

## So It Goes: The Daring Fictions of Bilingual Lindsey Collen

*Stephen Gray*

Late in the 1980s an aspirant woman writer picked from the rotating stand in a second-hand bookshop an old paperback with a lurid cover and vaguely familiar title – or at least so she would say when she came to preface her own first novel. Featuring a post-Botticelli floating-haired nude stepping off the open clamshell that conchologists visited her tropical island home to collect from the coral reefs at low tide, it was a Dell paperback published back in 1975. Called *Venus on the Half-Shell*, it was purportedly by one Kilgore Trout. Although a pumped-up brave was attaching himself to the icon's shoulder in an imagistic cliché, the book was actually about idealistic time-travellers, who lived in a utopian world of the far future in which our contemporary social problems (lack of education, chronic warfare, hunger, poverty and disease) had been abolished.

Although it was later to be revealed (in 1988) that the author of *Venus on the Half-Shell* was Philip José Farmer, our browser in her present time immediately noticed the spoof. Surely someone was using as a pseudonym the name of an alter ego of the American author to whom she was most devoted. In his slashing satires of his own late capitalist bourgeois society, which values the Money River above humanity, develops technology to bomb other nations to smithereens (Hiroshima, Dresden), Kurt Vonnegut was not afraid to speak out. Indeed, Trout himself had appeared in the character of a sci-fi author in Vonnegut's scathing anti-privilege novel, *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater* of 1965, in the devastating *Slaughterhouse-Five* of 1969, and would live on to make yet another appearance in *Timequake* of 1997. To our candidate author, who is Lindsey Collen, Vonnegut represented the way to develop teasing and daring fictions. And so for her it would go.

Meanwhile, alongside the Trout on the stand Collen spotted another work, ostensibly published in 2051. In retrospect it surveyed what its Foreword calls the Second Dark Ages (i.e. the 1990s). It comprised texts collected together from the archives as evidence of the hardly believable atrocities and social deprivations of the previous age, to be used as a school history book. It was edited by a researcher called Koko Bi Panchoo, who had retrieved two biographical texts and braided them together. The one was transcribed from tape-recordings made by a destitute dockworker's spouse, opening an interest in oral storytelling, the other scribbled out by an anorexic prisoner called Shyneer Pillay in the ancient Brown Seaward

Psychiatric Hospital. Together Panchoo had entitled them *There Is a Tide*, presumably because he had kept studying his Shakespeare in the postcolonial syllabus.

Once she had consulted the local copyright lawyers about literary rights and plagiarism and ingested many dhal purees without incurring any fatwas upon herself, Collen could republish the work as a 'found' text. This occurred in December, 1990, at Ledikasyon pu Travayer, the organisation of which she was a founder member and supports to this day.

By April, 1991, *There Is a Tide* had gone into reprint. When the journal *Wasafiri* devoted its Number 30 to Mauritian Writing in English of the new generation (in Autumn, 1999), the first chapter of *There Is a Tide* was included as a sample (pages 25–26), together with extensive treatment of Collen's later novel about women's rights and the taboo subject of abortion, *Getting Rid of It* (1997), soon to be longlisted for the Orange Prize. In her survey article in the same issue, Nandini Bhautoo-Dewnarain mentions that, like some other local authors (Azize Asgarally, Meera Pillay), Collen is a product of their country's post-independence economic boom and its supportive infrastructure. Hence she raises issues such as the clashes between tradition and modernity, folkloric wisdom and commercial lore, and the whole question of exile and return within reshaping polyglot communities.

The scene of all this gleeful provocation is Por Lwi, or the capital Port Louis, with readers into Collen's developing career having to pick up the country's Kreol Morisyin fast enough, for that is the language most of her characters speak, neatly translating into basic English as they go along. Collen had even produced the first ever novel in that lingo (*Misyon Garson*, 1996). Today LPT also has on sale pamphlets of hers like the long poem, *Komye Fwa No Finn Trap Enn Pikan Ursen* (1997), and the children's novella, *Teddy Rant dan Distrik Kawnsil* of 2000.

In the annual Collection Maurice anthologies, which have recently reached their twentieth title, Collen is also found to have usually contributed a short story in English, as well as another in Kreol. On Mauritius the language of high written culture still remains French, despite the fact that this remote volcanic upheaval had been a British colony (from 1810 to 1968), while seventy per cent of the population were once beached there as indentured labourers from India. Most Mauritian writers who have established a reputation abroad continue to use classical French as their first language (Ananda Devi, Natacha Appanah, Shenaz Patel, Édouard J. Maunick), with the only one using English as a creative medium listed in the current official Tourist Guide being in fact Collen.

