-known target of post-colonial rewriting is *The Tempest*, often criticized by African and Caribbean intellectuals⁶² in the late 1960s for its colonial undertones⁶³. They objected to the Prospero/Caliban relationship because they saw in it the same paternalistic, condescending attitude of the European colonizers towards their colonies, and, consequently, sought to redefine it along their own terms. Perhaps, one of the most well-known appropriations of *The Tempest* is the play, *Une Tempête*, created in 1969 by the Martinican writer, Aimé Césaire. In *Une Tempête*, Prospero is the white man from Europe, acting as a despotic colonizer determined to rule over his subjects. Caliban, on the other hand, represents the black colonized; he is the slave who openly rebels against Prospero, fuelled by the desire to be his own master. His wish to be renamed X (an obvious allusion to Malcolm X) also shows a yearning to refashion his own identity, while his speech to Prospero in the final scene is a clear repudiation of the image imposed upon him:

[...]
 Et tu m'as tellement menti,
 menti sur le monde, menti sur moi-même,
 que tu as fini par m'imposer
 une image de moi-même:
 Un sous-développé, comme tu dis,
 un sous-capable,
 voilà comment tu m'as obligé à me voir,
 et cette image, je la hais! Et elle est fausse!
 Mais maintenant, je te connais, vieux cancer,
 et je me connais aussi! (*Une Tempête* III. 5)

⁶² See Nixon (1987: 573-574) for a list of anti-colonial authors who rewrote *The Tempest* in literary forms other than theatre scripts.

⁶³ The amount of post-colonial rewritings of *The Tempest* even prompted the scholar, Chantal Zabus (1985: 49), to suggest that “the adaptation and re-interpretation of the earlier Old World literature of colonization, i.e., *The Tempest*, as literature of decolonisation is, at its worst, sheer parasitism”, although she does add that such adaptation can also be seen as “an articulate literary riposte (which) constitutes one of the most cogent strategies of decolonisation in literature”.

[...]
And you lied so much to me,
you lied about the world, about myself,
you ended up by imposing on me
an image of myself:
Under-developed, so you say,
under-competent,
that's how you made me see myself,
and I hate that image! And it's false!
But now I know you, you old cancer,
and I also know myself! (*The Tempest* III. 5)

Césaire's translation, however, has elicited what I consider to be a valid point from Thomas Cartelli (1999: 115), who argues that the translator's Caliban has more to do with the ethos of pan-African nationalist movements (for instance, Caliban's insistence on greeting Prospero with the Swahili word 'Uhuru', which means 'freedom') and with the US black militancy of the 1960s than with a specific West Indian, let alone a Martinican, perspective. Still, the merit of *Une Tempête* is that it attempts to resist the authority of colonial discourse and its power to subjectify through false cultural representation and definition.

3.2.1.2 Linguistic self-validation

In her analysis of theatre translation and identity in Quebec, Annie Brisset (1996: 167) has argued that "the goal of a translation is not to provide an introduction to the Other or to mediate the foreign work. It is the foreign work that is given a mission – to vouch for the existence of the language of translation and, by doing so, vouch for the existence of a Québécois 'people'".

Brisset's investigation, in fact, shows how, from the late 1960s to the late 1980s, the primacy of English and French was challenged with the emergence of a Québécois

theatre, largely assisted by translations of foreign drama into *joual*. The use of *joual* was, firstly, a response to the perceived threat of Anglo-Canadian authority and an aversion to the idea of being amalgamated into the North American melting pot. Secondly, it expressed the Québécois' need for differentiation from French linguistic values. Finally, it served as an indication of a collective search for identity and, although, once considered a form of badly spoken French⁶⁴, *joual* soon became the rallying point of Québécois nationalist feelings. Foreign masterpieces, including Shakespeare and Molière, were translated; some were even radically transformed. The intention however, was always to ensure that the plays would be perceived as Québécois written and produced. The use of creative devices, such as puns, metaphors, allusions to the reality of the audience and so forth, to give voice to a Québécois linguistic reality meant that the inherent political discourse within the translated plays always reminded the target audience that “their own native language or national language (was) a sign of the unity and purity of the Québécois ‘people’” (Brisset 1996: 174).

In an African post-colonial context, the ideological dimension, inherent in the choice of a language for translation and for the stage, is also significant. Here too, translators have been known to choose vernaculars to prove the validity of their languages. For instance, the translation of *Julius Caesar* and *The Merchant of Venice* in the 1960s by the first Tanzanian president, Julius Nyerere, was intended to promote Swahili in post-independence Tanzania (Walling and Walling 2000: 41), where the language eventually

⁶⁴ In fact, according to Moss (cited by Bowman and Findlay 2004: 68), the term ‘joual’ was “coined in the early 60s by André Laurendeau, editor of the Montreal French-language newspaper *Le Devoir*, who along with a priest named Jean-Paul Desbiens, wrote a series of articles denouncing the quality of French spoken and taught in Québec. To illustrate his point about the poor pronunciation of the average Québécois, he used the example of the word ‘cheval’ which was mispronounced ‘joual’.”

acquired an official status. In Sierra Leone, Thomas Decker is credited as the man who led the way in the recognition of Krio as a ‘proper’ language and not a debased form of English. The lack of a standardized orthography meant that his translation of *Julius Caesar* into Krio in 1964 was carried out using a writing system he himself had devised. The translated play was then staged in front of large audiences, generating a prolific production of local plays in the 1970s and 1980s, and causing drama to become the most important literary form for the promotion of Krio language and culture (Worman 2006: 34). The use of Krio has since spread throughout Sierra Leone and has become the inter-ethnic lingua franca for 95 percent of the population (Oyètádé and Luke 2008: 127-128).

3.2.1.3 Nourishment and enrichment

According to Even-Zohar (2000: 193-194), the selection of source texts for translation in a given society depends upon the dynamism (or lack) of its literary system. For instance, if the latter is not well established and there is a perceived need for the indigenous literary corpus to be increased, then the target culture is more likely to turn to foreign imports. However, prior to Even-Zohar’s concept, the idea of translation as a form of nourishment for the home culture had already been expounded in the 1960s by two Brazilian brothers, Haroldo and Augusto de Campos, who likened translation to a nourishing process where the translator is actively involved in bringing health and vitality to the target culture (Haroldo de Campos 1986: 42-58). Finland is a case in point. The country, which had been subject to asymmetrical relations, first as a Swedish territory from 1155 to 1809, then as a Russian protectorate from 1809 to 1917, had

initially begun to experience a cultural revival during the sixteenth century (Aaltonen 2000b: 66). In her analysis of the Finnish theatrical system, Aaltonen (1995: 93-94) suggests that during the nineteenth century, as part of its quest for a national culture and identity, Finland actively promoted translation and cultivated a policy of feeding off foreign plays because of its own meagre repertoire. In fact, it wanted to establish a Finnish National Theatre and a Finnish Literature, and when the former was finally created in 1872, only one quarter of the plays produced were of Finnish origins (Aaltonen 2000b: 66). Furthermore, since the writing system was also not well-developed, the translation of foreign drama texts provided a good opportunity “to exercise the Finnish language and to enrich its vocabulary with new expressions” (Aaltonen 1995: 94).

It must be pointed out that even if the Brazilian brothers’ concept can be applied to any context where asymmetrical relationships between different cultures and languages exist, it finds particular resonance within a post-colonial situation. Haroldo and Augusto de Campos had themselves been directly influenced by a group of Brazilian intellectuals from the 1920s, among whom Oswald de Andrade whose *Manifesto Antropófago*, published in 1928, recommended the notion of cannibalism⁶⁵ or ‘anthropophagy’ as a way of conceptualizing the relationship between Europe and its Latin American colonies, especially Brazil. As Haroldo de Campos himself (1986: 44) puts it:

“Anthropophagy” ... is the thought of critical devoration of the universal cultural heritage, formulated not from the insipid, resigned perspective of the “noble savage”

⁶⁵ Oswald de Andrade’s cannibalistic metaphor was apparently based on a real life event, which caused much horror in Europe in the sixteenth century, and which might even have led to the association between the word ‘cannibal’ and Shakespeare’s Caliban. It refers to the death of a Portuguese priest, Father Sardinha, who was killed and eaten by a Brazilian tribe, the Tupinamba tribe, in 1554 (Bassnett 2007: 11).

... but from the point of view of the “bad savage”, devourer of whites – the cannibal. The latter view does not involve a submission (an indoctrination), but a transculturation, or, better, a “transvalorization” ... capable of appropriation and of expropriation, de-hierarchization, deconstruction. Any past which is an “other” for us deserves to be negated. We could say that it deserves to be eaten, devoured. With this clarification and specification: the cannibal was a polemicist (from the Greek *polemos*, meaning to struggle or combat) but he was also an “anthologist”: he devoured only the enemies he considered strong to take from them marrow and protein to fortify and renew his own natural energies. (italics in the original text)

This cannibalistic metaphor therefore, rejects the notion that colonies are mere copies or ‘translations’ of Europe. In ‘devouring’ Europe, in digesting and transforming its very best, colonies can challenge European authority, while at the same time acknowledging what Europe has given them (Bassnett and Trivedi 1999: 4-5, Vieira 1999: 95-113). In fact, according to Vieira (1999: 98), this devouring of the source culture not only brings together both donor and receiver in a dialogical relationship, but also ruptures cultural hierarchies and enables the former colonies to break free from the stranglehold of mental colonialism.

3.2.2 Political ‘engagement’

The belief that translations can be carried out and manipulated for socio-political purposes highlights the significant role of translators, their intervention and their subjectivity. It runs counter to the commonly held view that translators merely echo the original authors, whose works they must faithfully reproduce while ensuring that their own ‘voice’ remains silent.

In her article, ‘Translation and Political Engagement’, Maria Tymoczko (2000: 26) maintains that translation as political engagement is more than just a method of translating, that it is a key component of a larger socio-political project in which the

translator is committed or ‘engaged’ as a militant activist to try and gain popular support. Tymoczko cites the example of Ireland from the late nineteenth century, where translating practices were correlated with actual political actions or armed conflicts; thus, playing an important role in the emergence of cultural and political nationalism which led to armed rebellion against England and eventually to self-determination. Theatre translation is believed to have contributed to this socio-political revival, with the most well-known translator being Lady Gregory. Theatre and audiences for plays in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century were mainly English-speaking. Instead, Lady Gregory used Hiberno-English to translate Molière’s plays – *Le Médecin malgré lui* in 1905, *Les Fourberies de Scapin* in 1908 and *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* in 1926, all of which were staged at the Abbey theatre with critical success (Cronin 1996: 139, Aaltonen 2000b: 68-69).

If for Tymoczko, political engagement, with particular reference to Ireland, implies a form of overt militant activism attached to the praxis of translation, I would like to apply this term to other contexts, where even if armed action is missing, translating itself is openly fuelled by the translators’ political thoughts and convictions. The Québécois example perfectly illustrates this paradigm and, although I have previously touched upon it, it is worth highlighting the convictions of the Québécois translators as explained by Brisset (1996). The translators, such as Eloi de Grandmont (who translated *Pygmalion*), Michel Tremblay (*The Government Inspector*), Antonine Maillet and Félix-Gabriel Marchand (*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*), Jean-Pierre Ronfard (*King Lear*), Robert Gurik (*Hamlet*) and Michel Garneau (*Macbeth*), many of whom also acted as theatre directors, encouraged a trademark of ‘visibility’ through their translational and theatrical

strategies. This was largely due to their commitment to the notion of *Québécoisité*, a concept based on the necessity of constructing a Québécois identity, in response to the Anglo-Canadian and to the French Other.

Sameh Hanna (2005: 109-128), investigating different translations of *Othello* in Egypt, also points to the importance of the translators' political convictions. The translations analyzed by Hanna show that the constructing or deconstructing of specific versions of national identity depends, to a large extent, on the individual translator's own concept of national identity. To Khalīl Muṭrān, who translated *Othello* in 1912, the language to be used could only be Standard Arabic, since it represented the glorious past of Arab nations and was the only language capable of unifying them. For Muṭrān, Egypt's identity, therefore, rested within a wider pan-Arabic political and cultural construct. Contrary to Muṭrān, Mustapha Safouan presented a wholly different political agenda in his 1998 translation of *Othello*. The use of Egyptian vernacular, which he advocated, was not only intended as a reminder of a unique Egyptian identity, but was also meant to empower both the masses and the intellectuals against manipulation from political authorities who had a vested interest in maintaining the use of Standard Arabic. In fact, he questioned the use of Standard Arabic, comparing it to the repressive use of Latin by the clergy in Europe. He also openly admitted that the selection of *Othello* as a source text was an entirely political choice. It was intended to compare the leadership of Egypt with Othello the Moor, both seen to be obsessed with the "appearance of leadership", with their "own idealized personal image" and striving to "set an ideal to follow". Such behaviour failed to appreciate "the human condition with all its

limitations” and caused the death of Desdemona in the same way that Egypt was being destroyed by its leaders (Hanna 2005: 120).

Textual manipulation intended to promote specific constructs can, therefore, be largely attributed to the translators’ political convictions. However, for political ‘engagement’ and interventionist acts to have any impact upon the home culture, the translators require a target audience.

3.2.3 Targeting the audience

Within translation studies, the issue of a target readership was initially foregrounded by Hans Vermeer (2000: 221-232) through his skopos theory. Vermeer (2000: 224) asserts that all texts, and by extension all translations, are goal-oriented, thus implying that they are conceived with a set of addressees in mind. In fact, the very idea that translations may carry political messages designed to influence or shape social consciousness highlights the importance of the target audience.

Brisset (1996: 110) has argued that in order to shape social consciousness, texts need a “perlocutory” effect, a “persuasive or injunctive function” that would encourage audiences to see the translators’ (and theatre directors’ if the translated texts are staged) viewpoints and to align themselves with such viewpoints. Such an effect, as a result of changes introduced within the target texts, would remind the audiences’ of their own specific socio-cultural realities. In her analysis of Michel Garneau’s 1978 adaptation of *Macbeth*, Brisset (1996: 109-158) shows how spatio-temporal markers (such as the names of people and of places) that make the source text a British play have been reworked and transformed into indicators which the audiences would inevitably

recognize as pointing to an entity named Quebec, in particular to ‘Québec libre’ (i.e. the idea of an independent Quebec). Similarly, Hanna (2005: 111) also acknowledges the role of the audience by suggesting that texts can carry out a “performative act ... (which) endeavours to get people to believe and endorse” the translators’ particular discourse. For example, writing about the use and appropriation of Shakespeare in India, Nandi Bhatia (1998: 117) notes how the Indian playwright and director, Utpal Dutt, ‘politicized’ *Macbeth* in the 1950s, deliberately converting the Shakespearean language into a form of incantation the villagers were familiar with, thus allowing the latter to identify fully with the protagonists in the play.

Furthermore, I suggest that in order for translations to acquire greater effectiveness as socio-political tools, they must appeal to as extensive a public as possible. Robinson (1997: 112) and Tymoczko (2000: 26) both argue that the political effectiveness of a translated text can be gauged by the extent to which it can reach mass audiences; in other words, it should not be limited to an elite. The example of the Irish cultural revival offered by Cronin (1996: 134-137) is helpful in this respect. Cronin reports how translations had few readers in Ireland in the nineteenth century, but creative ideas, such as publication of cheaper editions, use of newspapers and different genres and so forth, were employed to generate a wider dissemination.

The importance of the target audience as a fundamental link within the production of theatre translation cannot, therefore, be overlooked. If we believe that the latter can help influence the construction of a national identity, then the nature and the extent of the target audience may enable us to identify the connection between theatre translation and nation-building, as I will attempt to establish later on in Chapter Seven.

Conclusion

The first section of this chapter demonstrated that the traditional Western concept of ‘nation’ as a community bound by one language and culture was difficult to apply in many post-colonial societies, since they were usually characterized by the plural composition of their population. I explained that nation-building in such a society was a difficult task not least because of the multiplicity of languages, but also because of the asymmetrical nature of the relationship between the former colonial languages and the indigenous languages, and sometimes between the indigenous languages themselves. I looked at two different ways which had been used to deal with societal multilingualism: promoting the vernaculars as a measure of decolonization and/or having recourse to an internationalist strategy that emphasized the importance of the European languages as a prerequisite for growth and modernization. However, as I explained in Section 3.1.2.3, one of the best ways of observing how a multilingual society dealt with its language diversity was to look at the linguistic policies within the educational domain, since educational values were closely linked to the values the State usually wished to transmit to its citizens. I suggested that the use of and the reliance upon European languages were largely reflected in the educational system of many post-colonial countries. The use of European languages might have encouraged a form of horizontal integration within some urban elites, but was of little benefit to vertical integration and the construction of national cohesion. Perhaps then, the concept of identity as a fixed product of a monolingual and monocultural society needed to be replaced, at least for some of the post-colonial societies in the Caribbean Sea and south-west Indian Ocean,

by one that was intricately linked to the process of cultural creolization, not only rejecting the idea that boundaries between discrete groups were unchanging, but also acknowledging that new hybridized linguistic practices were emerging out of the multiplicity of languages.

In Section 3.2, I discussed the political nature of theatre translation and its relevance as a site of intervention for cultural affirmation. The subversive nature of textual translation was highlighted as I showed how and why it could be used in different instances, such as the desire to provide a counterweight to hegemonic Eurocentric cultural norms (especially those encapsulated within the canonicity of Shakespearean plays), the need to validate local vernaculars and to enrich the host society's cultural capital. I explained that as such, post-colonial translators could not be seen as the 'invisible' other of the source authors; in fact, the manipulation of the target texts could often be explained by their beliefs, their opinions and their motivations. Finally, I suggested that for their 'messages' to be heard and to be effective, translators had to ensure that their audiences were not restricted to cultural elites, but were drawn from different sections of the population.

This chapter has underlined the interconnection between linguistic nationalism and theatre translation. In the next two chapters, I aim to show how the Creole translations and their subsequent stage productions attempt to remove the negative image attached to Mauritian Creole in order to construct a form of national identification based on this language.

Chapter Four – Translation as Decolonization

Introduction

Writing in the early 1970s, V. S. Naipaul compared Mauritius to “an abandoned imperial barracoon, incapable of ... cultural autonomy” (1972: 270). However disparaging, this comment nonetheless recognized that the achievement of political independence did not entail the end of domination per se, that an ex-colony’s cultural sphere could still be determined by hegemonic views inherited from its former colonial masters.

Decolonization, therefore, cannot be viewed simply in political and economic terms, as the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines it – “the withdrawal from its former colonies of a colonial power; the acquisition of political or economic independence by such colonies”, but should, as we have already mentioned in Section 1.1.4, include the process of revealing and resisting the prevailing hegemonic form of cultural control. In many post-colonial societies like Mauritius, such cultural control is often symbolized by the authority conferred upon Western canonized texts, seen as ‘original’ and unique artefacts. In this chapter (Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2), I argue that the aim of the Creole target texts is to seek to undermine the textual authority and canonicity of such ‘originals’. In so doing, they prove that translations are not insignificant copies, but constitute new acts of creation. In the next two sections, I then show how translation is used to point to the existence of hegemonic influence, especially with reference to the way Mauritians consider the issue of miscegenation on the island. I suggest that ultimately, the target texts are calling for a form of self-identification that does not necessarily rely upon the viewpoint of the colonial ‘Other’.

In Section 4.2, I demonstrate how colonial cultural control exercised through existing language power structures in Mauritius is disrupted by the target texts. I show the various strategies used by the translators to level the playing field for Mauritian Creole, mainly by creating a specific spelling system that demarcates it from its lexifier (French), by overturning preconceived ideas that Creole in ‘serious’ literature is only for exotic enhancement or comical characterization, and by endorsing the hybridized nature of Mauritian Creole. I also show the way in which Creole on the stage is promoted as a form of linguistic emancipation.

4.1 Deconstructing the source texts

This section examines the ways in which the source texts are appropriated and deconstructed, so that colonial socio-cultural assumptions can be challenged and a form of self-representation based on local realities rather than inherited beliefs can be created.

4.1.1 ‘Originals’ vs. ‘copies’

One of the reasons for deconstructing the source texts is to challenge their status as powerful ‘originals’. Bassnett and Trivedi have suggested that the notion of originals coincidentally began at the same time as early European colonial expansion, hence the myth of Europe as the “great Original” (1999:4) and the interpellation of colonies as inferior ‘translations’. The aim is to show that translations (and colonies, for that matter) are not mere copies to be subordinated to the source texts and the source culture, but constitute acts of creativity that bring forth new texts for a different purpose, for a different audience. The Mauritian Creole adaptation of *L’Avaro* (*Misyè Peng*) and *The Tempest* (*Toufann*), for example, are clear instances of how translation can produce

‘originals’ in their own right. Both translations have retained the main story-lines of the source texts: the negative effects of an avaricious father over his children in *Misye Peng* and the desire of a deposed king for revenge over his enemies in *Toufann*. Several of the subplots, however, have been either omitted or altered. *L’Avaro*’s original five acts, which include thirty-one scenes, have been compressed into one act, comprising seven scenes; thus, leaving no place for the elaboration of subplots, such as the re-uniting of Seigneur Anselme’s family, and the romantic relationship between the daughter of the house and the ‘*intendant*’. In *Toufann*, the gentle daughter of the source text has given way to an outspoken woman who dares to defy her father in her marital choice. Her father’s chosen suitor, Prince Ferdinand, is, in fact, an asexual man with homosexual inclinations. This is a far cry from Shakespeare’s world. Inevitably, all the changes⁶⁶ that take place lay the texts open to severe criticism, usually in terms of ‘loss’ and ‘inferiority’, for in Mauritius, like in many other post-colonial societies, Shakespeare and Molière are held up as prime examples of Western canonized literature. The translators here challenge such hierarchization by ‘cannibalizing’ the source texts, to use Haroldo de Campos’ term (1986: 44), with the aim of producing new pieces of work; a process which can be viewed as a process of gain, rather than loss, for Mauritian Creole literature and for the target culture in general.

4.1.2 Using intertextuality

That Mauritian translators do not look to the source texts for ‘complete’ meaning is further revealed in the use of intertextuality. In *Toufann*, all the names have been

⁶⁶ More of the changes will be discussed throughout the rest of this chapter and the following one.

appropriated from other Shakespearean plays. Alonso, the king of Naples becomes Lerwa Lir (*King Lear*), his brother, Sebastian, becomes Edmon (Edmund from *King Lear*) and Antonio, Prospero's brother, becomes Yago (Iago from *Othello*). Gonzalo, the counsellor, is now Polonious (Polonius from *Hamlet*), while Miranda is now known as Kordelia (Cordelia from *King Lear*).

Another example of intertextuality is taken from Malkom's closing speech in *Trazedi Makbes*.

MALCOLM [...] What's more to do,
Which would be planted newly with the time –
As calling home our exiled friends abroad
That fled the snares of watchful tyranny ... (*Macbeth* V. 7. 64-67)

MALKOM [...] San perdi letan nou bizen okip
Bann travay prese: **kiltiv nou zarden**,
Plant nouvo pie-fri, redonn lesperans
Viktim tirani, souy larm ki'nn koule
Akoz dominer azan jabolik ... (emphasis added)

MALKOM [...] Without any further ado, let work begin:
We must cultivate our garden,
Plant new fruit trees, give hope to
Victims of tyranny, wipe away tears of
Those oppressed by the wicked

The idea of 'planting' which is suggested in the source passage has been extended in the target extract to a 'garden' imagery borrowed from the seventeenth century French philosopher, Voltaire. It is derived from Voltaire's well-known satirical novel, *Candide* (1968: 150), where the hero, having survived battles, wars and other perilous adventures, decides, like Malkom, that despite evil and tyranny, there is a better hope for tomorrow if tomorrow is spent 'cultivating one's garden'.

Using the concept of intertextuality is a way of calling into question the uniqueness of authors⁶⁷ and their texts. In fact, according to Barthes, the notion of authorship cannot be a fixed one, because texts always exist in relation to other texts and consist essentially of “tissue(s) of quotations” or “multiple writings, drawn from many cultures” (1977: 148). By challenging the idea of fixed origins, intertextuality provides the translator with the opportunity to create a new ‘frame’ for new texts.

4.1.3 Recognizing hegemonic manipulation

The target texts have also been used by the translators to question some of the norms Mauritians accept as realities. Prospero’s “*kontrol-roum*” in *Toufann* (I. 2), which is full of computerized equipment and lined with myriads of buttons, provides us with an analogy of outside hegemonic influence. His technological wizardry has replaced the source text’s white magic, and enables him to control natural elements and manipulate people’s lives and beliefs. He constructs a virtual reality for his victims, who, unaware of his presence, accept it readily and believe there is no escape from this island where they have been ‘shipwrecked’. From his position of power, he imposes his ideas upon others and does so in such a subtle way that even Yago, usually the most devious of characters, fails to recognize the effects. As Ferdinan points out correctly in Act III Scene 1, all the characters have, without thinking, adopted the term “*toufann*” (used by Prospero) to describe the ‘storm’ which caused their shipwreck, when the obvious choice should have been “*siklonn*” (“cyclone”).

⁶⁷ In fact, according to Sylvan Barnet (1963: x), general editor of *The Signet Classic Shakespeare*, authorship, in Shakespearean days, was not necessarily ascribed to plays when they were published. For example, the first eight plays published by Shakespeare himself did not have his name printed on them.

YAGO Personn pa kapav vinn ed mwa pou tir sa boug la anba lili. Depi Toufann ...
FERDINAN Toufann?
YAGO Wi Toufann
FERDINAN Kifer Toufann?
YAGO Pa Toufann mem ki sa siklonn la apele?
FERDINAN Wi. Me kouma ou kone?
YAGO Pa kone mwa. Mo la finn zis sorti.
FERDINAN Zot finn konpran vouzot. Aster Prospero kapav fer zot panse kouma li
anvi ... Reazir foutou. Sinon zot pou vinn kouma bann maryonet dan so lame
kouma Kalibann.

YAGO Nobody can help me extricate the man from under the bed. Since 'toufann' ...
FERDINAN 'Toufann' ?
YAGO Yes, 'toufann'.
FERDINAN Why 'toufann' ?
YAGO Isn't 'toufann' called a cyclone?
FERDINAN Yes. But how do you know?
YAGO I don't know. The word just slipped out of my mouth
FERDINAN At last, you understand. Prospero can now make you think the way he
wants you to ... For heaven's sake, do something. Or you'll end up as a puppet in
his hands, like Kalibann.

Both Prospero in *The Tempest* and his counterpart in *Toufann* use magic (albeit different kinds of magic) to cause the storm and to control their enemies once they are on the island. The difference, however, is that in the target text the translator deliberately ensures that Prospero's control is recognized by those who are being manipulated.

4.1.4 Accepting miscegenation

In his translation of *The Tempest*, Dev Virahsawmy introduces the notion of miscegenation as a way of challenging local persistence in representing the 'Other' by using the highly unreliable tools of race and/or ethnicity. In fact, miscegenation in the Mauritian context is not just about confronting the binary opposition of colonizer and

colonized, but also about challenging traditional beliefs that boundaries between the colonized themselves are impermeable.

By drawing on the historical narratives and social structures of the target culture, Virahsawmy manages to subvert the traditional readings of *The Tempest* when he proposes a new interpretation of Caliban. In the source text, Caliban is a physically and morally repellent character. Prospero, his owner, calls him a “freckled whelp ... not honoured with a human shape” (I. 2. 283-284), while Trinculo sees him as a fish, but “legged like a man! And his fins like arms” (II. 2. 34-35). Furthermore, as the offspring of an evil witch, he is considered an “abhorred slave”, a “savage”, a “thing most brutish” from a “vile race” (I. 2. 351-358). He almost rapes Miranda, Prospero’s daughter, but shows no remorse for his action (I. 2. 347-351). In the target text, Caliban is reinvented as a handsome half-caste. The translator even leaves specific instructions in the text (*Toufann* I. 2) that the role of Kalibann be played by “*enn metis, zoli garson ki paret bien intelizan e debrouyar*” (“a mulatto, a handsome guy who looks intelligent and capable”). As an intelligent and hardworking young man, he becomes Prospero’s assistant. As a good-looking and polite young man, he has no difficulty in winning over Prospero’s daughter, Kordelia, who returns his love. The story ends with plans for their marriage and with the couple taking over the reins of power from Prospero.

The reinterpretation of Kalibann is set to challenge certain local assumptions. Sexual union between different racial and ethnic communities has remained a social stigma in Mauritius today, so much so that the term ‘*milat*’ (‘mulatto’⁶⁸) to designate the

⁶⁸ As the local academic, Danielle Tranquille, points out in *Revi Kiltirel Kreol* (2005: 30), the term ‘mulatto’ is etymologically derived from ‘mule’, itself a hybrid animal. Hence, a ‘mulatto’ is inevitably

descendants of black and white relationships, continues to carry with it strong pejorative connotations. Kalibann, the *'milat'*, is born to a black slave, who, impregnated by her white owner, is later abandoned on the island. The conditions in which he is conceived, the unknown progenitor and the social 'status' of his mother identify him as a *'batar'* ('bastard'); a doubly injurious term which, in Mauritian Creole, designates a person of mixed parentage and/or one born out of wedlock. When Aryel explains to Polonious (*Toufann* III. 1) that Kalibann "*li enn metis*" ("he's a mulatto"), the latter's response of "*pov boug*" ("poor chap") is unmistakably paternalistic and pitying. This negative perception of the 'mulatto' is shared by Prospero, who is originally convinced that his assistant has inherited "*bann zenn negatif*" ("bad genes" – I. 2) and whose reaction, upon hearing of his daughter's plan to marry Kalibann, is "*sa..sa..sa..b..b..ba...*" ("this .. this .. this .. ba .. ba .. bas ..." – III. 1). To Prospero, Kalibann, until the end, is merely somebody to be viewed in terms of alterity, subservient alterity, because of his origins and his mixed parentage.

However, the exclusion of the unwanted 'Other' is impossible, if not unrealistic, because group cohesion can never be airtight. In an interview given in December 1999, at the time when his English translation of *Toufann* was being staged in London, the director, Michael Walling, recalled how Virahsawmy had specifically requested that Prospero be played by an Indian and Kalibann by a half-caste of black and white racial origins (Wilkinson 2001: 118). Kalibann's eventual marriage to the already pregnant Kordelia will presumably produce children whose lineage, in its combination of black,

bound by this derogatory association to the animal kingdom with all its implications of monstrosity and sterility; in other words, a 'mulatto' is not completely human, or rather, he is a substandard human to be socially excluded.

white and Indian blood, will be even less ‘pure’ than their father’s, in the same way that in Mauritius, ‘mulattoes’ are not the only people of mixed parentage. There are those whose parentage is an amalgamation of black, white, Indian and/or Chinese blood, but who are socially identified as a group of “misfit(s)” (Tranquille 2005: 29). For Virahsawmy, even misfits should have a voice and access to power. When Kalibann becomes king, “*c’est le métissage qui prend le pouvoir*”⁶⁹ (Virahsawmy cited by *Samedi Magazine* 24 June 1995). Through Kalibann, therefore, miscegenation not only blurs the dividing lines of racial and ethnic identification, but also overcomes the social hierarchization that tries to position those considered inferior to the periphery because of their mixed ancestry.

4.1.5 Towards self-definition

The re-invention of Caliban into Kalibann also provides the translator with an opportunity to invite his readers to be conscious of the need for self-awareness and self-definition. Kalibann reminds us that the interpellation of ‘colonized’, i.e. inferior, once absorbed, can result in the subjectification of the person hailed as such. The concepts of ‘interpellation’ and ‘subjectification’ are both taken from Louis Althusser. According to the latter (1971: 162-170), the action of ‘interpellating’, or ‘hailing’, someone in a particular way can shape his/her response and sense of self-representation.

Paradoxically, subjectification also brings together the idea that an individual can be under the subjection of another, but is, at the same time, a thinking and free person with

⁶⁹ “It is miscegenation that is taking over the reins of power”.

a degree of autonomy, insofar as “he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection ‘all by himself’” (Althusser 1971: 169).

When Prospero first offers Kalibann the prospect of freedom from slavery, the latter has no understanding of what freedom entails as he considers himself already a ‘free’ man (*Toufann* II. 2). He chooses instead to re-affirm his position, defining himself as his master’s subaltern. Although no less intelligent than Prospero, he has been brought up by an owner who considers him socially and morally inferior, a position he accepts; hence his remark:

Ou for ou Misie Prospero. Ou pa bizen personn me tou dimoun – Kordelia, Aryel, momem, bann nofrazé – zot bizen ou. (II. 2)

You’re smart, Mr Prospero. You don’t need anybody but everybody – Kordelia, Aryel, myself, the people who’ve been shipwrecked – we all need you.

Only towards the end does he understand the implications of freedom. Having been acknowledged king, he immediately takes control without having to defer to ‘Mr Prospero’ any more.

Other characters in the play also end up asserting their rights for self-identification. Ferdinan admits to being homosexual, refuses to be the heir his father intends him to be and chooses instead to ‘set up home’ with Aryel. The latter rejects the inferior role assigned to him by his creator, Prospero, when he discovers he has ‘friendly’ feelings for Ferdinan. Homosexuality is taboo in Mauritius. By bringing it into the open, even if the gay partnership is revealed as a sexless one (since Ferdinan is impotent and Aryel has no

reproductive organs⁷⁰), the translator stresses the fact that identity is about accepting who we are and refusing to be defined by others.

With this in mind, a new form of ‘reality’ is emerging, one where control now rests upon the son of a former slave. It is possible to argue that, although Kalibann assumes control, he has served his ‘apprenticeship’ under Prospero and he is marrying his master’s daughter. There is no guarantee, therefore, that his rule will be any different from Prospero’s. Nevertheless, Kalibann’s reign is perceived as the birth of a new life, the end of an era, the beginning of another one.

POLONIOUS Nanye pa revinn parey. Kapav parey, me si get bien, seki nouvo finn vinn pli for, pli zoli ki seki ansien ... Bann zenes apre nou pou bizen kontinie zot lavi dan zot prop manier. (III. 1)

POLONIOUS What emerges is not the same. May look the same but if you watch closely, you find that the new is more powerful and more beautiful than the old ... The young must live life in their own way.

This is the translator’s message of hope, reinforced by the captain of the ship when he announces “*Larg bann amar, lev lank, koup kordon obilikal*” (III. 1 – “Let out the rope, weigh the anchor, cut the umbilical cord”). The ship can now cast off, the “umbilical cord” with the mother(land) has been cut.

4.2 Disrupting linguistic hierarchies

Deconstructing the source texts is one way of challenging the power of the European canon and of questioning the autonomy of the local cultural values. Disrupting internal linguistic hierarchies through the target texts is another way; it displays the translators’

⁷⁰ In fact, in her article, “At the End of the Rainbow: A Note of Queerness in *Toufann*”, Chantal Zabus (2000) argues that even if the translator shows his disapproval of homophobia, he does so too “hesitatingly”. He “censors himself” by promoting a “sanitized” form of homosexuality. The relationship is not explicitly described as a homosexual one, and the words ‘homosexual’, ‘gay’ or ‘queer’ do not appear in the text.

attempt to assert the right of Mauritian Creole to the same status as that of the former colonial languages. In the section below, I look at how this is carried out, namely the promotion of a ‘decolonized’ spelling system, the use of code-switching and the use of, what Schultze calls, “linguistic collage” (1998: 180). The final subsection shows how the theatre productions of the target texts, by giving centre stage to Creole, are also promoting a discourse of decolonization.

4.2.1 Creating a ‘decolonized’ orthography

Theoretically speaking, the establishment of a Creole orthography in Mauritius could have been carried out using any of the scripts present on the island – Roman, Devanagari, Arabic or even Chinese (Rajah-Carrim 2004a: 87). The use of the Roman alphabet, however, has become the accepted norm for Mauritians, probably as a result of the island’s history as a European colony and the inevitable importance conferred upon the metropolitan languages. Although alphabetization has not caused any polemics, selecting a form of standardized spelling has not proved to be an easy task.

Like language choice in any speech community, a spelling system can function as a symbolic means upon which we establish our individual and/or group identity. Consequently, the promotion of a new one is unlikely to constitute an ideologically neutral task. Kwan-Terry and Luke (1997: 280) report that the attempt in China in the 1970s to substitute the logographic script by a phonetic system based entirely upon the Roman alphabet to make learning easier and quicker, has been unsuccessful, partly because the latter was deemed too foreign in appearance. In a post-colonial context, Nigerians from the Northern Igbo area are reported to prefer the local orthography for

fear that the official spelling is a political ploy by Igbo speakers from other parts of the country to dominate them (Fasold 1997: 269). Similarly, after 1968, several attempts to codify Mauritian Creole can be inscribed within this framework of identification as a way of demarcating it from the French-based Creole used by pre-independence Mauritian writers, most of whom were Franco-Mauritians (see Section 2.4.4.2). François Chrestien, for instance, used a Gallicized form of spelling that included French superposed and subscript diacritics, as in “*çanté*” (“to sing”), “*ei-n béf*” (“a bull”), “*pour chaquène*” (“for each one”) (cited by Hookoomsing 2004: 3). The most well-known Franco-Mauritian author, Charles Baissac, also used a heavily French-oriented form of Creole. Although his analysis of Mauritian Creole in *Étude sur le Patois Créole Mauricien* (published in 1880) has proved to be a well of information on linguistic creolization for academics throughout the world today (Hookoomsing 1987: 101), Baissac himself had a low opinion of Creole. He was a French teacher, an avid Francophile who provided tuition in French grammar to defend the language against the incursion of Creole (Hookoomsing 1989: 20). In his *Étude sur le Patois Créole Mauricien*, he firmly stated what his spelling conventions were:

Pour dérouter le moins possible l’oeil habitué à la physionomie du mot français, nous la lui avons conservée partout où nous l’avons pu. (cited by Hookoomsing 2004: 4)

We have kept, wherever we could, the physiognomy of the French word so that the eye, which is used to it, will be as little confused as possible.

