—— 1997, *Latchizann pou letan lapli* (Port Louis: LPT).
—— 1997, *Trazedji Makbess* (translation-adaptation of *Macbeth*) (Port Louis: LPT).
—— 1998, *Sir Toby* (original creation inspired by *Twelfth Night*) (Port Louis: LPT).
—— 1999, *Tartif Froder* (translation-adaptation of *Le Tartuffe*) (Port Louis: Boukie Banane)
—— 1999, *Zil Sezar* (translation-adaptation of *Julius Caesar*) (Rose-Hill: Boukie Banane).

'Translating' *The Tempest*
Dev Virahsawmy's *Toufann*, cultural creolisation & the rise of Mauritian creole

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Shakespeare – the most-produced playwright in the world – fascinates. Writers, film-makers, artists and ordinary folk the world over continue to draw on his work in creative and sometimes conflicting ways, and Mauritian writers are not immune from this fascination.[1] In 1998, for instance, two works inspired by the bard appeared, both of them in 'Kreol',[2] the language spoken by all Mauritians. Vidya Golam published a contemporary meditation on Iago and his treachery in a long poem entitled *Lonorab Yago* (The Honorable Iago)[3] and the prolific translator and dramatist Dev Virahsawmy published *Sir Toby*, which emphasizes values that have been important to him since 1967, when he first began writing in Kreol.[4] That is, as he made clear in an interview with Danielle Tranquille: freedom, cultural creolisation (*métissage*), women's liberation and empowerment.

Besides Golam and Virahsawmy, three other Mauritian writers have been recognizably influenced by Shakespeare: Bhisma Dev Seebaluck, Yacoob Ghanty, and Lindsey Collen. For his comic and pointed attacks on Mauritian mores, Seebaluck used Shakespeare as a not-quite-Renaissance interlocutor for a weekly 'My dear Billy' column in a Mauritian Sunday newspaper. He published a selection of these columns in 1989 in a volume entitled *Dear Shakespeare* and this was followed six years later by *Dear Shakespeare II*. In the closing essay of the first volume, Seebaluck explained: 'So I invented you once again, my dear Billy. And now, I have got so used to you that I cannot stop abusing you' (1989: 109).

In 1995 the novelist Yacoob Ghanty published a play entitled *Macbeth Revisited*, a transparently political meditation on the police investigations into, press speculations about, and popular condemnations of a senior civil servant who allegedly killed his wife and child. Ghanty explored the so-called 'Affaire Bacha' through the prism of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. His decision to use the Scottish play was unquestionably connected to Shakespeare's meditation in that play on notions of power, authority, and usurpation, issues Ghanty has taken up again in his 1999 play, *Clinton and Cleopatra*.

In her fourth novel, *Getting Rid of It* (1997), Lindsey Collen also turned to *Macbeth*. The novel's three female protagonists, Jumila, Sadna Joyna, and

Goldilox Soo, are likened by the narrator to *Macbeth*'s witches: 'There's trouble written on their bodies now. Double double toil and trouble' (1997: 5). And a few pages later, Sadna asks her two friends: 'What brings you two here? Thunder, lightning or is it rain?' (1997: 23). Collen's recourse to Shakespeare was already signalled in her decision to entitle her first and second novels *There is A Tide* (1991) and *The Rape of Sita* (1994), respectively. The title of the first is taken from *Julius Caesar*, and that of the second, mirrors Shakespeare's *The Rape of Lucrece* in which Rowan rapes the protagonist, Sita, just as Tarquin raped sweet Lucrece.

The imprint of Shakespeare on Dev Virahsawmy is greater than his imprint on all other Mauritian writers, to the extent that Virahsawmy's engagement extends beyond influence, borrowing, blueprinting, or bardolatry. In most writers, the use of Shakespeare is referential, as in Collen's *Getting Rid Of It*, or formal, as in Ghanty's *Macbeth Revisited*. In Virahsawmy the use is far more sophisticated.