When in 1997 Ron Butlin edited one of the first such anthologies, *Mauritian Voices: New Writing in English*, he included Collen's extraordinary short story about an innocent

bottle-seller accused of devouring children during the recent State of Emergency (“The Sacrifice,” 37–48). This confronted the problem of mass hysteria in the face of militarised social controls, and showed the author’s daring in using her fiction’s subject matter way beyond the remit of her compeers.

In a rather baffled report-back to *The Times Literary Supplement* in 2001, Jason Wilson in his “Letter from Port Louis” noted that Creole (as he called it) was obviously the country’s lingua franca, describing it as an unwritten pidgin French rich in Zs (*zozo* = *oiseau* or bird). He also mentioned several French writers (Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Robert-Edward Hart, Malcolm de Chazal and J.M.G. Le Clézio) as having contributed to the fame of this parliamentary democracy, 2 000 kilometres off the South East African coast and 2 000 square kilometres in size, with a population of over one million.

In a subsequent “Letter from Port Louis” (in 2004) and after conducting workshops there, Sean O’Brien found room for a mention of Collen, praising the way in which her art and her politics were always inextricably linked, especially in her latest novel about a women’s jailbreak, *Mutiny* (2001). Yet in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of African Literature*, edited by Simon Gikandi in 2003, apart from in a reference to Maunick, Mauritian literature is not mentioned at all.

But then in the first ever article on Morishya and its Kreol published in the West (in *Kunapipi* in 1999), Roshni Mooneram explained that since the French occupation (1721–1810), French had persisted as the language of the press, with English following as the official language of administration, while most of the people were speakers of their Kreol (second only to Haiti). As an illustration of the resultant melange, *Kunapipi* in the same Number 1 carried an excerpt from *Mutiny* as “Honey Mother’s Confession” (3–11). This helped the novel to win the Karl Vadamootoo Prize in 2009.

In a review of the first monograph devoted to Collen’s oeuvre – *The Subversion of Class and Gender Roles in the Novels of Lindsey Collen, Mauritian Social Activist and Writer* by Felicity Hand –François Lionnet made the point that not to do justice to the impact of “the creolised life-world of the Indian Ocean and to Collen’s representations of that world” (146) in favour of a rather narrow English-only approach was to belittle her achievement. In her own chapter devoted to *There Is a Tide* (in English, though some items are written in French in her collection called *Writing Women* of 2012), Mauritian-born Lionnet went on to pay tribute to Collen’s mastery of polyvocality. She praises Collen’s fine contribution to “multilingual literary history and to international discourses of development,” by raising “serious questions about history, gender and society” (145). Since most of Collen’s characters

are preliterate, she makes extensive use of the interior monologue, Toni Morrison-style, but with additional re-phrasings which serve to abet and provoke the monolingual reader into an involving experience.

For Mauritius is indeed a unique melting pot, a speck of refreshment station with its own several dependencies, usually described as “East African” or “West Indian Ocean.” It has been the axis for some while of an entire inter-island literary region that includes several other locales with similar histories, such as Madagascar, the Seychelles, the Comoros and even Mayotte.

Although she was born (in 1948) and brought up in South Africa’s Transkei region (in the village of Mqanduli, near Qunu, the birth- and burial-place of Nelson Mandela), where her father was magistrate, and boarded at the government Clarendon Girls’ High School in East London, Collen is not mentioned in Jeanette Eve’s *A Literary Guide to the Eastern Cape* (Double Storey, 2003). After stints in other rural areas, and as a student at the University of the Witwatersrand and a member of their New Poetry movement, when her fellows were arrested in 1968 under the notorious ninety-day detention law, Collen found herself by default the editor of their Arts Faculty quarterly journal, *Critique*. There under her own name (in various spellings) she published some of her own radical verse. After time abroad at the London School of Economics and elsewhere, she married Ram Seegobin, himself the author of several contentious pamphlets, whom she describes as “another grassroots political activist.” With him she returned in 1974 to his native Mauritius, where she has been resident for the last four decades.

When I visited her at their home early in 2014, she explained how, since Seegobin is a general medical practitioner and she has always acted as his *controleuse*, this had given her the opportunity to enter neighbouring homes and to enjoy the confidences of the humble folk who inspire and are portrayed in her writings. After campaigning for a long list of protest issues, she explained the current stand of LALIT among villages and town councils: to mobilise the people against the compulsory issuing of fingerprinted biometric ID cards, a form of state control which would return the populace to the days of slavery, not to mention South Africa’s detested pass system of yore.

Her own leap to fame came with the publication of her second novel, *The Rape of Sita*, which in 1974 won the prize for the best book from Africa (one of the four regions in which the annual Commonwealth Writers Prize was awarded), while being longlisted for the Orange Prize as well. *The Rape of Sita* had first been published by her own LPT in 1993, so was at first distributed without fuss within Mauritius. But the prize propelled her into the

company of other winners of the same year, such as Vikram Seth, David Malouf and Margaret Atwood.