However, although published Creole texts tended to adopt French-based spelling conventions, there was no standardized format to adhere to and users of the language were generally inclined to create their own individual system. It was the translator, Dev Virahsawmy, who, wearing his linguist’s hat, first proposed one in 1967. Convinced

that the development of Mauritian Creole as an autonomous linguistic system could only be realized if it had its own specific orthographic system, he recommended his “*grafi riptir*” (“breakaway orthography”), also known as “*grafi aksan sirkonfleks*” (“circumflex accent orthography”⁷¹ – Hookoomsing 2004: 11), which strove for maximal deviance from French. To draw attention to the differences between the two languages, he produced an orthography based on phonemic principles. As he puts it in a newspaper article published in *L’Express* of 4 April 1985:

Je trouve plus sage d’écrire le mauricien comme il est parlé ... Disons le sans ambages, le mauricien n’est pas un dialecte du français. Il est une langue à part entière, ayant des structures propres à elle, ayant sa propre “personnalité”.

I find it more sensible to write Mauritian as it is spoken ... Let us not beat about the bush, Mauritian is not a dialect of French. It is a language in its own right, with structures of its own, having its own “personality”.

Over the next decades, he made several revisions as he realized that the task of producing an orthography based purely on phonemic principles was not practical. Hence, he introduced “*graphie d’accueil*” (“inclusive orthography”) in 1985, then “*graphie consensuelle*” (“consensual orthography”) in 1988 in order to take into account the specificity of Mauritian Creole in a multilingual and multicultural context (Virahsawmy 1988). Virahsawmy’s efforts culminated in 1999 in “*grafi DV/DPL*” (“orthography of Dev Virahsawmy/Diocese of Port-Louis”), also known as “*grafi legliz*” (“church orthography”), because it was put forward in collaboration with the Catholic Church (Virahsawmy, email 30 Jan 2007). Although less dogmatic in its approach, “*grafi DV/DPL*” still maintained Virahsawmy’s preference for a phonetic, rather than an

⁷¹ So-called because the circumflex accent was used as an indicator of vowel nasalization. For example, ‘bon’ became ‘bô’, ‘ban’ ‘bâ’ and ‘ben’ ‘bê’ (Virahsawmy 1988).

etymological approach. Nowadays, Virahsawmy uses “*grafi larmoni*” (“orthography of harmony”), a system recommended in 2004 by a committee of linguists, as I have already mentioned in Section 1.2.1.1. The committee’s recommendations are largely based on Virahsawmy’s “*grafi DV/DPL*” and the existing spelling system designed by an organization called *Ledikasyon Pu Travayer* (Education for the Workers) which is actively involved in literacy programmes for adults⁷².

The extract below is taken from Makbes’ soliloquy (*Trazedi Makbes* I. 7). The spelling system used is analyzed to show the ways in which Virahsawmy sets out to express the specificity of Mauritian Creole orthography.

Si ler fer li, fer li prop, san les tras,	(Line 1)
Korek, louvraz prop. Si asasina	(Line 2)
Ti pou touf leres, efas konsekans -	(Line 3)
Koumansman devor finision – isi	(Line 4)
Lor rivaz letan ti kapav pran risk	(Line 5)
Lor lavi apre. Me malerezman	(Line 6)
Lazistis prezan toultan. Nou prop zarm	(Line 7)
Bien fite vir kont nou sekirite;	(Line 8)
Lazistis enparsial fer nou aval	(Line 9)
Nou prop pwazon.	(Line 10)

When carrying out the deed, do it neatly,
 Leave no traces. If the assassination
 Eliminates the consequences –
 The beginning devouring the end – here
 On the shore of time, it is possible
 To take a risk on the life to come. Alas,
 Justice is always present. Our weapons,
 Well sharpened, will harm our security;
 Dispassionate justice makes us swallow
 Our own poison.

What is immediately obvious to the Francophile reader is the lack of diacritics. A Gallicized transcription of Line 8, for example, would have been written as “*bien fité vir*

⁷² More information regarding *Ledikasyon Pu Travayer* will be provided in Chapters Six and Seven.

kont nou sékirité”, with the acute accent acting as guide for ease of pronunciation. Next, the etymological origins of most of the words are obliterated. This is done, first of all, through the mixing up of word boundaries. The French definite articles, ‘*le*’ and ‘*la*’, are combined with their accompanying nouns to form one lexeme, because in Mauritian Creole, unlike in French, they do not exist as prefixes but are part of the word:

- ‘*leres*’ instead of ‘*le reste*’ (Line 3)
- ‘*letan*’ instead of ‘*le temps*’ (Line 5)
- ‘*lavi*’ instead of ‘*la vie*’ (Line 6)

Even the idiomatic phrase ‘*tout le temps*’ is joined up into ‘*toultan*’ (Line 7). Secondly, silent letters, normally found at the end of words, are simply excluded:

- ‘*san*’ instead of ‘*sans*’ (Line 1)
- ‘*asasina*’ instead of ‘*assassinat*’ (Line 2)
- ‘*devor*’ instead of ‘*dévore*’ (Line 4)
- ‘*vir*’ instead of ‘*virent*’ (Line 8)
- ‘*aval*’ instead of ‘*avale*’ (Line 9)

Thirdly, certain lexical items are phonetically transliterated:

- ‘*les*’ instead of ‘*laisse*’ (Line 1)
- ‘*fer*’ instead of ‘*faire*’ (Line 1)
- ‘*me*’ instead of ‘*mais*’ (Line 6)

Also, the grapheme **c** and digraph **qu**, widely used in French, are replaced with **k**:

- ‘*korek*’ instead of ‘*correct*’ (Line 2)
- ‘*konsekans*’ instead of ‘*conséquences*’ (Line 3)

Finally, **oi** is exchanged for **wa**, which may appear unfamiliar to a reader used to French orthography:

- ‘*pwazon*’ instead of ‘*poison*’ (Line 10)

Interestingly enough, the digraph **th** (as in ‘Macbeth’), a frequent occurrence in English, is also eliminated. Rarely encountered in Mauritian Creole, it has instead been

exchanged for the more familiar grapheme *s* (Makbes), thus nativizing the pronunciation of our anti-hero's name.

If Virahsawmy's texts, *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid*, *Prens Hamlet*, *Tartif Froder*, *Toufann*, *Trazedi Makbes* and *Zil Sezar*, have been published using “*grafi larmoni*”, *Misye Peng* and *Otelo*, as a result of *Ledikasyon Pu Travayer*'s (or LPT) patronage, have been printed using the latter's orthography. Developed almost a decade after Virahsawmy's first standardization efforts in 1967, the LPT orthography was designed primarily for adult literacy classes. Known as the “*grafi n/nn*”, because it was the first to adopt the ‘vowel + nn’ convention as a way of representing nasalized vowels⁷³, this system also applies a phonemic approach to spelling. Like Virahsawmy, LPT believes that an etymological approach implicitly positions the language being codified as a derivative of the lexifier. As they put it:

... (K)an nu pe travay lor grafi li pa vremem itil pu gete kimanyer li kapav resanble plus u mwins ar lekritir Angle, Franse u lezot langaz. (cited by Hookoomsing 2004: 20)

... When we are working on the orthography, it is not really useful for us to see whether it can more or less resemble English, French or other languages.

The following excerpt taken from *Otelo* (I. 1. 86-92) shows how LPT's approach is fairly similar to Virahsawmy's in its attempt to promote Mauritian Creole as an autonomous writing system.

⁷³ According to Hookoomsing (2004: 14-19), representing nasalized vowels has been a stumbling block for most linguists attempting to provide a standardization of Mauritian Creole, in particular with the consonant ‘n’. This is because when the consonant ‘n’ is placed at the end of a word or a syllable, usually behind a vowel, it ‘nasalizes’ that vowel. LPT's solution has, therefore, been to add two ‘n’s after the vowel if the sound of the consonant is needed. For instance, the word ‘*ban*’ (‘bench’) would retain the nasalized sound of the vowel, but the word ‘*bann*’ (‘group’) would immediately produce the required ‘n’ sound.

YAGO Ayo, Sinnyor, zot finn kokin u, pu u loner degaze met u linz, (Line 1)
 U leker finn kase, u lavi finn ale; (Line 2)
 Aler kile, asterla mem, enn vye toro nwar (Line 3)
 Pe grinp lor u ti zenis blan; leve, leve, (Line 4)
 Sonn laklos, lev tu dimunn ki pe dormi (Line 5)
 Tansyon demon fer u vinn granper. (Line 6)
 Leve mo dir u. (Line 7)

YAGO Alas, Sir, you have been robbed, for honour's sake, quick, don some clothes,
 Your heart has been broken, your life has vanished;
 At this very moment, an old black bull
 Is climbing over your little white heifer; arise, arise,
 Ring the bells to waken everyone out of their sleep
 In case the devil turns you into a grandfather.
 Arise, I say.

Similar to Virahsawmy, LPT makes no use of diacritical marks to guide the reader, otherwise Line 4 would have been written as “*pé grimp lor u ti zénis blan; lévé, lévé*”. Instead, emphasis is placed on linguistic simplicity, visually altering the orthographic topography. For instance, the di- and trigraph **au** and **eau** are simplified, replaced by the single grapheme **o**:

- ‘*toro*’ instead of ‘*taureau*’ (Line 3)

At the same time, **c** and **qu** are substituted with the grapheme **k**:

- ‘*kase*’ instead of ‘*cassé*’ (Line 2)
- ‘*ki*’ instead of ‘*qui*’ (Line 5)

Redundant letters, such as the oft-silent **e** at the end of certain words, are also omitted:

- ‘*mem*’ instead of ‘*même*’ (Line 3)
- ‘*dir*’ instead of ‘*dire*’ (Line 7)

Single words are created when different lexical items are affixed together:

- ‘*loner*’ instead of ‘*l’honneur*’ (Line 1)
- ‘*leker*’ instead of ‘*le coeur*’ (Line 2)
- ‘*aler*’ instead of ‘*à l’heure*’ (Line 3)
- ‘*kile*’ instead of ‘*qu’il est*’ (Line 3)

Finally **oi** becomes **wa**:

- ‘*nwar*’ instead of ‘*noir*’ (Line 3).

The only difference noted here between Virahsawmy’s and LPT’s spelling conventions is the former’s adoption of the digraph **ou**, while LPT prefers the phoneme **u**. Lines 9 and 10 in Makbes’ speech, for example, illustrate Virahsawmy’s stance:

- Lazistis enparsial fer **nou** aval
N**ou** prop pwazon. (emphasis added)

Yago’s words (Line 4), on the other hand, reveal LPT’s differentiation:

- Pe grinp lor **u** ti zenis blan ... (emphasis added)

Difference aside, it can be said that the establishment of spelling conventions for Mauritian Creole by Virahsawmy and LPT has been carried out along two main lines – the need for phonemic simplification, but equally, the aim to create a system that is different from its lexifier, French, so as to proclaim its independence.

4.2.2 Using code-switching

Broadly speaking, code-switching, usually observed in multilingual environments, refers to the phenomenon of alternating between two or more languages in the same conversation, at either inter- or intra-sentential level (Myers-Scotton 1993: 1). Paul Bandia (2008: 142) argues that in a post-colonial environment, code-switching is normally done in “a context of competing knowledge or command of languages, which of course implies that code-switching is never a neutral act, since it occurs in situations of unequal power relations between languages.” For instance, writing about the post-colonial multilingual context of Francophone North Africa, namely Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, Samia Mehrez calls attention to the ways in which some of the local

plurilingual writers have tried to “subvert hierarchies by bringing together the ‘dominant’ and the ‘underdeveloped’” (1992: 122). Although mainly writing in French, these authors have drawn upon more than one language, more than one culture to produce what is considered as ‘hybrid’ texts; i.e. plurilingual texts that contain different linguistic signs and modes of signification. The purpose of those texts is “to decolonize themselves from two oppressors at once, namely the western ex-colonizer who naively boasts of their existence and ultimately recuperates them and the ‘traditional’, ‘national’ cultures which short-sightedly deny their importance and consequently marginalize them” (Mehrez 1992: 120). In the Mauritian context, the use of code-switching is equally linked to a dual purpose – the need to deny primacy to the European languages and the need to dismiss local prejudices regarding the autochthonous language, even if, unlike the North African writers, the Mauritian translators have chosen to write in their native language and use the dominant ones for code-switching.

In *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid*, there is a clear attempt to destabilize the linguistic hierarchy when the translator juxtaposes English and French with Creole in the conversations of two of the characters, Dogberi, the police constable, and Verzes, his assistant, in order to produce humorous effects; humour that is, in fact, largely derived from their mistreatment of English and French.

- Example 1

Moreover, sir, which indeed is not under white and black, this plaintiff here, the offender, did call me ass. (*Much Ado About Nothing* V.1. 305-307)

E sertenman ossi. Sir Leonato mem li pa dan **off-record**, sa plengnan-fenean, sa delenkan-ofansan ti zoze **epel** mwa "bourik". (*Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* V. 1, emphasis added)

And certainly too. Sir Leonato, even if it's not **off-the-record**, this whingeing scoundrel, this wicked miscreant has dared **spell** the fact that I'm an "ass".

The play, here, is on the words 'off-record' and 'epel'. The former constitutes the exact opposite of what Dogberi intends to use ('on record') and the latter (from the French word 'épeler', 'to spell') should have been 'apel' (from 'appeler', 'to call').

▪ Example 2

Flat burglary as ever was committed. (*Much Ado About Nothing* IV. 2. 49)

Malice **abovethought, larsenik** ... Note, note, note ... (*Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* IV. 2, emphasis added)

Malice **abovethought, arsenic** ... Note, note, note ...

Laughter is derived here not just from the fact that Dogberi (like his counterpart in the source text) is behaving in an officious and self-important manner, but also that he is enjoining a policeman to note everything down, including his misappropriation of the legal term, 'malice aforethought', and of 'larceny'. I would suggest therefore, that the use of these malapropisms introduces a role reversal as Creole, normally at the receiving end of linguistic jokes, is instead used to provoke laughter at the expense of the other languages.

Furthermore, it must be pointed out that code-switching, as a laughter-inducing device, is mainly used by parodic characters in the target texts. Indeed, apart from Dogberi and Verzes in *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid*, the code-switchers most likely to provoke ridicule and laughter are other comic personages, such as Misie Lwayal in *Tartif Froder*, Osrik in *Prens Hamlet* and Misye Peng himself. It is possible to argue that such a comic portrayal is clearly a satire of certain sections of the local population who adopt similar speech patterns, convinced that, by using fragments of the colonial languages, they are

identifying themselves as members of the dominant classes, when, in fact, their linguistic choices only reinforce their lack of proficiency in those languages. However, my contention is that the juxtaposition of the three languages as carried out by the comic characters and their linguistic affectation is also a deliberate attempt on the part of the translators to expose local prejudices that English and French can only be seen as vehicles of high culture.

- Example 1

M. LOYAL [...] De vos biens désormais il est maître et seigneur
 En vertu d'un contrat duquel je suis porteur.
 Il est en bonne forme, et l'on n'y peut rien dire⁷⁴. (*Tartuffe* V. 4. 1755-57)

MISIE LWAYAL [...] Li tousel ena drwa zer sa larises la,
C'est clairement stipulé nwar lor blan dan kontra
Signé bonne et due forme, e **according to law**. (*Tartif Froder* V. 4,
 emphasis added)

MISTER LWAYAL He alone has the right to this wealth,
It is clearly stipulated, black on white, in the contract
Signed in due and good form, and **according to the law**.

Misie Lwayal is a bailiff who has been sent to inform Orgon that he and his family have to leave their home because their wealth has legally been transferred to Tartif. Misie Lwayal's smattering of legal English and French, no doubt acquired through his job as a legal officer, speaks of linguistic pomposity and self-importance.

- Example 2⁷⁵

M. PENG To ena rezon, Fiston, **eh bien, mes chers enfants**, mo finn desid pu marye ek Maryann ...Mo ankora 'fit for duty' mwa, ki to krwar? (*Misyé Peng* I. 3,
 emphasis added)

⁷⁴ M. LOYAL [...] He is now the lord and master of your goods
 By virtue of a contract which is in my possession here.
 It is a valid document which cannot be doubted.

⁷⁵ Since *Misyé Peng* is a loose 'adaptation', no 'equivalent' source extract can be provided, either here or elsewhere in the thesis.

M. PENG You're right, Fiston, **well, my dear children**, I have decided to marry Maryann ... Me, I am still '**fit for duty**', you know?

Misye Peng is a self-deluded quinquagenarian miser who believes he has good looks that would 'catch' a twenty-two year old girl and the necessary prowess to satisfy her. He also treats his own children in a patronizing manner, for even if he calls them 'dear', his treatment of them is anything but loving and kind.

Although code-switching is also carried out by 'serious' characters (but on a much smaller scale), it is rarely used to satirize their linguistic skills. For instance, Hamlet's use of code-switching (and malapropism) in the first extract below is mainly intended to point to the pompous behaviour of his interlocutor, Osrik, and to draw laughter at the latter's expense.

▪ Example 1

HAMLET Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you, though I know to divide him inventorially would dozy th'arithmetic of memory, and yet but yaw neither in respect of his quick sail. But in the verity of extolment, I take him to be a soul of great article, and his infusion of such dearth and rareness as, to make true diction of time, his semblable is his mirror, and who else would trace him, his umbrage, nothing more. (*Hamlet* V. 2. 106-111)

HAMLET **Ah Monsieur**, ou deskriptasion so bann **qualities** zot **very expensive**. So grandisman peyna so segon apart so prop **reflexion** ou so prop **shadow**. **Je vous dis il est** mamma. (*Prens Hamlet* V. 2, emphasis added)

HAMLET **Oh Sir**, your description of his **qualities** is **very expensive**. Nothing is like His highness, apart from his own **reflection** or his own **shadow**. **I am telling you, he is** fabby.

On the other hand, Ofilia's code-switching in *Prens Hamlet*, as shown in the next example, does not provoke laughter. The translator has retained some of the original source extract, but Ofilia's incoherent jumble in the target passage is no less effective in

revealing the onset of madness as she struggles with Hamlet's cold-hearted rejection and her father's tragic death.

▪ Example 2

OPHELIA Well good dild you. They say the owl was the baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at your table. (*Hamlet* IV. 5. 42-44)

OFILIA **Well good** Bondie beni **vous. They say the owl was a baker's daughter.** Zordi fasil kone. Me dime? Dime **il sera trop tard.** (*Prens Hamlet* IV. 2, emphasis added)

OFILIA **Well good,** God bless **you. They say the owl was a baker's daughter.** Today, it is easy to know. But tomorrow? Tomorrow, **it will be too late.**

Rarely then, is code-switching used to provoke laughter at the expense of the 'serious' protagonists. In fact, it is interesting to note that Kalibann, the Creole hero does not switch codes (Mooneeram 2006a: 77). His counterpart in *The Tempest* considers that the language he has learnt from Prospero is only beneficial in that it enables him to curse his master:

CALIBAN You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language! (I. 2. 363-365)

Kalibann, on the other hand, has no need to curse because he owns his own language. Perhaps as Mooneeram (2006a: 77) points out, this code-switching approach is a reflection of the translators' confidence in Creole. From its former role as mere accessory within French and English texts, where Creole lexical items were often incorporated for local colour or for, usually negative, characterization, Creole is now standing on a par with the former masters' languages.

4.2.3 Championing linguistic creolization

Another way of disrupting the linguistic hierarchies on the island is to foreground the hybrid nature of Mauritian Creole. Here, translation serves as a reminder that in a multicultural space such as Mauritius, linguistic hybridization, like racial miscegenation, is inevitable because it is unlikely for different cultures to co-exist and still remain unaffected by each other. I suggest that this is carried out in the target texts through a form of “linguistic collage” (Schultze 1998: 180).

According to Schultze (ibid.), “linguistic collage” refers to the existence of multiple languages within a certain text. The meaning of the term is somewhat extended here to include the presence of transliterated foreign terminology. Technically speaking, code-switching, which we looked at previously, could be considered a form of ‘linguistic collage’. However, in this thesis, code-switching refers to the alternation of different languages “within the same conversation” (Myers-Scotton 1993: 1), whereas ‘linguistic collage’ is taken to mean the combination of languages throughout the entirety of the text. Such combination recognizes the ability of Mauritian Creole to ‘accommodate’ other languages. This collage acknowledges that far from being a homogenizing factor, linguistic creolization allows space for multilingualism, thereby placing Mauritian Creole firmly as the product of a multicultural society; a hybridized entity, which far from being an inferior language, is actually enriched through its contact with other languages, allowing it to function as *the lingua franca*.

If, as argued previously, English and French were used to elicit laughter as a way of disturbing their hegemonic position, it would be foolish, nonetheless, to deny that their

presence within the linguistic landscape of the island has not played a part in the development of Mauritian Creole. The translators recognize this fact and it is acknowledged in the target texts, where English and French lexical items are identifiable. Where possible, most of these items, however, have been transliterated; a process of acculturation designed to render both their spelling and their physiognomy more indigenous, more ‘creolized’. Below are some examples of transliterated English and French words taken from a cross-section of our corpus: one text from each of the three translators, whose works constitute the primary data for this thesis. In Dev Virahsawmy’s *Zil Sezar*, we have “*chalenj*” (I. 2), “*tayming*” (III. 1 – “timing”), “*diil*” (IV. 1 – “deal”), “*braib*” (IV. 3 – “bribe”); in Richard Etienne’s *Otelo*, “*kes*” (I. 2. 95 – “case”), “*a u dispozisyon*”⁷⁶ (III. 2. 6), “*fam de sanb*”⁷⁷ (IV. 3. 9); and in Krishna Somanah’s *Misyé Peng*, “*fenean*”⁷⁸ (I. 2), “*desizyon*” (I. 3), “*tranzaksyon*” (I. 4).

However, ‘linguistic collage’ in the Mauritian context also refers to the inclusion of languages from Africa (including Madagascar), India and China. According to the local scholar, Ramanujam Sooriamorthy (1984: 63), the development of Mauritian Creole by the slaves and the immigrants was not simply a passive acceptance of the masters’ languages. By using African (or Madagascan), Chinese and Indian words, they were also deconstructing the colonial languages. Applied in transliterated form, the insertion of these non-European lexical terms in the texts highlights the process of linguistic cross-fertilization. In a way, it is intended to lessen the local ‘ghettoized’ perception of Creole as belonging to the descendants of slaves, while emphasizing, at the same time,

⁷⁶ From the French “*à votre disposition*” (“at your disposal”).

⁷⁷ From the French “*femme de chambre*” (“chambermaid”).

⁷⁸ From the French “*fainéant*” (“lazybones”).

its ‘representativeness’ of Mauritian society as a whole. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that some of the words mentioned below, even if assimilated into the Creole language, still retain an ‘ethnic’ distinctiveness and are not necessarily used by speakers of other communities.

The examples provided below have again been drawn from one text from each of the three translators and their origin verified against the entries within the dictionary published by the local linguistics scholar, Arnaud Carpooran; so far, the latest (2009) and biggest (15,000 entries) monolingual Mauritian Creole dictionary ever published. In Virahsawmy’s *Tartif Froder*, some of the words originating from India are “*agrram-bagrram*” (I. 1 – “mayhem”), “*chokrra*” (I. 2 – “manservant”), “*beta*” (III. 1 – “son”), “*dainn*” (III. 2 – “witch”), “*paysa*” (IV. 1 – “money”), “*douk*” (IV. 1 – “bad luck”) and “*choup-chap*” (IV. 7 – “be quiet”). Words from Madagascar can also be found: “*manga*” (V. 5 – “angry”), “*vang-vang*” (II.2 – “to wander about”) and “*kanbar*” (II. 4 – “roots”). From Chinese (Hakka), there is “*sefann*” (IV. 1 – “to eat”). In Krishna Somanah’s *Misyé Peng*, culinary dishes, originally from India, are featured, hence “*briyani*”, “*dal*”, and “*samusa*” (I. 5). A famous 1980s Hindi film, “*Ek duje ke liye*” (I. 1 – “Made for each other”) is also mentioned, as is an “*agwa*” (I. 4 – “matchmaker”). Urdu is represented by the word “*salam*” (I. 7 – “good-bye”). Finally, *Otelo*, translated by Richard Etienne, contains Hindi-derived words such as “*dulha dulinn*” (II. 3. 170 – “groom (and) bride”), “*batyara*” (I. 1. 31 – “trouble-maker”), “*jamalgota*” (I. 3. 61 – “witchcraft”) and “*pukni*” (II. 1. 81 – “fire-blower”). Equally, it contains lexical items

from Africa: “*bobok*” (I. 3. 358 – “cuckold”) and “*longanis*”⁷⁹ (I. 3. 61 – “witch doctor”), and from Madagascar: “*fuka*” (V. 2. 348 – “mad”).

The intercalation of a variety of lexical items, originally from other languages, is, therefore, an acknowledgement of the role played by the different groups in shaping and enriching Mauritian Creole, and of the linguistic hybridization taking place in Mauritius. As Virahsawmy stated in an interview with the local journalist, Shenaz Patel, in *Week-End* of 14 April 2002:

[...] Je pense que le morisyen en tant que langue est une belle expression de notre métissage.

[...] I think that Mauritian, as a language, expresses our miscegenation beautifully.

4.2.4 Giving centre stage to Mauritian Creole

Confronting the hegemonic authority of European texts and their linguistic systems has not been restricted to the textual manipulation performed by the translators. I suggest that this hegemony has also been challenged by some of the local theatre directors, whose aim in producing several of the target texts was to give centre stage to Mauritian Creole.

Following the 1992 staging of *Otelo*, a member of the public, named Gossagne, wrote to the press and insisted that “the production on stage of *Othello* in Creole ... is a crime against Shakespeare” because “the beauty of the English language is in its magical sounds and its rhythm” (*L’Express Dimanche* 16 Aug 1992); a statement which illustrates the assumption of the public in the superiority of the English language over

⁷⁹ Carpooran’s dictionary does not indicate the origin of this word. It is Philip Baker in his research, *Contribution of Non-Francophone Immigrants to the Lexicon of Mauritian Creole*, who suggests that ‘*longanis*’ is possibly of Bantu origins (1982: 111-112).

Mauritian Creole⁸⁰. Some journalists also expressed their misgivings on the use of Creole and its reception by the audience. In their attempt to understand why there was public laughter in the middle of a tragedy⁸¹, one member of the press wrote “*la faute en est davantage au langage qu’aux spectateurs*” (Week-End 9 Aug 1992 – “the language, more than the audience, is to be blamed”), while his/her colleague suggested that laughter was due to “*l’effet que ces mots ont sur la psychologie des spectateurs*” (Week-End 16 Aug 1992 – “the effect these words have on the psychology of the spectators”). This, in fact, is broadly in line with the reader-response theory formulated by Stanley Fish and originally applied to the field of literary criticism. Fish’s theory (2001: 2071-2089) dismisses the idea that meaning is embedded within the textual artefact, but suggests instead that it is constructed by the readers themselves, who ‘write’, as it were, their own meaning onto the text, using strategies they have acquired by belonging to specific “interpretive communities”. In other words, the readers’ interpretation is largely conditioned by the cultural assumptions of the group to which they belong. Similarly, it can be argued that the response of many of the spectators during the production of *Otelo* is not only informed by the linguistic presuppositions of a large section of Mauritian

⁸⁰ In fact, this assumption of superiority is also extended to plays staged by foreign directors over those produced by local directors, even if the language featured is the same. In August 1983, for instance, the Mauritius Drama League produced *Macbeth* that attracted only a small audience (Week-End 7 Aug 1983). In June 1997, the British director, Michael Walling brought *Macbeth* to the stage (also with a Mauritian cast) but it was declared a huge success because of its sizeable audience (*Impact News* 29 June 1997, Patel 1997). Although the socio-economic and political contexts (economic recession in the early 1980s and tense election campaigns for 1983, exacerbated by inter-ethnic hostilities) could have explained the low audience turnout for the first play, these factors could not be used to explain the poor attendance rate for the same play produced by another local director, Rowin Narraidoo, in June 2006. The local journalist, Saphira Kallee, once observed that “*il y a [...] l’idée toute faite et fautive que le talent qui vient d’ailleurs est forcément mieux que celui qui est local*” (*L’Express Dimanche* 1 Sept 2002) (“there is the preconceived and mistaken idea that talent which comes from abroad is better than home-grown one”). Her comment was confirmed to me several times in interviews conducted with leading Mauritian theatre practitioners (see Chapter Six), frustrated over this prejudice.

⁸¹ See also Section 7.3.1.

society, but is also a projection of their understanding of the sociolinguistic status of Mauritian Creole.

However, not all of the theatre practitioners I interviewed belong to this interpretive community nor do they subscribe to the views above⁸². There is an understanding among some of them that as an important theatrical signifier, language can be handled to promote a form of linguistic emancipation, since audiences who hear the plays hear a language that is specific to their local culture and, equally, understand it through frames of reference that are familiar to them. Beyond the selection of Creole for the stage, attention is also paid to its paralinguistic resources, such as accent, intonation, stress and rhythm, by some theatre practitioners to confirm the specificity of the language and to express post-colonial cultural autonomy. Henri Favory, *Otelo*'s director, for instance, insists upon the richness and variety of Creole as a spoken language. For him:

[I]e Kreol de Georgie Espitalier par exemple, n'est pas le même que celui de Rashid Neerooa mais, pour moi, c'est cela qui fait la beauté et la richesse de cette langue (cited by Venkatasamy 1992).

Georgie Espitalier's⁸³ Kreol, for example, is not the same as Rashid Neerooa's⁸⁴, but this, for me, constitutes the beauty and richness of this language.

It is partly in this way that theatre can help forge "*une identité nationale avec toutes ses nuances*" (ibid. – "a national identity with all its subtleties"). The director, Rajoo Ramana, takes a similar view as his colleague. In his production of *Trazedi Makbes* in August 1998, he insisted on exact pronunciation and intonation, on the fact that his

⁸² More details on their involvement in the production of the target texts and their views on Mauritian Creole will be provided in Chapter Six.

⁸³ Brabannsyo in the play.

⁸⁴ Rodrigo in the play.

actors should speak “*ène créole carré-carré, pas francisé*” (*Le Mauricien* 30 July 98 – “a straightforward Creole that is not gallicized”).

Mention should also be made, here, of a specific production of *Toufann* in April 2002. It is not one of the productions analyzed for this thesis because it was brought to the stage by a theatre director and his troupe from neighbouring La Réunion⁸⁵. However, its brief inclusion here is warranted by the fact that its purpose was to display the potential of Mauritian Creole as a stage-worthy language and by the fact that the only Mauritian invited to participate was the well-known local actor/director/playwright, Gaston Valayden, who was one of the theatre professionals interviewed for this research⁸⁶. The play itself was not fully acted out but was orally interpreted. There was a lack of décor in order to focus on the actors’ speech utterances, their intonation, voice modulation and speech rhythm; in short, the oral quality of the play. As a result, some local theatre critics have suggested that an oral interpretation, in adding depth to the text, has also helped promote Mauritian Creole as a theatrical language (Patel 21 April 2002, Bellier 2002).

Gilbert and Tompkins (1996: 1) have proposed that post-colonial drama provides a way of “re-acting to empire”. In the Mauritian context, “re-acting” is to enable Creole to be “heard” in its richness and variety.

⁸⁵ The director, Kristof Langromme, and his theatre company, Nectar, are mainly committed to producing contemporary Creole plays written by authors of the Indian Ocean islands. His aim is not dissimilar to that of several theatre professionals interviewed for this research, since his productions seek to explore the richness of Creole languages as performed on the stage (*Le Mauricien* 15 April 2002).

⁸⁶ Details on his work, and his views on Creole and Creole theatre will be found in Chapter Six.

Conclusion

When Naipaul (1972: 255-286) offered his unfavourable portrayal of Mauritius, the island had only been independent for four years. What he saw was a “barracoon” facing political disaffection, socio-economic restlessness, and everywhere he went, people with the desire to emigrate. Nowadays, escape routes may no longer be in such high demand, as the country has since experienced political stability and some form of economic prosperity, but, a few decades on, his perception that imported cultural values still predominate over local ones lingers on, as we have seen throughout the chapter.

Decolonization, then, is about challenging the fact that political sovereignty does not necessarily equate with cultural independence. In Section 4.1, I looked at the ways in which Shakespeare’s and Molière’s plays were appropriated and deconstructed. The texts were subverted to challenge their position as ‘originals’ and to promote the idea that translations were new creations within their own rights. Their authority was also challenged by the translators’ use of intertextuality as a way of questioning textual ‘uniqueness’ and ‘fixed’ origins. At the same time, they were used to confront local misconceptions regarding population hierarchization based on unreliable criteria such as race and ethnicity, and to encourage the acceptance of racial and ethnic miscegenation taking place in Mauritian society. The idea was to try and formulate a form of self-identification that was based more on local realities than on one perceived through colonial lenses.

In Section 4.2, I discussed how the translators declined to submit to the current hierarchized language structures. As I explained in Section 4.2.1, although the two

spelling systems used in the target texts were slightly different from each other, their development, to a large extent, reflected their creators' desire for a phonemic approach that would emphasize their specificity and that would attempt to dismiss the notion that Mauritian Creole was nothing but a form of corrupt French. Furthermore, the translators' clever use of code-switching not only satirized the linguistic pretensions of many of their compatriots but above all, showed their own refusal to treat the imperial languages with the usual deference accorded to them. In championing the use of Creole, the translators also showed that linguistic hybridization was inevitable for such a multicultural environment as Mauritius. Finally, I explained that the transition from written word to spoken performance revealed that some theatre practitioners were equally keen to promote the status of Mauritian Creole by exploiting its richness and variety as a language for the stage.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate that decolonization is closely linked to the idea of cultural confidence. For the Mauritian translators, literary and cultural confidence largely stems from the belief that a linguistic reality based on the use of Creole can be articulated. The next chapter will show how translation is used to reflect this reality as a way of renegotiating identities.

Chapter Five – Translation as Re-territorialization

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to look at the role of translation as a tool for ‘re-territorialization’; a term which has been borrowed from Annie Brisset (1996: 165), who used it to describe the way in which, during the period 1968 – 1988, Québécois drama translators reinterpreted source texts in order to promote their local vernacular and to affirm their cultural identity against the threat of Anglo-Canadian authority and French linguistic traditions⁸⁷. This translating strategy, in actively promoting the existence of a Québécois ‘nation’, became, in Brisset’s words, “an act of reclaiming, of recentering of the identity” (ibid.).

In the Mauritian context, re-territorialization is informed by a similar need for cultural self-validation and is actively sought through the promotion of Creole and its socio-linguistic symbols. Indeed, for many Mauritians, such as the translators of Shakespeare and Molière, the development of a Creole literature through translation is essential in the task of nation-building, because the existence of a national literature confers legitimacy and prestige not only upon the language, but also upon the idea of a Mauritian nation held together by the same linguistic values. In Section 5.1, I consider the different ways in which the process of re-territorialization is carried out when translation is used to validate the credibility of Creole as a written and literary language.

In Section 5.2, I look at how the process of re-territorialization continues when translation actively ‘embeds’ the texts within the local culture. Through the process of

⁸⁷ See Section 3.2.1.2.

nativization and modernization, familiar aspects of Mauritian reality are emphasized to construct a form of self-representation that highlights shared history, common political and socio-cultural practices, and shared geographical and natural environment. It points to a notion of identity that is not static, because, although influenced by external factors, it is in the process of being reinvented by and through collective transformation.

5.1 Validating the language

In this section, I look at how Mauritian translators are extending the ability of Creole to function in literary circumstances. This is carried out through two specific aspects of literary composition: the use of verse as a dramatic form and the deployment of rhetorical devices.