Nowhere is this clearer than in his 1991 play, *Toufann* ('Tempest'), a play inspired by *The Tempest*. The choice of the word *toufann* for the title, and as a rendering of 'tempest', is evidently carefully thought out. When Ferdjinan observes to Prospéro that 'Enn zafèr misteryé finn ariv mwa... Premieman nou bato finn tass dan siklonn...', 'Something mysterious has happened to me... First of all, our boat was caught in a cyclone...,' Prospéro interrupts with 'Toufann.' 'Ki ou djir?,' 'What's that you say?' asks Ferdjinan. 'Pa siklonn, Toufann.' 'Not cyclone,' Prospéro answers, 'Toufann' (Act 1, Scene 4 of the Kreol version. *Readers will note that the text of 'Toufann' reproduced in this volume sometimes varies from that quoted in this article. Eds*). The Kreol word for the weather phenomenon in question is *siklonn*, 'cyclone', but any Mauritian listening to the Hindi-language weather service cyclone bulletins – broadcast together with those in English, French and Kreol – will recognise the word *toufann*.[5] And, in fact, the word *Toufann* does not appear in any Kreol lexicons, although it is commonly used metaphorically to describe a tumultuous situation or rambunctious child.

That the word is magical and foreign is made clear in Act 3, scene 1, when Yago enters the scene:

Yago Personn pa kapav vinn ed mwa pou tchir sa boug la anba lili. Depi Toufann...
Ferdjinan Toufann?
Yago Wi Toufann.
Ferdjinan Kifèr Toufann?
Yago Pa Toufann mem ki sa siklonn la appelé ?
Ferdjinan Wi, mé kouma ou koné ?
Yago Pa koné mwa. Mo la finn ziss sortchi.
Ferdjinan Zot finn konpran vouzot. Astèr Prospero kapav fèr zot pansé kouma li anvi... Reazir foutou...

Yago Someone come help me get this guy out from under the bed. Ever since the Toufann...
Ferdjinan Toufann?
Yago Yes, Toufann.
Ferdjinan Why Toufann?
Yago Isn't this cyclone called Toufann?
Ferdjinan Yes, but how did you know?
Yago How should I know. The word just came out.
Ferdjinan Don't you see, everyone. Now Prospero can make you think any way he likes... Do something about it, goddammit...

Toufann was not Virahsawmy's first work to be inspired by a Shakespeare play. In 1981, finding it daunting adequately to translate *Macbeth* into Kreol, Virahsawmy decided instead to adapt the play and published his reworking the following year. Thus was born *Zeneral Makbef* [General McBeef] – not only Virahsawmy's first Shakespearean work, but the first Mauritian work manifestly based on a Shakespearean model.[6]

Besides Shakespeare, Virahsawmy has turned to other enduring works of world literature. James Snead's remarks, made in another context, about these classics are *à propos* here:

> These texts (he cites as examples, *The Odyssey*, *The (Divine) Comedy*, *Don Quixote*, *King Lear* and *Faust*) are extraordinary... (T)hey are not so much universal as hybrid, unifying previously scattered or dispersed dialects, colloquialisms, and oral traditions. They reach beyond the standard set of materials proper to a local sense of group cohesion, and make assimilationist gestures which abruptly break the mold of national languages. (Snead 1981: 234)

It is these assimilationist gestures which underpin Virahsawmy's project. In a 1998 interview, he observed:

> I've translated Molière, Shakespeare, and right now I'm translating fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm because I am convinced that such a project follows the logic of cultural creolisation (*métissage*). Our culture is necessarily linked to a world culture. It's a way for me to share this heritage with all of humanity. This helps to build bridges between peoples, between the past and the present, between different cultures... Translations can build bridges between the Tower of Babel's different rooms ('Tradjiksion capav cree pasrel ant bann lasamm dâ la tur Babel'). (Tranquille 1998)[7]

In this project, however, Shakespeare has pride of place. Perhaps because, as Inga-Stina Ewbank urges us all to remember, 'Shakespeare has been a creative force outside insular culture and involved in making not only English men of letters but also lettered men and women of other tongues and cultures' (Ewbank 1991: 110). It is in this light that Virahsawmy's Kreol-language post- and un-colonial *Toufann* must be read, not in the perspective of post-colonial English-language adaptations where, as Chantal Zabus notes, 'The twin result of the irreversible process of colonization is that the colonized speaks the language of the colonizer and, by the same token, becomes his rival in literary sophistication.' (Zabus 1985: 37)

The following table is a chronological listing of Virahsawmy's plays which have recourse in one way or another to Shakespeare:

Title of play (translated title)	Original or Translation /Adaptation	Year of publication
Zeneral Makbef (General McBeef)	Original	1982
Toufann ('Tempest')	?	1991
Enn ta senn dan vid (Much Ado About Nothing)	Translation/Adaptation	1994*
Hamlet 2 (Hamlet II)	Original	1995
Doktèr Hamlet (Dr Hamlet)	Original	1997
Trazedji Makbess ((Tragedy of) Macbeth)	Translation/Adaptation	1997
Sir Toby (Sir Toby)	Original	1998
Zil Sezar (Julius Caesar)†	Translation/Adaptation	1999

† Completed in 1986 and published in 1999.
* Serialised in 1994 in the Mauritian daily, *L'Express* and published by Ledikasyon Pu Travayer (LPT) in 1995. Most of the early work was self-published using a Kreol orthography Virahsawmy had developed himself. In the 1990s he adopted the orthography used by LPT, and in 1999 he reached an agreement with the Catholic Church regarding 'official' orthography.

Although three of Virahsawmy's plays are specifically identified by him as being the objects of 'Tradjiksion/Adaptasion' ('Translation/Adaptation'), *Toufann*, like *Zeneral Makbef* before it, is not so identified. It is in fact a supremely creative reworking, and has, consequently, attracted deserved critical attention by, for example, Roshni Mooneeram (1999).

Virahsawmy subtitles *Toufann* 'Enn fantezi antrwa ak,' 'A fantasy in three acts,' and dedicates it to Shakespeare and to the contemporary North American literary critic and cultural theorist (of Mauritian origin), Françoise Lionnet.[8] The dedication to Shakespeare acknowledges an enormous and obvious creative debt. But the dedication to Lionnet is far more significant. It underscores a major part of Virahsawmy's project in 'translating' Shakespeare *in Mauritius*, and *into 'Mauritian*,' namely introducing to Mauritians the importance of notions of inclusion, as opposed to exclusion, of cultural creolisation (*métissage*), as opposed to (supposed) ethnic purity, of the empowerment of women, as opposed to their oppression.

Admittedly, adapting *The Tempest* is nothing new in postcolonial world literature. An article by Diana Brydon and another by Chantal Zabus, for instance, focus on the numerous New World adaptations of the play; and, in a 1987 article, Rob Nixon describes a host of appropriations by African and Caribbean writers and intellectuals of the late 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Like many of these writers, Virahsawmy graduated from a British university; he spent 1963 to 1967 at the University of Edinburgh. And like a number of dissenting intellectuals, he too made what may appear to be a paradoxical choice, namely to use the canonical and quintessentially English Shakespeare as a model.

But unlike so many African and Caribbean appropriations of *The Tempest*, Virahsawmy's *Toufann* is not a 'component of the grander counterhegemonic endeavors of the period.' Virahsawmy may have been 'electrified by newly-gained independence, revolutions, and black power,' but his play does not form part of a collective 'call for a renunciation of Western standards' and is not one of the countless 'cultural ... insurrections against the bequeathed values of the colonial powers' (Nixon: 557). His aim, rather, is to redeploy, exploit (in the good sense) and wield Shakespeare in order to elevate Kreol – the language in which all his plays are written – to the status of a world language.

For many writers, taking up *The Tempest* was an act fraught with complexity:

> A schooled resemblance could become the basis for 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. (Nixon: 560)

In short, a mastery of Shakespeare could end up demonstrating a non-European inferiority. But Virahsawmy has no anxiety and has no complex. This explains (or helps to explain) why he completely elides the passages that are at the core of almost every appropriation, adaptation and reworking of *The Tempest*, namely the exchange between Caliban, Prospero (and possibly Miranda) which begins 'This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother,' and concludes:

> 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!

Even those writers, such as Fanon and Césaire, who vociferously rejected Octave Mannoni's positing of a Prospero (or inferiority) complex and a Caliban (or dependence) complex, which Mannoni based on this passage, themselves incorporate versions of this exchange.[9] Indeed, it is also the basis of some influential literary critical analysis of the original play (Greenblatt 1990: 23). And yet, it, or any variation of it, is conspicuously absent from Virahsawmy's *Toufann*. Like the French-Canadian novelist Pierre Seguin in his adaptation, *Caliban* (1977), Virahsawmy does not attempt to illustrate scenes from *The Tempest* per se, nor give a personal interpretation of it. He does not even produce a parody or an allegory. Instead, Virahsawmy reworks text and context in such a way as to champion Kalibann.

