



From Creole to Standard: Shakespeare, Language, and Literature in a Postcolonial Context. (Cross/Cultures)

Roshni Mooneeram

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This book gives a fascinating account of the unique history of the national - creole - language of Mauritius and the process of standardization that it is undergoing in postcolonial times. The central question is how far a creative writer's activity may affect the status and linguistic forms of a regional language. The book focuses on the work of the author Dev Virahsawmy, who, particularly through his Shakespeare translations, is an active agent in the standardization of Mauritian creole. The approaches employed in *From Creole to Standard* combine a sociolinguistic examination of (changing) language attitudes with detailed textual studies of some of Virahsawmy's works to show the relation of his work to the process of language development. This book is relevant to the study of other creole languages undergoing standardization as well as to questions of language development more widely. Its strength lies precisely in its interdisciplinary approach, which addresses different readerships. Mooneeram's study is of great interest to both postcolonial thinking and sociolinguistics but also has important implications for debates about the role of canonical literary works and their transmission in the wider world. Her book is also a contribution to Shakespeare studies and the field of literary linguistics. There are interesting parallels between the contemporary situation of Mauritian creole and English in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Virahsawmy's adaptations and translations into creole echo the role Shakespeare's 'originals' played for English, and Mooneeram demonstrates how other writers have followed Virahsawmy in using literary forms to enrich the language.

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