5.1.1 Use of verse as a dramatic form

Translation, as Lefevere has pointed out (1990: 24), enables new poetics to be introduced into the receiving culture. Likewise, theatre translation into Mauritian Creole has enabled the translators to experiment with new poetic styles. Until the publication of *Otelo* in 1991, the use of verse in Mauritian Creole dramatic art was, to my knowledge, unheard of⁸⁸. This is partly because versification is strongly associated with Shakespearean tragedies, and Shakespearean tragedies⁸⁹ with their flawed heroes and their tales of suffering do not constitute the standard fare for Mauritian Creole stage

⁸⁸ *The Tempest* and *L'Avare* have been translated into prose, but Creole writings in prose already existed; hence, my examination, here, of poetic styles only.

⁸⁹ The term 'tragedy', here, is understood within its narrow classical conception, derived from the formulations of the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, and later on, by the Roman philosopher, Seneca, who is thought to have particularly inspired Shakespeare's works. Put simply, a classical tragedy requires that the action be serious by creating some form of calamity for the main protagonist who, although exceptional in many ways, must also present a tragic flaw. The misfortune that befalls our hero and that ends with his redemptive death must evoke pity, anger and fear on the part of the audience (Brown 2003: 1376).

productions⁹⁰. In Shakespeare's tragedies, the use of iambic pentameter, or blank verse, play a large part in the creation of a language that is intended to be poetic, stately and majestic. Such a language is used because the plays, in evolving around royal and/or aristocratic households, require the dialogue to be as dignified as the status of its speakers. Also, tragedies deal with fundamental issues of life, heroic ideals and moral dilemmas, all of which require a language that is lofty and full of gravitas (Aston and Savona 1991: 56). Given the traditional local perception of Mauritian Creole as a language devoid of refinement, it can be argued that the translators' decision to 'upgrade' the language into the highly structured and artificial form of poetic expression required for tragedies is a bold act. The decision to use blank verse⁹¹ for *Prens Hamlet*, *Trazedi Makbes* and *Zil Sezar* (although they also contain large sections written in prose), and free verse for *Otelo* is, therefore, an attempt to demonstrate the flexibility of the language in handling the 'serious' nature of tragedies.

The desire to display the adaptability of Mauritian Creole with regards to versification is also shown in the translation of *Tartuffe*. In French classical drama traditions, the use of verse, or the alexandrine, has been firmly extended beyond tragedies. For instance, some of Molière's plays (such as *Tartuffe*) which would not be viewed as tragedies (in the sense provided above), were written in the form of alexandrine verse with its twelve syllables and six beats in rhyming couplets. Although

⁹⁰ Looking at the productions for 2006-2007, for example, I note that the Creole repertoire is essentially composed of comedies (slapstick, musical and short sketches) and of a few plays with strong moralizing messages, which I will refer to as 'problem plays' because they are plays "in which a particular problem is treated or discussed" (OED). See Appendices V and VI.

⁹¹ However, as Mooneeram (2006b: 339) points out, Creole prosody is different from English in that the latter is a stress-timed language and Creole is a syllable-timed language; therefore, the iambic pentameter is not methodically observed in the texts, although the translator does scrupulously maintain ten syllables for each line.

alexandrines have been used by Franco-Mauritian playwrights⁹² in the past, Virahsawmy's *Tartif Froder* is possibly the first of its kind in Creole. Some local critics have questioned the use of alexandrines by suggesting that fitting Mauritian Creole into tight poetic strictures weighed the text down and highlighted its linguistic incongruities, but nonetheless, they recognized the obvious translational skills and syntactic complexity involved (Raynal 1999, *Week-End* 10 Oct 99), since part of the merit of *Tartif Froder* (and of the Shakespearean translations too) lay in the establishment of a poetic form of dramatic dialogue that is wholly new to Mauritian Creole.

5.1.2 Developing a literary language

The need to prove the literary 'worthiness' of Mauritian Creole is also shown in the way translation is used to introduce rhetorical devices and to elaborate upon existing linguistic resources. In her analysis of *Prens Hamlet*, Mooneeram (2006b: 339-345) has already examined some of the stylistic and literary efforts of Virahsawmy, mainly with reference to "registers, idiolect and wordplay". My own brief analysis below looks not just at *Prens Hamlet* but also at the other target texts, with reference to textual imagery, auditory imagery and lexical innovation, and is intended to complement her findings.

For the translators, the deployment of rhetorical devices is essential to enhance the quality of their writing. The following extract aims to show how their use in the target texts constructs textual imagery. My own back-translation has been carried out as literally as possible to highlight the devices utilized:

⁹² The most well-known local playwright to have used the alexandrines is Léoville L'Homme (1857-1928), with his French play, "*Le Dernier Tribut*", which was staged in August 1883 (Prosper 1978: 80).

HAMLET 'Tis now the very witching time of night,
 When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
 Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood,
 And do such bitter business as the day
 Would quake to look on. Soft, now to my mother.
 O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
 The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom.
 Let me be cruel, not unnatural;
 I will speak daggers to her but use none.
 My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites,
 How in my words some ever she be shent,
 To give them seals never my soul consent. (*Hamlet* III. 2. 349-360)

HAMLET Marenwar jabolik pe anvlop tou (Line 1)
 E bann tom dan simitier pe rote; (Line 2)
 Lanfer pe vomit lapest lor later. (Line 3)
 Finn ler pou bwar disan so sakrifis (Line 4)
 E fer louvraz ki, ler soley leve, (Line 5)
 Fer disan kaye. Kalme twa baba! (Line 6)
 Bizen sakouy bonnfam la me pa plis; (Line 7)
 Koz koze disan me pa fann disan; (Line 8)
 Fwet li ar parol san violans fizik. (Line 9)
 Feros dan repros me zame fer fos. (*Prens Hamlet* III. 2) (Line 10)

HAMLET Malevolent darkness envelops us (Line 1)
 And the tombs in the cemetery are belching; (Line 2)
 Hell is vomiting its catch onto the earth. (Line 3)
 It is time to drink the blood of its sacrifices (Line 4)
 And perform the work which, when the sun rises, (Line 5)
 Causes the blood to curdle. Calm down, child. (Line 6)
 The lady needs to be shaken but no more; (Line 7)
 (We will) speak of blood, but (will) not shed blood; (Line 8)
 Whip her with words without physical violence, (Line 9)
 Fiercely reproachful, but never deceitful. (Line 10)

First of all, we notice that darkness is not only personified but also metaphorically compared to a shroud that envelops us so that evil deeds can be carried out without being seen. Tombs and hell are also personified and given human abilities of making eructating noises or of vomiting, so as to present a strong, but nauseating, image. The seemingly contradictory claim of Line 9 creates, what Dupriez (1991: 311) in his

Dictionary of Literary Devices calls, an “oxymoric sentence”; a device, which “consists in making two successive assertions contrary to, but not incompatible, with one another”. Hamlet plans to be harsh in his verbal rebukes to his mother, but has no intention to apply physical force. The use of what appears, at first glance, to be mutually contradictory ideas, compounded by Hamlet’s portrayal of the dark malevolent atmosphere around him, certainly conveys the impression of a young man in an extreme state of turmoil. It portrays him as ill at ease, with feelings of anger towards his mother’s perceived betrayal, but, at the same time, mixed with filial affection for her. Finally, parallelism introduced by the syntactic correspondence between the two parts of Lines 8 and 10 highlights the artfully formulated and literary nature of the passage, giving it a rhythmical quality, which reminds us of the importance of prosody, especially as it is a text intended for oral performances.

Other rhetorical devices, while highlighting the literary character of the texts, also draw attention to the fact that the target texts are meant to be spoken and to be heard. The two examples below show how the deployment of repetition and alliteration enhances the auditory imagery of the texts, while displaying the phonological potential of the language.

- Example 1

BEATRICE I wonder that you will still be talking, Signior Benedick; nobody marks you.

[...]

BENEDICK Well, you are a rare parrot-teacher. (*Much Ado About Nothing* I. 1. 112-113)

BEATRIS Komik! Mari komik, Sir Benedik. Ou zaze, zaze, zaze, personn pa ekoute.

[...]

BENEDIK Zaza, zaza, zaza! Lalang peyna lezo. (*Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* I. 1)

BEATRIS Funny! Very funny, Sir Benedik. You prattle on, and on, and on, nobody's listening.

[...]

BENEDIK Yak, yak, yak! Your tongue hasn't stopped wagging.

▪ Example 2

BRA⁹³. [...] She is abused, stol'n from me, and corrupted ... (*Othello* I. 3. 61)

BRA⁹⁴. [...] Zot finn anbet li, anlev li, ansorsel li ... (*Otelo* I. 3)

BRA. [...] They have deceived her, abducted her, bewitched her ...

The repetition of 'komik', 'zaze' and 'zaza' in example one, coupled with the phonic effects of alliteration produced by the sounds 'k', 'z' and 'l' during the exchange, add depth to the comedy taking place as the protagonists are verbally belittling each other. In fact, the combination of alliteration and repetition here reinforces the perception that *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* is really about a constant verbal battle; a battle of words, in which Beatris and Benedik, both known for their propensity for garrulousness, are engaged. In example two, the phonic quality of the target extract, provided by the repetition and alliteration of the 'an' sound, and the repetition of the word 'li' ('her') reinforces the auditory effect of Brabannsyö's outpouring of anguish, as he wrestles with the idea that his beloved daughter, Dezdemonä, might be in love with a Moor. These two literary devices enable the readers to 'feel' and 'hear' the texts.

According to Haugen (1983: 273), the elaboration of a language into new domains inevitably entails the enlargement of its vocabulary, usually in the form of lexical innovation. Below, I focus specifically on lexical innovations carried out by the translators through the strategy of calquing. Calques are expressions from one language,

⁹³ As in the source text, short for Brabantio.

⁹⁴ As in the target text, short for Brabannsyö.

which have been translated more or less literally into another language (OED).

Newmark (1988: 84) and Hervey and Higgins (1992: 33-34) all warn against the dangers of calquing as a translation device. The latter suggest that calqued expressions, by bringing something alien into the target culture, may seem unidiomatic to the target readers. This is true of course, but in the Mauritian case, it can also be argued that calques are intended for the specific purpose of introducing new or alternative modes of expression and extending, at the same time, the language's ability to handle concepts, hitherto unexplored in written format. As Vinay and Darbelnet (2000: 85) put it, "translators are ... interested in new calques (when they) ... serve to fill a lacuna." In *Zil Sezar*, for instance, the translator uses calques to look at the idea of 'self'.

CASSIUS 'Tis just:
And it is very much lamented, Brutus,
That you have no such mirrors as will turn
Your hidden worthiness into your eye,
That you might see your shadow. I have heard
Where many of the best respect in Rome
(Except immortal Caesar), speaking of Brutus,
And groaning underneath this age's yoke,
Have wished that noble Brutus had his eyes.

BRUTUS Into what dangers would you lead me, Cassius,
That you would have me seek into myself
For that which is not in me? (*Julius Caesar* I. 2. 54-65)

KASIOUS Foul dakor.
E li fer bien sagren ki gran Broutous
Peyna sa kalite laglas ki kapav
Montre li so vre valer envizib
Pou li konn **so vre limem**. Mo finn tann
Boukou grandimoun dan nou pov pei
(Apar Sezar bien sir) koz ou koze;
Zot dir koumsa ki pou kas zot lasenn
Bizen ki Broutous get **so vre limem**.

BROUTOUS Dan ki kales ou pe ris mwa Kasious,
Ler ou pe rod fer mwa trouv **dan momem**
Seki pa ekziste? (*Zil Sezar* I. 2, emphasis added)

KASIOUS I agree.
And it is a pity that great Broutous
Does not have the kind of mirror that will
Show him his true invisible worth
So that he knows **his true self**. I have heard
Many great people in our poor country
(Apart from Caesar of course) talk about you;
They say that for their chains to be broken
Broutous must look at **his true self**.

BROUTOUS Where are you taking me, Kasious,
When you are trying to make me find **in myself**
What does not exist?

In everyday discourse, the adverb ‘*mem*’ (‘same’ or ‘even’) is generally attached to the personal pronoun and is used to indicate emphasis (for example, ‘*momem*’ – I, myself; ‘*limem*’ – he/she, himself/herself). However, the use of these emphatic pronouns in the translation above is not necessarily to convey markedness (although their ‘unidiomaticity’ does mark them out), but to extend their functional range to include the concept of ‘self’, as in one’s character or nature, which is not present in normal usage.

It is obvious, therefore, that in order for Mauritian Creole to function within a written context, the translators have had to manipulate the language. This is done through their endeavours at versification so that, in a tragic setting, the language may be allowed to appear distinguished, but also through their extension of current linguistic resources and their exploitation of rhetorical devices as essential features of written and literary language so that the language can convey meaning in a creative way.

5.2 'Embedding' the target texts

This section looks at two strategies used by the translators to validate the target culture and promote its specificity and modernity – substitution by nativization and by modernization. Nativization, which can also be known as 'domestication', is the transformation process, whereby items from the original texts are rendered into items, either specific to the target culture, or historically well connected with or entrenched within that culture. Modernization, on the other hand, adjusts the texts for a modern day Mauritian reader by substituting items contemporaneous to Shakespeare and Molière with present day references. These two categories, obviously, cannot claim to have precise, impermeable boundaries. Like any deliberate categorization of reality around us, there is always the possibility of some overlap. However, the usefulness of this dual classification is to show another part of the process of re-territorialization, which is based here on two components. The first one is the understanding that, in many ways, the target texts are specific products of Mauritian history and its local environment, and the second one, that Mauritian Creole is able to transcend the narrow confines of its geographical boundaries and absorb what is obviously taking place in the wider world today. Consequently, the difference between nativization and modernization, as strategies here, is that references to the former are embedded within home-grown reality, whereas allusions to the latter, although known to the audience, are more 'universal' in character.

5.2.1 Substitution by nativization

According to Tymoczko (1999: 45), “a piece of literature customarily evokes its culture through consequential and telling signals or details, typically parts or aspects of the culture that are saturated with semiotic significance and emblematic of the culture as a whole”. Translations, as pieces of literary rewriting, can be viewed in this light, when it uses a familiar discourse with its accepted stereotypes and representations. In the target texts, such practice is aimed at re-examining the concepts of belonging and collective identity, and is expressed in four main areas – geographical, political, socio-cultural and within the realm of nature.

5.2.1.1 Geographical place

Shakespeare’s plays, as we know from our six source texts, are set in various places, including Messina, Venice, Cyprus, Denmark, Scotland, Rome and an island in the Mediterranean. The location of Molière’s plays, on the other hand, is geographically less diverse than Shakespeare’s, having been inspired mainly by the absurdities that the playwright found around him within the mid-seventeenth century Parisian ‘*salons*’. The dramatic functions of a play’s geographical dimension cannot be underrated, whether for characterization purposes or for the construction of the theme and the plot. However, the idea of location, of ‘place’, takes on an additional significance in a post-colonial framework, where it is closely linked with displacement. Physical and cultural dislocation, born out of slavery and migrations (forced or voluntary), created a fracture between environment and self, between place and identity (Ashcroft *et al* 2002: 8-9). It

is this fracture which has largely provided the impetus for the post-colonial concern for identity formation.

The use of indigenous locations in the Mauritian Creole translations, therefore, can be seen as an affirmation of belonging. They provide the bed-rock on which the translators attempt to build a representation of self. This textual negotiation of identity is largely carried out through two approaches – total and partial nativization. Total nativization occurs when the location of the play is transferred to Mauritius, so that none of the original geographical points of reference is retained, as in *Misyè Peng* and in *Toufann*. In *Misyè Peng* (I. 4), the Parisian *salon* is replaced by a living-room belonging to a family of Indian descent living in Maybur⁹⁵, a small town on the south-eastern coast. Maybur, like many other small towns and villages in Mauritius, has its fair share of families originally from India; families that are similar to Misyè Peng's, who though attached to some of their ethnic traditions (such as the use of an 'agwa' or a 'matchmaker'), have not remained completely unaffected by the proximity of other communities. The son of the household, for instance, is known as Fiston ('son' in French), while his girlfriend is called Maryann, a name of non-Indian provenance, which could either suggest that Maryann comes from a 'non-traditional' Indian family or that their eventual marriage would be an inter-racial one. In *Toufann*, the original Shakespearean island, located somewhere between Naples and Tunis, is exchanged for Mauritius, although it is not explicitly spelt out in the text. However, there are obvious pointers that the island referred to is indeed Mauritius. In Act I Scene 3, Edmon declares that the lake in which his ship is trapped is a "basin", a "basin omilie enn lil ...

⁹⁵ Or 'Mahébourg' on official maps. See Appendix II.

en lil inabite” (“a lake in the middle of an island ... an uninhabited island”). The usual lexical item would have been ‘*lak*’, but ‘*basin*’ for the target audience, is immediately evocative of Grand Bassin, a volcanic lake in the middle of Mauritius, commonly used as a place of pilgrimage for the Hindu community. Furthermore, this “uninhabited island”, which Mauritius used to be prior to colonization, is being buffeted by a ‘*toufann*’ or ‘*siklonn*’, in the same way that Mauritius itself is affected by cyclones every summer.

While total nativization clearly defines the boundaries within which to construct self-definition and from which the foreign is kept at bay, partial acculturation, on the other hand, uses a more fluid approach. It concedes the existence of the Other, but at the same time promotes an awareness of local geographical realities. Although the original setting remains, references to some of the locations in the source texts have been exchanged for local ones. Horatio’s “high eastward hill” in *Hamlet* (I. 1. 167) is replaced by two familiar geographical landmarks in Mauritius, “*Montagn Signo, kolinn Samarel*”. Signo Mountain, situated to the south-west of Port-Louis, is known for its outstanding views of the capital, while Samarel Hill points to two local landmarks – the Samarel waterfall, the highest on the island, and the nearby dune-like geological formations that consist of seven differently coloured layers of earth. Further on in the play, in the same way that Shakespeare pokes fun at his compatriots within the source text, the translator gives a nod of humorous complicity in the direction of his target audience.

CLOWN Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell that. It was the very day that young Hamlet was born, he that is mad and sent into England.
HAMLET Ay marry, why was he sent into England?

CLOWN Why, because a was mad. A shall recover his wits there, or if a do not, 'tis no great matter there.

HAMLET Why?

CLOWN 'Twill not be seen in him there. There the men are as mad as he. (*Hamlet V. 1. 123-131*)

KLOUN 1 Nenport ki gopia konn sa. Samem lane Prens Hamlet ti ne. Pov jab la, tann dir so latet finn gate, katorz ventwit. Akoz samem finn avoy li, mo kwar ... Moris.

HAMLET Kifer Moris?

KLOUN 1 Ou pa kone? Zot tou fou laba. Personn pa pou remarke. (*Prens Hamlet V. 1*)

CLOWN ONE Any idiot knows this. It was the year Prince Hamlet was born. Poor soul, I heard he's lost his marbles, completely gaga. So, they've sent him to ... Mauritius, I think.

HAMLET Why Mauritius?

CLOWN ONE Don't you know? They're all mad there. Nobody will notice.

The technique of substituting an original place with a local one can also be found in *Tartif Froder*. Here in Act V Scene 4, although the action is supposed to take place in the living-room of a wealthy Parisian family, the bailiff, Misie Lwayal, announces that he was born in Port-Louis and not in Normandy as the source text indicates. It is more than likely that the mention of the capital of Mauritius itself is intended, like the previous example, as a nod toward the readers. This assumption is reinforced, when Misie Lwayal, immediately following his admission that he was born in Port-Louis, announces his responsibilities as a “*wisie lakour*” (“court bailiff”). Port-Louis is the seat of judicial affairs and “*lakour*”, in other words the Supreme Court of Justice, is directly evocative of the imposing colonial building impossible to miss near the centre of town⁹⁶.

Embedding the topographical realities of the island within the texts, therefore, represents a way of reversing the trauma of displacement and its negation of cultural belonging. It articulates a form of possession of the geographical space upon which a

⁹⁶ In fact, about 200 yards from the Port-Louis theatre, where *Tartif Froder* was performed in 2002.

local collective identity can be built. However, geography does not constitute the only element in the formulation of identity. The following section proposes to show how local political narratives are introduced in the target text, *Toufann*, in order to further this process of self-representation.

5.2.1.2 Political domain

Like any literary work, plays can sometimes mirror or, at the very least, give a glimpse of the political circumstances of the society within which they are produced.

Shakespeare is reckoned to have provided oft-veiled allusions to the English monarchy and contemporary political affairs, while Molière has often referred to Louis XIV and the intrigues at the French court. It is not surprising, then, that Mauritian politics have also been alluded to, especially by Virahsawmy. The terms ‘politics’ and ‘political’ here refer to ideologies, practices and activities relating to the government, and to the organization and administration of the state (OED). Although, presenting a somewhat simplified view of politics (given that vast amount of literature has been devoted to it), I find this description adequate enough to delineate boundaries between the political, discussed below, and the socio-cultural domain, examined immediately afterwards.

In an interview with Jane Wilkinson (2001: 121), Michael Walling, the theatre director, suggested that there were two specific allusions to Mauritian political events in *Toufann*. In Act II Scene 1, Lerwa Lir, reminiscing about Prospero before the latter was overthrown, talked about “*proteksion montagn, aras move lerb*” (literally, “protection of the mountains, pull out the bad weeds”). This, according to Walling, was a direct reference to a speech made by Harish Boodhoo, a well-known politician, leader of the

now defunct PSM (*Parti Socialiste Mauricien*) political party, who has served in several governments in the 1970s and 1980s. Walling also reckoned that the character of Prospero hinted at Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, former Prime Minister of the island. Interestingly enough, the translator himself was more circumspect in divulging the inspiration behind his allusions, only laconically admitting in an interview, also with Jane Wilkinson, that he was “certainly influenced by local events” (2001: 114). However, the quote attributed to Boodhoo was undoubtedly a “local event”, well known in Mauritian political circles and well reported in the local press. His “*zako bizin protege so montagne*” and “*arrache bann mauvais l’herbe*” (Antoine 2007 – “monkeys must protect their mountain” and “pull out the bad weeds”), formulated during the 1983 general elections and quoted almost verbatim by Virahsawmy, had caused outrage as they were seen as political slogans intended to encourage ethnic sectarianism.

Regarding the second allusion, the idea that Ramgoolam could have served as model for Prospero is reinforced when, at the end of the play, the latter voices his intention to relinquish power.

Zot trouv sa lakle la? Samem lakle kontak pou alim ousa tengn tou mo bann laparey,
leker mo pouvwar ... Me mo kwar ki ler finn arive pou mwa’si mo pran retret.
(*Toufann* III. 1)

See this key? It is this key that can turn my machines on or off, it is the source of my power ... But I think it is now time for me to step down as well.

As Mauritians know, the local Labour Party is symbolized by a key, and it was the Labour Party, with Ramgoolam as leader, who had pressed for self-determination. Having won independence, Ramgoolam and the Labour Party ran the country for the next fourteen years before losing power in the 1982 elections. In the source text,

Prospero abandons his magic by drowning his books; in the target text, it is substituted by Prospero flinging his key into the sea, marking not only the end of his power, but also the end of his reign. In my opinion, this scene validates Walling's interpretation of Prospero, as it is evocative of the end of Ramgoolam's political control.

Even though Virahsawmy was not entirely forthcoming in disclosing his sources for the above, there is one specific issue which he was, however, keen to clarify. In the source text, Prospero summons a storm to wreck the ship his enemies are on. Once they are stranded on the island, he proceeds to mete out his own brand of justice to avenge the usurpation of his throne. In the target text, Prospero also seeks revenge from past injustices by controlling everybody and everything. Prospero's change from victim to oppressor and his manipulative tactics are used by the translator to denounce what he perceives as a Mauritian political issue; the misuse of power by one particular ethnic group and its highly discriminatory practices against others. The journalist, Shenaz Patel (*Week-End* 2 Jul 1995), reports his comments:

Mo bien irrité par ène zafer ki mo pé trouvé de plis en plis dépi 85-86; mo trouvé ki éna ène ethnie ki disposé zistifié tou kalité l'inzistis ziste parski dan le passé, zot fine souffrer l'inzistis. Et mo fine lé utilise Prospero pou montré couma sa kapav créé ène débalansman.

I am very irritated about an issue, which, I find, has been on the increase since 1985-86; I find that there is an ethnic group willing to defend any form of injustice, simply because they themselves have suffered injustices in the past. And, I wanted to use Prospero to show how this could cause havoc.

In consultation with Walling over the racial composition of his cast, Virahsawmy admits that he intended Prospero to be an Indian (see Section 4.1.4), which, in Mauritian understanding, is a Hindu rather than a Muslim. It is possible to see which ethnic group Virahsawmy has in mind for three reasons: Ramgoolam was a Hindu, the Labour Party

is largely a Hindu-backed party and finally, in Mauritian electoral politics, the numerical importance of the Hindus makes it impossible for any government to be in power without their support (Lau Thi Keng 1991: 20).

5.2.1.3 Socio-cultural domain

The representation of the socio-cultural domain in the target texts is investigated here through three main components – food, entertainment and leisure. I aim to show that the culture-specific items used by the translators introduce different socio-cultural significations than those presented in the source texts. Of course, it may be argued that as language is an intrinsic part of culture, the translation of any linguistic feature will inevitably introduce different cultural implications in the target texts. My contention, however, is that the translators' references are almost certainly *intended* to express what is distinctive to Mauritius. This is noticeable through their lexical choices: linguistic 'equivalents', or even 'neutral' words, whose cultural specificity is less evident, could have been, but were not, utilized. On the basis that the target audience is likely to be mainly composed of Creole-speaking Mauritians, it can be said that the culture-specific references provide a mirror, which is being held up for self-reflection. This strategy is shown by the examples provided below, to which emphasis has been added to highlight the use of those references.

Newmark (1988: 97) suggests that for many people, food represents “the most ... important expression of national culture.” Indeed, practices often associated with food (how and what we eat, for instance) can identify our cultural background. The next two examples refer to local fruit, and since no such item is mentioned in the original

passages, their presence in the translations clearly places the texts within a Mauritian cultural ‘frame’. It highlights the translators’ attempt to inscribe both difference and specificity; difference, because the imagery moves the target texts away from the source culture, and specificity, because it reinforces the sense of identification between the translations and the target audience.

▪ Example 1

BENEDICK The flat transgression of a schoolboy who, being overjoyed with finding a bird’s nest, shows it his companion, and he steals it. (*Much Ado About Nothing* II. 1. 220-222)

BENEDIK Pinision pou enn enbesil. Li trouv enn **mang mir** lor pie. Olie kas li manze, li al apel so bann kamwad ... Kamwad vini, grenp lor pie, kas mang la. (*Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* II. 1)

BENEDIK Punishment for a fool. He found a **ripe mango** on the tree. Instead of picking and eating it, he called his friends ... His friends came, climbed the tree and plucked the mango.

Mangoes constitute one of the main fruit grown on the island and an essential part of the local diet in the summer. The appearance of mangoes on trees and market stalls represents, for Mauritians, the onset of summer.

▪ Example 2

OPHELIA You must sing a-down a-down, and you call a-down-a. Oh, how the wheel becomes it. It is the false steward that stole his master’s daughter. (*Hamlet* IV. 5. 170-172)

OFILIA Rapel so refren, rapel so refren! Foser fer taker, kas **gouyav** dan lakour madam. (*Prens Hamlet* IV. 5)

OFILIA Remember his chorus, remember his chorus! The treacherous man attacks women, plucks **guavas** in the lady’s courtyard.

Guavas are fruits originally from other tropical countries (Mosaheb 2004: 10), but are now grown and harvested on the island, and therefore very much part of the local fare.

If food can be considered an expression of a culture, I would also argue that its presence can act as cement to bring the wider community together. The consumption of local food that is available for everyone represents a form of cohesion for a society as disparate as Mauritius. Moreover, the cohabitation between the various groups has created a kind of culinary hybridization, based on a blend of ingredients not necessarily included in the original dish.

DORINE [...] Laissez agir les soins de votre belle-mère. (*Tartuffe* III. 1. 834)

DORINN [...] Les Elmir, ou belmer, fer **satini** ar li. (*Tartif Froder* III. 1)

DORINN [...] Let Elmire, your stepmother, make **satini** out of him.

‘*Satini*’, a popular Mauritian dish, is a take on the Indian ‘chutney’, but the local preparation of a basic ‘*satini*’ incorporates the ingredients of Mauritian Creole cuisine: tomatoes, onions, garlic, coriander and chillies to make a salsa-like side-dish. In some instances, ‘*satini*’ also uses other local ingredients such as green mangoes or coconuts, resulting in new Mauritian recipes. Also, it can be argued that the use of ‘*satini*’ as a metaphor in the text foregrounds the idiomaticity of the language as a further act of nativization.

However, although culinary styles are often blended and adapted to suit local tastes, the availability of such a diverse cuisine also means that dishes from a community can become adopted by other groups at large⁹⁷.

⁹⁷ What is, nowadays, effectively known as ‘Mauritian cuisine’ is the sum total of disparate dishes, such as fried noodles/rice (Chinese), curries and biryani (Indian), *rougailles* (Creole stews made of tomatoes, garlic, onion, ginger, herbs and meat), and *daubes* (French). Mauritian cookery books will often reflect this diversity. See, for example, Bheekee’s *Cuisine Simple de l’Ile Maurice* (1981).

HAMLET [...] He hath much land and fertile; let a beast be lord of beasts, and his crib shall stand at the king's mess. 'Tis a chough, but as I say, spacious in the possession of dirt. (*Hamlet* V. 2. 85-87)

HAMLET [...] Pitay par tonn. Ar pitay li aste tou. Mem promotion dan lakademi **tekwa**. Enn veritab **madriye**, **makacha** fabrike ar restan. (*Prens Hamlet* V. 2)

HAMLET [...] Loaded. With money, he buys up everything. Even promotion within the Academy of '**tekwa**'. He's a real '**madriye**', a '**makacha**' produced from left-overs.

'*Tekwa*' is a deep-fried sweet snack filled with dal originally from India. '*Madriye*', on the other hand, is generally believed to be a Franco-Mauritian culinary creation.

Nowadays, it is commonly seen as a poor man's cake as it is very filling and eaten mainly to stall hunger pangs. '*Makacha*', also of Franco-Mauritian origins, is a small bun stuffed with coconut and raisins. Despite their different provenance, these sweets are now seen as being part of a Mauritian culinary landscape.

Furthermore, beyond expressing the horizontal integration of Mauritian society in terms of food, this translator is also appealing to the ability of his audience to decode the underlying cultural meaning of these lexical features. It is a well-known fact that Mauritian political circles are not immune to allegations of corruption (Miles 1999: 98, Bowman 1991: 164), and so, Hamlet's above-mentioned reference to Osrik and his promotion, which the latter received by virtue of his wealth, is a knowing nod towards the readers who, in addition, will recognize the connotations associated with the food items. Suggesting that someone is a '*tekwa*', and in particular a '*madriye*', is a way of insinuating that he/she is rather slow and stupid. Calling someone a '*makacha*' is indicating that he/she is ugly and foolish. Insulting Osrik by suggesting that he was promoted despite being an uncomely half-wit, may add a touch of humour to this

passage, but I propose that in the end, it reveals the ability of the translator to convey multilayered meanings, some of which are difficult to access unless one is a native user. This, in my opinion, shows a distinct act of ‘embedding’ the texts.

Drawing upon shared communal leisure and entertainment activities is another translation strategy designed to focus on what unites rather than what differentiates in order to promote cohesion and integration within the island. The following three examples illustrate the fact that they are all generally accepted and promoted as ‘national’ events and activities.

- Example 1

MARULLUS [...] You know it is the feast of Lupercal. (*Julius Caesar* I. 1. 70)

MAROULOUS [...] To kone zordi **fet Lendepandans**. (*Zil Sezar* I. 1)

MAROULOUS [...] You know that today is **Independence Day**.

Replacing ‘Lupercal’, a Roman fertility festival, by ‘Independence Day’ is recognizing the importance of that date, 12 March, as a public holiday in the Mauritian calendar. It is celebrated in all schools on the island and government ministers are normally sent to various academic institutions to mark the occasion with official speeches. The day itself is commemorated every year by a celebration held with great pomp at the Champ de Mars racetrack in Port-Louis and attended by governmental officials as well as by the general public. Given that the commemoration is celebrated under a ‘patriotic’ slogan every year⁹⁸, and that the ceremonial raising of the flag and the singing of the national anthem are essential features of the day’s programme, the show could, therefore, be construed as an attempt to encourage nationalistic sentiment.

⁹⁸ The 2009 slogan was “*Nou pays, nou fierté*” (“our country, our pride”).

▪ Example 2

BEATRICE [...] For, hear me, Hero: wooing, wedding, and repenting is as a Scotch jig, a measure and a cinquepace. The first suit is hot and hasty like a Scotch jig (and full as fantastical); the wedding, mannerly modest, as a measure, full of state and ancientry; and then comes Repentance and with his bad legs falls into the cinquepace faster and faster, till he sink into his grave. (*Much Ado About Nothing* II. 1. 71-79)

BEATRIS [...] To kone Iro tou sa bann koze “ze vou tem ze vou tanvlop” li kouma enn **ravann**. Okoumansman li so, li red, li vif; amizir letan pase li refrwadi, li vinn bankal; alafin li vinn maf, so son lamok, li kabos-kabose, li tonbe. (*Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* II. 1)

BEATRIS [...] You know, Iro, all this talk about “I love you, I embrace you” is like a **ravann**. At the beginning, it is hot, it is hard, it is vigorous; as time goes by, it cools down, it becomes lop-sided; in the end, it becomes limp, it sounds hollow, it gets a bit misshapen, it collapses.

Although the musical imagery in Beatrice’s advice to Hero is maintained in the target text, the original metaphors have been taken out and replaced by one, more accessible to the local audience. The ‘*ravann*’ is a large tambourine-shaped musical instrument, with goatskin stretched taut over a wooden hoop, into which are inserted three small metal cymbals (Menwar 1999: 18). It is usually beaten as a drum after being heated over a fire to obtain a better sound. Although used with other traditional instruments for producing *sega* music, it is probably the most important one as it establishes the main rhythm. Despite their African provenance, the ‘*ravann*’ together with *sega* (music and dance) have now been appropriated as national symbols, repeatedly promoted and advertised as part of Mauritian folklore. *Sega* dancing itself is considered a sexy dance, full of eroticism, because of the suggestive swaying of the hips by dancers, both male and female, which explains the sexual innuendoes attached to the ‘*ravann*’ within the extract above.

▪ Example 3

HAMLET [...] Give us the foils, come on.

LAERTES Come, one for me.

[...]

HAMLET Very well, my lord.

Your grace has laid the odds a'th'weaker side. (*Hamlet* V. 2. 226, 232-33)

HAMLET [...] Larg **lekours**?

LAIRTES Korek sa. Large!

[...]

HAMLET Wi Votmazeste. Bien sagren pou dir

Ou finn met paryaz lor **seval katar**. (*Prens Hamlet* V. 2)

HAMLET [...] Let the **horses** go?

LAIRTES Good. Let them go!

[...]

HAMLET Yes, Your Majesty. I am sorry to say

That you have placed your bet on a **slow horse**.

The exchange in the source text refers to a fencing duel between Hamlet and Laertes in the presence of King Claudius who has wagered that Hamlet will win. The target text, however, uses a different imagery. Instead of rapiers and foils, the audience encounters horse-racing, a sport which is extremely popular on the island. The Mauritius Turf Club, founded shortly after the British takeover, oversees a long racing season, which usually takes place from April to December at its Champ de Mars track in Port-Louis. Races take place on Saturday afternoons, with the exception of four well-known meets of the season, including the Maiden Cup which takes place on a Sunday in September. In fact, Virahsawmy specifically mentions this race in *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* (I. 1), when Benedik, crossing verbal swords with Beatris, claims that “*si mo seval ti galoup osi vit ki ou lalang mo ti pou gagn lekours Medenn*” (“if my horse had run as fast as your tongue, I would have won the Medenn Cup”). A day at the races is not only for

aficionados and gamblers (betting is big business in Mauritius), but it also constitutes a social event where people can meet and be entertained by the almost carnivalesque atmosphere.

5.2.1.4 The realm of nature

Apart from food, leisure and entertainment, nature has also been a source of inspiration for the translators in attempting to foster a sense of national belonging. The link between nationhood and nature has been explored by Oliver Zimmer (1998: 637-665) in his article, “In Search of Natural Identity”. According to Zimmer, the concentration of beliefs and symbols surrounding the Alpine landscape meant that the latter came to constitute a unifying force in the construction of a Swiss identity, despite the country’s ethno-cultural heterogeneity. This process, which he called “the naturalization of the nation” (1998: 645), imparts distinctiveness to natural features, endowing them with significance that generates a sense of commonality and transcends any cultural differences. I suggest that such an approach is recognizable in the target texts, and by way of illustration, I would like to show how a particular climatic feature – ‘*siklonn*’ (‘cyclone’) – is inserted in the target texts to construct a form of Mauritian ‘natural’ reality. In the following extracts, ‘*siklonn*’ replaces a variety of lexical items, even though, in some instances, it is not the usual corresponding term.