The first writer really to champion Caliban was George Lamming in *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960). For Lamming, Caliban is the colonized writer-intellectual whose root frustration is the fact that he will always lag behind, permanently shackled to the colonizer's language, the only one he has (Nixon: 568). In this respect, the cultural and linguistic politics of Lamming and Virahsawmy diverge. Kalibann is not the writer-intellectual, but a resourceful everyman, and his language is a creative and liberating Kreol.

What is at stake ... is something larger than the immediate local value of a Shakespearean play: it is the very possibility of decolonizing the area's cultural history by replacing it with an endemic line of thought and action. (Nixon: 569)

For Virahsawmy, as I have already suggested above, this endemic line of thought and action is the championing of Mauritian Kreol.

This has not always been easy. Because Kreol was, and still is, primarily a spoken lingua franca, it has for long been regarded as a bastardised form of French – which, of course, it is not. What is more, as Henri Favory, performer and playwright *engagé*, notes,

Most people who know how to read Kreol are the people who read English and French, that is, people who are schooled. Very often, these people reject Kreol literature.

Laplipar dimunn ki konn lir kreol, se bann dimunn ki lir angle ek franse, setadir bann letre. Byen suvan, bann letre refiz literatir an Kreol. (Favory 1996: 8; cf Ramharai 1990: 63)

In the programme notes to *Trazedji Makbess*, Virahsawmy wrote that it is a literary text which has a vital role to play in the growth in prestige of a language which is on the complex road travelled by all languages before they can achieve a standard form.

enn tex literèr ki ena enn rol vital pou zwé dan devlopman prestchiz enn lang lor simé konpliké ki tou lang traversé pou li gagn so form standar. (Virahsawmy *Trazedji Makbess*, programme notes)

In a May 1998 interview, Virahsawmy was more explicit

Globalization is taking place through the medium of English as its language of communication. In the local context, however, we cannot minimize the role of Kreol: it's the language of cohesion, all the other languages will only be able to play a secondary role. There is a groundswell: when it surfaces, the tempest will be unleashed ('Ena ène lam de fon, kan sela pou fer sirfas, bel toufann'). (Tranquille 1998: 4)

Endemic thought and action extend beyond a championing of Kreol to a championing also of Mauritian culture, a culturally creolized Mauritian culture. In the programme notes to *Trazedji Makbess* Virahsawmy also noted that his translation of *Macbeth* is:

a way for us to proclaim loudly that we are part of a large planetary culture known as humanity; our own way of saying that you cannot shut away Shakespeare, Molière, Mozart, Tagore, Picasso ... in the prison of small minds or the evil of 'His Excellency The Communalist.'

enn fason pou nou djir for-for ki nou form partchi enn gran kominoté planetèr ki apel limanité; nou prop fason pou djir ki pa kapav ferm Shakespeare, Moliere, Mozart, Tagore, Picasso ... dan kaso tchi-lespri ek mesansté Mazesté Djat-Pat (Virahsawmy MDL)

Virahsawmy told me that one of his motives for populating his works with fictional characters is to pre-empt communalised readings of his characters' actions. (Personal Communication, cf Zabus 1985: 46)

Much recent criticism of *The Tempest* has attempted to situate it in colonial social and political contexts. In *The Stranger in Shakespeare*, for example, Leslie Fiedler (1973: 208) argued that 'no respectable production of the play ... can afford to ignore the sense in which it is a parable of transatlantic imperialism (and) the colonization of the West'. (See also Hulme (1992) and Brown (1985: 48–71)). Eldred Jones unambiguously sees *The Tempest* as an actual preview to colonial rule[10] (1992: 59–67). Whether one accepts these readings or not, there is no denying the fact that *The Tempest* has been widely used as a general metaphor and as an articulate post-colonial literary riposte. (See Peters 1996, Wilson 1997, Zabus 1985.)[11]