- Example 1

CASCA [...] I have seen tempests, when the scolding winds
Have rived the knotty oaks ... (*Julius Caesar* I. 3. 5)

KASKA [...] Mo finn zwenn **siklonn** kan rafal divan
Desir gro-gro pie ... (*Zil Sezar* I. 3)

KASKA [...] I have been in **cyclones** when gusty winds
Have torn down huge trees ...

▪ Example 2

CASSIUS [...] The storm is up ... (*Julius Caesar* V. 1. 68)

KASIOUS [...] **Siklonn** pe bate ... (*Zil Sezar* V. 1)

KASIOUS [...] A **cyclone** is raging ...

▪ Example 3

ROSS [...] But float upon a wild and violent sea ... (*Macbeth* IV. 2. 21)

ROS [...] Balot-balot nou dan **siklonn** feros ... (*Trazedi Makbes* IV. 2)

ROS [...] Lurching about in violent **cyclones** ...

▪ Example 4

OTHELLO [...] Blow me about in winds! (*Othello* V. 2. 280)

OTELLO [...] Zet mwa dan **siklonn** ... (*Otelo* V. 2)

OTELLO [...] Throw me into **cyclones** ...

‘Tempest’ and ‘storm’ are normally known by the less evocative, more neutral equivalent ‘*tanpet*’, while ‘sea’ is familiar as ‘*lamer*’ and ‘winds’ as ‘*divan*’. The term ‘*siklonn*’, on the other hand, has specific resonance for Mauritian readers, in a way that none of the other words do. It refers to tropical cyclones that, formed over the Indian Ocean, can bring in their wake powerful winds (sometimes exceeding 250 km per hour), high waves and torrential rains. The period between January and March is usually seen as the cyclonic season. Although cyclones sometimes bring much needed rain, they can also cause, especially in the case of direct hits, serious devastation, such as the loss of human lives, damages to buildings and roofs, failures of electricity and water supply networks, and destruction of sugar cane fields. The latter is particularly serious as it has

direct consequences upon sugar production, one of the main pillars of Mauritian economy. Cyclones, hence, are associated with fury and violence, and as such are often used metaphorically, as the following examples demonstrate.

▪ Example 1

BENEDICK [...] There's her cousin, and she were not possessed with a fury, exceeds her as much in beauty ... (*Much Ado About Nothing* I. 1. 184-185)

BENEDIK [...] So kouzinn wi. Si li pas ti enn **siklonn** li ti pou pli zoli ... (*Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* I. 1)

BENEDIK [...] Her cousin, yes. If she wasn't (like) a **cyclone**, she would be prettier ...

▪ Example 2

TARTUFFE Je sais ...
[...]
Que vous m'excuserez sur l'humaine faiblesse
Des violents transports d'un amour qui vous blesse⁹⁹ ...
(*Tartuffe* III. 3. 1007-10)

TARTIF Mo bien kone ...
[...]
Ki ou pardonn mwa si mo bann febles zom
Sarye mwa dan **siklonn** ki fer mwa vinn kokom ... (*Tartif Froder* III. 3)

TARTIF I do know ...
[...]
That you forgive me if my human weaknesses
Carry me into a **cyclone**, which renders me useless.

However, the marked use of 'siklonn' as a metaphor draws attention, not only to the human passion that is supposed to inhabit Beatris and Tartif, but also to the symbolic connection between man and nature. It points to the fact that when these weather phenomena hit the island, they affect the entire population in the experience of

⁹⁹ TARTUFFE I know ...
[...]
That you will forgive me, on the score of human weakness,
The violent impulses of a love that offends you ...

destruction, as much as in the post-cyclonic reconstruction tasks, when damages to buildings and roads have to be repaired, loose debris removed, mosquito-borne epidemics prevented and so forth. Cyclones are, therefore, local natural elements, whose occurrences could be viewed as symbols of a common experience and a common cause; nature, generally, having no respect for ethno-cultural differences. Benjamin Moutou (1996: 506), a well-known Mauritian historian and author, even sees cyclones as a common enemy:

Notre pire ennemi [...] reste les cyclones tropicaux qui nous visitent chaque année [...], que nous soyons chrétiens, musulmans, hindous, bouddhistes ou bahaïs.

Tropical cyclones, which visit us every year, are our worst enemies ... whether we are Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists or Bahaists.

Finally, it would be injudicious to consider the nativization of the target texts without a look at the place allocated to Mauritian fauna. The following extract, for instance, is used by the translator to promote the local birdlife and animals. Suggesting that this approach nativizes the text comes from the fact that the translator does not substitute the original items with direct equivalents in Creole. That is not to say that some of the direct equivalents in question do not exist in Mauritius, they do (frog and toad, for example). However, the impression is that overall, most of the animals chosen appear to be well established as part of the local fauna, even if, one animal aside (the bat), most were originally introduced from other parts of the world.

SECOND WITCH Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.
[...]

FIRST WITCH Round about the cauldron go:
In the poisoned entrails throw.
Toad, that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one
Swelt' red venom sleeping got,

Boil thou first i'th' charmed pot.

[...]

SECOND WITCH Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the caldron boil and bake;
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blindworm's sting,
Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,
For a charm of pow'rful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

[...]

THIRD WITCH Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf ... (*Macbeth* IV. 1. 2-22)

SORSIER 2 Trwa fwa enn **tang** finn plengne. (Line 1)

[...]

SORSIER 1 Fer laronn otour dife, (Line 2)
Kamaleon dan sodron (Line 3)
Pwazon lare masere (Line 4)
Dan labav **koson maron** (Line 5)
Trante-enn zour Fevriye. (Line 6)
Pwazon, pwazon bouyone (Line 7)
Dan sodron Tantinn Touye. (Line 8)

[...]

SORSIER 2 Met for-for **koulev** par trans, (Line 9)
Lefwa griye **kankrela**, (Line 10)
Dile roke ki finn rans, (Line 11)
Royon, larat ti-baba, (Line 12)
Enn pogne zepis vanzans, (Line 13)
Fiel **kourpa** ek **mous-kaka**. (Line 14)
Lekim lamor dans-danse (Line 15)
Dan lanfer Tantinn Touye. (Line 16)

[...]

SORSIER 3 Lezel **sovsouri** pouri, (Line 17)
Ledan **lera** angourdi ... (*Trazedi Makbes* IV. 1) (Line 18)

WITCH 2 Thrice did a **tenrec** whine. (Line 1)

[...]

WITCH 1 A circle around the fire, (Line 2)
The **chameleon** in the cauldron, (Line 3)
Poison of the stingray marinated (Line 4)
In the saliva of the **wild pig** (Line 5)
Thirty-one days in February. (Line 6)
Poison, poison bubbling (Line 7)

In the cauldron of Auntie Murder. (Line 8)

[...]

WITCH 2 Pour in slices of the wolf **snake**, (Line 9)
 The grilled liver of the **cockroach**, (Line 10)
 The sour milk of the yappy dog, (Line 11)
 The kidneys, the spleen of the small baby, (Line 12)
 A handful of spice (called) vengeance, (Line 13)
 The bile of the **snail** and the **fly**. (Line 14)
 Foaming death is dancing (Line 15)
 In the hell of Auntie Murder. (Line 16)

[...]

WITCH 3 The wings of the rotten **bat**, (Line 17)
 The teeth of the lifeless **rat** ... (Line 18)

The ‘*tang*’ (‘tenrec’ – Line 1), a hedgehog native to Madagascar, was introduced in Mauritius in the late eighteenth century, while the ‘*koson maron*’ (‘wild pig’ – Line 5) was introduced by the Dutch in the seventeenth century (Staub 1993: 52, 57). Once found in large numbers on the island, they have been drastically reduced due to human intervention such as culling and hunting¹⁰⁰. Both creatures used to be part of the local diet¹⁰¹ for some sections of the population, although they are no longer as popular. The two reptiles mentioned in this extract are the ‘*kamaleon*’ (Line 3) and ‘*koulev*’ (Line 9), a non-venomous wolf snake. Imported from Madagascar and from India respectively, both seem to have flourished on Mauritian soil, so much so that according to the local National Parks and Conservation Service¹⁰², they now constitute a threat to native reptiles and invertebrates. In fact, these two creatures are more likely to be seen than

¹⁰⁰ Staub (1993: 57) suggests that the tenrec hunter is, in fact, a Mauritian “folkloric character, with his old hat, his thick stick and his bag thrown across the shoulder.”

¹⁰¹ In *Tales from Mauritius*, Ramdoyal (1979: 5) tells of a group of escaped slaves living on wild animals, including wild pigs and tenrecs, whose meat they used to cover in the thick bark of trees, and which was then left to dry with smoke.

¹⁰² See the National Parks and Conservation Service’s webpage at <http://www.gov.mu/portal/sites/moasite/nationalpark/reptiles.htm>. Accessed 9 Mar 2009.

their endemic cousins¹⁰³. Bearing in mind the island's sub-tropical climate, some species of animals are more likely to thrive than others, such as the '*kankrela*' ('cockroach' – Line 10), the bane of Mauritian housewives. As are the common '*mous-kaka*'¹⁰⁴ (Line 14), a large greenish black fly, and the brown rat known as '*lera*' (Line 18), certainly an animal more likely to be seen in Mauritius than the animal (the wolf) for which it was substituted. The bane of Mauritian gardeners, on the other hand, is the '*kourpa*' (Line 14), or the *Achatina Fulica* snail, which, according to Staub (1993: 83), proved so destructive to fruits and vegetables, that a carnivorous gastropod had to be introduced to limit its numbers. The only endemic mammal mentioned above is the '*sovsouri*' ('fruit bat' – Line 17). It replaces the owl, an animal not so familiar within the Mauritian avifaunal landscape. Like the wild pig and the tenrec, the bat used to be hunted for consumption purposes, but it too is no longer in high demand, due in large part to its status as an endangered and protected species¹⁰⁵.

The above references illustrate the way in which the translators' lexical choices, rooted as they are in the geographical, political, socio-cultural and 'natural' realities of the island, manage to inscribe a sense of 'Mauritianness' in the target texts. Other ways of articulating national self-representation will be looked at in the following section.

¹⁰³ Such as the Durrell's night gecko, Telfair's skink, the keel scaled boa and so forth, now restricted to the uninhabited islets surrounding Mauritius (see the National Parks and Conservation Service's webpage as above). Accessed 9 Mar 2009.

¹⁰⁴ Literally meaning "flies of excrement", probably because, as Michel (1967: 69) points out, they tend to feed on waste matters.

¹⁰⁵ However, in recent years, such a status has proved controversial on the island, as many fruit growers have objected to their orchards being decimated by fruit bats and have requested that the law regarding bat culling be relaxed (Yvon 2007).

5.2.2 Substitution by modernization

The idea of modernizing classical texts, especially in the case of drama, is not without its opponents. Many would agree with David Edney's statement that "the pleasure of being transported to a different time and place is indeed one of the great attractions of the theatre" (cited by Zatlin 2005: 69). There are, of course, those who disagree and believe that the source texts should be changed in order to conform to the sensibilities of a contemporary target audience. As a translation phenomenon, the term 'modernization' is an elusive term which can be applied with different degrees of manipulation and to different sections of the source text (setting, plot, language and so forth). Here, I have used the word 'modern' in the sense provided by the OED – "characteristic of the present and recent times" – to denote changes carried out by the translators, where certain lexical items used have more currency within the context of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries than with the historical period associated with the source authors. This analysis is carried out in two specific areas – the political and the socio-cultural domains.

5.2.2.1 Political domain

References to certain political concepts on nationhood in the target texts indicate that the latter were written for a late twentieth century Mauritian reader. Despite the debates between 'modernists' and 'primordialists'¹⁰⁶, I believe that, in the Mauritian context, the idea of 'nation' should be viewed as a modern construct. After all, the existence of the

¹⁰⁶ The battle is over the origins of nationalism. 'Modernists', as the name suggests, believe that the idea of nationhood is an inherently 'modern' phenomenon, while 'primordialists' believe in the antiquity of nations (Gellner 1997: 90-101).

island as an independent nation-state and the creation of its accompanying institutional mechanism are of recent origins. The term ‘nation-state’ is used here as it is commonly understood nowadays, as a country that is politically independent and that exercises sovereignty over its own territory, regardless of the heterogeneity of its population¹⁰⁷.

I suggest that, despite the presence of the monarchy in the text, *Toufann* promotes another form of governance, which did not apply to the source culture in Shakespearean days, but which is relevant to Mauritius as a modern nation-state. In Act I Scene 3, Yago’s proposal of empire-building is immediately countered by the notion of self-government offered by Polonious.

YAGO Mopanse ki noumem premie dimoun ki pe met lipie isi. Mo propoze ki nou pibliy enn dekree pou deklar ofisielman ki sa lil la fer parti ou lanpir ...
[...]
POLONIOUS Vot Mazeste, nou profit lokazion pou teste mo teori lor otozestion.
(*Toufann* I. 3)

YAGO I think we are the first people to have ever set foot here. I propose that we publish a decree, officially declaring this island as part of your empire ...
[...]
POLONIOUS Your Majesty, let us take the opportunity to test my theories on self-government.

Further on in the play, the king himself suggests that power resides in the people when he offers his abdication and proposes that elections be held.

LERWA LIR Wi, mo abdike. [...] Donn pouvwar lepep. Organiz eleksion. (*Toufann* II. 3)

KING LIR Yes, I abdicate. [...] Give power to the people. Organize an election.

¹⁰⁷ This is to differentiate it from the narrow definition sometimes provided by political theorists. Such conception sees a nation-state as a political entity, with a population composed mainly of one homogenized ethnic group whose territorial boundaries are coterminous with state sovereignty (Smith 2001: 15).

Likewise, the idea of democracy is also introduced in *Trazedi Makbes* at the end of the play, even though, ironically, the play itself is largely about loyalty to the monarchy. In the source text, the defeat and the death of Macbeth and his wife allow the new king of Scotland, Malcolm, to invite his vassals to his coronation. The target text, on the other hand, makes no mention of the future coronation.

MALCOLM [...] What needful else
That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace
We will perform in measure, time, and place:
So thanks to all at once and to each one,
Whom we invite to see us crowned at Scone. (*Macbeth* V. 8. 71-75)

MALKOM [...] Avek led Bondie
Nou pou remet lord, amenn armoni,
Lape, devlopman ek demokrasi. (*Trazedi Makbes* V. 7)

MALKOM [...] With God's help
We will bring order and harmony,
Peace, development and democracy.

These are the words that bring an end to the play. Even though they seem to sit at odds with the monarchical values that permeate the entire play, they are, nonetheless, suggestive of a new beginning, seemingly offering the promise of a new era, this time based on different political values. With these words of hope, the translator seems to equate democracy with order, harmony, peace and development; a kind of wishful thinking perhaps, but a reminder, nonetheless, that Mauritius, no longer under British monarchical rules, has adopted the principle of self-government and democratic procedures, such as elections and universal suffrage (The Constitution 1968c, Articles 42-44, 57). In effect, the island has to rely upon the participation of the people as a whole (not just as members of different communities) to establish a modern nation.

Similarly, other terms reinforce the political context of the times. In *Toufann* (II. 1), when Aryel shouts out “*Viv Edmon. Prezidan Repiblik! Viv Yago. Premie Minis*” (“Long live Edmon. President of the Republic! Long live Yago. Prime Minister”), he is not only moving away from the Shakespearean divinely ordained, monarchical model of society, but also focusing on the political alternative which Mauritians have chosen. The system of representative democracy, with the president (chosen by the National Assembly) as its head of state and the elected prime minister as its head of government, was, in fact, very much a topical issue for Mauritians when *Toufann* was first published in 1991. The debate for constitutional reform to turn Mauritius into a republic had been simmering since prior to the 1987 general elections, with the main political parties disagreeing over the type of powers to confer upon the future president, but agreement was finally reached with the arrival of the 1992 government, a year after the publication of *Toufann*. I would suggest, then, that the connotations attached to the offices of President and Prime Minister as representatives of the people, of *all* the people, give official, if not definite, contours to the abstract notion of what constitutes Mauritian nationhood. They facilitate the process of national integration by enlarging the otherwise narrow understanding of nation as nothing more than an ethnic community. It is worth noting here that the institution of a president is a clear move towards further decolonization, as it displaces the British Queen in her role as head of state.

Finally, the pre-Enlightenment view of society as inherently hierarchical is countered in *Toufann*, introducing, instead, the principle of equal civil rights, as we see in the following excerpt.

FERDINAN [...] Lemonn pe sanze. Prospero. Ou lozik ti valab lontan ... Divan finn sanz bor. Nou nepli kwar ki ninport kisannla ena kik drwa spesial.

PROSPERO Ki sa koze la?

FERDINAN Dapre ou, ou ena bann drwa inalienab. Apre ou, ou zanfan, ou fami, zanfan ou fami. Fini sa lepok la ... (*Toufann* III. 1)

FERDINAN [...] The world is changing. Prospero. Your logic was valid a long time ago ... (But) the wind is now blowing in a different direction. We no longer believe in people having special privileges.

PROSPERO What kind of talk is that?

FERDINAN According to you, you have privileges. After your death, (they will be passed on to) your children, your relatives, the children of your relatives. That period is over ...

The granting of equal rights by the State confirms the status of citizenship to all those domiciled within its territory, regardless of any differences. In a society where ethnically and racially driven partisan politics is quite common, the principle of equal rights, as guaranteed by Article 3 of the Constitution (The Constitution 1968d), is a brave attempt to restrict any form of discrimination and to promote an egalitarian society for all its citizens. Smith (1991: 117) suggests that appeals to people as citizens are, in fact, overt attempts to override appeals for ethnic or racial allegiances.

The alterations in the target texts, therefore, point to the changing nature of Mauritian society, which, until independence, had been defined by its existence as a colony. The emphasis on democratically elected officials and unified rights for everyone shows a desire for collective cohesion and an attempt to remodel the island as a modern nation-state.

5.2.2.2 Socio-cultural domain

Translation, in recording the changes and evolution a society is going through, shows us that nations are not fixed entities. This section looks at how the translators are recording

some of the changes in post-independence Mauritius as it attempts to keep in touch with what is happening in the world of technology. From their perspective, it is an important development that has taken place and is continuing to take place, since the days when the island was seen as underdeveloped and geographically remote (Benedict 1965: 1).

Like the rest of the world, Mauritius has not been immune to the changes brought by the world of information technology. This became apparent in the 1990s, when the government announced plans to establish Mauritius as a cyber-island, and made grand promises to provide state of the art facilities and infrastructure in order to attract foreign investments from global companies. The aim was to strengthen its service economy and generate further economic growth (Selvon 2003: 578). Although such a modernization effort has been made essentially in connection with economic preoccupations, it has also, to a certain extent, seeped through into the socio-cultural domain as Mauritians, or to be more precise, some sections of the population¹⁰⁸, have become more aware of technological possibilities. In *Toufann*, the translator notes the increasing usage of electronic equipment. In Act II Scene 2, the world created by Prospero, a modern day technological wizard, would be incomplete, or rather would not function properly without “*ordinater santral*” (“central computer”), “*servo santral*” (“central processing unit”), “*chip*” and “*materyel dizital*” (“digital equipment”), and “*lekran*” (“screen”). Earlier on, in Act I Scene 4, Kordelia’s admission that her father’s CCTV cameras and monitor screens are keeping a close eye on Ferdinan serves as a stark reminder to the audience that even in Mauritius, surveillance systems no longer belong to the realm of

¹⁰⁸ For further details, see Section 7.1.2.

fantasy, but are increasingly used, rightly or wrongly, as justification to ‘protect’ the people they are watching.

Other translations may not offer as many examples as *Toufann*, but references to modern technological devices, obviously not present in the source texts, are also featured. The following two examples are taken from *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* and *Zil Sezar*:

▪ Example 1

MARGARET Well, I will call Beatrice to you, who I think hath legs.

BENEDICK And therefore will come ... (*Much Ado About Nothing* V. 2. 24-25)

MARGARET Bon, mo al apel Beatris. Sey ser so vis.

BENEDIK Mo tournavis elecktronik. (*Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* V. 2)

MARGARET Alright, I will go call Beatris. Try and tighten her screw.

BENEDIK My electronic screwdriver.

Margaret’s and Benedik’s witty exchange in this scene has been full of sexual innuendoes. Although the substitution of ‘electronic screwdriver’, here, does not interrupt the sexual imagery, it creates a modern ‘frame’ which reaches out to the intended audience with its contemporaneity. In *Zil Sezar*, both Broutous and Antwann are about to appeal to the crowd using a ... microphone:

▪ Example 2

THIRD PLEBEIAN Let him go up into the public chair;

We’ll hear him. Noble Antony, go up. (*Julius Caesar* III. 2. 65-66)

DIMOUN 3 Ki zot pe atann! Donn li mikro la.

Koze Antwann! Koze mam! Pa per twa! (*Zil Sezar* III. 2)

THIRD PERSON What are you waiting for? Give him the microphone.

Speak, Antwann! Speak, friend! Do not be afraid!

The imagery of Broutous and Antwann at the pulpit, microphone in hand, attempting to calm an excitable crowd of Romans, is, undoubtedly, a twist to the historicity of a play exploring the assassination of a Roman dictator in 44 BC. The conspicuous presence of such a modern day invention highlights the modernizing effect of this particular translational approach on the text, placing the latter clearly within the context of its times, with a late twentieth century Mauritian audience in mind.

Another area, which has undergone changes in Mauritius in this age of mass telecommunications, is within the sphere of entertainment. Going to the cinema, for instance, is an accepted leisure activity. Prospero's comment, when he compares watching his victims on the screen as being at the cinema (*Toufann* II. 2), and Kalibann's reply that it is a sad film (*ibid.*) will not strike any unusual chord in the readers. In *Tartif Froder*, the translator also brings such a modern touch to his text when commenting on Tartif's numerous evil deeds.

L'EXEMPT [...] Et c'est un long détail d'actions toutes noires
Dont on pourrait former des volumes d'histoires. (*Tartuffe* V. 7.
1925-6)¹⁰⁹

KAPITENN [...] So dosie bien-bien sal: vol, viol, frod, krim lor krim,
Ena ase zistwar pour tourn omwen dis fim. (*Tartif Froder* V. 7)

OFFICER [...] He has a criminal record: theft, rape, fraud, crime upon crime,
There is enough to make at least ten films.

Cinemas, of course, are not the only venues in which to catch a film, as most Mauritian households now own a TV set. *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid*, for instance, presents us with a

¹⁰⁹ THE OFFICER [...] And it is a long string of evil actions
Which can be turned into voluminous tales.

television imagery when Benedik is rudely dismissed by Klodio, to whom the news that Don Pedro has perhaps wooed Iro for himself is most unwelcome.

BENEDICK [...] ‘Twas the boy that stole your meat, and you’ll beat the post. (*Much Ado About Nothing* II. 1. 197-198)

BENEDIK [...] Move nouvel lor t.v., to kraz lekran. (*Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* II. 1)

BENEDIK [...] Bad news on TV, smash the screen up.

Global connectivity (and increasing consumption of foreign films) means that Mauritians are often *au fait* with what is going on in the outside world, including the world of Hollywood, as evidenced in *Prens Hamlet*.

HAMLET [...] Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers, if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me, with two provincial roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?

HORATIO Half a share. (*Hamlet* III. 2. 250-254)

HAMLET [...] Horasio mo matlo, mem si nanye pa marse, omwen mo kapav gagn enn bon rol pou zwe, kikfoi gagn enn Oskar.

HORASIO Oskar meyer figiran? (*Prens Hamlet* III. 2)

HAMLET [...] Horasio, my friend, even if things do not work out, I have at least a good role to play. Perhaps I shall win an Oscar.

HORASIO Oscar for best actor?

Past representations of Mauritius as a backward agrarian society are being challenged and, as we have seen in the extracts above, the specifically modern form of self-definition as formulated by the translators is undoubtedly a way of reinventing Mauritian identity.

Conclusion

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, many drama translators in Quebec, in the second half of the twentieth century, justified their work on the grounds that “the

existence of a Québécois language is ... tangible proof of the existence of a 'Québécois people'" (Brisset 1996: 167). This chapter has sought to demonstrate how this quest for self-validation could also be observed in the Mauritian context. Here too, translation as re-territorialization has been used to attest to the validity of a language; here too, it has attempted to bear witness to the existence of a Mauritian nation.

How translation tried to promote and legitimize the existence of Mauritian Creole as a written language was explored in Section 5.1. I explained that the use of verse as a dramatic language was intended to divest Creole of its low status. I also briefly examined how the translational process was enriching the language, easing the transition from orality to literacy and allowing it to better fulfil its literary role. By giving Mauritian Creole its literary '*lettres de noblesse*', both endeavours were aimed at raising its status to become a valid symbol of the Mauritian nation.

In Section 5.2, I looked at how re-territorialization was carried out when local narratives were introduced or 'embedded' within the target texts. The substitution of source items for well-known local ones went some way towards deflecting attention from the source culture, but mostly, it was intended to present a discourse that was familiar to the host culture, redefining, in the process, the nation as a community with common geographical space, and shared political narratives and socio-cultural practices. Furthermore, it was evident that the target texts were promoting the idea of Mauritius as a modern nation-state, an independent political entity that encouraged democratic principles as a way of furthering the process of integration. Such principles included the granting of equal rights to the population, regardless of its plural nature, and the institution of the office of president and of prime minister, who could both be viewed as

representatives of the Mauritian nation as a whole. This notion of modernity, however, eschewed the idea of fixity, as the translators showed, when they constructed a form of self-representation that was in line with current ongoing technological progress.

Translation as re-territorialization has, therefore, sought to reject linguistic marginalization and promote Mauritian Creole as a literary language. It has also attempted to renegotiate identities and construct a frame of reference which was derived from Mauritian shared practices and resources. As such, it was no less than a political act; an attempt on the part of its creators to influence social change. The next chapter will, in turn, consider the role and the motivation of those engaged in this undertaking, from the translators themselves to those agents within the literary and theatrical polysystems, whose input enabled the publication and stage production of the target texts.

Chapter Six – The Role of Patrons and Professionals

Introduction

Chapters Four and Five confirmed the view that translation is not simply a matter of linguistic equivalence. They revealed the translators' 'operational' changes which embedded the target texts within the host culture. I suggest, however, that to further grasp the significance of theatre translation as a socio-cultural activity, we need to take a wider view of the translational process; one that includes not just the linguistic transfer, but also encompasses the selection, printing and publication of the new texts and in our case the stage productions too, as part of an overall effort for dissemination purposes. To this end, it is crucial that we look at the role of those involved in this process, referred to here as patrons and professionals. By examining their political and socio-cultural beliefs, we may understand how their use of translation, as printed text or as play script, seeks to establish or perpetuate a specific cultural construct.

Anthony Pym has suggested that translators are "active effective causes, with their own identity and agenda" (1998: 160), not anonymous agents or by-products of their work; they are flesh and blood people, whose competence, skills (in translating and in other areas), personal background and interests, if looked at carefully, can enable us to understand and reveal their influence upon society. I suggest that this can be applied to the Mauritian patrons and professionals I interviewed for this research; they are the ones who have been and/or are engaged in the dialectic of power, attempting to (re)negotiate power configurations and relations. I introduce these people in Section 6.1, explaining my choice of the professionals included here.

Next, in Section 6.2, I focus on the reasons behind the actions of the patrons and the professionals. I suggest that bringing into light their beliefs and values, and their interactions with the rest of society will not only serve to reveal the existing power structures but also the dissonance between two distinct value systems. Indeed, what emerges is the tension between those for whom translation and its dissemination are aimed at challenging the status quo, and those who wish to align themselves with, or rather perpetuate the existing multilingual discourse. For the former, Creole language is the main ingredient in the process of social integration and of nation-building. For the latter, nation-building does not necessarily take place through the promotion of one language, even if it is the most widely spoken one; nation-building is about consolidating the country's multilingual and multicultural heritage.

In Section 6.3, I look at how patrons and professionals set about to promote their 'causes', ensuring that what is being created is done according to specific requirements. First, I explore how some of the patrons define "the perimeters of the acceptable" (Lefevre 1992: 7), which is another way of suggesting that patrons have some form of control over what professionals do, although it is also possible to argue that not all professionals are attached to patrons, preferring in fact to be independent. Then, I suggest that the most obvious form of promotion in the Mauritian context is arguably a form of 'visibility', where the translators' intervention is openly acknowledged in the target texts, and where both patrons and professionals use the written press to proclaim and disseminate their own specific viewpoints.

6.1 Mauritian patrons and professionals

This section looks at who the main patrons and professionals are. They are listed in the table below for ease of reference. I met each of them during my first three trips to Mauritius (July 2005, August-September 2006 and November 2007), although one interview (with Gaston Valayden) was conducted in London in December 2007.

<u>Professionals</u>			<u>Patrons</u>	
<u>Translators</u>	<u>Theatre Directors</u>	<u>Actors</u>	<u>Publishers</u>	<u>Theatre Patrons</u>
Richard Etienne	Henri Favory	Kiran Dussaram	<i>Ledikasyon Pu Travayer</i> (Alain Ah-Vee)	Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources ¹¹⁰ (Vijay Veeramootoo and Taramatee Kumar)
Krishna Somanah	Rowin Narraido	Darma Mootien		<i>Immedia</i> (Rama Poonosamy)
Dev Virahsawmy	Rajoo Ramana	Gaston Valayden		
	Vel Veeramootoo			

Table 4

¹¹⁰ When our interviews took place, Veeramootoo and Kumar both worked within the drama unit of the Ministry of Arts and Culture, but since then, there has been a mid-term cabinet reshuffle (September 2008) and the Ministry of Arts and Culture is now subsumed under the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources (MECHR).

Some of the information provided throughout this chapter was gleaned from press records, but most of it was gathered from our face-to-face meetings and via emails or phone calls when further clarification was needed. Below is the list of ‘core’ issues raised during our interviews, bearing in mind however, that more specific questions, not included in the list, would have been asked depending on who the interviewee was¹¹¹.

- Autobiographical background (individuals and organizations) - how did they end up translating, publishing or getting involved in theatre?
- The reasons why they translate/act/produce/direct/publish.
- Their views on Mauritian Creole, its uses, its socio-cultural and political roles in Mauritian society.
- Do they see a future for Mauritian Creole literature (translations included) and theatre? Should there be more translations and more stage productions of translations? Why?
- Why Shakespeare and Molière? After all, these playwrights are available to the Mauritian public in their original languages.
- What are the differences between the State’s drama festivals and the plays produced by a non-governmental organization like *Immedia*? (Question only asked to theatre patrons and professionals).
- Are there effective ways of promoting their work?
- Who do they think their target readers/audiences are?

6.1.1 Professionals

According to the OED, a professional is somebody who “engages in a specified occupation or activity for money or as a means of earning a living, rather than as a pastime.” In this sense, none of the Mauritians I interviewed are professionals; they all

¹¹¹ With the MECHR representatives for example, I needed more factual information regarding the way their drama festival operated; consequently, more straightforward, ‘closed’ questions were asked. On the other hand, with Virahsawmy for instance, we talked about different translation strategies.

either have a full-time job outside of their literary or theatrical ‘pursuit’ or are currently retired. But in the Lefeverian scheme of things, they have a recognized degree of competence in their fields and operate directly within the literary or theatrical system. To prevent any misunderstanding and to counter criticisms such as the one levelled by Theo Hermans (1994: 139-142) that Lefevere’s terminology is too vague, I want to indicate that the professionals here refer specifically to the translators themselves, the theatre directors who staged the translated texts and the actors, or some of the actors, who starred in the plays.

I have already introduced the translators, Dev Virahsawmy, Krishna Somanah and Richard Etienne, and their work in previous chapters; their names should, therefore, be familiar by now. The theatre directors, Henri Favory (*Otelo*), Rowin Narraido (the 2002 *Tartif Froder*), Rajoo Ramana (*Toufann*, *Trazedi Makbes* and the 1999 *Tartif Froder*) and Vel Veeramootoo (*Misye Peng*), are well-known in Mauritian theatre circles and are, in the case of the first three, arguably the most prolific over the years. Although this research looked at all the translators and directors involved, it was not possible, for obvious practical reasons, to consider all the actors who had a role in the stage productions. I had to make a choice and my selection was based mainly on the length of their acting career (Creole and non-Creole plays) and on how well-known they were to their peers in the theatrical milieu. Additionally, for a more balanced perspective, I chose at least one actor from each of the two theatre patrons. Gaston Valayden, one of the most familiar faces on Mauritian stage, is also known for wearing several hats as actor, playwright and director. He has performed in *Toufann*, *Trazedi Makbes* and the 1999 *Tartif Froder* for *Immedia*. Darma Mootien has been acting since

the 1970s, and has appeared in both *Trazedi Makbes* and the 1999 *Tartif Froder*. I settled on Kiran Dussaram as my third actor for his performance as the miser in *Misyè Peng*, the only play under the auspices of the MECHR.

It must be noted, however, that the views expressed by the theatre professionals throughout our interviews and as communicated in this chapter reflect their many decades of experience in theatre, rather than just the experience of directing or acting in the translated Creole plays. This is because the development of Creole theatre (and by extension, the contribution of translation to Creole theatre), of which they themselves have been the prime movers and shakers, is of fairly recent origins (see Section 2.4.4.4). It is unlikely that their views about theatre in general would negate their views about Creole translated plays. If anything, their many years of experience would enable them to provide additional depth and insight into the interaction between translation, theatre, Mauritian Creole and nation-building.

6.1.2 Patrons

We know that Molière and Shakespeare both enlisted the patronage of the Court and their respective kings (Lewis 2001: 77, Dutton 1989: 50-51, 127). Louis XIV and the Lord Chamberlain, later replaced by James I, accorded financial help and protection against enemies to their protégés. In the Mauritian context, although the latter component of patronage is not evident, we recognize that it is thanks to patrons that some professionals are able to produce their works and that these works are then able to reach their target audiences. The patrons, whose representatives I have interviewed, are *Ledikasyon Pu Travayer* (LPT) included here for its publication of *Misyè Peng* and

Otelo, MECHR and *Immedia* who between them backed the production of five of the translated texts. Before proceeding any further, it must be made clear that, although patrons in the Mauritian theatrical context can sometimes refer to the local municipalities who are responsible for the upkeep of the two main public theatres, this local understanding of the term has not been included here. Also excluded are financial sponsors; commercial enterprises whose aim is usually to provide some form of monetary aid as a marketing strategy to secure the appearance of company logos or advertisements in the theatre programmes. Neither of these kinds of ‘patrons’, I am informed by *Immedia* (interview 4 Sept 2006), have any say in the production of the plays themselves.

LPT, like the translators, has already been introduced before, but here, I would like to briefly look at its foundation and early development during what is known in Mauritius as the “*années de braises*” (Ramjanally and Runghen 2004 – “the smouldering years”), roughly the mid-seventies until the beginning of the eighties. Contextualization, I believe, would give a better understanding of its beliefs and purposes (and for that matter, those of some of the other professionals and patrons as well). LPT was born out of the May 1975 student protests, which the Mauritian historian, Selvon (2003: 519), described as “*un véritable Mai 1968 européen à retardement, mais à la mauricienne*” (“a real belated European May 1968, but Mauritian style”). The high rate of unemployment, the disastrous economic conditions, the ravages of *Gervaise* (one of the worst cyclones to have ever hit the island) in February 1975 and the frequent workers’ strikes towards the end of the 1970s, supported by the newly created but rapidly growing MMM party, had created an unstable political situation.

The volatility of that period, exacerbated by the open hostility of the Labour government against the student protests, saw a heightened sense of nationalist feeling. These protests, largely inspired by Marxist thinking, called for a radical shake-up of the Mauritian socio-political landscape of the time. They demanded among other things, the creation of trade unions to defend workers' rights, the rights to free education and reforms of the existing 'colonialist' educational system in order to develop a sense of Mauritian identity among the young people (Marimootoo 2005). LPT itself was formed by a group of teachers who were fired after the protests and who proposed an alternative form of education for the illiterate that focused on awareness of wider social and political issues such as decolonization and democracy. It was first designated as *Lekol Kooperativ* (The Co-operative School), but eventually came to be known by its current name.

If LPT is a non-profit organization run along co-operative values, *Immedia*, on the other hand, is a private company founded in 1987, which started out as an advertising agency and has now moved into events management. The main aim, I am told, is to broadly enrich the cultural life of Mauritius through the creation and provision of musical concerts, theatrical plays, art exhibitions, variety shows and so forth in any of the languages spoken in Mauritius. However, my interview (4 Sept 2006) with the owner, Rama Poonoosamy, reveals a more nuanced stance than the aim suggests. Poonoosamy, as he himself acknowledges, is a product of those '*années de braises*' and one of the original members of the MMM party. Following the MMM's unexpected landslide in the 1982 national elections, he became the first Minister of Arts and Culture on the island. The introduction of Mauritian Creole as a linguistic category within the

State drama festival was due to his efforts and it is a legacy that has carried on. How his own political views influence the work of *Immedia* will be shown further on in this chapter.

My interviews at the MECHR took place with two representatives, Chief Arts Officers Taramatee Kumar and, later on, Vijay Veeramootoo, from the drama unit. Although the interviewees themselves were not in charge at the time when *Misye Peng* was staged in 1992, the rationale behind its production has not changed since then, as we will see further on. What is made clear to me from the outset is that the only Creole theatre promoted by the Ministry is what takes place within the festival. Assistance is not always made available for other Creole productions, so that even though some of the theatre professionals, such as Ramana and Valayden, once performed for the State drama festivals, not many actually maintain that theatrical connection with the Ministry.

6.2 Ideological motivations

Below, I explore the ideological convictions of the patrons and the professionals, and the stance they adopt in order to legitimate their beliefs and justify their actions. I focus on four specific areas: the importance of Mauritian Creole as a symbol of nationhood, its use in the provision of educational equality, the pedagogical usefulness of Creole theatre and finally, the place of Creole within this multicultural society.

6.2.1 Creole, symbol of Mauritian nationhood

Lefevre (2004: 13) suggests that translators often produce their work within the parameters set by the dominant ideology of their culture. Although such ideology or framework of societal values and beliefs can act as a constraint, it can also be

challenged. For Mauritian translators, one obvious constraint to overcome is the general scepticism accorded to the importance of Mauritian Creole. As early as 1967,

Virahsawmy, for instance, was proclaiming in *L'Express* that:

We, Mauritians, have something in common. It is a useful tool for the creation of a nation. It can release the feelings of loyalty, self-respect and complete participation. It is the Creole we speak. (cited by Hills 2001: 51)

Even for the other translators, Somanah (interview 2 Sept 2006) and Etienne (interview 20 Nov 2007), whose commitment to the Creole language may not appear as forceful and publicly outspoken as their colleague's, or as prolific in terms of translations produced, to write in Creole constitutes a political act, a statement that explicitly asserts their faith in the language as an obvious unifying factor for their country.

This viewpoint is shared by most of the theatre professionals, including the actors Dussaram, Mootien, Valayden, and the directors, Favory, Narraidoo and Ramana. Some of them (Mootien, Valayden, Favory and Ramana) had been active participants during the '*années de braises*' when Creole theatre was then known as a form of '*théâtre engagé*' (Fievez 1993: 120), a site for strong nationalist claims, asserting among other things the cultural significance of this language for the country. Ramana, reminiscing about those days, believed that "*nous avons participé à la révolution culturelle à Maurice, surtout au niveau du théâtre créole, pour rendre sa place à la langue*" (Ramjanally and Runghen 2004 – "we have taken part in the Mauritian cultural revolution, especially at theatre level, to give the language its due place"). Although the strident militancy of the 1970s and early 1980s has been toned down in recent years (no director or actor would, in fact, dismiss the role of plays in other languages, especially English and French, within the theatrical development and diversity of the island),

Mootien, Valayden, Favory and Ramana agree upon the importance and necessity of a theatre that gives a more accurate linguistic representation of Mauritius as a nation. Furthermore, as Favory points out (interview 28 Aug 2006), Creole theatre gives a more accurate visual representation of Mauritian society in all its diversity, since oral and auditory accessibility enables the use of multi-ethnic casts. Whereas plays based on non-Creole languages (apart from English and French) are restricted to performers from specific linguistic backgrounds, actors for Creole productions can be chosen from all sections of the population. Indeed, from press reports, I note the presence of Gloria Ng Yin Kui, a Chinese actress, playing the lead female role in *Tartif Froder* in 1999 (*Week-End* 10 Oct 1999), Jean Marc Juhel, the Creole actor in the fitting role of the half-caste Kalibann in *Toufann* in 1995 (Patel 1995), Georgie Espitalier-Noel, a member of one of the most well-known Franco-Mauritian families, impressing the critics as Brabannsyö in *Otelo* in 1992 (Savripène 1992), and many players from Indian descent who also trod the boards alongside them. By negotiating a reality that the audience can subscribe to and identify with, this visual dimension of theatre is, in effect, being used to promote a notion of ‘Mauritianhood’.

The whole strategy of LPT’s publishing programme is founded upon a policy of affirmation for Mauritian Creole. In its 1997 Language Declaration (Ledikasyon Pu Travayer 2007: 120), LPT publicly asserts that “*nu langaz Kreol transand tu divizyon e inifye lepep Repiblik Mauritius*” (“our Creole language transcends all divisions and unifies the people of the Republic of Mauritius”¹¹²). It is a belief that Alain Ah-Vee,

¹¹² It must be noted that their public declaration also pledged to encourage the “*ful rekonesans langaz Kreol e Bhojpuri*” (“full acknowledgment of Creole and Bhojpuri”). When this was queried, Ah-Vee

LPT's spokesperson, puts to me in different words but which, in essence, bears the same meaning: "a Mauritian identity can only be done through Mauritian Creole because it is through this language that Mauritians live, express their emotions, their worries, their lives and so forth" (interview 6 Sept 2006).

In local press interviews, Poonoosamy has openly admitted that the role of *Immedia* is to promote his vision of a Mauritian nation by encouraging local artistic creativity, whether in writing or on the stage (Esoof 2006). It was *Immedia* who, in 1994, created an annual literary magazine, entitled *Collection Maurice*, inviting Mauritian writers (including those who live and publish their work abroad) to contribute short stories in English, French or Creole. It was also *Immedia* who started the local annual theatre festival in 2002, encouraging local troupes (and inviting the occasional foreign ones) to perform in Creole, Bhojpuri, English or French. One may say that Poonoosamy's vision of nationhood largely relies on the maintenance of the various languages spoken on the island. And yet, looking into his biographical details and speaking to the man himself reveal a strong conviction that nationhood in Mauritius must necessarily include the acknowledgement of the importance of Mauritian Creole in the political and socio-cultural development of the country. Poonoosamy was the President of the University of Mauritius Students Union in May 1975 at the time of the students' protests. In his own words:

candidly admitted that Bhojpuri would eventually be dropped as Mauritian Creole became more and more accepted as the main national language. It was originally included for two specific reasons: (a) the need to recognize the influence of Bhojpuri on the development of Mauritian Creole, and (b) Bhojpuri, like Mauritian Creole, had been the language of the oppressed and promoting it was LPT's way of righting a wrong (interview 6 Sept 2006). I suggest that since some of the other Asian language speakers can also claim to have been oppressed, LPT's acknowledgement of Bhojpuri can arguably be construed as a political move designed to win the support of Bhojpuri speakers, who constitute the second largest linguistic group of the island. See Appendix III.

Depuis l'Université, j'ai toujours agi, avec d'autres, pour la promotion de la langue mauricienne. [...] Lorsque nous faisons la promotion de la langue mauricienne, je n'ai jamais affirmé être contre les autres langues. Mais, je voulais éliminer ces complexes de supériorité ou d'infériorité par rapport à une langue. [...] J'utiliserai toujours le créole mauricien, même pour les discussions les plus sérieuses et les plus exigeantes. Ce qui est logique, puisque la plupart des foyers mauriciens utilise le mauricien. Certains foyers utilisent le français, encore moins utilisent l'anglais. Mais ne me dites pas qu'il y a des foyers où l'on parle le tamoul, l'hindi, le maharati, l'urdu .. Ça, c'est uniquement pour les recensements officiels. (cited by Martial 2002: 224-225)

Since University, I have always worked, with others, to promote the Mauritian language. [...] When we were promoting the Mauritian language, it was never a statement against the other languages. But, I wanted to eliminate those inferiority or superiority complexes. [...] I will always use Mauritian Creole, even for the most serious or challenging discussions. This is logical, since most Mauritian households speak Creole. Some households use French, even less use English. But do not tell me that there are households where Tamil, Hindi, Marathi, Urdu ... are spoken. This is only for official censuses.

Like many of the other professionals, he sought to fight prejudices against Mauritian Creole. He did so by producing songs and theatre plays in the vernacular. It was his ministerial decision that sent a Creole-speaking cast (Favory's troupe) abroad to an international theatre festival for the first time in 1984. It was he, as head of *Immedia*, who decided to produce *Otelo*, the first Shakespearean drama performed in Creole. In fact, most of the translations of Molière and Shakespeare that have been staged (*Otelo*, *Toufann*, *Trazedi Makbes*, *Tartif Froder*) have been *Immedia*'s productions. Their latest Creole venture was the 2006 organization of a competition to encourage local playwrighting, in which the winning play, *Abé Mwa* (written by Valayden), was subsequently produced.

6.2.2 Use of Mauritian Creole in education

The sentiment “that language is a major problem and a stumbling block in Mauritian education” (Bunwaree 1994: 108) is shared by most patrons and professionals, because they believe that the State practises a form of linguistic discrimination by its unwillingness to introduce Mauritian Creole in schools. For some, such as LPT, Virahsawmy and Favory, the State is tacitly creating second-class citizens by clearly favouring those who are wealthy and competent enough to acquire the ‘right’ linguistic capital, when it should be encouraging the use of Creole to create equal opportunities for every one and to promote the fact that every child has a place in this society.

To many of my interviewees, the problem of language acquisition is encapsulated in the use of English as the medium of instruction. It is seen as one of the main factors that encourage the perpetuation of an elitist society, creating educational underachievement and failures which can eventually lead to social exclusion. Although education is technically free, it carries with it the powerful excluding mechanism of private tuition¹¹³, which children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are unlikely to be able to afford. And since formal education, from primary level onwards, is regulated by fiercely competitive examination systems, it is not surprising to find a somewhat high level of failure at the CPE exams (see Section 2.4.4.1). Those who fail and who are then directed to state prevocational schools have little likelihood of improving their level of

¹¹³ The 1990 Ramdoyal report calls it “a parallel system of education” (cited by Bunwaree 1994: 113). Private tuition is a deeply entrenched phenomenon in Mauritius, which even affects primary school pupils. It is not meant for ‘weak’ students but rather, it is seen as a path to success in this highly competitive educational system. Its widespread use (or abuse), since the unreported and untaxed tuition fees can make a big difference to a teacher’s earnings, has often been condemned as being one of the reasons for perpetuating the inequity of the state educational system (Baptiste 2002: 103, Hilbert 28 July 2006).

literacy, because most of these prevocational schools also use English as their medium of instruction.

In my meetings with the patrons and the professionals, all of them, except for the representatives of the MECHR and the director of *Misyé Peng*, were openly in favour of the use of Mauritian Creole in schools. In October 2007, four of them, Ah-Vee, Poonoosamy, Favory and Virahsawmy, even co-signed an open letter addressed to the State to help mark the International Day of Creole language and culture. The letter stated that:

Avek evolisyon lang Kreol Morisien kouma enn lang ekri, nou dimann Leta fer introdiksyon lang maternel (setadir lang ki servi toulezour) kouma medium formel dan lekòl; sa vèdir servi li pou montre lir-ekrik, matematik, syans e ouisi pou aprann lezot lang. Nou dimann Leta, bann institisyon piblik ek prive, Lakour, bann lasosyasyon, sindika, parti politik, media servi enn grafi standar, kouma Grafi larmoni (cited by Ah-Choon 24 Oct 2007).

With the development of Mauritian Creole as a written language, we demand that the State formally introduce the mother tongue (i.e. the everyday language) as medium of instruction in schools; that it should be used to teach reading, writing, mathematics, science and other languages. We demand that the State, the Court of Justice, public and private organizations, socio-cultural associations, trade unions, political parties, and the media use a standardized spelling, such as the orthography of harmony.

In fact, two of the signatories, Virahsawmy and LPT, are particularly well-known in Mauritian society for their active involvement in the use of Creole for literacy purposes. Since 2005, Virahsawmy has teamed up with the *Bureau d'Éducation Catholique* (BEC), the organization in charge of Catholic schools in Mauritius, to introduce their *Prevokbek* programme, which I have already mentioned in Section 2.4.4.1. By Mauritian standards, this *Prevokbek* programme (using ‘*grafi larmoni*’) is nothing short of revolutionary, as it focuses on the acquisition of both writing and reading skills in Creole. Virahsawmy’s role here is as translator and purveyor of pedagogical material, as

well as being responsible for ensuring the linguistic formation of the teaching staff.

Tests carried out in July 2006 have recorded an improvement in the academic development of the *Prevokbek* students¹¹⁴ and have encouraged the organizers to cautiously consider the possible move of introducing Creole in some Catholic primary schools as early as 2010. On the other hand, although the government has publicly recognized the efforts of the BEC to improve educational levels in Mauritius, it has also refused to consider the use of Creole within state prevocational schools (Hilbert 9 Sept 2006, Etienne 2007).

If Virahsawmy's approach has been to target Catholic prevocational schools, LPT, in contrast, has been committed to adult literacy since its inception, when it was discovered that 50% of Mauritians at the time were illiterate (Kamanah 1996). Classes are usually aimed at the poor sections of society, those who, for all sorts of reasons, have been unable to experience any benefit from a state education. These literacy courses are taught by volunteers at a minimal cost¹¹⁵, either at LPT's headquarters, located in one of the poorer suburbs of the capital, or in several villages throughout the island. In 2004, LPT's efforts during the last 30 years were recognized by UNESCO who presented the organization with its Literacy Award (*L'Express* 21 June 2004). However, according to Ah-Vee (interview 6 Sept 2006), the role of LPT goes beyond teaching their students how to read and write. The literacy courses constitute a process of 'liberation' and

¹¹⁴ 200 third year students from a state prevocational school (where English, instead of Creole, was used as medium of instruction) were also asked to take part in literacy tests. The topics provided were similar in content, but the tests were set in English. The results showed that only 16% of these students obtained the average pass mark against 31% from the Catholic *Prevokbek* schools (Hilbert 9 Sept 2006, *Week-End* 17 Sept 2006).

¹¹⁵ Five rupees a month at the time of my interview with Ah-Vee (approximately ten pence in Mar 2009, when the exchange rate was roughly Rs50:£1).

empowerment, in that the pedagogical methods and materials used aim to valorize the students' daily experiences, and to enable them to understand and intervene in the socio-political realities around them; in other words, to function as fully integrated members of Mauritian society.

6.2.3 Mauritian Creole theatre, an 'educational' tool

In the same way that a Creole-centred education is held to be beneficial to Mauritian society as a whole, several patrons and professionals also believe that Creole plays constitute an additional tool that can make a positive intervention in Mauritian society, enabling it to thrive culturally by encouraging artistic creativity. Below, I also suggest that Creole plays are often used in an attempt to raise awareness of local socio-political issues in order to legitimize and promote the idea of a Mauritian nation.

Since the heady days of May 1975, Mauritian theatre, with more Creole plays being performed, has become, in Favory's words, a theatre "*ki tou dimoun kompran*" (cited by Sundanum 30 Aug 2002 – "which everybody understands"). Because Creole on the stage is not an instrument of exclusiveness, the professionals and the patrons I spoke to want to produce plays that do not constitute mere entertainment, even if some of them (Narraidoo interview 29 Aug 2006, Ramana interview 26 Aug 2006, Vel Veeramootoo interview 23 Nov 2007, Valayden interview 22 Dec 2007) readily admit that Creole theatre usually consists of light entertainment, which is easily accessible and which does not demand a lot of reflection on the part of its audience. They themselves see the stage more as an 'educational' space, where messages are transmitted and issues addressed. For instance, *Toufann* explores, among other things, the role of creolization and

miscegenation, bringing into sharp focus the ethnic situation in Mauritius (see Section 4.1.4). Molière is also particularly appropriate as it enables producers to reiterate the French playwright's well known and oft-quoted maxim that "*l'emploi de la comédie est de corriger les vices des hommes*" (Preface to *Le Tartuffe* 1965: 16 – "the task of comedy is to correct the vices of men"); hence the choice of *Tartif Froder* (as an exploration of religious hypocrisy). But clearly, it is through plays, other than translations, that the theatre professionals have tried to build socio-political awareness. For example, Virahsawmy's play, *Li* (1977)¹¹⁶, directed by Ramana in 1982, condemned the repressive governmental measures of the turbulent 1970s. *Tras* (1983), written and directed by Favory, dealt with social injustices and the economic power of the 'tablistan', the 'establishment', a Mauritian term which refers mainly to the people in charge of the sugar industry (i.e. the Franco-Mauritians). Valayden¹¹⁷ explored ethnic division (*Baraz*, 2002) and the intense academic pressure on 11 year olds taking part in the CPE exams (*Fil Mo Servolan*, 2006). These professionals, therefore, see their role in terms of alerting the public to local realities. It appears that their representation of this nation is that of an entity bound together by its specificities and sharing the same socio-cultural and political problems which need to be confronted and dealt with; by and large, a nation in the making.

It is also interesting to note that all of the professionals interviewed, apart from the translator, Etienne, were, or are currently, teachers, and consequently, there is one other aspect of theatre as an 'educational' tool, which they all (including Etienne) are in

¹¹⁶ *Li* was written following the author's imprisonment from 1971 to 1972.

¹¹⁷ When asked, Valayden, who wrote both *Baraz* and *Fil Mo Servolan*, stated that neither script was available to the general public (interview 22 Dec 2007).

agreement with: that Creole plays should benefit the student population. Mindful that literature syllabuses at secondary school level always include plays by Molière and Shakespeare, and mindful of comprehension difficulties arising from the lack of linguistic familiarity, the actors and the directors are conscious of the need to bring these texts¹¹⁸ to life through the creative process that a *mise-en-scène* is. They want the texts to be understood and appreciated as stage plays rather than to be seen purely as course books to be studied for achieving good grades. As theatre practitioners and also as teachers, their concern is that education in Mauritius is not child-centred, but competition-centred, marked as an economic and job-related pursuit, where rote learning and memorization in an unfamiliar language constitute the norms. According to most of my interviewees, this leaves many children with little ability to express their creativity or their imagination. To them, a more appropriate pedagogy must incorporate the use of theatre and other arts subjects in order to teach children self-expression, and a fair and balanced construction of the world around them. More importantly, this holistic approach, like the use of Mauritian Creole, is designed to help counter the high level of academic failure and at the same time, produce well-adjusted citizens, assured of themselves, of their place in this nation and ultimately in the world.

6.2.4 Upholding multiculturalism

It is evident during my meetings with Vel Veeramootoo, the director of *Misye Peng*, and the representatives of the MECHR that their views on Mauritian Creole and its role in the socio-cultural development of the island are different from the other patrons' and

¹¹⁸ To be fair, it must be admitted once again, that none of them would restrict themselves to the Creole translations only.

professionals', although to be fair, none of the three interviewees decries the importance of Creole as a lingua franca for all the different communities.

However, Vijay Veeramootoo and Taramatee Kumar are adamant that, as civil servants, their responsibilities and those of their department are encapsulated in the mission statement of the Ministry's Culture Division, which is "to foster a balanced and harmonious Mauritian society through consolidation of existing pluralism, promotion of creativity and the celebration of cultural values"¹¹⁹. They see themselves as guardians of the current multicultural orthodoxy. In other words, the state rationale that governs the production of the annual drama festivals, where Vel Veeramootoo directed *Misyé Peng* in 1992, is to perpetuate the existing discourse of plurality in diversity. The State's first festival, started in 1951, was only intended for an English-speaking audience, but has since been extended so that the current format now includes ten languages – English, French, Creole, Bhojpuri, Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telegu, Urdu and Mandarin¹²⁰. Even for the production of *Misyé Peng* which was staged in the context of an international conference on Creole Studies¹²¹, the performance was partly intended to present to the many foreign conference participants the official image of a rainbow nation, whose linguistic diversity was an economic asset for the country. In his speech (in English) at the drama competition, Mr Choonee, then Minister of Arts and Culture, praised the richness of Creole as a language, but went on to suggest that in the Mauritian context, it

¹¹⁹ See the MECHR's webpage at <http://www.gov.mu/portal/site/mac/menuitem.d48926ead3d9ed9ea6597adaa0208a0c/>. Accessed 10 Mar 2009.

¹²⁰ See the MECHR's webpage at <http://www.gov.mu/portal/site/mac/menuitem.98812505f5550bafa6597adaa0208a0c/>. Accessed 10 Mar 2009.

¹²¹ It was the Seventh International Colloquium on Creole Studies organized by the University of Mauritius.

was the diversity of languages that provided social harmony, and without which there would have been no economic development (Grimaud 1992).

This practice of linguistic categorization can arguably be viewed as a way of nurturing talents for the theatre and of promoting the use of ethnic or so-called ‘ancestral’ languages. However, I would suggest that in the Mauritian context, it reduces theatre (and language) to the level of ethnic compartmentalization and as such, endorses the separation of linguistic groups and encourages a form of differentiation or exclusion, produced by linguistic incomprehension and/or social elitism. Indeed, plays performed in Asian languages are unlikely to be comprehensible to those spectators whose linguistic appurtenance is different from the actors’, while comprehension of the ‘prestigious’ languages, French and in particular English, is too often largely dependent upon the level of education attained. However, the idea that linguistic categorization within the drama festivals may reflect and reinforce the ethnic fragmentation of the island is, to my two interviewees at the MECHR, a moot argument. All prevailing languages and cultures need to be preserved. To my comment that spectators would perhaps not wish to see a play in a language they did not understand, Vijay Veeramootoo (interview 21 Nov 2007) replied that, to facilitate comprehension, theatre programmes usually contained a short résumé of the plot in English. In fact, the programmes (including the French one) are mostly published in English. It reinforces the idea that the status of English as the preferred language for official use is not likely to be undermined, even if the quality of the written English itself, as demonstrated in the

résumés, is somewhat poor¹²². Perhaps, a more accurate representation of the Ministry's beliefs can be found in its calendar for the 2008 drama festival, when it places Creole as the last category, with English, followed by French as the top two, and the Asian languages sandwiched in between¹²³.

6.3 Promoting their 'causes'

Having considered the reasons why the patrons and the professionals interviewed choose to translate, publish, perform in or produce Creole plays, I would now like to explore how they express these ideological convictions. I aim to show how measures are adopted by the patrons to ensure a smooth implementation of their strategies by the professionals, although it is clear that not all of the professionals are inclined to rely on the patrons for the promotion of their works. What is also obvious is the way in which some of the patrons and professionals have deliberately tried to increase the visibility of their 'causes'.

6.3.1 Patrons' control

Patrons do set certain parameters, as is obvious in the Mauritian context; parameters, which many of the professionals have to conform to. In the case of the LPT competitions, for instance, the choice of a spelling system is initially left to would-be translators, but a later contract between prize-winners and LPT gives the latter the right to implement its own system, a right which it will exercise before publication of the

¹²² Here is an example which I found in the 2007 programme of the finals of the Tamil language drama competition: "Azaghee is a dressmaker while her husband is a mason. Their younger son kumaren is very studious whereas, the elder son kannen is a rowdy and he indulges himself in evil deeds. Finally, upon the advice of a priest..." (Ministry of Arts and Culture 2007a).

¹²³ See Appendix VII.

target texts (Ah-Vee interview 6 Sept 2006). Translators can also be asked by members of the jury to ‘improve’ their texts if necessary, as confirmed to me by Etienne who was required to make changes to his *Otelo* (interview 20 Nov 2007).

In the case of the MECHR, rules and regulations regarding the drama festivals are clearly stipulated in their handbook updated every year. The duration of the play, the availability of technical assistance, the dress rehearsal and so forth are all specified, including this requirement that “only plays which have been approved by the Ministry may be staged” (2007b: 1). The Script Committee, brought together by the Ministry, is responsible for examining all potential scripts and any controversial ones are sent back to the writer/director for amendments. If no consensus is reached between the two parties, the script in question is then forwarded to the Board of Film and Stage Plays (also appointed by the Ministry) who has the final say. During our interview, Vijay Veeramootoo assures me that plays very rarely end up with the Board, as more often than not, authors are willing to make the changes demanded. There is, however, no written definition of what constitutes a controversy. The decision rests upon the Script Committee and ultimately upon the Board. When pressed, Veeramootoo informs me that the censorship rule would apply to any comment likely to cause offence to a political leader, religious leader or socio-cultural organization, anything that could be perceived as inciting social unrest. The lack of precision surrounding this rule, the fact that it is left to the discretion of ministerial nominees, or that it is there in the first place, indicates that it potentially gives the government a free rein to control and to dismiss any work that does not conform to its own expectations and viewpoints, or worse, any work that casts a critical eye in its direction.

6.3.2 Economic considerations

Lefevre has suggested that economic considerations can also regulate the relationship between patrons and professionals (2004: 16). To promote their ‘causes’, Mauritian patrons have indeed used economic incentives to ensure that the work produced corresponds to their expectations, although, as I explain below, patronage for the professionals working with *Immedia* has sometimes proved to be economically beneficial in more ways than one.

The introduction of writing competitions in 1987 by LPT was intended to encourage creative writing in Mauritian Creole and to promote the language (and LPT’s spelling system) at the same time. These competitions, which have been organized four¹²⁴ more times since then, are divided into different categories, such as theatre, poetry, children’s literature, fiction and translation, with each category offering the prospect of a financial prize, although work from any category can collect the star prize of Rs10, 000¹²⁵ if considered to be of outstanding quality; a prize which *Otelo* collected in 1989. LPT, however, reserves the rights not to hand out awards. In 2004 for instance, the main translation prize was not presented, because the quality of the texts submitted was considered to be too poor. Instead a lesser award, entitled ‘special prize’, was specifically created for the occasion (Ah-Vee interview 6 Sept 2006). Similarly, the MECHR encourages participation in its drama festivals by offering financial incentives. Allowances are provided to each participating troupe to cover expenses incurred and

¹²⁴ 1989, 1995, 2000 and 2004.

¹²⁵ Approximately £200 in Mar 2009, when the exchange rate was roughly Rs50:£1.

special awards are available for those who make it to the finals (Ministry of Arts and Culture 2007b: 4-6).

In the case of *Immedia*, Poonosamy and his team take on the role of theatre producers responsible for the financial administration of the plays; in other words, they sort out the finances, contact potential sponsors, pay for the advertising and so forth. This, in turn, allows the directors to concentrate on the interpretation and the mise-en-scène of the play, freed from the constraints of financial considerations. As many directors privately indicated to me, such considerations can constitute a frustrating and thankless task since theatre is not necessarily a financially rewarding occupation in Mauritius. Witness the case of *Otelo*: the play, when performed in 1992, made a loss of Rs 89,730¹²⁶, which, luckily for the director, Favory, was absorbed by *Immedia* (*Week-End* 20 Sept 1992).

6.3.3 Independence

However, the idea that patronage is only made up of a vertical relationship where patrons control what professionals do is not entirely true. Certainly in the specific case of Virahsawmy, there is no dividing-line between patron and professional since both roles are more often than not assumed by the translator himself.

In Virahsawmy's eyes, this independent stand assures him the freedom to maintain his position without the need to submit to parameters set by others (although, he does admit that in the early days of his writing career, it was out of necessity that he wore both hats, as no publisher was remotely interested in his work, then considered too

¹²⁶ Roughly £1795, if the exchange rate is about Rs50:£1 (Mar 2009).

radical and definitely not economically profitable). His own works were initially printed and published, using a publishing company he himself set up, called *Boukie Banane*, although two of his translations, *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* and *Trazedi Makbes*, were printed by LPT in 1995 and 1997, respectively. Even in the latter case, a concession was made by LPT since the two target texts were printed using Virahsawmy's own spelling system. The late 1990s saw his increasing utilization of computerized technology to circulate his works, including his translations, in an effort to save money, effort and time on printing and physical distribution. Even then, the rationale behind making his writings freely available on the Web was to generate more interest from those who might not have otherwise been interested in his books (interview 29 Aug 2006).

6.3.4 Visibility

Virahsawmy's independent stance is not the only tactic he has adopted for his agenda. In this section, I show how he does not espouse the 'invisible' approach, disapproved of by Lawrence Venuti¹²⁷. His pro-active intervention takes on two forms; firstly, via his creative works, including his translations, and secondly, through his regular use of the written press. I also show how the two patrons, LPT and *Immedia*, endeavour to keep a public profile.

In his translations, the blatant substitution of source culture specific items by those belonging to Mauritian society is an obvious sign of Virahsawmy's presence. This, we have already discussed in the previous chapter. But, there are other textual

¹²⁷ According to Venuti (1995: 1-17), translations for the Anglo-American world are nowadays expected to conform to norms of fluency, therefore requiring translators to produce transparent texts. This domesticating strategy, however, constitutes a form of invisibility, or worse, self-annihilation which contributes to the marginalization of the translators' status as they are then seen as inferior to the source authors.

manifestations of his visibility. In *Toufann*, for instance, a direct reference to Shakespeare allows him to ‘poke fun’ at the English playwright, allowing him to distance himself from the source text and present his own creative skill.

YAGO Mon’nn plen, plen. Sak fwa enn zafer pa pe mars korek-korek, tou dimoun rod mwa. Bizen enn koupab? Sirman Yago sa. Depi ki sa bezsomin Shakespeare finn servi mwa pou li bez Othello ek Desdemona tou dimoun kwar momem responsab tou problem dan lemonn. (*Toufann* II. 6)

YAGO I am sick and tired of this. Every time things go wrong, people look for me. Need a culprit? There’s Yago. Since that wretched Shakespeare used me to mess things up between Othello and Desdemona, everyone thinks I’m responsible for all the problems in the world.

Also in *Toufann*, Virahsawmy is not shy in acknowledging his own intervention. At the end of the play, Kaspalto and Dammarro, the jesters, are complaining that there is no prospect of social mobility for people who, like them, come from a poor background.

DAMMARRO Be nou, nou gon nou? Zame nou pou vinn lerwa. Tou gopia gagn drwa vinn lerwa. Me nou zanfane lepep, fer koumadir nou pa ekziste.
ARYEL Pa trakase, mo pou koz ar misie la. Mo pou dimann li ekri enn nouvo zistwar kot zot zot vinn lerwa. (*Toufann* III. 1)

DAMMARRO But what about us, do you take us for dodos? We will never become kings. Any idiot will do. But we, children of the masses, it’s as if we don’t exist.
ARYEL Don’t worry, I’ll have a chat with the boss. I’ll ask him to write a new story where you, you will become kings.

Virahsawmy did go on to write another play featuring Kaspalto and Dammarro, which is entitled *Prezidan Otelo*¹²⁸ (2003), although sadly, neither fool acceded to the throne.

That Virahsawmy’s translation approach does not consist of, what Venuti calls, “an illusion of transparency” (1995: 1) is evident. He sets out to affirm his rights as creative

¹²⁸ The play is currently available from Virahsawmy’s website at <http://www.boukiebanane.orange.mu/polankteatOTELO.html>. Accessed 10 Mar 2009.

author of the translated text, putting himself on an equal footing with the source author, and using translation as a springboard for his own ideas and to engender further works.

Virahsawmy has also tried different ways to raise the profile of his ‘cause’ in the public consciousness. As a zealous political activist in the 1970s and 1980s, he is still remembered as the one who took the newly formed MMM party to its first electoral victory in 1970; a victory made all the more significant in that the election had been held in the then Labour Prime Minister’s constituency, supposedly a Labour stronghold (Addison and Hazareesingh 1993: 111). This, and the clever way in which he uses the press, then and now, enable him to disseminate his ideas. Furlong and Ramharai (2006: 517) report that shortly after his return from Edinburgh University, he had his first article published in *L’Express* of 12 Aug 1967. In the heightened atmosphere of the pre-independence period, the article, on the unifying role of Mauritian Creole, was intended to be polemical. In fact, over the next few months, well into the following year, Virahsawmy continued to write ‘controversial’ articles which appeared in the local press – on the use of Creole in Mauritian education as a way of eradicating illiteracy, on the ‘wrong’ perception of Creole as a mere dialect, on linguistic prejudices in Mauritius and so forth (Furlong and Ramharai 2006: 518-525). In the mid-1980s, Virahsawmy’s articles (mainly *L’Express* 4 April 1985, *L’Express* 3 Mar 1988) focused the debate on the standardization of a Mauritian Creole spelling system, publicly recognizing that his own system had evolved towards a more simplified version and openly inviting the public to write in with their views and suggestions. Over the years, he has also had his poems published in the newspapers and *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* was even serialized in *L’Express* in 1994 (Collen 1995). Decades of efforts and regular exposure in the written

press mean that Virahsawmy's involvement in any linguistic and related socio-cultural debates that take place on the island is usually reported and his views requested. In this way, Virahsawmy shows that he is not a writer shut away in his ivory tower, dispensing ideas and advices only to a small like-minded coterie, but is visibly engaged in taking the debate to the public; a task which appears unrewarding considering that the interest for Creole literature is not often forthcoming.

Like Virahsawmy, the two patrons, LPT and *Immedia*, are fairly media-savvy. For LPT, even though it is a small organization staffed entirely by volunteers, press conferences are not rare occurrences. In 2006 alone, it had recourse to *Le Mauricien* and its week-end publications, *Week-End Scope* and *Week-End*, on average once every four weeks to publicize its activities and to make its voice heard on certain issues¹²⁹.

Similarly, *Immedia*, as one of the major local providers of cultural and entertainment events, is never out of the written press for long. These events take place throughout the year and inevitably keep *Immedia* and Poonoosamy in the public eye. I looked at the daily national newspaper, *L'Express* (including its Sunday paper, *L'Express Dimanche*) throughout 2006 and counted no less than 37 articles¹³⁰, on average one every ten days, featuring or mentioning the company and its director. This was due not only to *Immedia*'s work and theatre-related activities, but also to Poonoosamy himself, who was interviewed a couple of times because of his past as a well-known political activist¹³¹.

¹²⁹ See Appendix VIII.

¹³⁰ See Appendix IX.

¹³¹ 2006 marked the thirty-first anniversary of the May 1975 student protests, of which Poonoosamy, as I have mentioned previously, was one of the leaders (see Section 6.2.1).

Conclusion

By using Lefevere's systemic approach in a flexible way, this chapter has aimed to expose the ideological forces at work in the wider process of theatre translation in Mauritius, from linguistic transfer to publication, through to stage production. First of all, in Section 6.1, I identified those patrons and professionals who had been actively involved in this socio-cultural process and who had been interviewed for this research.

In the next section, I considered the reasons behind their involvement. It became clear that in this effort to shape the cultural development of the country, there were opposing forces at play. While governmental policies were mainly interested in upholding the view that unity could only be achieved by maintaining the multicultural and multilingual status quo, it was mostly the civil society (private patrons and professionals) who insisted that the promotion of Mauritian Creole, through its use in education and on the stage, was essential in fashioning a sense of nationhood. However, although united in this belief, the latter group was not as homogenized as it sounded. Theatre patrons and professionals, for instance, were highly unlikely to limit themselves to acting in, directing and producing Creole plays only, justifying their reasons on creative and artistic grounds.

Finally, in Section 6.3, I showed how patrons and professionals furthered their agendas. Patrons did so mainly by controlling how the texts and the plays were produced and through economic incentives. Rather than work under patronage, one of the professionals, however, preferred to adopt an independent stance and a tactic of

visibility that was aimed at keeping the profile of his 'cause' in public eye. Such a 'visible' approach was also implemented by two of the patrons through the written press.

While this chapter has examined the role of many of those who were involved in the process of translation and its stage production afterwards, I suggest, however, that an analysis of 'movers and shakers' only would be incomplete without an investigation of those for whom the target texts and the plays were intended. The next chapter will, therefore, be looking at the addressees themselves in order to determine whether the target texts and the plays have had as much of an impact as the patrons and the professionals would have liked.

Chapter Seven – Evaluating the Target Audience

Introduction

This chapter will aim to evaluate the potential audience, both readers and spectators, targeted by the patrons and the professionals. The rationale behind such an evaluation is to find out whether the translations and the plays have caused any impact upon Mauritian society; in other words, whether the promotion of Creole, as articulated on the page and on the stage, has helped in the construction of a national identity.

This chapter is divided into three main sections, with Section 7.1 focusing on the readership. In the last decade or so, Mauritius has promoted itself as a highly literate society whose knowledge of several languages constitute valuable assets, in order to attract overseas investment and encourage the development of a service economy (tourism, call centres and an offshore financial industry). As a starting point, I try to find out if the existing figures trumpeted by the Mauritian government can be reliably used to represent the overall potential target readers on the island. Would their level of reading skills enable them to read Shakespeare and Molière? I then look at three specific sets of addressees – the ‘middle-class’, the local academic community and the literate monoglots in Creole – which the translators and the publishers had in mind. My general observation is that the target texts do not appeal to a wide audience and the reasons for this are considered in Section 7.1.5.

In Section 7.2, I first look at the norms of textual production in order to attest to the validity of my above observation. I examine the output of the local publishing industry between 1996 and 2003, by dividing the publications into different linguistic categories

and by comparing them. Such a comparison is intended to give us an insight into the ‘behaviour’ of the publishing industry and, at the same time, to help us determine the relevance of Creole texts in the local linguistic and socio-cultural contexts. I then look at the role of the main publishers to find out why the Creole publishing industry is far from flourishing. If Creole books are not produced on a large scale, how easily obtainable are they for interested readers? In Section 7.2.3, I give a brief account of efforts trying to locate the target texts as a way of illustrating that Creole books are not always accessible.