But whereas many writers of the decolonized, post-colonial world have 'written back', some, such as Romesh Gunesekera, have written *with* (cf. Ashcroft *et al.* 1989: 191–3). Gunesekera's 1994 novel, *Reef*, is not a retaliatory rewriting of *The Tempest*, but rather a subtly embracing and imbricating one. (See Chew 1998.) Virahsawmy also writes *with*, and in order to do so enlists allies in characters from Shakespearean plays other than *The Tempest*. Thus in *Toufann* Alonso is Lerwa Lir (King Lear); Antonio is Yago (Iago), and Miranda is re/cast as Kordelia (Cordelia).[12]

Bann karaktèr dan lord ki zot paret	The Characters in order of appearance	Who they represent in *The Tempest*
Bann Maren	Mariners	Mariners
Poloniouss (kôseyé Lerwa)	Polonius (the King's counsellor)	Gonzalo, an honest old Counsellor
Kordelia (tchifi Prospero)	Cordelia (Prospero's daughter)	Miranda, daughter to Prospero
Prospero	Prospero	Prospero, the rightful Duke of Milan
Kalibann	Caliban	Caliban, a savage and deformed slave
Aryel	Ariel	Ariel, an airy spirit
Lerwa Lir	King Lear	Alonso, King of Naples
Edmon (frèr Lerwa Lir)	Edmond (King Lear's brother)	Sebastian, his brother
Yago	Iago	Antonio, Prospero's brother, the usurping Duke of Milan
Bann solda	Soldiers	–
Ferdjinan (garson lerwa Lir)	Ferdinand (King Lear's son)	Ferdinand, son to the King of Naples
Kaspalto	Have-a-drink	Stephano, a drunken butler
Dammarro	Take-a-hit	Trinculo, a jester
Kapitenn pakbo	Ship's captain	Master of a Ship
Bann servitèr	Servants	–

This (re)naming is of utmost significance because naming can sometimes make it seem that one is accepting a legacy when one is in fact undermining it, turning it into a 'stunning act of signifying' (Lionnet 1995: 46, Gates 1988). This is, of course, true of Shakespeare too. The minor characters Trinculo and Stephano in *The Tempest*, for example, are very possibly cued from Roberto Dudley's exploitations of the rival redemptionist orders, the Trinitarians and the Knights of San Stephano (Wilson 1997: 351). Virahsawmy names them Dammarro, or 'Take-a-hit', and Kaspalto, 'Have-a-drink', respectively, divesting them of historical or fictional connections (unlike his other choices among the characters), and inserting them into a comic intertextual and self-referential narrative that will resurface in *Sir Toby* :

(2 customers (of a tavern) front-stage: Dammarro and Kasspalto)

Dammarro D'you think this time he'll give us our chance?
Kasspalto Who?
Dammarro You don't remember?
Kasspalto No.
Dammarro Didn't they tell us in *Toufann* that next time it'd be us who'd be made king?
Kasspalto Dream on! Just quietly accept your two-bit role. Anyway, Republics don't have kings.

(2 kliyan dan lavan-senn: Dammarro ek Kasspalto)

Dammarro To quar sannkoutla li pou donn nou nou sanss?
Kasspalto Kisannla?
Dammarro To pa rapel?
Kasspalto Non.
Dammarro Dan *Toufann* pa tchi djir nou prosenn lot kout nou ki pou vinn king?
Kasspalto Bliyé! Akseptê to tchi-rol trankil. Tou mannyèr dan repiblik peyna lerwa.
(*Sir Toby* 1998: 11)

In the closing moments of *Toufann*, the following exchange had taken place:

Dammarro Bé nou, nou gon nou? Zamé nou pou vinn lerwa. Tou gopia gagn drwa vinn lerwa. Mé nou, zanfan lepep, fèr koumadjir nou pa ekzisté.
Aryel Pa trakasé, mo pou koz ar misié la. Mo pou djimann li ekrir enn nouvo zistwar kot zot zot vinn lerwa.
Dammarro & Kasspalto Si koumsa dakor.

Dammarro What about us, don't we count? We'll never become king. Every nut-case gets to become king. But us, the children of the people, it's as if we don't exist.
Aryel Don't worry, I'll talk to the boss. I'll ask him to write a play where you guys get to become king.
Dammarro & Kasspalto Well alright then. (*Toufann* 1991: 24)

These exchanges between Dammarro and Kasspalto may be clever ways of problematising the relationship between characters and playwright, and

amusingly self-referential. On another level, Virahsawmy sets about to avenge a history of representation: in the closing scene, for example, Yago expresses the hope 'that literary critics will now understand that I'm not all bad': 'Mo esperé ki bann kritchik literèr konpran ki mo pa mové net' (*Toufann* 1991: 3.1).