In Section 7.3, theatre audiences constitute the subject of my analysis. First of all, I explore the spectators’ reaction to the plays as reported by the press. Then, I examine a specific set of addressees – student audiences – as identified by the theatre directors themselves. Using the latter’s observations and an analysis of articles provided by a variety of newspapers, I also assess the possibility of a theatre audience that is guided by ethnic considerations. Ethnicity, however, is not the only factor to consider with regards to theatre attendance in Mauritius; other variables, such as the costs of tickets and the location of theatre venues, also come into play and these are duly taken into account to explain who may, or may not, constitute the target audience. Finally, I look at governmental contribution to Creole theatre and theatre in general.

7.1 Readers

Readers constitute one of the essential links in the development of textual production because, as recipients, they allow the dissemination of ideas to take place. The aim of this section is, therefore, to find out who the translators could be writing for. I also

consider the various factors which are likely to have an impact upon the level of target readership in Mauritius.

7.1.1 Targeting 'literate' readers

According to the 2000 population census report provided by H. Bundhoo (2005: 44), Director of the Mauritian Central Statistics Office (CSO), the literacy rate in Mauritius is 85.6%; a figure, which the government takes great pride in publicizing as it is among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa. The report also defines a literate person as any individual, aged 12 and above “who can both read and write, with understanding, a short simple sentence (in any language) on his/her everyday life” (Bundhoo 2005: 43). While recognizing the complexity of the notion of literacy¹³², I would also like to state that literacy as understood here, refers essentially to the skills of reading and writing, the acquisition of which, I believe, are essential for any individual today so that he/she can participate in society. True, as Holme points out (2004: 17), “people will master the skills of literacy to different degrees”, but my view is that the government’s definition is rudimentary and in doing so, has set the bar very low. I believe that the ability to read and write a simple sentence is unlikely to be sufficient nowadays to enable a Mauritian to use print information in such a way that he/she will be capable of making informed choices, of aiming for higher wage occupations and, in general, of making a full contribution to society (Holme 2004: 13). This is especially important for a society, like Mauritius, that wants to be known for its service industry, for which the level of literacy

¹³² I am aware that there are different aspects (not to mention definitions) of literacy, such as visual literacy, media literacy, cultural literacy (Barton 1994: 13) and so forth, but for this thesis, I am mainly referring to print literacy.

required from its labour force will not in the long run be satisfied by the definition provided by the State.

Consequently, I suggest that the current level of literacy on the island is, in fact, lower than the figure provided by the CSO, and more importantly, that it is unlikely to reflect the percentage of people able to read the target texts. To work out the number of potential readers, I have tried a method of calculation that consists of using the yardstick of educational attainment, given that literacy is predominantly acquired through formal education in Mauritius. Let me be clear though, that the aim of my calculation is to give us an indication of the possible percentage of Mauritians who might be able to read the source texts and their translations; it is not intended to be an accurate representation of how literate Mauritian society is. Based on the evidence that Shakespeare and Molière are part of the national curriculum at secondary level, that their texts are studied for the Cambridge exams and that students start to seriously prepare for these exams from the fourth form onwards¹³³, I examined the statistics provided in the 2000 population survey (Bundhoo 2001c) and combined the number of people who left school either after their fourth or fifth form with those who obtained their School Certificate ('O' levels), then with those who obtained their Higher School Certificate ('A' levels), and finally with those who completed a university degree. Out of a population of over 1.1 million in 2000, only 353,054 Mauritians, representing approximately 32% of the population¹³⁴,

¹³³ I acknowledge that not all secondary students would have studied English and French literature for their exams, as different subject choices could have been made prior to the start of their fourth form, but their inclusion here is deliberate, as I am assuming that from this stage, their linguistic level would be competent enough to enable them to read and understand Shakespeare and Molière, even if their field of study lay outside of literary pursuits.

¹³⁴ See Appendix X.

could potentially read Shakespeare and Molière and their translations¹³⁵. In my opinion, this percentage provides a more realistic representation of literate Mauritians who could constitute our potential target readership.

7.1.2 Targeting the ‘middle-class’

During our interview (29 Aug 2006), the translator, Virahsawmy, readily accepted that his readers would include those with a high educational attainment. In fact, he suggested that they were likely to be, for the most part, middle-class Mauritians (at least those with an open mind about Mauritian Creole). His idea of ‘middle-class’, although not precisely defined, presupposes a group of Mauritians who are not only well-educated (at least up till secondary education) but who are also well-off. In the light of his policy of making all his writings, including his translations, available on the internet, I argue that his readers certainly have to be wealthy enough to own or have access to a computer and educated enough to be computer literate.

Unfortunately, in Mauritius, as it is, no doubt, in many other developing countries, computers and technological equipment are not commodities that are easily available and accessible to the population. According to the journalist, Patrick Hilbert (*L'Express* 28 Dec 2007), a good quality computer would set a customer back Rs15000¹³⁶. On top of this, the cost of access to ADSL, set in 2006 at Rs750¹³⁷ per month for residential

¹³⁵ The translator, Virahsawmy, also using the yardstick of educational attainment, reached the even lower figure of 20% (1999: 31). His method of calculation was based, as he explained to me in an email (11 March 2008), on working out how many of the pupils who, having started formal schooling in Standard I at primary level, actually obtained their SC and then their HSC certificates, eleven and thirteen years later. He was, however, unable to provide me with any of the statistical data he used.

¹³⁶ Approximately £300 in Mar 2009, when the exchange rate was roughly Rs50:£1.

¹³⁷ Roughly £15, assuming the exchange rate is the same as above.

use¹³⁸, is too high for many, given that the average local monthly household disposable income is only Rs19025¹³⁹. It is not surprising, therefore, to read in the 2006 CSO¹⁴⁰ report that only:

- 24% of households in Mauritius have a computer,
- 16% of which have access to internet facilities in the home,
- 18% of the population (aged 12 and above) have used the internet.

The same survey also records that some 37.3% of the population are computer literate. Because of its low age categorization (it includes anyone aged 12 and over), I am inclined to think that the percentage of computer literate people able to read the target texts is actually lower than what is suggested by this figure.

At this stage, however, it would be fair to point out that the use of computer technology has grown exponentially and that prices have come down dramatically within the last few years on the island, as shown by the data in the 2006 CSO report I have been using for this sub-section¹⁴¹. If this trend continues, it may, in the future, have an impact on the accessibility of Virahsawmy's e-works. However, as it currently stands, the use of computerized technology to attract a potential readership is still limited to a generally prosperous, but small, section of the population.

¹³⁸ See data provided by the 2006 CSO report on Information and Communication Technologies in Mauritius: <http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/cso/ei648/ict.pdf> (Table 4). Accessed 2 Feb 2009.

¹³⁹ Roughly £380.50. Data taken from the Household Budget Survey of 2006/2007, undertaken by the CSO. See <http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/cso/ei664/intro.doc> (page 1). Accessed 7 April 2009.

¹⁴⁰ Figures taken from the CSO's 2006 Information and Communication Technologies report (as above). See <http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/cso/ei648/ict.pdf> (page 4). Accessed 7 April 2009.

¹⁴¹ See <http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/cso/ei648/ict.pdf> (Tables 3 and 4). According to this report, the total number of internet subscribers has increased from 61,252 in 2003 to 137,479 in 2006 (an increase of 124.5%) and the cheapest available ADSL tariff for residential use has decreased from Rs 1499 (£30) in 2003 to Rs750 (£15) in 2006. Accessed 7 April 2009.

7.1.3 Targeting the local academic community

If Shakespeare and Molière are essential school text-books, it is a logical step to assume that the local academic community would constitute a specific part of the target readership. The translator, Etienne (interview 20 Nov 2007), certainly thought so, as did Somanah (interview 2 Sept 2006). Neither of them, for inexplicable reasons, included students and members of the teaching profession at tertiary level, only at secondary level, despite the fact that there are several well-known Creole proponents employed in tertiary institutions, including for instance, Vinesh Hookoomsing, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mauritius (UoM), chair of the 2004 committee responsible for producing ‘*grafi larmoni*’ and member of the jury for LPT Creole writing competitions who awarded the translation prize to *Otelo*; Ramesh Ramdoyal, former director of the Mauritius Institute of Education, also a jury member for LPT competitions; Danielle Tranquille, former UoM lecturer who translated *Toufann* into French; and Arnaud Carpooran, current UoM lecturer and lexicographer.

For the translators, targeting the students and teachers of secondary schools is based on the belief that their translations would provide pedagogical help. Even the former Minister of Education, Armoogum Parsuraman, shared this sentiment when he wrote in the foreword to *Otelo*, that the translation “will . . . be of benefit to students in their studies and enable a better understanding and appreciation of the Shakespearean tragedy” (1991: vii), although this official endorsement is ironical, considering that Mauritian Creole is a language the State does not actively promote within its schooling system. However, I believe that this assumption that the target texts would prove

invaluable to the academic community is flawed. The fact that Shakespeare and Molière are examinable school texts is no guarantee that students and their teachers would want to read the Creole translations. The difficulties of reading Creole and societal prejudices towards the language, which I will explore later on, constitute potential deterrents. More importantly, it must be pointed out that a plethora of study aids and study notes written in the source languages are easily available in libraries and in bookshops.

7.1.4 Targeting literate monoglots in Mauritian Creole

According to the 2000 population census report (Bundhoo 2001d), there are 29,690 Mauritians (2.5% of the population) who profess to be able to only read and write in Creole. While not disputing the existence of literate monoglots in Creole, I have, once again, misgivings regarding the definition of literacy used in this instance (it is similar to the one used in Section 7.1.1). It is highly unlikely that everyone (aged 12 and above) included in this category, who could ‘read and write a simple sentence’ would be able to read and understand as complex a target text as, say, *Otelo*. Laura Hills (2001: 101) has suggested that individuals who profess to be literate only in Mauritian Creole, would include those who have acquired some basic literacy in French (for example, the first few years of primary teaching) but having subsequently lost the ability to read it, find Creole easier to follow¹⁴². Hills’ explanation may be true, but I do not think it is applicable to our potential readers. French is a compulsory subject beyond primary level and her statement implies that those monoglots are individuals who have left school

¹⁴² This assumption that written Creole can be followed if one has had some prior knowledge of French is presumably based on the notion that Mauritian Creole is essentially derived from French, which reinforces the idea that Creole is badly spoken French.

before or shortly after their primary education, which, as a result, makes them unlikely to be potential readers for our target texts. What is possible is that the potential target readers in this group are those who have been taught by LPT; an ideal target readership for whom the publication of the translations constitutes needed reading material.

However, it is also clear that this target readership represents a very small minority, since the yearly intake for the LPT literacy courses is usually between 100 to 300 students (Ledikasyon Pu Travayer 2007: 131).

7.1.5 Accounting for the low level of target readers

The sets of addressees delineated above do not, therefore, constitute a high level of readership. In this section, I explore some of the reasons why Creole texts do not have a wider appeal.

7.1.5.1 The unfamiliarity of Mauritian Creole orthography

It will be obvious by now that the majority of literate Mauritians have no need for Creole translations, because they already have English and French reading skills. In other words, a Mauritian reader of Creole texts (unless ‘educated’ by LPT) would only be able to read Creole if he/she has been schooled in English and French beforehand. As a result, familiarity with English and French texts and orthography means that any of the Creole spelling systems used in the target texts may initially appear alien, which could, I suggest, constitute a strong disincentive. The lack of formal teaching in Creole makes reading a Creole text a very laborious task, a deciphering event rather than an enjoyable fluid experience, as I discovered myself when I picked up my first target text. This, consequently, begs the question: how many, when confronted with this unfamiliar

orthography and this seemingly challenging task, would prefer to read the translations when they could read the source texts? The answer may help explain Ah-Vee's nod towards a possible English-reading audience in his preface to *Otelo* (1991: x):

Nu finn met Shakespeare so pyes an Angle a-kote tradiksyon an Kreol, pu ki u kapav lir Angle-la osi, si u ule.

We have put Shakespeare's text next to its Creole translation, so that you can also read the English version, if you so wish.

7.1.5.2 The 'inferior' value of Mauritian Creole

It will also be obvious by now that the long-held perception of Mauritian Creole as an 'inferior' language can act as a disincentive for many potential readers. This unwillingness to read Creole is related to two socio-cultural factors already mentioned previously. Firstly, Mauritian Creole does not give its readers access to power and the possibility for upward social mobility. Secondly, the educational system represents Shakespeare and Molière as symbols of prestigious languages and cultures; a prestige, which many refuse to extend to the translations on the basis that the linguistic 'performance' of the target texts cannot measure up to the source texts. Translations are, thus, seen as acts of sacrilege. Following the stage production of *Otelo* in 1992, one member of the public, Gossagne (see Section 4.2.4), wrote in the local press (*L'Express Dimanche* 16 Aug 1992):

How is it humanly possible to translate Shakespeare into Creole? It is simply an inconceivable idea. [...] Shakespeare was a linguistic genius and he wrote under permanent inspiration. How can inspiration (=linguistic magic) be translated? Can one translate Molière?

Furthermore, I would also suggest that the overall quality of the target texts produced may help reinforce the perceived 'inferior' status of Mauritian Creole. *Otelo* and *Misye*

Peng are printed on low-grade paper, with amateurish illustrations on their front covers¹⁴³, while editing mistakes are noticeable throughout all the target texts. Lack of capitalization (where necessary), inaccurate punctuation, spelling mistakes, missing lines and mistranslations are examples of poor editorial skills on the part of the translators and the publishers. In a couple of instances (such as the examples provided below), they even caused some confusion to this reader and had to be clarified by the translator himself. In the following extract, the target text misses a line, which subsequently alters the meaning of the dialogue. Cassius is talking about Julius Caesar to his fellow conspirator, Casca, identifiable here as the “willing bondsman”.

CASSIUS ... What trash is Rome,
 What rubbish and what offal, when it serves
 For the base matter to illuminate
 So vile a thing as Caesar! But, O grief,
 Where has thou led me? I, perhaps, speak this
 Before a willing bondsman (*Julius Caesar* I. 3. 108-113)

KASIOUS ... Rom, to fin vinn gonaz,	(Line 1)
Brousay ek lerip, lapousier dibwa,	(Line 2)
Kaka vas pou ekler foli-grander	(Line 3)
Enn esklav volonter ... (<i>Zil Sezar</i> I. 3)	(Line 4)

KASIOUS ... Rome, you have become worthless,
 Scrubs and splinters, wooden dust,
 Cow dung will light up (the) ego trips
 Of a willing slave ...

The impression, when reading the target extract, is that it is Zil Sezar himself who has been an “*esklav*” (Line 4 – “slave”). Upon query, the translator admitted (email 4 Aug 2006) that he had missed the following line – “*Ayo bondie! Kikfwa, mo pe koz ar*” –

¹⁴³ See Appendices XI and XII.

which needed to be incorporated before the fourth line so that the extract, back-translated into English, would have read:

KASIOUS ... Rome, you have become worthless,
Scrubs and splinters, wooden dust,
Cow dung will light up (his) ego trips.
Oh God! Perhaps, I am talking to
A willing slave ... (emphasis added)

In *Hamlet* (II. 2. 74-78), Voltemand, the Danish ambassador, delivers a request from the King of Norway to Claudius, the Danish monarch, that the latter grant permission to Norway's nephew to cross Denmark on his way to attack Poland.

VOLTEMAND ... And his commission to employ those soldiers,
So levied as before, against the Polack;
With an entreaty, herein further shown,
That it might please you to give quiet pass
Through your dominions for this enterprise ...

VOLTEMAND ... Zot finn formelman
Formil enn reket, dimann permision
Pou travers **Norvez** lor sime Pologn ... (*Prens Hamlet* – emphasis added)

VOLTEMAND ... They have formally
Requested your permission
To go through **Norway** to Poland ...

The translator admitted (email 24 April 2006) that '*Norvez*' should, in fact, be replaced by '*Dannmark*'¹⁴⁴.

The fact, therefore, that Creole literature can be associated with poor 'readability' value and appeal may help explain why the readership for the Creole target texts is not extensive. Indeed, although my statistical evaluation shows that there is a percentage of literate Mauritians (32%) who are potentially able to read the translations, it is evident

¹⁴⁴ This error has since been amended. See the latest version in the translator's website at <http://www.boukiebanane.orange.mu/polankshakHAMLET.html>. Accessed 31 Oct 2008.

that when we take into account the several economic and socio-cultural factors, mentioned above, the proportion of readers is likely to be even lower.

7.2 Local textual production

So far, my assessment of potential readers has relied, to some extent, upon an element of conjecture, even if the reasoning behind it is logical. This is because, short of a comprehensive national survey, it is not possible to quantify the target readers. In this section, I aim to verify the validity of my previous evaluation. I first look at what the norms of textual production in Mauritius are. I offer a quantitative analysis of texts published locally by comparing Creole texts with non-Creole texts. Then, I look at how the demand for Creole publications may be related to the public perception of the publishers and their beliefs. To conclude, I show how the printed target texts are not easily obtainable in Mauritius.

7.2.1 Creole texts vs. non-Creole texts

The following data have been taken from the National Bibliography of Mauritius (2002 and 2005), edited by Yves Chan Kam Lon, the director of the National Library, in two separate volumes for the years 1996 to 2003. Both volumes list all the publications printed in Mauritius during those eight years, and provide a fairly reliable and comprehensive source of information because the law (the 1996 National Library Act¹⁴⁵, article 15) requires all printers to deposit copies of each of their productions with the National Library.

¹⁴⁵ The National Library Act is available on the government's website at <http://www.gov.mu/portal/sites/ncb/mac/nlibrary/nlact.html>. Accessed 17 Mar 2009.

Before proceeding, a brief explanation may be in order. In classifying the publications into different linguistic categories, I have depended upon the editor's information (in English), especially with texts published in Asian languages. In some cases where the language used is not obvious, I have relied upon my own judgement, based upon other information provided (such as the purpose of the publication) and my knowledge of the linguistic situation in Mauritius. There are a few entries, however, for which I have been unable to determine the language used (because of their transliterated titles and their vague bibliographic details). These constitute less than one percent (15) of the overall textual production and I have omitted them from my calculation.

Of the 2478 texts¹⁴⁶ published, only 95 (4%) use Mauritian Creole. However, even within these 95 texts, Creole is not the only language used. For example, more than a third (44%) are bilingual, trilingual or quadrilingual copies. The table below illustrates this fact – that even in Creole production, the two colonial languages are never far from the picture. Put differently, publishers like LPT, despite their staunch support for Mauritian Creole and their desire for linguistic decolonization, cannot afford to exclude these two languages from their publishing efforts¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴⁶ They include books, pamphlets, government publications, school magazines, in-house journals, newspaper supplements, company reports, etc. Theses, dissertations, parliamentary debates and newspaper articles are excluded (Chan Kan Lom 2002: Introduction).

¹⁴⁷ Of the 27 texts produced by LPT, 11 are bilingual (French/English and Creole) and trilingual (English, French and Creole) editions.

<u>Creole Textual Production</u>	<u>Quantity</u>
Monolingual Creole texts	53
Creole-English texts	21
Creole-English-French texts	10
Creole-French texts	10
Creole-English-French-Bhojpuri texts	1

Table 5

Out of the 95 Creole publications, 57 (60%) are literary texts (poetry, drama, songs and children’s literature), 16 (17%) are religious books, 18 (19%) are socio-political writings and 4 (4%) are educational texts. Furthermore, there are only 11 translations into Creole, which represent a small 0.4% of the overall book production or 12% of the Creole production. Of the 11 target texts, 6 are published with their French or English source texts, and only 3 are theatre translations¹⁴⁸ (*Tartif Froder*, *Trazedi Makbes* and *Zil Sezar*). Translation into Creole and publication of Creole texts are, therefore, still peripheral activities which remain to be popularized.

If Creole writings only make a small contribution to the overall textual production, what about Asian language texts? An analysis of the data shows that of the 2478 publications, 134 (5%) are in Asian languages. However, individually, none of them has ‘performed’ better than Creole. In fact, a closer inspection reveals that, apart from Hindi publications, most of them are text-books produced by the Ministry of Education as part of its language syllabuses for primary and secondary schools. The table below gives a

¹⁴⁸ The others include 4 children’s story books, 1 socio-political pamphlet, 1 novel, 1 religious book and 1 collection of songs.

breakdown of the languages used, the number of educational text-books, the total number of publications for each linguistic category and the corresponding percentage in terms of the overall local textual production.

<u>Asian Languages</u>	<u>Educational text-books</u>	<u>Total no. of publications (Percentage)</u>
Arabic	9	9 (0.4%)
Bhojpuri	5	10 (0.4%)
Hindi	8	66 (2.6%)
Mandarin	3	5 (0.2%)
Marathi	6	9 (0.4%)
Tamil	10	20 (0.8%)
Telegu	8	8 (0.3%)
Urdu	4	7 (0.3%)

Table 6

By combining the above educational text-books with three other publications (a French-Hindi dictionary, a collection of papers presented at a conference on Bhojpuri and a magazine intended to promote Hindi writing among secondary school children), I find that there are 56 texts which could be considered as geared towards the academic market. This constitutes 42% of the total Asian language textual production. The remaining 58% is divided as such: the literary domain, including fiction, drama, poetry and children's literature (32%), the religious sphere (14%), magazines/periodicals (6%), theatre programmes (4%) and others (2%). It is clear, then, that the norms for Asian

language textual production are quite different from those of Creole production. The former is mainly targeting a language-learning public within an educational environment, which implies that for many, these languages could possibly constitute ‘foreign’ languages rather than ‘mother tongues’. The latter, on the other hand, clearly wishes to fulfil a literary role.

Needless to say, the remaining 2249 publications show that the use of English and French constitute the norm in the Mauritian publishing industry. I calculated 1457 texts in English, 740 in French and 45 in both languages¹⁴⁹. Unsurprisingly, data also show that English is mainly used for ‘official’ texts, such as governmental documents, company bulletins, business reports, financial records and of course, educational materials. These ‘official’ texts represent some 1059 publications, i.e. 73% of the total monolingual English publications. On the other hand, there are only 67 (5%) and 46 (3%) literary and religious texts respectively, while the remaining 285 (19%) consist of a wide variety of publications¹⁵⁰. As for French, data regarding the monolingual texts reveal that its usage follows a different pattern; its main popularity lies within the sphere of literature and literary criticism with 228 (31%) publications. In contrast, there are only 145 (20%) ‘official’ documents (again, governmental reports, company newsletters and accounts, and school text-books) and 113 (15%) texts on religious and spiritual matters. Historical topics are more popular in French than in English with 46 (6%) texts,

¹⁴⁹ The remaining seven publications are in Réunion Creole, Italian and Spanish.

¹⁵⁰ On healthcare, local flora and fauna, environmental issues, car maintenance, interior design, sports and leisure, management, politics, sex education, gender issues, public administration, consumer behaviour, cookery, law, etc.

as are socio-cultural magazines with 27 (4%) publications and cookery books with 21 (3%) texts. The remaining 160 (21%) texts are composed of various publications¹⁵¹.

The above analysis, therefore, shows that so far, the publication of Creole texts, including translations, does not violate societal norms with regards to language beliefs in Mauritius. In fact, with no Creole text produced for official purposes, it confirms the language's lack of status, even as it tries to increase its literary capital. Considering that over two-thirds of the population are descendants of Asian immigrants¹⁵², it is surprising that there are only 134 publications in Asian languages, confirming that, apart from Hindi, they are languages largely used in an educational context. As expected, the vast majority of publications are in English and French, the main languages of learning. The publication pattern gives credence to the perception of English as the 'official' language and French as the 'literary' language.

7.2.2 Publishing houses – politicization vs. indifference

As already pointed out in Section 2.4.4.2, the promotion of Mauritian Creole following independence was largely due to the MMM political party who turned the language debate into a political issue:

Quelques personnes ont voulu joindre l'action culturelle à l'action politique en pensant à une sorte de complémentarité entre littérature et politique ... Un des objectifs de ceux qui publiaient en créole dans les années 1970-1980 a été de dénoncer à travers leurs écrits, ce que le MMM dénonçait sur les estrades publiques. (Ramharai 1993: 57)

Some people wanted to combine the cultural with the political, by imagining a sort of complementarity between literature and politics ... One of the objectives of those who

¹⁵¹ On healthcare, educational issues, environmental topics, music, sports, domestic violence, politics, travel guides, philosophy, law, etc.

¹⁵² See Section 2.4.1.

were publishing in Creole during the years 1970-1980 was to denounce, through their writings, what the MMM was denouncing on the podiums.

These days, mainstream political parties, including the MMM, are more reluctant to openly admit where they stand in relation to the Creole debate. However, the politicization of the issue during the 1970s and 1980s means that Creole literature has become known as a “*littérature à thèse*” (Ramharai 1990: 124), known for its political content rather than for its literary merit; so much so that publication in Creole, to a large extent, has continued to be associated with left-wing politics and activism. This is reinforced by the fact that most Creole texts (more than 50% for the period, 1996-2003) are published by companies with strong left-leaning viewpoints and that several of the publications are still politically militant in tone and content.

The data in the following table have again been taken from the National Bibliography (2002 and 2005); they show who the publishers were and the number of Creole texts they produced between 1996 and 2003.

<u>Publishers</u>	<u>No. of Creole texts</u>
LPT	27
FPSP	10
<i>Boukie Banane</i>	9
<i>Immedia</i>	6
<i>Lalit</i>	2
Other publishers ¹⁵³	13
Printers ¹⁵⁴	15

¹⁵³ See Appendix XIII for a list of these publishers and the number of Creole texts they each published. ASSIMIL is a French publishing company and *Kutub Khana Ishayat* is based in India. Apart from *Editions Le Printemps*, one of the key players in the local publishing industry, the other Mauritian publishers in this list are small, little-known companies.

Associations ¹⁵⁵	11
Others ¹⁵⁶	2

Table 7

LPT takes the lion's share as the publishing company with the most Creole books published, followed by the Federation of Pre-School Playgroups (FPSP) with 10. FPSP, despite its English name, is the main purveyor of children's books in Creole for use in its nurseries. It is also known in Mauritius for having taken the government to court in April 1997, on the basis that the educational programme devised by the latter is detrimental to preschool children, because it excludes the use of Creole and Bhojpuri¹⁵⁷ (Frew 2004). Together with LPT, FPSP is affiliated to *Lalit* ('The Struggle'), which has produced 2 publications. LPT and *Lalit*, in fact, share the same headquarters and several of LPT's members (including Ah-Vee) are members of *Lalit*'s executive board. As its name suggests, *Lalit* is rooted in Marxism and strongly advocates class struggles, since it believes¹⁵⁸ that the Mauritian political and economic structures are unjust and exploitative of the population. *Lalit*, as Eriksen (1998: 110) points out, is a well-known but not a popular political party; this is due to its frequent use of Marxist rhetoric which is alien to the population and to the fact that, even if Mauritians do acknowledge the existence of social classes, the notion of class differentiation itself is "abstractly

¹⁵⁴ 'Printers' refers to entries which only displayed the name of the printing companies, no publisher was mentioned.

¹⁵⁵ 'Associations' refers mainly to socio-cultural associations (such as *SOS Femmes*, *Muvman Liberasyon Fam* – the Women's Liberation Movement – and the *Centre Culturel Islamique*) and religious organizations (such as the Baptist Association of Mauritius and the *Société Biblique Il Moris*).

¹⁵⁶ The entries show neither publishers' nor printers' names.

¹⁵⁷ On 4 Sept 1997, FPSP also legally obtained that the then government's curriculum for the preschool sector be discontinued. As a result, on 23 March the following year, the government decided to provide a new curriculum (Frew 2004).

¹⁵⁸ See *Lalit*'s website at <http://www.lalitmauritius.org/about.php>. Accessed 17 Mar 2009.

unthinkable” (ibid., emphasis in original text), since, as we have already said previously, they tend to view themselves, on the whole, not as members of social classes but as members of ethnic groups. If, on top of LPT’s, FPSP’s and *Lalit*’s publications, we include *Boukie Banane*’s (Virahsawmy’s publishing company, formerly known as Educational Production Ltd) and *Immedia*’s¹⁵⁹, we obtain a total of 54 (or 57%) of Creole texts produced by publishers, known for their left-wing stand. Furthermore, texts published by LPT, *Boukie Banane* and *Lalit*¹⁶⁰ also include non-literary genres, usually socio-political books and pamphlets, whose content¹⁶¹ and writing style can help reinforce public perception of these publishers as purveyors of writings that are mainly intended to defend their own beliefs for a more militant stance in the face of societal problems.

What also became noticeable during this investigation was the absence, or near absence, of the two key publishing houses in Mauritius – *Editions de l’Océan Indien* (EOI), whose main shareholder is the Mauritian State, and *Editions Le Printemps* (ELP). According to the data from the National Bibliography of Mauritius (2002 and 2005), one book (a collection of poems written in Creole, French and English) has been published by ELP but none by EOI. Both companies admit that financial reasons play the most important role in their publishing strategy; in effect, books that do not sell, do not get

¹⁵⁹ I have included *Immedia* here because Poonoosamy, the director, is publicly known as a MMM member. However, it is also possible to suggest that *Immedia* is different from LPT, FPSP, *Lalit* and *Boukie Banane*. The latter publishers are primarily interested in texts written in Creole (even if LPT and FPSP have also published English and French translations of some of their literary productions), whereas *Immedia* aims to encourage Mauritian writers to express their creativity not only in Creole, but also in English and French (see Section 6.2.1).

¹⁶⁰ *Immedia*’s publications are mainly literary in content and FPSP’s Creole texts are intended for nursery age children.

¹⁶¹ The objects of their condemnation have included issues such as globalization, governmental educational policies and linguistic genocide. See Appendix XIV.

published (Leung 2006), and since Creole books do not carry prospects of huge sales, they do not feature highly on their agenda. The general lack of enthusiasm for Creole texts from Mauritian readers, therefore, partly reflects the indifference shown by these companies and by the State itself (or vice versa). As a result, the publication of Creole texts, caught between the militant stand of publishers, such as LPT, *Lalit* and *Boukie Banane*, and the lack of interest from the larger players, still has a long way to go in order to establish itself and appeal to a wider public.

7.2.3 In search of the target texts

Comparing the Creole publishing industry of several Indian Ocean islands, Christophe Cassiau-Haurie (2007: 76), curator of the French-sponsored Charles Baudelaire Library in Mauritius, suggests that any book that generates a sale of 6000 copies can be considered a local success. This section first briefly looks at whether the target texts could numerically be seen as successes. I then describe how easy (or difficult) it would be, nowadays, for a Mauritian reader to locate those texts.

In quantitative terms (and very possibly in financial terms as well), the target texts when produced in printed format cannot be viewed as successes. With only 500 printed copies each for *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid*, *Tartif Froder*, *Toufann*, *Trazedi Makbes* and *Zil Sezar*¹⁶² (Virahsawmy email 4 Mar 2008), the production of Virahsawmy's target texts fall very short of the 6000 mark¹⁶³. At LPT, the situation is fairly similar, with a print

¹⁶² *Prens Hamlet*, as already mentioned in Section 1.2.1.1, was never printed. It was made directly available on the web upon completion.

¹⁶³ Since all of Virahsawmy's translations are also available on the internet, I admit, however, that it is not possible to estimate how many times they have been downloaded.

run of 500 copies for *Otelo* and 800 for *Misye Peng* (Ah-Vee email 4 Mar 2008). There are no reprints for any of the target texts.

If only 500 copies, or 800 in the case of *Misye Peng*, have been made available, and bearing in mind the fact that most of them have been published more than a decade ago, would obtaining a copy now be difficult, I wondered? During three of my visits to Mauritius (2006, 2007 and 2009), I decided to find out if the main bookshops stocked them. I visited five major bookshops: Bookcourt (Port-Louis), *Le Cygne* (Rose-Hill), The Bookstore (Quatre-Bornes), *Editions Le Printemps* (Vacoas) and *Librairie Allot* (Curepipe)¹⁶⁴. They all had a section devoted to books written by Mauritian authors and/or published locally (in Creole and non-Creole languages), but four of the bookshops had no copies of any of the target texts, which the salespersons had never heard of (although to be fair, the name of one of the translators, Virahsawmy, was known to some). One bookshop, *Le Cygne*, had *Trazedi Makbes* but not the other translations. Interestingly enough, it was able to offer *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid*, *Misye Peng*, *Tartif Froder*, *Trazedi Makbes* and *Zil Sezar* online through its website¹⁶⁵; an indication that the sale of the target texts was intended for a niche (and wealthy) market. I then tried the LPT headquarters, since LPT, as the main publisher of Mauritian Creole texts, was the obvious place to look. They only had *Misye Peng*, *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid*, *Trazedi Makbes* and *Zil Sezar*, but the staff correctly directed me to the National Library for the texts they no longer had in stock. At the National Library, all the target texts

¹⁶⁴ These were chosen because they are the most well-known on the island for offering a wide selection of books, as opposed to smaller bookshops whose revenue is derived mainly from the sale of school textbooks.

¹⁶⁵ See <http://www.lecygne.com/index.html>. Accessed 17 Mar 2009.

were available for consultation, except for *Prens Hamlet* which had not yet (Nov 2007) been downloaded from the translator's website. However, the other translations carried out by Virahsawmy (*Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid*, *Tartif Froder*, *Toufann*, *Trazedi Makbes* and *Zil Sezar*) were old copies which used his former spelling conventions, not 'grafi larmoni'.

Finally, my intention was to see if the target texts were available for public loan in the main municipal libraries in the towns¹⁶⁶. The Port-Louis library had *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid*, *Misye Peng* and *Trazedi Makbes* which were available only on request. The municipal library of Beau-Bassin/Rose-Hill had a copy of *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid*, *Misye Peng*, *Toufann* and *Trazedi Makbes* available in the reference section only. The Quatre-Bornes library did not have any copies. While the Vacoas/Phoenix library had *Toufann* (for reference only) and *Misye Peng*, the Curepipe one only stocked *Enn Ta Senn Dan Vid* (for reference only).

It may be argued here that a small survey of the main bookshops and libraries in the urban areas of the island does not offer a comprehensive picture of the availability of the target texts for the entire population, but it is not my intention to provide such a picture. My contention is that if the translations are not available in the main bookshops and libraries located in the capital and in the towns of Plaines Wilhems, then they are highly unlikely to be found in rural areas, where there are fewer and smaller bookshops, and where library facilities are not necessarily as extensive.

I would argue, therefore, that low print runs do not allow for a wide dissemination, and with the lapse of time, make it even harder for an interested reader to obtain a copy.

¹⁶⁶ For the geographical location of the five main towns on the island, see map in Appendix II.

Although the National Library currently (Feb 2009) holds a copy of seven of the target texts, not all of the main public libraries do. This is in line with the findings of the local academic, Vicram Ramharai (1990: 126), who, before me, pointed out that Creole texts were not being promoted by distribution outlets, such as bookshops, nor were they easily accessible in libraries since consultation usually had to be done on site. Ramharai, himself, had tried to obtain a copy of all of Favory's written works and was unable to do so (1990: 127). It is, therefore, possible to maintain that Creole publication currently does not command a huge market and that Creole books do not constitute an important part of the Mauritian reading regimen.

7.3 Spectators

Given that textual dissemination of the translations appears to have been rather limited, this section aims to find out how popular a cultural practice Creole theatre is and, in particular, how the stage productions of *Misyè Peng*, *Otelo*, *Tartif Froder*, *Toufann* and *Trazedi Makbes* were received by the target audiences.

7.3.1 'Laughing' audiences

If success could be counted in terms of theatre seats taken, then two of the productions, *Otelo* and *Toufann*, would be considered successful. According to the producer, Poonoosamy (interview 4 Sept 2006), *Otelo* attracted some 2200 spectators for five representations and *Toufann* averaged 400 spectators for twelve performances at the Plaza theatre¹⁶⁷. I suggest, however, that this is not necessarily an indication of a

¹⁶⁷ It must be pointed out however, that these figures are merely Poonoosamy's estimate of the spectators present. When asked, he was unable to confirm the actual number of tickets sold.

collective approval for the Creole translated plays. In the case of *Otelo*, for instance, a couple of journalists revealed their enthusiasm for the play¹⁶⁸, but many chose to report the spectators' mixed reaction. According to them, laughter was heard amongst the audience at the tensest, most inappropriate moments, when the language uttered on the stage had appeared to be vulgar and sexually explicit¹⁶⁹. For example, during several representations, laughter erupted when Dezdemona, about to die, was heard crying out: “A, *pu nanyin, pu nanyin mo pe mor!*” (V. 3 – “Alas, it is for nothing, for nothing that I am dying!”), because “*mo pe mor*” (“I am dying”) could also have sexual connotations.

Trazedi Makbes was another play that elicited laughter at unexpected moments. According to the journalist, Shenaz Patel (*Week-End* 16 Aug 1998), bursts of nervous laughter were heard when Ledi Makbes, trying to goad her husband into murdering Denkan, was appealing to his masculine pride. Her every suggestion that he was man enough to carry out such a task was accompanied by laughter from the audience:

... Mo ti kwar **to'enn zom!** [...]
 Kan to ti koz sa lera **to ti zom,**
 E kan to fer plis lera **to plis zom.** (I. 7 – emphasis added)

... I thought **you were a man!** [...]
 When you spoke about it, **you were a man,**
 And when you do more, **you will be more than a man.**

¹⁶⁸ For example, the article of the journalist, Marie-Annick Savripène, writing for *L'Express Dimanche* (9 Aug 1992) was entitled “*Othello, magistral!*”, while the editor, Yvan Martial, wrote “*Vive le Théâtre en Créole*” (*L'Express Dimanche* 16 Aug 1992).

¹⁶⁹ Even Navin Ramgoolam, the current Prime Minister (June 2009), seems to think that Creole is a crude language. Asked by an MP, during the parliamentary session of 1 April 2008, whether he would consider amending the Constitution to make Creole the official language of the country, he replied that, since it was “easier to swear in Creole than in English or French”, such an amendment would encourage the use of too many obscenities in Parliament. See the National Assembly's website at <http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/assemblysite/file/orans01apr08.pdf> (pp 14-15). Accessed 14 Mar 2009.

It seems that for many within the audience, the expressions ‘*to’enn zom*’, ‘*to ti zom*’ and ‘*to plis zom*’ had brought to mind sexual connotations which were not intended in Ledi Makbes’ speech.

It can be argued here that perhaps the audience’s unfamiliarity with hearing Creole in a formal context, such as a Shakespearean tragedy, may have prompted the laughter. And yet, even *Tartif Froder* (1999) is reported to have generated public laughter at inappropriate moments, so much so that one journalist stated in *Week-End* of 10 Oct 1999:

Et le public rit, ce qui est de bon aloi pour une comédie. Mais ... il rit des mots en soi, ou du fait de les entendre soudain lancés sur une scène de théâtre.

And the public laughs, which is a good sign for a comedy. But ... it is laughing about the words themselves, or the fact that it is hearing them being suddenly uttered on a stage.

His (or her) colleague, Linley Raynal, writing in *Le Mauricien* of 9 Oct 1999, went further:

Tous ces ‘shut up’, ces ‘tchum tai’, ces ‘touledé’, ces ‘macatia’ et ces ‘traka par bal’ ... paraissent vouloir souligner des incongruités de notre langue ... On en rit, on en rit avec ou sans la complicité des acteurs. De nos permanentes diglossies.

All those ‘*shut up*’, ‘*tchum tai*’, ‘*touledé*’, ‘*macatia*’ and ‘*traka par bal*’ ... seem intent on highlighting the incongruities of our language ... We laugh, we laugh with or without the collusion of the actors. At our permanent diglossic situations.

The fact that Creole is seen as a crude, ‘laughable’ language confirms my view that Mauritians are still, on the whole, very much ill at ease with their lingua franca, very self-conscious when it is used beyond everyday informal situations.

7.3.2 Student audiences

The theatre professionals, like the translators, were convinced that their works would be useful teaching aids for the student population (see Section 6.2.3). Henri Favory, as he acknowledged in our interview (28 Aug 2006), certainly thought that the *Otelo* audience would include students, even if, unlike Ramana's *Trazedi Makbes* and *Tartif Froder*, no representation of *Otelo* had been specifically scheduled for students¹⁷⁰. In fact, *Trazedi Makbes* was staged six times (out of eight), and *Tartif Froder* five times (out of eight) expressly for students¹⁷¹. To attract maximum attendance from this target audience, both plays were produced as matinee performances, while tickets were available at half price and for purchase in secondary schools (*Week-End 2 Aug 1998, Week-End 3 Oct 1999, Impact News 5 Sep 1999*).

However, although the press diligently reported the dates for these matinee performances, there was an obvious lack of journalistic interest in reviewing them. The newspapers, by concentrating mainly on evening performances, made it impossible to see if the plays had any impact upon this section of the population. Nevertheless, I

¹⁷⁰ *Misye Peng* (1992) and Narraïdoo's *Tartif Froder* (2002) were not specifically intended for students either. However, for *Misye Peng*, the actors themselves were students from Eden College, where the director, Veeramootoo, was at the time occupying a teaching post. He had, as he admitted (interview 23 Nov 2007), chosen this target text, because *L'Avare* was then on the school syllabus. Narraïdoo's *Tartif Froder* (2002) was performed only twice as part of the Port-Louis theatre festival. But, Narraïdoo is particularly known within Mauritian theatre circles as a director who focuses mainly on plays prescribed as school text-books. From 2002 to 2006, for instance, he produced ten plays, eight of which had been part of the State secondary schools' literature syllabus: *Topaze* (2002), *Tartif Froder* (2002), *Animal Farm* (2004), extracts from Molière's *Le Malade Imaginaire*, *Tartuffe* and *Les Femmes Savantes* (2005), *Le Petit Prince* (2006), *Le Voyage de Monsieur Perrichon* (2006), *Twelfth Night* and *Macbeth* (2006).

¹⁷¹ Interestingly enough, no representation of Ramana's *Toufann* (1995), even though adapted from *The Tempest*, another prescribed school text-book, appeared to have been aimed at students. My only explanation is that the director had decided that the *mise-en-scène* would not, in any way, call the source text to mind. As he put it to the journalist of *Samedi Magazine* (24 June 1995), "*Toufann est une nouvelle pièce ... pena narien pour faire avec Tempest*" ("*Toufann* is a new play ... it has nothing to do with *The Tempest*").

suggest that, despite having the students' interests at heart, the theatre professionals' efforts to compartmentalize this particular audience were sending out the message that to see Shakespeare and Molière on stage was an educational exercise; thus, reinforcing the academic and intellectual aspects of the target texts, and highlighting the gap between those who had (or were acquiring) the 'right' cultural capital and the less fortunate segment of the population who did not make it beyond primary schooling.

7.3.3 Ethnically-based audiences?

Considering that ethnicity plays such a large part in how Mauritians identify themselves, and categorize the world and the people around them, I wanted to find out if any ethnic group had been specifically targeted within press reports. First, I looked at reviews from the main daily (*L'Express*, *Le Mauricien*) and weekly (*Week-End*, *Week-End Scope*, *L'Express Dimanche*, *5 Plus Dimanche* and *Le Défi Plus*) newspapers but none, in fact, used ethnic criteria (for example, the ethnic background of the director or any member of the cast) as a way of promoting or denigrating the plays. Then, I looked at other newspapers that targeted specific sets of readers, in particular *Le Militant*, *Mauritius Times*, *La Vie Catholique* and *Impact News*¹⁷². Unfortunately, copies of *Le Militant* and *Mauritius Times* covering the production periods for *Otelo*, *Misyé Peng*, *Toufann* and *Trazedi Makbes* were not available for consultation¹⁷³. They did, however, have copies covering the periods of Oct 1999 and Aug 2002 when *Tartif Froder* was produced. *Le Militant* of 1 Oct 1999 advertised the coming production, but apart from this one

¹⁷² See Section 1.2.1.3 for more details regarding the newspapers' target readers.

¹⁷³ When this was queried, the staff explained that newspaper copies from those years had not been received by the National Library.

reference, neither newspaper actually reviewed the plays themselves. As for *La Vie Catholique*, it briefly mentioned *Toufann* in its edition of 14 July 1995 and published an interview of one of the actresses performing in *Tartif Froder* (Sundanum 23 Aug 2002). None of the other plays (*Otelo*, *Misye Peng* and *Trazedi Makbes*) were publicized or reviewed. Finally, *Impact News* did not review any of the plays, although it did give advance notice of the production of *Tartif Froder* in its editions of 5 and 26 Sept 1999.

Lack of interest on the part of the last four newspapers does not, however, mean that ethnicity is not a variable when people choose to go and watch a Creole play. In fact, when interviewed, three theatre professionals, Mootien, Narraidoo and Ramana, are prompt to suggest that ethnicity does play a part in some of the audience's choice. For Ramana, the director's ethnic background plays an important role. In an interview accorded to *5-Plus Dimanche* (Teycheney 2002), he asserts that "*chaque metteur-en-scène a sa clientèle*" ("each director has his own clientele"). Narraidoo (interview 29 Aug 2006) puts it more bluntly by stating that "white people only go to plays produced by white people." By white people, he is referring to the Franco-Mauritian community, implying by extension that members of this community were absent at the productions of the target texts, because none were produced by Franco-Mauritians. Mootien also suggests that relatives of acting casts have been known to attend, even when theatre-going does not normally form part of their leisure habit¹⁷⁴; a practice also confirmed to me by Ramana during our interview (26 Aug 2006). Unfortunately, there are no known

¹⁷⁴ Mootien (interview 2 Sept 2006) gave me the example of one of his Chinese co-practitioners, whose father once bought 150 tickets for his relatives simply because his son was in the play.

figures¹⁷⁵ that can corroborate (or contradict) the opinions of these three theatre practitioners.

Not everyone, however, agrees that the audience for Creole theatre can be delineated along ethnic lines; certainly the actor, Dussaram (interview 22 Nov 2007) and the director, Veeramootoo (interview 23 Nov 2007) do not think so. Instead, what they both suggest is that the audience, especially for the production of the target texts, could be defined as ‘educated’ members of the public. This is an opinion shared by the director, Favory (interview 28 Aug 2006) and the actor, Valayden (interview 22 Dec 2007), who qualify such an audience as ‘literary’ and ‘intellectual’; yet another sign that mastery of Shakespeare and Molière is mainly seen as an educational achievement.

Whether theatre audiences are influenced by ethnic factors in their choice of Creole plays is, therefore, not evident. On the part of the theatre professionals themselves, there is a lack of unanimity, and some of them prefer to use the criterion of educational knowledge rather than ethnic membership as a way of qualifying their audience.

7.3.4 An expensive pursuit

However, there is one thing most theatre professionals I interviewed agree upon – that the Mauritian theatre audience, whether for Creole or non-Creole plays, is mainly a wealthy audience. They suggest that although the introduction of Creole on the stage, by removing linguistic barriers, has largely been an attempt at democratization, the

¹⁷⁵ The only figures I came across regarding theatre-attendance in Mauritius were those from a survey done in 1996 (Asgarally 1997: 103-127), which was looking into the connection between social exclusion and cultural practices. The informants were divided into the four main population categories used on the island. They were asked whether they were interested in theatre in general, but not whether ethnicity played a role in such an interest. It was, therefore, not possible to determine the importance of ethnicity as a variable for theatre-attendance as a whole. More details of the survey are provided later on in the chapter.

reality is that post-independence theatre is still a pursuit for the well-to-do. Their assertion is in line with the findings of a 1996 national survey¹⁷⁶ carried out over a twelve-month period by a group of researchers, who were investigating the issue of social exclusion in Mauritius. In trying to establish what constituted factors of exclusion, the cultural practices of the population were looked at and it was discovered that at a national level, 88%¹⁷⁷ of the population were not interested in theatre (Asgarally 1997: 110). Money was put forward by the respondents as one of the main reasons for this lack of interest, and it was obvious, by looking at the statistics provided in the report, partially reproduced below, that the higher the income bracket, the higher the percentage of theatre-goers – a substantial 96% of those who never went to the theatre earned an average monthly income of Rs2500¹⁷⁸ or less, compared to 59% who earned more than Rs14000¹⁷⁹ (Asgarally 1997: 112).

<u>Monthly Income</u> (Rs)	<u>Never went to the theatre</u>	
	No. of people	Percentage
2500 or less	80	96%
2501 - 4000	212	95%
4001 - 5000	123	89%
5001 - 6000	110	92%
6001 - 8000	149	88%

¹⁷⁶ A sample of 1000 households across the country was selected to take part in this survey. A second sample of 500 households in four pre-selected regions was also picked for comparison purposes.

¹⁷⁷ At a regional level, within the four pre-selected areas, 89% of the informants never went to the theatre (Asgarally 1997: 110).

¹⁷⁸ £50, if we use the current (Mar 2009) exchange rate of Rs50: £1.

¹⁷⁹ £280, if we use the current (Mar 2009) exchange rate of Rs50: £1.

8001 - 10000	74	81%
10001 - 14000	42	72%
More than 14000	23	59%

Table 8

7.3.5 Location, location, location

Although financial considerations can help explain why theatre is not a popular form of entertainment, there is, I believe, another factor which can also act as a deterrent – the issue of theatre location. In the 1996 survey mentioned above, only 6% of the informants considered distance as one of the main obstacles to theatre-attendance (Asgarally 1997: 123). Unfortunately, no indication was given as to the respondents' areas of residence, making it, in my opinion, difficult to establish the validity of this piece of information. For example, the idea that respondents living in the far corners, mainly rural parts, of the island would find the location of the theatre venues far from being a handicap when choosing a form of entertainment is questionable. It is, in fact, an issue that crops up repeatedly during my meetings with the theatre professionals. The main theatres are located in urban areas, i.e. the capital, Port-Louis (Port-Louis theatre), and the towns of Rose-Hill (Plaza theatre) and Vacoas (Serge Constantin theatre). *Otelo*, *Toufann*, *Trazedi Makbes* and *Tartif Froder* (1999) were staged at the Plaza, and *Tartif Froder* (2002) at the Port-Louis theatre. There are other sites which can potentially be used as theatrical spaces, but the directors' objections are that (a), the renting costs are too high, and (b), the fact that they were not originally built for theatre

and are, therefore, not always suitable for drama productions. Also, these sites, the historic fort of *La Citadelle* in Port-Louis and the auditorium of Mahatma Gandhi Institute, an educational institution in Moka (where *Misye Peng* was performed in 1992), are also located in, or near to, urban areas. The only venue situated away from the built-up areas of Port-Louis and the Plaines Wilhems district is the State-owned open-air theatre of Pointe Canon, in the south-eastern town of Mahébourg. It should, logically, attract the mainly rural population around it (at least in the non-rainy season), but the theatre directors I spoke to have never used it. Some, like Ramana (interview 29 Aug 2006), Favory (interview 26 Aug 2006) and Valayden (interview 22 Dec 2007) have preferred, in the past, to use village halls, local schools and other makeshift stages in rural areas to produce their plays. Playing for rural crowds, however, is a strategy that requires a lot of commitment and is not easy to maintain on a long-term basis, the reasons being that acting is unlikely to be the troupes' main profession and that there is always the need to keep costs down as theatre is not a profitable occupation (for instance, transport costs will have to be taken into consideration if the troupes are based in urban areas, and most, if not all, of the well-known ones are). A lack of proper and affordable theatre facilities outside of urban areas, a lack of public transport at night (most theatre representations, except for those intended for student audiences, are held at night), a subsequent need for private means of transport, plus a round trip journey that may involve a couple of hours for some mean that theatre-going would not, in terms of cultural entertainment, be an obvious choice for the rural population.

7.3.6 Governmental contribution

Earlier in this chapter, I suggested that there was little effort on the part of the government to boost Creole readership by encouraging the publication of Creole texts via its publishing house. The section below aims to look at whether the government follows a similar pattern in the promotion of theatre.

7.3.6.1 The drama festival and its audience

During my interview with Vijay Veeramootoo (21 Nov 2007) at the then Ministry of Arts and Culture, it became obvious that the State's yearly drama festival is the only governmental undertaking in terms of drama productions and it is not aimed to appeal to as wide a target audience as possible. Invitations are sent to various socio-cultural organizations and to schools throughout the country to take part, but the representations themselves are not open to the general public and the audience is restricted to the people the Ministry invites. For the finals, for instance, free invitations are sent out to the ministerial drama committee members¹⁸⁰, playwrights and actors who have been eliminated from previous rounds and also to non-theatre individuals, such as well-known political and socio-cultural personalities.

Since *Misye Peng* was the only target text, from among the eight examined for this thesis, to have been produced for a State drama festival, I needed to establish how restricted its audience was. As the winner of the 1992 Creole drama festival, I expected the play to have generated substantial press coverage. However, it was only briefly reviewed by the journalist, Vijay Shankar, in *Le Mauricien* of 2 Oct and by *L'Express* of

¹⁸⁰ They are the people appointed by the Ministry, who are in charge of the organization and the smooth running of the drama festival.

1 Oct. There was no mention even in the week-end papers which normally provided an overview of the weekly cultural events. The two articles indicated the presence of students and governmental guests, many of whom were the foreign participants at the International Colloquium on Creole languages being held at the time at the University of Mauritius (see Section 6.2.4). As the exclusive prerogative of the Ministry, the drama festival and its restricted audience reinforced the view that the government's aim was not necessarily to popularize theatre, much less Creole theatre. There was a lack of journalistic interest for this event, compared to say, *Otelo*. Indeed, the latter, produced by *Immedia* only a few weeks prior to *Misyé Peng*, was open to the general public, received more coverage and generated a debate on the issue of Creole language in the press, thus highlighting the fact that the State's Creole drama festival was a peripheral activity which did not affect the population in general.

7.3.6.2 Theatre buildings

The government's indifference towards creating or nurturing a dynamic theatre culture away from its competition-driven drama festival is also reflected in its lack of concern towards the upkeep of the two main local theatres. Both the Port-Louis theatre and the Plaza in Rose-Hill, surprisingly, come under the responsibility, not of the culture section within the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, as one would perhaps expect, but of the local municipalities within which they are located (as briefly mentioned in Section 6.1.2). These are, in turn, accountable to the Ministry of Local Government, Rodrigues and Outer Islands, who, judging by the buildings' state of disrepair, show a lack of concern. The Plaza in Rose-Hill where most of the target texts

were staged, was inaugurated in 1933, but has been closed since 2004. Renovation works only started in Sept 2008. The Port-Louis theatre, often presented as the oldest theatre building in the Southern Hemisphere because it was inaugurated in 1822 (Renaud and Raynal 1972: 1), has also been in need of renovation, despite extensive works already carried out in 1994. Over the last few years, articles in the press have regularly decried its state of neglect (Patel 2006, Groëme-Harmon 2007, Groëme-Harmon 2008, to name just a few); a state which I can confirm, having attended a couple of plays during my visit in 2007. Several broken seats and armrests, faulty light fittings, peeling paint, and leaking roofs in times of heavy rains were some of the obvious signs of its lack of maintenance. Furthermore, the people in charge of the Port-Louis theatre did not have the required expertise; they were two civil servants in charge of the city's welfare department (Groëme 2005). The theatre has now been closed since July 2008 for much-needed roof repairs and no date has been put forward for its reopening. The unavailability of both the Plaza and the Port-Louis theatre at the same time is likely to have a knock-on effect on theatre activities in the foreseeable future¹⁸¹.

Confusingly, the Serge Constantin, unlike the Plaza and the Port-Louis theatre, falls under the direct responsibility of the MECHR and not that of the municipality of Vacoas/Phoenix where it is located. Previously known as Trafalgar Hall, home of the British expatriates' Mauritian Dramatic Club before independence, it was completely renovated in the late 1990s. Today, it is also used as a venue for cultural events other than theatre activities (film screenings, public lectures, seminars and so forth). None of

¹⁸¹ For example, the yearly theatre festival which *Immedia* has been organizing since 2002 has been cancelled in 2008 (Groëme-Harmon 2008).

the target texts were staged here. In fact, the theatre practitioners I spoke to rarely use it, the reason for this is mainly related to its size¹⁸², although the director, Narraidoo, in an interview accorded to local journalist, Sonia Serra (*L'Express Samedi* 17 Sept 2005), has claimed that the Serge Constantin is not always made available to theatre professionals.

I believe that the above governmental policies, by confining theatre to small selective audiences and by showing an indifference towards providing proper theatrical spaces or venues, are partly responsible for reducing theatre to its marginal position in the local cultural landscape; thus, making it more difficult for Creole theatre to become a cultural practice enjoyed by a wide audience in Mauritius.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to examine the likelihood that Mauritian society has been impacted by the Creole target texts and their stage productions. I first looked at the target readership. In Section 7.1, I argued that only a potential 32% of the population would have reached the necessary educational level to be able to read and understand the target texts. Furthermore, after examining the three groups of recipients specifically targeted by the translators and the publishers, I found that they were unlikely to represent a large proportion of the population, even less so, considering the existence of several factors liable to discourage a Creole readership – the fact that Creole was not taught in mainstream education, the general perception of Creole as a language of no economic or cultural value, and the poor ‘readability’ appeal of the texts themselves.

¹⁸² It offers 292 seats, while the Port-Louis theatre has a seating capacity of 350 and the Plaza 600.

In Section 7.2, I wanted to verify if the low level of potential target readership was an indication of a lack of interest from Mauritian society for Creole publications in general. This was done by carrying out a quantitative comparison between Creole texts and non-Creole texts published locally during the years 1996-2003. I showed that the publication of Creole texts did not deviate from expected societal norms; in other words, as a language perceived to be of little socio-cultural value, Mauritian Creole generated few publications compared to the other languages. From my findings, I also surmised that public lack of interest in Creole texts was likely to be correlated, first of all, to the high-profile politicization of the Creole linguistic issue by several publishing houses known for their left-wing militant stand, and secondly, to the fact that the two key players in the publishing industry in Mauritius, one of which was mainly owned by the State, had shown little or no interest in bringing out and popularizing Creole publications to their clientele. Inevitably, low demand also meant lower print runs and fewer distribution points.

Considering that the target texts were unlikely to have been popular, did the stage productions receive a better response? This question was the focus of Section 7.3. I discovered that a couple of the productions (*Otelo* and *Toufann*) had been popular inasmuch as they had played to full, or almost full, houses. However, it appeared that the use of Creole as a stage language in a ‘serious’ and formal drama setting had not been a convincing experience for many spectators, who were heard laughing at the most inappropriate moments of the performances. In the case of student audiences, the lack of press reviews meant that I was unable to assess their reactions, but I suggested that the compartmentalization of students as a specific target audience confirmed the link

that tied Shakespeare and Molière to the local educational curriculum; thus, largely pigeonholing the audience to an academic one. Next, I looked at a selection of newspapers to find out if specific ethnic groups had been targeted but this did not appear to have been the case. Some theatre practitioners, however, did claim that for many spectators, ethnic considerations still played an important role because choosing a play depended on the cast members' or directors' ethnic background; although, it was a claim which was disputed by some of the other theatre professionals who suggested that it was not ethnicity that defined their audiences. It was a matter of education and of money in particular, since the population's financial situation clearly dictated who and how many people could afford to go to the theatre. If economic resources (or lack of) determined access to the productions, I also argued that the current location of theatre venues could potentially be a challenge for many of those living in rural areas. I finally concluded Section 7.3 by looking at the State's contribution to Creole theatre, and theatre in general, by examining the target audience for its Creole drama festival and its upkeep of two of the three main theatre buildings. I suggested that the State's policies did not appear to popularize theatre, much less Creole theatre.

The indication throughout this chapter, therefore, is that the target texts and the stage productions which were the subject of this research have had limited impact so far upon Mauritian society. I would propose, however, that this cannot be taken to suggest that the task carried out by the many translators, publishers, actors, directors and producers has been futile and has not helped to extend the cause of Mauritian Creole. In the next and final chapter, I give reasons why and offer suggestions on the different ways in which the practice of translation could potentially still make a difference.

Conclusion

On 12 March 2009, Mauritius celebrated its forty-first year as a politically independent country. Despite sombre predictions from socio-political analysts in the 1960s¹⁸³, the island has, in those forty-one years, enjoyed a fair measure of political stability and economic success. However, as we have already seen, the idea of a Mauritian nation, to which all Mauritians, irrespective of racial and ethno-cultural differences could subscribe, has still proved to be somewhat elusive. In this concluding chapter, after providing a recapitulation of what has previously been examined, I will discuss future trends and possible developments with regard to the linguistic situation in Mauritius. I will then suggest several ways in which the translational process could be ‘improved’, should there be continued efforts and desire to promote Mauritian Creole. Finally, I will briefly explain the ways in which I hope this research will contribute towards academic knowledge, before concluding with some suggestions for further research.

In Chapter One, I explored the theoretical framework, first by examining the debates surrounding ‘adaptation’ vs. ‘translation’. Then I looked at the polysystem theory formulated by Even-Zohar and the systemic approach proposed by André Lefevere, both of which enabled me to analyze the local Creole literary and theatrical systems, and their interactions with the rest of society. I also looked at several post-colonial concepts which allowed me to highlight the tension and power relations between the different

¹⁸³ In particular, Professor Meade whose report in 1961 highlighted the economic woes facing the island, and Professor Titmuss and Dr Abel-Smith who, in 1960, predicted disastrous results for the country’s future prosperity if the population growth rate was not curbed (Addison and Hazareesingh 1993: 98).

languages and cultures on the island. Finally, in the second section of this chapter, I described the data and the data collection methods used.

The aim of Chapters Two and Three was to provide the necessary background for this thesis. In Chapter Two, I placed the research issues in their geographical context by looking at the historical, political, economic and socio-cultural situations in Mauritius. I showed that modes of representation based on ethnic traditions and values had been historically shaped by the successive waves of immigration from Europe, Africa, India and China. A brief aperçu of the political culture and economic development of post-independence Mauritius was provided, in which I suggested that ethnic self-identification was currently the norm. I then surveyed the heterogeneity of the Mauritian population and the existing differences between the various groups and subgroups. I observed how the locals attributed value and prestige to the different languages present on the island by hierarchizing them. I also explained that the complexity of the linguistic situation was exacerbated by the fact that some languages (in particular, the Asian languages), although not widely spoken, were mainly used as markers of identity, and that Mauritian Creole, despite its low status, was the first language of the majority of the population.

In Chapter Three, I explained how Herder's belief that a nation derived its legitimacy through its unique language and culture was difficult to apply in many post-colonial societies, as the latter often incorporated groups of different ethnic and racial origins. I explored some of the different policies adopted by various post-colonial societies as a way of facing the challenge of multilingualism. By focusing on the interplay between

theatre translation and linguistic nationalism, I then looked at how and why theatre translation could be used to participate in efforts of nation-building.

Chapters Four and Five provided an analysis of the target texts and some of the stage productions to show how theatre translation was being used as a site of intervention. In Chapter Four, I explained that political independence was not synonymous with cultural autonomy and that in fact, Mauritian cultural values were still influenced by colonial ones. This would, therefore, explain the translators' use of the target texts in decolonization efforts, in their attempts not only to deconstruct and re-interpret the source texts, but also to challenge hegemonic views of self-definition. I also showed how decolonization efforts encouraged the creation of an autonomous orthographic spelling that was phonemically inspired, made use of code-switching in the target texts to allow a level playing-field for French, English and Mauritian Creole, and finally endorsed the process of linguistic hybridization clearly taking place between Creole and the other languages present on the island.

While Chapter Four dealt with decolonization issues, Chapter Five concentrated on the translators' endeavors to embed the target texts within the political and socio-cultural realities of the home society. I showed how certain lexical items from the source texts were deliberately substituted for well-known local ones in order to promote their Mauritian specificity. The aim was to validate a mode of group identification which was anchored in shared referents, such as local geographical places, weather conditions, indigenous fauna and so forth. In other domains such as culinary practices and leisure patterns, the translators clearly intended to highlight the emergence of hybridized practices, thus pointing to the process of cultural creolization taking place within

society, proof that no community has remained immune to the existence of the others. Furthermore, I investigated the way in which a discourse of modernization was inserted within the target texts so as to emphasize the idea of Mauritius as a modern nation-state, adopting democratic principles, and providing freedom and representation for all its citizens regardless of their ethnic affiliation.

In Chapter Six, I examined the role of the patrons and the professionals who were instrumental in the translation, publication and stage production of the translated texts. I sought to establish not only the rationale behind their involvement in this literary and theatrical process, but also the different ways in which they endeavoured to promote and publicize their respective ‘causes’. It became apparent that currently there were two trends pointing in opposite directions: one, nation-building efforts which were based on the promotion of Mauritian Creole as *the* national language and which mainly came from individuals or organizations from civil society; and two, governmental efforts which were directed primarily towards maintaining a discourse of multiculturalism and multilingualism designed to give equal importance to the existing languages.

Finally, in Chapter Seven, I gave an evaluation of the target audience to find out whether the translated texts and their stage productions could have had any impact on society. I first looked at the target readership by calculating the possible percentage of the population with the necessary reading skills and by examining the groups of readers the translators and publishers had in mind. My analysis suggested that the potential readers for translations into Mauritian Creole were unlikely to constitute a large proportion of the population. This evaluation was backed by figures provided by the local publishing industry which showed that Creole publications constituted a small

percentage of the overall textual production. I also suggested that it was likely that in public perception, the production of Creole texts was linked to left-wing Marxist ideology as advocated by some of the publishers, which could partly account for the public indifference. I then looked at the stage productions of some of the target texts, but found that they too only attracted a limited audience. I observed that governmental policies with regard to Mauritian Creole theatre (or to theatre in general) were not intended to appeal to a wide audience.

Although the lukewarm response from the public suggests that theatre translation into Creole and its stage production are still peripheral activities, there have been several indicators, some already mentioned in this thesis, which point to the fact that Creole is slowly, very slowly, emerging as a language whose importance as a symbol of the island should not be underestimated. The creation of '*grafi larmoni*' as a unified form of orthographic spelling illustrates this point. The fact that a consensus has been reached between local academics and language activists, when it has previously been a bone of contention, is a major step forward. Furthermore, since 2005, the pre-vocational sector of Catholic schools has been using '*grafi larmoni*' as medium of instruction (see Section 6.2.2), and last year, the University of Mauritius set the end of year exams paper for a course module on Creole languages in English, French and Mauritian Creole (also using '*grafi larmoni*'), with candidates given the opportunity to answer their questions in any of the three languages (see Appendix XV). The University's new venture is in marked contrast to its 1982 decision when participants to a colloquium it had organized on the language issue in Mauritius were forbidden to use Creole (Unmole cited by Hookoomsing 1987: 135). My final example is taken from the former Minister of

Fisheries, Silvio Michel, who, in 2004, resigned as a member of the government with a letter written in '*grafi larmoni*'. Despite the fact that Creole has no official status, the letter was accepted by the President of the Republic (Hookoomsing 14 Dec 2004).

In fact, I would argue that, despite the low number of Creole readers and theatre-goers, the role of Creole, as a shared language, is likely to increase, while the number of Asian language speakers is likely to continue its downward trend (see Section 2.4.2.3). This may possibly have future repercussions on ethnicity as a factor in the construction of identity, especially as Mauritius continues to become integrated into the world economy, with its focus on materialism and consumerism. These can potentially erode the traditional and cultural values upon which ethnic identification has until now firmly relied. For instance, the 1999 riots (mentioned in Section 2.3), which became an inter-ethnic conflict between the Hindus and the Creoles, also quickly assumed a 'consumerist' bent when looting began. Supermarkets and electronic goods stores, all symbols of material wealth to the have-nots, were ransacked. Furthermore, as I have already pointed out in Section 2.3, the traditional division of labour based on ethnic perception is being slowly replaced by a more meritocratic approach in matters of recruitment because foreign companies are increasingly present in the Mauritian economy and are less inclined to pay heed to ethnic considerations.

However, it is also likely that the importance of English and French as languages for international communication will continue. This is because since the 1990s, the government's plans to turn the island into a cyber-island have meant that local and foreign companies have increasingly needed to recruit staff who are competent in these two languages. As for the patrons and the professionals interviewed for this research,

despite their recognition of and their fight against English and French hegemonic cultural influence, most are pragmatic enough to realize that, for all sorts of political and socio-economic reasons, Mauritians do need a working knowledge of these languages. This would explain the theatre practitioners' revelation during our meetings (see Section 6.2.1), that for all their commitment to Mauritian Creole, they also continue to perform in and to produce English and French plays. Virahsawmy, himself, has never called for the total rejection of either French or English. In an interview with *L'Express* on 14 Feb 2004, he points out that as long as Creole is used as the medium of instruction, English could be gradually introduced to primary age children while French could be offered at secondary level for those who wish to study the language (Soondur 2004). In terms of identity construction, however, I think it is unlikely that Mauritians would claim an English or French identity (except perhaps for the small group of Franco-Mauritians) purely on the basis that they have mastered these two languages.

Although the impact of theatre translation efforts with regard to the promotion of a form of national identification based on Mauritian Creole, has so far appeared to be limited, I do not believe that the tasks performed by the patrons and the professionals have been in vain. Their efforts have helped enrich the Mauritian Creole cultural capital, while their linguistic creativity and innovation in the translational process have demonstrated that the language can be used for written and literary purposes. I do believe, however, that there is plenty of room for improvement that could prove beneficial in the long term, especially if the translational process is carried out in conjunction with other societal efforts (see the example of Ireland in Michael Cronin 1996 and Maria Tymoczko 1999, as already mentioned in Sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3).

Firstly, patrons and professionals should provide more care and attention to detail in the production of Creole texts, ensuring that the latter are edited and published to a high standard, unlike some of the target texts analyzed for this research. This would go some way towards improving the poor image of Creole and of Creole publications. Secondly, dissemination efforts should ensure that Creole publications are made available, at least in places such as schools and public libraries (urban and rural), and that the Mauritian public is made aware of the existence of these publications through newspapers and through the medium of radio and of television¹⁸⁴. Thirdly, translation should not be limited to canonized literature. Virahsawmy's choice of source texts, for instance, includes by and large Shakespeare's and Molière's plays, and works by other well-known Western literary figures, such as William Blake, T.S. Eliot, La Fontaine and Antoine de St-Exupéry¹⁸⁵. There should be attempts for translation from languages other than English and French; this, I believe, would help towards decolonization efforts as Mauritians need to stop referring to the former colonial cultures as the only providers of 'good' literature. There should also be translations from domains other than drama and literature (scientific, commercial and technical writings for example) to improve and promote the versatility of Mauritian Creole. In fact, for Mauritian Creole to participate fully as the language of the nation, it should be present in all disciplines and not restricted to what Cronin calls "the aesthetic ghetto" (1998: 150). Non-literary and non-theatre translations would thus target a wider set of addressees, unlike Shakespeare's and

¹⁸⁴ Asgarally's 1996 survey, already mentioned in Section 7.3.4, found that 92% of the population owned a TV set and 88% a radio (1997: 104).

¹⁸⁵ See Virahsawmy's website at <http://www.boukiebanane.orange.mu/polanktradiksion.html>. Accessed 28 Jan 2009.

Molière's translations which have often been produced with the local student community in mind.

Moreover, I suggest that there is a need for greater contribution on the part of the Mauritian government. To be fair, the creation of '*grafi larmoni*' in 2004 was made possible thanks to the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research (as it was called then) (Hookoomsing 2004: 37). However, there has been little official development since then. For Mauritian Creole to be truly promoted at a national level, its use as a written language in domains such as the law courts and state schools (mainstream and pre-vocational) needs the official endorsement of the State. The State could actively encourage activities linked to the development of Mauritian Creole, such as the publication of Creole books and text-books, the translation of legal documents (including the Constitution¹⁸⁶) and their official recognition, the pedagogical training of teachers in Creole, the establishment of a theatrical culture that would be accessible to the nation as a whole (rather than to pockets of addressees as its drama festival currently caters for), and of course the provision of necessary funds when and where required. Although there are local critics who suggest that literacy in Mauritian Creole is a wasteful activity when resources could be allocated to consolidate the acquisition of foreign languages (Hills 2001: 140), I argue that it is essential for Mauritians to learn to accept, understand and be comfortable with their first language before mastering other languages. This, of course, will prove to be a tough political challenge which future

¹⁸⁶ In 2006, Virahsawmy was asked by the current attorney general, Rama Valayden, to translate the Constitution into Mauritian Creole (interview 29 Aug 2006). While the Creole text is now ready, it is yet to be officially accepted as a legally binding document.

governments will need to tackle without being seen to favour the Creole community and without antagonizing non-Creole groups.

On the other hand, there is also a need to dispel the local perception that the promotion of Creole language and Creole textual production, including translation, is inextricably linked with left-wing Marxist thinking which had been popular among certain sections of the population in the 1980s and which had initially brought to prominence the issue of Creole as a language in its own right. As we have seen in Chapter Six, many patrons and professionals, such as Virahsawmy, Poonoosamy, Mootien and LPT's representative, Ah-Vee, are well-known for their political background and their involvement in those so-called '*années de braises*'. Although their militancy has somewhat waned over the years, their outspoken views and political sympathies, often publicized, are still apt to conjure up that connection. There is, thus, a need for Mauritians to see that the development of Creole is an issue that concerns all of them, not just political and cultural activists. The involvement of the Catholic Church¹⁸⁷ and the recent contribution of the University of Mauritius, therefore, provide a useful basis for continued efforts in promoting Creole as they constitute examples of the language taking on a role that is beyond the militant aspect to which it has been linked.

Although this thesis, and in particular the policy suggestions in this concluding chapter, are intended to contribute towards nation-building efforts in Mauritius, I would like to think that from an academic viewpoint, this research has also made some contribution towards two specific areas – the fields of Creole and of translation studies.

¹⁸⁷ Although it must be pointed out that the Catholic Church is traditionally seen as the defender of the Creole ethnic group and its involvement in promoting Mauritian Creole may provoke some suspicion on the part of the other communities.