Earlier, when he is accused of being the cause of Edmon's problems, Yago reacts as follows:

> I've had it up to here, to here! Every single time something doesn't go according to plan, everyone looks for me. Need a culprit? Must be Yago. Ever since that bastard Shakespeare used me to screw over Othello and Desdemona, everyone thinks I'm the one responsible for every problem in the world. (*Toufann* 2.6)

As for Kalibann, he is introduced by the playwright as follows:

(Enter Kalibann. He is a young man of about twenty-five, a métisse, a pretty boy who looks intelligent and resourceful.)

(Kalibann rantré. Li enn zenn-om anviron vennsenk an, enn metchiss zoli garson ki paret bien entelizan é debrouyar.) (*Toufann* 1991: 1.2)

Not only is Kalibann the resourceful right-hand man of Prospero, he is also Kordelia's lover, in a relationship of mutual affection. At the end of the play we learn that Kordelia is expecting his child:

Kalibann I'm free, then?
Prospero Yes, yes.
Kalibann Mr Prospero, sir, I have the honor of asking for your daughter's hand.
Prospero You looking for a kick in the behind?
Kordelia *(angrily)* Pappy! ... Pappy, you have to accept.
Prospero And why is that?
Kordelia I'm pregnant.
Prospero A tempest upon my head! ...

Kalibann Mo lib alor?
Prospero Wi, wi.
Kalibann Misié Prospero, mo ena lonèr djimann ou lamé ou tchifi.
Prospero To pa lé enn koutpié?
Kordelia (ankolèr) Papa! ... Papa, to oblizé axepté.
Prospero Kifèr?
Kordelia Mo ansent.
Prospero Toufann kraz mwa ... (*Toufann* 1991: 3.1)

Kalibann and Kordelia will be acclaimed King and Queen at the play's end and their child will presumably rule both Naples and the 'bare island'.

Ross McDonald has noted *The Tempest*'s profound concern with reproduction, not only biological, but also political and linguistic (1991: 17, 26). The concern with biological and political reproduction is evident in *Toufann* not only in Kordelia's pregnancy but elsewhere too. As Ferdjinan notes: 'Zot obsédé par maryaz, par reprodjiksion, par leritaz.' When Prospero explains to

Kordelia that he himself created the cybernetic Aryel, Kordelia reacts by asking her father if he, Prospero, is a hermaphrodite (*Toufann* 1991: 1.2). When the morose Aryel says to Ferdjinan, 'Mo pa kapav reprodwir,' 'I can't reproduce,' Ferdjinan sets about to show him that in spite of this he does and can have feelings, and the two resolve to become companions in a homosocial couple of great interest (*Toufann* 1991: 2.4). Reproduction, of which it turns out neither is capable, is thereby problematised – or further problematised – by Virahsawmy in the exchange where Ferdjinan finds reason to regard Aryel as a twin. ('Savedjir ou ek mwa nou dé frèr zimo ..')

As for the rape of Miranda, which is a preoccupation of so many adaptations of *The Tempest*, it is subverted and inverted, as it were, in *Toufann*: it is Kalibann's mother, a slave woman by the name of Bangoya, who was raped by her owner and abandoned on the island. And, as we have already seen, Kalibann is Kordelia's lover, and the father of her child.[13]

As with *The Tempest*, the production and re-production of *language*, its creation and re-creation, are also a subject in *Toufann*. The characters play with it, take pleasure in it, test its capacities, and misuse it consciously and unconsciously (Barton 1971: 19). When Poloniouss waxes prolix, he explains it as follows: 'Mo tchi servi enn metafor, Vot Mazesté.' 'Your Majesty, I was trying metaphorically to describe ...' Edmon replies: 'To meta tchi tro for ... Bess so laflamm'. This incorporates a play on words I can only render inadequately as: 'Diss your scribe, speak plainly'. (*Toufann* 1991: 2.6) The play is on the word 'metaphor'.