In the first instance, I hope that in analyzing translational efforts into Mauritian Creole, I have provided a better understanding of the complex sociolinguistic challenges faced not just by Mauritius but also by many Creole societies, especially those Caribbean island-societies mentioned in the introductory section, who wish to dispel the negative image of their Creole languages and to promote them as fully-fledged languages by upgrading their oral status to a literate one. This research has shown how and why this ‘upgrading’ process is more than a linguistic procedure, that in fact, it involves important political and socio-cultural factors. Overall, it has drawn attention to the difficulties those Creole societies have to face, trying to reconcile a desire for autonomous linguistic and cultural values with their status as a former colony and as a multicultural society, and with the need for pragmatism in order to participate in a world ‘dominated’ by European languages.

This thesis has also confirmed the now widely accepted view within the field of translation studies that translation is not merely a linguistic matter, but that it can be and is often conceived as an ideological weapon within a wider political agenda, where source texts are appropriated and manipulated for specific reasons. I hope that it will, in particular, provide an insight into the translational practices of post-colonial, multilingual Creole societies, who are engaged in finding and creating their own ‘voice’, distinct from their former masters’. I also hope that this research, in emphasizing the role played by Mauritian patrons and professionals, has further contributed to our understanding that translators are not the only people involved in the praxis of translation, that in the case of theatre translation in particular, it includes a wider set of

agents, each with his/her own purposes, tasks and responsibilities; thus, marking translation as a socially embedded activity indeed.

Although in the Mauritian context, the effectiveness of translation as an agent of change appeared to have been minimal so far, it would still be hasty on my part to conclude that the process of translation cannot lead to any changes in a post-colonial multilingual and multicultural situation. For this, more research is needed. It would be particularly productive to look at and to be able to compare the situation regarding translational efforts between different Creole societies, whether in the Indian Ocean or in the Caribbean. It would be interesting to examine any translations carried out, the types of translations (technical, literary, scientific and so forth), the reasons behind such efforts and their influence in bringing about internal cohesion. It would also be interesting to investigate whether state contribution can make any difference to the impact of translation, as I conjecture it might possibly do in the Mauritian context. We know, for instance, that the Seychellois government is officially and financially involved in the promotion of local Creole books (Canova 2006: 75-92), but there seems to be, as yet, no thorough research regarding its input towards translational efforts.

Although this research has looked at theatre translation using concepts taken from the field of post-colonial studies, I would like to suggest that theatre translation, as a genre, could benefit from further research. The main existing theory pertaining to theatre translation is the notion of performability (see Introduction) which, according to Bassnett (1998: 105), primarily concerns European theatre traditions. There is, consequently, a need for more theoretical reflection on the translation of theatre texts that could be applied to European and non-European contexts, especially when the

practice of translation is motivated by ideological reasons. It would be interesting to see how using the translated text as a 'framework', the *mise-en-scène* in turn combines linguistic and non-linguistic sign systems to convey ideological meaning to its audiences.

In her article 'Postcolonial Translations', Bassnett (2007) points out that the Latin root of the word 'translation' means to 'carry across' and that the early uses of the term were, in fact, both literal and metaphorical. In the same way that a text could be translated from one language to another, so a body, in a religious context, could be 'translated' from one place (earthly) to another (heavenly), implying, therefore, that translation could be seen as a spatial journey between two points. From a personal point of view, this piece of work has in itself been a journey for this author, a journey where some old assumptions about her place of birth and about herself have been 'carried across', but where others have been discarded in order to acquire new ones. Similarly, it is also a journey being undertaken by the Mauritian population, as Mauritian Creole is clearly still being 'carried across' from its original beginning as a 'pidgin' in a colonial slavery context to a post-independence national and inter-ethnic language. As linguistic and cultural creolization slowly takes place, it is possible to assume then that for Mauritians, identities are not static but continue to be influenced and reshaped. Mauritius, therefore, is still in the making, still changing, still on its journey.

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Appendix I



Available from <<http://bii.intnet.mu/images/map.jpg>>. Accessed 23 Mar 2009.

Appendix II



Available from
http://www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/CIA_Maps/Mauritius_20088.gif.
 Accessed 23 Mar 2009.

Appendix III

Country, Island and Language usually spoken at home	Both sexes	Male	Female
ISLAND OF MAURITIUS			
All languages	1,143,069	566,056	577,013
Creole	791,465	397,335	394,130
Cantonese	132	58	74
Chinese	6,793	1,152	5,641
Hakka	610	214	396
Mandarin	996	78	918
Other Chinese	205	44	161
English	3,505	1,758	1,747
French	39,827	18,726	21,101
Other European	743	354	389
Arabic	82	43	39
Bhojpuri	142,385	68,870	73,515
Gujrati	240	140	100
Hindi	7,245	3,974	3,271
Marathi	1,888	887	1,001
Tamil	3,622	1,892	1,730
Telegu	2,169	1,067	1,102
Urdu	1,789	892	897
Other Oriental	719	484	235
Creole & Chinese	1,439	715	724
Creole & French	33,216	16,029	17,187
Creole & Other European	5,744	2,950	2,794
Creole & Bhojpuri	64,089	31,554	32,535
Creole & Hindi	4,565	2,211	2,354
Creole & Marathi	1,656	778	878
Creole & Tamil	3,274	1,593	1,681
Creole & Telegu	2,837	1,380	1,457

Creole & Urdu	3,529	1,718	1,811
Creole & Other Oriental	1,879	935	944
Chinese & European	63	35	28
Chinese & Oriental	39	19	20
French & Other European	1,708	817	891
French & Oriental	430	209	221
Other European & Oriental	2,501	1,265	1,236
Bhojpuri & Hindi	7,295	3,659	3,636
Bhojpuri & Marathi	86	44	42
Bhojpuri & Tamil	13	6	7
Bhojpuri & Telegu	52	23	29
Bhojpuri & Urdu	166	79	87
Bhojpuri & Other Oriental	30	17	13
Hindi & Marathi	26	18	8
Hindi & Tamil	18	17	1
Hindi & Telegu	18	11	7
Hindi & Urdu	8	4	4
Hindi & Other Oriental	73	58	15
Marathi & Tamil	8	4	4
Marathi & Telegu	-	-	-
Marathi & Urdu	-	-	-
Marathi & Other Oriental	3	1	2
Tamil & Telegu	3	1	2
Tamil & Urdu	-	-	-
Tamil & Other Oriental	4	2	2
Other	805	513	292
Not stated	3,077	1,423	1,654

Data from the 2000 Housing and Population Census, Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment, Mauritius. Available from <<http://www.gov.mu/portal/sites/nbc/cso/report/hpcen00/Demogra/homeisl.htm>>. Accessed 29 Mar 2009.

Appendix IV

Key

Blue highlights – use of French

Black italics – use of Creole

Red highlights – use of English

lexpress.mu

La une

Mercredi 16 février 2005

No - 15336

AMBIANCE

Les “facts” de Soodhun et l’alliance “pac pac”...

La deuxième séance depuis la rentrée s’est passée dans un climat bon enfant et d’échanges railleurs sur la recomposition du paysage suite aux démissions au MSM.

Un Premier ministre taquin qui s’emporte quelquefois, un vice-Premier ministre discret et pas très à l’aise, un leader de l’opposition calme et souriant, un ministre du Travail en pleine forme, des démissionnaires mal à l’aise et des membres du MSM qui essaient tant bien que mal de cacher leur gêne... la bonne humeur était au Parlement hier malgré quelques piques de part et d’autre.

Showkatully Soodhun a occupé la scène avec verve. Alignant humour et bonne humeur, Soodhun s’est défendu tant bien que mal face aux provocations de l’opposition. Le ministre du Travail a choisi l’humour. “**J’étais avec les directeurs de CMT, Beachwear (...) jusqu’à fort tard...**”, annonce-t-il fièrement. “*Ki restoran?*” veut savoir Ramgoolam. Et Soodhun s’arrête au beau milieu de sa phrase et saute sur l’occasion : “*Mo ti kone to ti pou demann mwa sa. Mo pa koumsa mwa!*” se défend-il avant de reprendre son discours.

Discours qui ne passionne pas le Premier ministre, Paul Bérenger, qui voit sa concentration disparaître quand il aperçoit l’ex-ministre Choonee qui fait son entrée et se met avec les backbenchers de la majorité et le député Nancy de Rodrigues. “*Personn pa le Choonee, mil fwa Ramjuttun*”, ricane Bérenger. Un membre de la majorité en profite pour demander à Mookhesswur Choonee si “*tonn retourne tou?*” Ce dernier, embarrassé, fait un petit sourire. Pravind Jugnauth détourne le regard.

Entre-temps, le ministre Soodhun a fort à faire pour convaincre l’opposition des points qu’il avance. “**This is a fact!**” s’emporte-t-il face à l’incrédulité de l’opposition. Phrase reprise toutes les deux minutes. L’opposition donne du fil à retordre à Soodhun. “**Tu**

crois que je mens? I give you fact!” reprend Soodhun de plus belle. “**Oui, it’s a fact**”, reprend le Premier ministre, qui n’arrive plus à contrôler son fou rire.

Soodhun est sur le point de perdre patience. Ses chiffres sont contestés par l’opposition. “**This is a fact, man!**” s’écrie-t-il. “*Zot tou pe riy twa ta*”, se moque David. Finalement, le ministre n’en peut plus. “**Le leader de l’opposition peut continuer avec son bla blabla... mais moi je vous donne des... facts!**” affirme Soodhun. Et il décide de démontrer à quel point il contrôle son sujet. “**Tu ne me crois pas ? C’est très simple. 40,000 divisés par 2 nous fait 20,000**”, s’acharne-t-il à expliquer. Le ministre est applaudi pour “son génie”. Bérenger va plus loin. “*Sithanen mem tom sek ar twa.*”

Calme apparent

Ce dernier change de tactique après que son énième “this is a fact” eut provoqué d’autres éclats de rire. A chaque question de Ramgoolam, Soodhun remercie le leader de l’opposition : “**Je vous remercie et vous félicite pour cette question**”, dit-il avec un large sourire. Et à Bérenger de s’inquiéter : “*Pa akoz sa to bizin telefonn li, in, get Choonee pe trakase!*” Et Soodhun reprend : “**J’outrepasse mon rôle de parlementaire...**” “*Pa mwa sa, li sa!*” se moque Madun Dulloo. Soodhun n’est pas content. Il fronce les sourcils : “*Ress trankil twa, to pa konn nanien.*” Et Dulloo rétorque : “*tou dimoun pe riy twa ta!*” “**But I am doing my best**”, se défend le ministre. “**Your best is not good enough!**” rétorque Ramgoolam. “*Li limite*”, s’écrie David.

Le Premier ministre veut aussi être de la partie: “*Get Arvin, li ena mem batatz ki Ramjuttun!*” Xavier Duval en a assez. Il se lève et pose une question supplémentaire d’un ton grave qui ne plaît pas au Premier ministre. Il essaie tant bien que mal d’imiter le leader du PMXD : “**He knows everything... ale do arogan!**” Mais Soodhun détend l’atmosphère. “**Je vous félicite pour votre question**”, dit-il en éclatant de rire. Mais Bérenger ne compte pas lâcher prise. “*Li mem ti pli move minis lindistri. Clown!*” Le député rouge s’y met aussi : “*Eta Soodhun, twa ki sanla to lider filozofik?*”

Après la PNQ, les esprits se calment. Ahmad Jeewah et Rajesh Bhagwan s’endorment. Emmanuel Leung Shing converse avec Sushil Khushiram et Sylvio Michel bombarde le Premier ministre de questions. Les parlementaires se mettent à se disputer sur ce qui est le plus shocking ; que l’éthique n’ait pas été respectée pour la nomination de Sir Victor Glover pour présider la commission d’enquête sur la vente à la barre ou la suggestion de Megduth Chumroo d’ignorer les considérations de la commission. “**You are shocking**”, dit Bérenger à Chumroo.

Souffre-douleur

Et la mauvaise humeur du Premier ministre persiste. Il ne veut pas répondre à la question de Rajesh Jeetah sur les salaires et conditions d’emploi de ses conseillers. “**L’information est en train d’être compilée**”, dit-il sèchement. “**C’est la cinquième fois que je pose cette question. Vous n’avez toujours pas l’information?**” s’enquiert le député rouge. **Cela ne reflète pas positivement sur le pays le mieux géré du monde!**”

“**Les informations seront compilées le mieux du monde**”, rétorque Bérenger.
“**Pourquoi ne sont-t-elles pas prêtes?**” intervient David. “**Advisers come and go. The time will come when I will be ready**”, déclare Bérenger, impassible. “**In an age of computer...**” commence David. “**Ça suffit. Plus de questions**”, intervient le speaker quelque peu de parti pris...

Entre-temps, Soodhun et Xavier Duval ont fait la paix. Ils se lancent des piques et pouffent de rire. Mais le député Maudarbaccus décide qu’il est temps d’agacer les membres de l’opposition encore une fois: “***Ey monn tann dir ki Ramjuttun ti pe tire lafisel depi New York ? Li bouz difil zot danse!***” dit-il dans un éclat de rire. Et Bérenger décide de donner un coup de main : “***Pac pac pac pac pac***”, chantonne-t-il. Quelqu’un mentionne les noms de Jhurry et Bachoo. Le Premier ministre marmonne : “***Al dan renion no 5, al gagn kout kalbass lor latet...***” et éclate de rire.

Sam Lauthan va répondre à une question. Burty David et Arvin Boolell tiennent une photocopie d’un journal chacun en main. “***Kot Goolfee***”, demande David. “***Goolfee derier twa***”, reprend Boolell en riant. Lauthan s’arrête, regarde ses collègues et lance: “***Al enkadre foto la, to met dan to lasam!***”

La seconde tranche de la séance est plus calme. Fidèle à son habitude, Ramgoolam ne revient pas. Dinesh Ramjuttun est omniprésent par contre. “***Lalians pac pac***”, lance Bérenger sans raison apparente. Les députés rouges Hookoom et Jeetah seront les souffre-douleur de la majorité. Le premier se met debout et pose des questions qu’il lit de son carnet. “***Si li perdi karne, li pa kapav poz kesyon***”, lance Bérenger. Il ne reçoit pas de réponse. Il décide de provoquer davantage : “***Ayo pa kompren nanien sa, al get Choonee... Choonee papa, fouf ! bon debara!***” dit-il, d’un air dégoûté.

David pose des questions au ministre Lauthan et demande que des documents soient déposés. Le Premier ministre intervient. David est mécontent. “***C’est quoi ton problème? Bouffon!***” et la majorité n’est pas contente: “***Fou sa dan so lagel.***”

Et c’est au tour de Jeetah. Ashock Jugnauth décide de lui faire la leçon: “***Eta Jeetah, depi 2 semenn Bachoo la, li pankor explik twa kouma fer travay la?***” Le ministre Leung Shing s’est entretenu avec Sushil Khushiram et Motee Ramdass. Pas un seul mot, pas un seul regard échangé avec son leader. Quant aux démissionnaires, ils se sont fait très discrets. Face à l’hostilité de la majorité, les blagues pas très gentils du Premier ministre et la sévérité du speaker à l’égard de l’opposition, il ne fait pas trop bon être minoritaire au Parlement...

Par Deepa BHOOKHUN, Jean-denis PERMAL

From <http://www.lexpress.mu/print.php?news_id=36000>. Accessed 16 Feb 2005.
(Now available at <http://www.lexpress.mu/Services/archive_36000_AMBIANCE>. Accessed 24 Mar 2009).

Appendix V

Mauritian Creole stage productions in 2006

<u>Stage Productions</u>	<u>Months</u>
<i>Tuni Minwi</i> (comedy)	April
<i>Komiko Lor Baz</i> (sketches)	May
<i>Humorisiens</i> (sketches)	June
<i>Pa Kit Mwa</i> (comedy)	June
<i>Komiko Folies Reloaded</i> (sketches)	July-Aug
<i>Deksi Feler</i> (comedy)	Aug
<i>Fil Mo Servolan</i> (problem play)	Aug
<i>Tablo</i> (sketches)	Sept
<i>Zenfán La Ri</i> (problem play)	Sept

Appendix VI

Mauritian Creole stage productions in 2007

<u>Stage Productions</u>	<u>Months</u>
<i>Komiko Dan To Baz</i> (sketches)	May-July
<i>Cloclo Le Débonnaire</i> (sketches)	May-June
<i>Abé Mwa</i> (problem play)	June
<i>Riyé Zamé Fini</i> (sketches)	Aug
<i>Promes</i> (comedy)	Sept
<i>Pou Enn Fwa</i> (problem play)	Sept
<i>Solisyon Dan Ou Lamé</i> (problem play)	Sept

Appendix VII

MINISTRY OF ARTS AND CULTURE CALENDAR OF NATIONAL DRAMA FESTIVAL 2008

SN	Language	Venue for Preliminaries & Finals	Preliminaries 13.00 hrs	Stage Rehearsals for Finals	Date for Finals – 12.30 hrs	Last date for submission of entries	Responsible Officer
1.	English	Municipality of Port Louis	28 April - 10 May	Tuesday 27 May	Thursday 29 May	28 March	Mr. L. Bhiwajee
2.	French	Serge Constantin Theatre, Vacoas	28 April - 10 May	Tuesday 20 May	Thursday 22 May	28 March	Mrs. M. Rangasamy
3.	Telugu	Serge Constantin Theatre, Vacoas	12 May - 31 May exc. 20, 22, 27, 29 May	Thursday 12 June	Saturday 14 June	28 March	Mr. C. Swami
4.	Hindi	Municipality of Port Louis	12 May - 24 May exc. 22 May	Thursday 5 June	Saturday 7 June	28 March	Mr. M Ramjeeawon
5.	Mandarin	Municipality of Port Louis	26 May - 4 June	Tuesday 17 June	Thursday 19 June	28 March	Mr. L. Bhiwajee
6.	Urdu	Serge Constantin Theatre, Vacoas	2 June - 21 June exc. 5 & 7 June	Tuesday 1 July	Thursday 3 July	2 May	Mrs. M Rangasamy.
7.	Marathi	Serge Constantin Theatre, Vacoas	28 July - 9 August	Thursday 21 August	Thursday 23 August	2 May	Mr. L. Bhiwajee
8.	Tamil	Municipality of Port Louis	28 July - 6 August	Thursday 14 August	Saturday 16 August	2 May	Mrs. M Rangasamy
9.	Bhojpuri	Serge Constantin Theatre, Vacoas	18 August - 30 August exc. 21 & 23 August	Thursday 11 September	Saturday 13 September	2 May	Mr. M Ramjeeawon
10.	Creole	Municipality of Port Louis	18 August - 30 August exc. 15 & 23 August	Thursday 18 September	Saturday 20 September	2 May	Mr. C. Swami

Appendix VIII

List of articles featuring LPT in *Le Mauricien* and its week-end publications, *Week-End Scope* and *Week-End* in 2006.

1. Criticizing the government's educational policies:
 - *Le Mauricien* 17 Feb
2. Advertising their translational activities:
 - *Le Mauricien* 29 March
3. Advertising their literacy programmes:
 - *Week-End Scope* 4 April
 - *Le Mauricien* 27 April
 - *Le Mauricien* 2 Sept
 - *Le Mauricien* 30 Dec
4. Advertising the sale of LPT publications:
 - *Le Mauricien* 20 April
5. Expressing their stance against political repression:
 - *Week-End Scope* 23 June
 - *Week-End Scope* 30 June
6. Expressing their views on the local economic situation:
 - *Week-End* 26 June
7. Celebrating 30 years of existence:
 - *Le Mauricien* 27 June
8. Celebrating Kreol Day:
 - *Le Mauricien* 21 Oct
 - *Week-End Scope* 27 Oct

Appendix IX

List of articles featuring or mentioning *Immedia* and/or Poonoosamy in *L'Express* and *L'Express Dimanche* in 2006.

1. The French singer, Francis Cabrel, in concert:
 - *L'Express* 3 Feb
 - *L'Express* 4 Feb
 - *L'Express Dimanche* 5 Feb
 - *L'Express* 23 Aug
 - *L'Express* 26 Aug
 - *L'Express Dimanche* 27 Aug

2. Launching two writing competitions – a play and a musical:
 - *L'Express* 25 Feb
 - *L'Express* 27 Feb
 - *L'Express Dimanche* 5 Mar
 - *L'Express* 18 Mar
 - *L'Express* 22 April
 - *L'Express* 12 July
 - *L'Express Dimanche* 16 July

3. The Indian artists, Kay Kay and Mahalakshmi Iyer, in concert:
 - *L'Express* 17 Mar
 - *L'Express* 18 Mar
 - *L'Express* 7 April
 - *L'Express* 8 April

4. Promoting Mauritian artists:
 - *L'Express* 27 Mar

5. Promoting *Collection Maurice*, *Immedia*'s annual literary magazine:
 - *L'Express Dimanche* 23 April
 - *L'Express* 24 April
 - *L'Express* 4 Dec
 - *L'Express* 11 Dec

6. Promoting Mauritian comedy shows:
 - *L'Express* 15 May
 - *L'Express* 20 May
 - *L'Express* 3 June

7. A historical survey of May 1975:
 - *L'Express* 20 May
8. Projection of a Mauritian-produced film:
 - *L'Express* 10 July
9. A get-together for the Trotters Club¹⁸⁸, of which Poonoosamy is a member:
 - *L'Express* 24 July
10. Port-Louis theatre festival:
 - *L'Express* 4 Aug
 - *L'Express* 5 Aug
 - *L'Express Dimanche* 6 Aug
 - *L'Express* 19 Aug
 - *L'Express Dimanche* 20 Aug
 - *L'Express* 28 Aug
 - *L'Express* 2 Sept
 - *L'Express Dimanche* 3 Sept
 - *L'Express* 11 Sept

¹⁸⁸ Short for the Globe-trotters Club, a sports club created in 1972 which, unlike many of its contemporaries, was not founded upon ethnic affiliation.

Appendix X

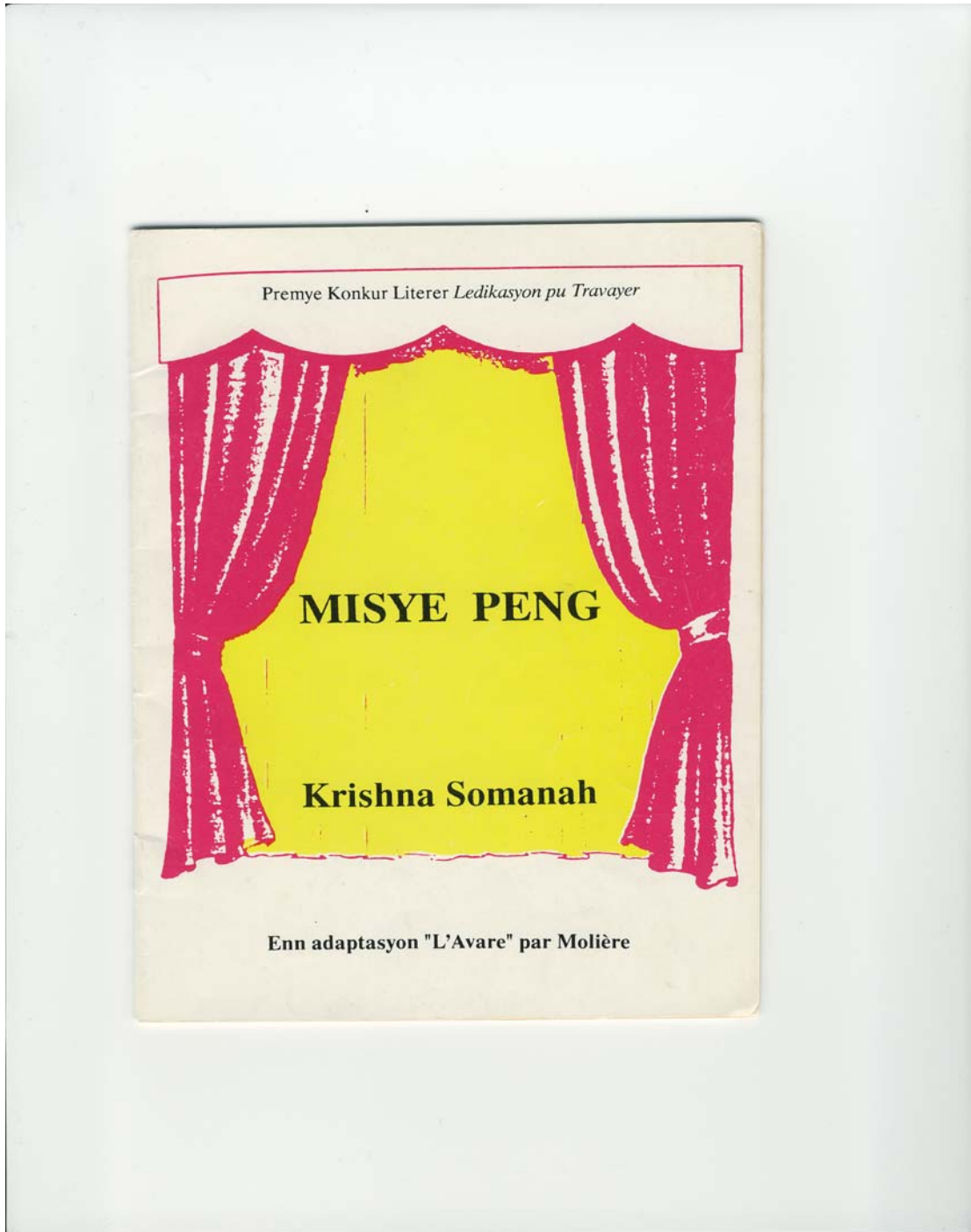
2000 Population Survey: Educational attainment

Country, Island, Sex and Age (in years)	Total	Educational attainment								
		Nil & Pre- primary	Primary		Secondary				University degree or equivalent	Not stated
			Std I-VI but not passed CPE	Passed CPE	Forms I-III	Forms IV- V but not passed SC	Passed SC or equivalent	Passed H SC or equivalent		
ISLAND OF MAURITIUS										
Both Sexes										
Total	1,106,986	146,184	426,130	47,260	129,399	158,124	117,100	58,267	19,563	4,959
2	17,955	17,955	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	18,039	18,039	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4	18,772	18,772	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2-4	54,766	54,766	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5	19,392	9,694	9,689	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
6	19,687	438	19,249	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7	20,991	103	20,888	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	20,854	90	20,764	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9	20,576	75	20,501	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5-9	101,500	10,400	91,091	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
10	20,490	53	19,332	877	152	-	-	-	-	76
11	19,614	71	12,071	1,562	5,821	-	-	-	-	89
12	18,632	82	4,298	674	13,487	-	-	-	-	91
13	17,758	90	2,413	339	14,693	134	-	-	-	89
14	17,354	83	2,352	348	10,181	4,293	-	-	-	97
10-14	93,848	379	40,466	3,800	44,334	4,427	-	-	-	442
15	17,806	103	2,706	405	4,356	9,773	328	7	-	128

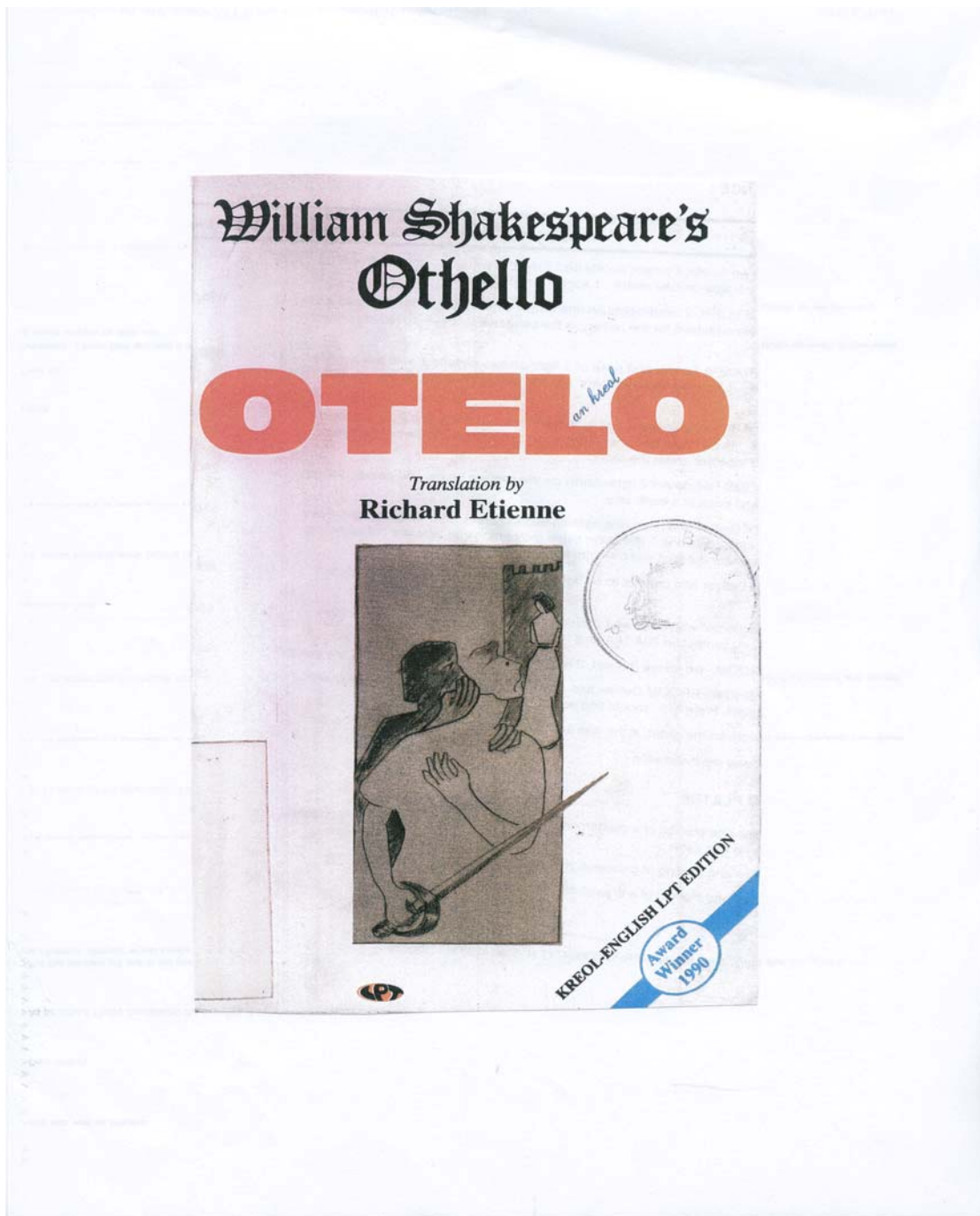
16	18,361	115	3,208	504	2,423	9,797	2,083	122	-	109
17	19,020	124	3,798	573	2,045	7,284	4,576	539	2	79
18	20,775	138	4,546	766	2,257	5,710	5,626	1,666	4	62
19	21,611	182	4,874	884	2,469	4,840	5,128	3,143	18	73
15 - 19	97,573	662	19,132	3,132	13,550	37,404	17,741	5,477	24	451
20	23,494	220	5,795	953	2,889	4,768	4,439	4,314	46	70
21	22,162	201	5,563	881	2,673	4,717	3,632	4,260	156	79
22	21,954	229	6,025	888	2,600	4,601	3,322	3,759	405	125
23	20,611	232	5,868	885	2,461	4,300	3,089	3,031	630	115
24	19,097	225	5,494	789	2,254	4,093	2,748	2,574	814	106
20 - 24	107,318	1,107	28,745	4,396	12,877	22,479	17,230	17,938	2,051	495
25	19,853	252	5,641	810	2,416	4,272	3,017	2,559	774	112
26	19,081	268	5,506	836	2,351	4,019	2,950	2,294	770	87
27	16,938	246	5,277	788	2,153	3,451	2,392	1,923	598	110
28	17,592	288	5,403	823	2,166	3,713	2,549	1,858	661	131
29	17,582	264	5,355	796	2,305	3,725	2,586	1,822	611	118
25 - 29	91,046	1,318	27,182	4,053	11,391	19,180	13,494	10,456	3,414	558
30 - 34	97,046	2,134	31,982	4,700	11,701	20,867	14,332	8,265	2,571	494
35 - 39	99,654	3,266	33,784	5,676	11,346	20,362	16,014	6,606	2,213	387
40 - 44	88,307	4,630	34,240	6,464	8,746	12,881	13,786	3,951	3,247	362
45 - 49	76,409	7,482	32,254	6,019	6,830	8,489	9,993	2,437	2,601	304
50 - 54	55,724	8,672	24,236	3,940	4,001	5,737	5,956	1,333	1,584	265
55 - 59	39,270	9,597	16,803	2,072	2,106	3,124	3,701	790	868	209
60 - 64	32,056	10,837	13,997	1,054	1,249	1,563	2,214	474	442	226
65+	72,469	30,934	32,218	1,954	1,268	1,611	2,639	540	548	757

Available from the Central Statistics Office's website at
<http://www.gov.mu/portal/sites/ncb/cso/report/hpcen00/educa/e5isb.htm>. Accessed 7
April 2009.

Appendix XI



Appendix XII



Appendix XIII

List of ‘other publishers’

<u>Publishers</u>	<u>No. of Creole texts published</u>
ASSIMIL	1
<i>Editions Alma</i>	1
<i>Editions de la Tour</i>	2
<i>Editions de l’Au-Delà</i>	1
<i>Editions Le Printemps</i>	1
<i>Editions Maurice</i>	1
<i>Editions Sapo</i>	1
<i>Editions Shantee</i>	2
<i>Editions Ulaz</i>	2
<i>Kutub Khana Ishayat</i>	1

Appendix XIV

List of several socio-political writings published by *Lalit* and LPT from 1996-2003
(Chan Kam Lon 2002 and 2005).

1. Lalit, *Program lor Ekoloji e Lanvironman (Ecological and Environmental Program)*, 2003.
2. Lalit, *Program lor langaz (A Program for Language)*, 2003.
3. LPT, English-Mauritian Creole bilingual copy of Lindsey Collen's talk on "*Natir Imin*" ("*Human Nature*"), 2000.
4. LPT, English-Mauritian Creole bilingual copy of Trevor Ngwane's talk on "*The World Movement against Neo-liberal Globalization and Resistance in South Africa*", 2001.
5. LPT, *Lefe Globalizasyon lor Drwa Imin (The Effects of Globalization on Human Rights)*, 2001.
6. LPT, English-Mauritian Creole bilingual copy of Ram Seegobin's talk on "*Lalwa Travay depi Lesklavaz ziska Globalizasyon*" ("*Labour Laws, from Slavery to Globalization*"), 2001.
7. LPT, English-Mauritian Creole bilingual copy of Patricia McFadden's talk on "*Patriarchy: Political Power, Sexuality and Globalization*", 2001.
8. LPT, French-Mauritian Creole bilingual copy of José Bové's talk on "*La Mondialisation en Question*" ("*The Issue of Globalization*"), 2001.
9. LPT, English-Mauritian Creole bilingual text written by Lalit, "*Diego Garcia in Times of Globalization*", 2002.
10. LPT, English-Mauritian Creole bilingual copy of Shiva Vandana's talk on "*Globalization, Food Security and War*", 2002.
11. LPT, English-Mauritian Creole bilingual text based on a public lecture given by Tove Skutnabb-Kangas, "*Eski Gouvernman Pe Tuy Bojpuri ek Kreol? Zenosid Linguistik dan Lekol ubyen Diversite Langaz?*" ("*Is the Government Killing Bojpuri and Kreol? Linguistic Genocide at School or Linguistic Diversity?*"), 2003.
12. LPT, *Artist against War*, 2003.

Appendix XV

Question 2

Those two poems are from DevVirasawmy. Read them and explain briefly the words and expressions that have been underlined.

Lir sa de poem Dev Virasawmy la e explik an detrw mo, bann term ek expression ki finn souligne.

LALANG PEYNA LEZO

Lalang peyna lezo do koko
Lalang peyna lezo
Bat to lalang de foi do matlo
Avan to zaza
Kouma enn nanye
Enn parol sape
- parol pa panse -
Ler to regete
Ler to regrete
Finn deza tro tar
Lalang peyna lezo do koko
Enn silab blesan
Enn ton kontretan
Enn zes kontsezon
Ala toudisman
Ranz nik ar tourman
Fil rasinn mofinn
Santiman anrouinn
Lalang peyna lezo do koko
Kifer yer boner
mo pa ti balans
mo lalang de foi
avan mo zaza?

KAN KRAS ANLER

Vie chachi dan nou vilaz
Zame li ti rasazie
Dir zanfan nou voizinaz:
"Baba si to kras anler
Li retom lor to nene."
Basjit souvan fer fezer
Li koir limem gran fanor
Li pa lare komanter
- Pa limem pli gran kapor? -
Lor tou seki dimoun fer
Li kritik bonavini
Boufonn seki pa dakor
Kras lor febles setaki
Riy erer lezot for-for
Lor zot santiman vom
Pa limem pli gran kapor?
Later tro sal pou so lipie