Virahsawmy's decision to open the play with a curse, 'Vansé foutou' ('Out of the fucking way'), must surely be read with Caliban's 'You taught me language/My profit on't is I know how to curse'. The very first words spoken by Aryel in the play are not in Kreol at all, but in English: 'Kapitenn, everything under control. When Prospero says do it, it is done' (*Toufann* 1991: 1.2): An echo of Marc Antony's words: 'I shall remember: When Caesar says do it, it is perform'd'. In Act 2, scene vi, Poloniouss inquires after Prospero's daughter in the following manner:

> So tchifi ... Mir ... non... Kordelia, li bien?
>
> His daughter, Mir ... I mean, Kordelia, is she well? (*Toufann* 1991: 3.1)

Given Virahsawmy's abiding preoccupation with language and with Kreol, these inventive and self-conscious slips repay close attention.[14] Kreol and English, as Mooneeram has observed, rewrite each other in the play. Like Michelle Cliff, Virahsawmy 'appropriates the repressed otherness of patois, thereby questioning its ambiguities and shifting otherness' (Lionnet 1995: 46).

In an article on the question of identity in Caribbean literature, Roger Toumson asked:

> What philosophy of the subject, what concept of difference can bear witness to the Caribbean cultural particularity without the experienced difference being neither put as difference in relationship to the European or African model nor brought back to a repetition of one or the other of these models? How else can we conceive ourselves *otherwise*? (Toumson 1986: 134)

Françoise Lionnet – to whom, remember, *Toufann* is dedicated – replies:

> To conceive ourselves, 'otherwise' means to scrutinize the assumptions that buttress our systems of ideology, including the ones that tend to essentialize language as an entity that is not permeable to its 'other' or that can be judged authentic or inauthentic, depending on the subject position adopted or evinced by the speaker. Because linguistic innovations tend to undermine the separation between standard language and vernacular speech, this highly creative process of cultural creolization also forms part of the basis for a praxis of self-invention through and in language that is the virtual project of many writers who are the products of colonial encounters and whose works experiment with the emancipatory potential of language. (Lionnet 1995: 34)

Cultural creolisation (*métissage*), self-invention, the emancipation of Kreol – it is with these threads, I would like to suggest, that Virahsawmy weaves in and through *Toufann* a different and daring narrative of freedom, belonging, inclusion, and liberation. In so doing, the play bears testimony to the pluralities of a serene and truly creolised post-post-colonial existence, and challenges us, its readers and viewers, to do the same (Lionnet 47). In the end, of course, as Kordelia herself says: 'Sakenn get listwar dan so mannyèr' (*Toufann* 1991: 1.6, p.7).

NOTES

1. See Toorawa 27–31.
2. Dev Virahsawmy prefers the term 'Morisien'(literally, 'Mauritian') to 'Kreol' to describe the Creole spoken by all Mauritians, which has only recently been accepted (by Mauritians and, indeed, by scholars of linguistics) as a bona fide language, worthy of attention and cultivation.
3. This desire to reform Iago, already expressed by Virahsawmy in *Toufann* (1991) is discussed below. Interest in Shakespeare's *Othello* was underscored by the appearance that same year of a translation of it into Kreol by Richard Etienne. Sedley Richard Assonne has also been inspired by the Moor of Venice. In 1994 he published a French poem entitled 'Otelo, Maure ou Vif' ('Othello, Dead/Moor or Alive').
4. The principal publisher and promoter of Kreol (and to a smaller extent English) writing in Mauritius, especially through its annual literary competitions, is Ledikasyon Pu Travayer (hereafter LPT). an adult literacy organisation. Most of Virahsawmy's early work is self-published under the imprint Boukié Banané using a Kreol orthography he developed himself, but his adoption in the 1990s of the orthography developed by LPT has meant that his recent work has been published by them. In mid-1999, Virahsawmy reached an agreement with the Catholic Church in Mauritius regarding an 'official' orthography. His last work using the orthography he pioneered is *Testaman enn Metchiss* (*Mestizo Manifesto*), a mixture of poetry, translation and linguistic excursuses on Kreol. The libretto of his recent translation into Kreol (with Father Gérard Sullivan) of the musical *Les Misérables* is not available. *Zil Sezar* (*Julius Caesar*) has appeared in the new orthography. (On Julius Caesar in Africa, see Malzahn 46–8.)
5. I am grateful to Vinesh Hookoomsing for pointing this out.
6. The name 'Makbef' evokes the comic and crude Kreol words mak ('pimp') and bef ('dolt') but is complemented by the names of other characters, such as 'Sitronel' ('lemon grass'). which derives directly from the local herbal medicinal tradition (see Ramharai 75).

7. As Ramharai (65), puts it, 'les emprunts s'insèrent dans [la] quête d'une culture mauricienne' ('these borrowings are an integral part of the quest for a [truly] Mauritian culture').
8. Françoise Lionnet, whose work focuses on francophone women's writing, has been important in bringing wider currency to the concepts of métissage (cultural creolisation) and multiculturalism in its literary dimensions.
9. Mannoni was inspired by the experience of the 1947–48 Madagascar uprising: see now the revised edition of his work. Césaire accordingly demythologised Prospero and made Caliban a slave who is an agent of change; cf. Nixon 573.
10. Contrast the perceptive analysis in Cartelli 99–115.
11. For two recent readings that situate *The Tempest* in the Old as opposed to the New World, see Peters 61–84, and Wilson 333–57.
12. On Miranda's possible link to Cordelia, see the quirky genealogy suggested in Hughes 421–5.
13. Interestingly Miranda shows up in *Sir Toby* as the fiancée of Sir Toby's nephew Gabriyel, whose child she is carrying.
14. The use of Shakespeare and the motives for that use, by Mauritian writers has not yet been satisfactorily investigated. I have suggested some motives in a recent essay. Some have argued that it is because Shakespeare is utterly familiar, and is still on the school syllabus. There has been much written about this – David Johnson's recent article, for instance. But you would be hard put to find someone, even someone who had excelled in the colonial English syllabus, who would readily recognise 'there is a tide', who would know who Feste is, or who would completely appreciate the subtlety of the character mélange in *Toufann*. Whatever the motivations, they are certainly complicated by the fact that the Mauritian readership is far more comfortable with literary French than with literary English and far more comfortable with the Indian and French literary heritages than with the English literary heritage. The situation is complicated, as Henri Favory noted above, by the fact that literate folk often reject Kreol.

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Aimé Césaire's *Une tempête*
A British premiere at the Gate Theatre

PHILIP CRISPIN

The Gate Theatre in Notting Hill, London, is a small space above a pub that exists on peanuts and cannot pay its actors. At the same time, it has a string of awards to its name, receives constant critical attention and is considered by many as 'the home of international drama' in the capital. The dichotomy of such a situation was not lost on me when I became The Gate's Literary Manager in 1998. But I knew that the spiritual rewards were what counted.[1] As the vanguard production for our *Home for the Exiles* season, I advised that we stage Aimé Césaire's *Une tempête* to mark the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in the French colonies and the 50th anniversary of the arrival of the first wave of post-war immigrants from the West Indies to Britain on board the *S.S. Windrush*, (Notting Hill itself remaining a locality with close ties to those immigrants). We would commemorate these momentous events in what was to be a British premiere.

I provided a new translation of the play for this purpose. *Une tempête* was already well known within the Francophone world.[2] First produced at an international festival in Hammamet, Tunisia, in the summer of 1969, before playing in Paris in January 1970, it was directed by Jean-Marie Serreau, with whom Césaire had worked so closely on most of his theatrical writing. Serreau's death in 1973 brought Césaire's career as a playwright to a close.[3] That first production is of special interest: a Caribbean rewriting of *The Tempest*, produced in Tunisia, close to Sycorax's origins and to Claribel's destiny (though neither, interestingly, feature much); which reads the play in part through the US Black politics of the Civil Rights period (associating Caliban with Malcolm X and Ariel with Martin Luther King), and which adopted the manners and dress of an American Western. Another notable recent production was that by Elie Pennont in Martinique in 1992. In that the actor playing the Yoruba deity Eshu became the unifying image, remaining on stage throughout the performance (in Césaire's text he appears in one scene only), watching silently from a distance, 'the incarnation of the fragmented psyche that must be acknowledged before any healing can take place'.[4]

Césaire shall be forever associated with the philosophy of Negritude that he espoused with such impact on the francophone black world from the 1930s on.