Accordingly in 1995 it was taken up by Heinemann Educational in Oxford to be included in the African Writers Series, by then numbering over three hundred titles, with Collen being their first ever Mauritian author. That would be her last appearance in the HAWS, however, except for a short story called “The Enigma,” commended in the preface for its “cryptic, discordant tonalities” (Vera 4) by the editor of the anthology, co-published with Baobab in Harare, *Opening Spaces: Contemporary African Women’s Writing* of 1999.

But what really drove *The Rape of Sita* into bestsellerdom was that, as Collen might well have foreseen, its frankly graphic depiction of time-honoured sexual chauvinism, seen candidly from the female point of view (perforce underneath, ravished from above), would provoke an uproar in her local parliament, such that denunciations came from the Prime Minister himself. For her apparent outrage against public and religious morality, Collen even received anonymous threats of acid attacks, with the text being banned forthwith in Mauritius: never mind that the entire work was supposedly merely an update of a protest made by Shakespeare himself against the forced submission of the Roman heroine, Lucrece, as told by Ovid and Livy.

Collen’s compatriot, Noel Langley, had pulled the same stunt in 1935 against the gathering male military-industrial complex of his day in *Cage Me a Peacock*. Once it was reprinted by Penguin and reached South Africa in 1960 it was embargoed and likewise prohibited. When another South African author, Dan Jacobson, produced his *The Rape of Tamar* in 1970, this time based on Biblical sources, it duly suffered the same fate.

With her genius for making her works resemble texts well-known to metropolitan readers, Collen would go on to adapt and rework her *Misyon Garson* eight years later as *Boy* (cf. James Hanley’s of 1931, a scandal once it was tried for obscenity). Published in hardback by Bloomsbury, *Boy* then earned Collen the almost unprecedented accolade in 2004 of winning the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Africa for the second time. Despite all such honours, Collen’s signature work, *The Rape of Sita*, is the one which remains a classic text in its own right.

In the issue of the Paris-based *Notre Librairie* of July–September, 1993, devoted to Mauritian literature, there is no mention of Lindsey Collen. But then, by Number 128 of 1996 it is the author from nearby Réunion Island, Jean-François Samlong, who praises it as an addition to the culture of the Indian Ocean island countries, but then under the translated title of *Le Viol de Sita*.

The first word of Collen's dextrous use of interlanguage that her readers need to learn is *lalit*, which is the name of the literary wing of her organisation rooting for social reform (*la lutte*, the revolutionary struggle). As in the days of hippiedom and anti-apartheid crusading, Collen functions with a backyard printing press under a poster of Che. So we may take it that she may not be portrayed as some gormless Alice chatting up an extinct dodo, but rather as one who learned her tactics as a pro-democracy campaigner on the campus of the University of the Witwatersrand, committed to provoking any Publications Control Board and its climate of censure, and who has stuck to her guns against the "gouvernman."

With support from liberty-loving organisations like the international PEN, *The Rape of Sita* has been helped to live on. It was reprinted by Granta and then in 2001 rejacketed by Bloomsbury in London, with powerful shouts from the *Independent on Sunday* ("tragic and heroic"), the *Mail on Sunday* ("exhilarating and free-wheeling") and the inevitable "magical story" from *The Observer*. But Bloomsbury were to turn down her next two novels after that as too specialised in the vernacular lingo for their international readership. So with *The Malaria Man and her Neighbours* of 2010 Collen was back on her home ground in Port Louis with LALIT's LPT.

*The Rape of Sita* is a highly accomplished and deeply shocking work. In the unpaginated June supplement of the *Mail & Guardian* in 1995 in Johannesburg I was able to summarise some of the altercation it had caused, thanks mainly to the monitoring of its reception in the African Literature Association's *Bulletins*, published in Edmonton, Alberta. In their Volume 20, Number 2 issue of Summer, 1994, on page 65, they reported that Lindsey Collen had been threatened with public rape herself when the book was first released on 3 December, 1993. As a result of all the brouhaha, she and her local publisher withdrew it from circulation. The international Writers in Prison Committee called for a full investigation of the clamour and threats against her, describing her as "a leading member of LALIT, a political group working on trade union, squatters' and women's rights" – rather like her heroine, the abused militant Sita.

And then as a snub to her violent critics, in Volume 20, Number 4, of Fall, 1994, on page 63, the *Bulletin* reproduced the Commonwealth Writers Prize jury's assessment, without prejudice, as to why it had been chosen as their award-winner: "for the wide historical, philosophical and mythical scope of its context and for its adventurous and innovative narrative style." They went on to praise Collen's way of presenting "women's strengths and capacities for empowerment and action within a patriarchal society." With 'rape' becoming a subtle and complex symbol for the abuses of the capitalist system of labour exploitation in

general, the *Bulletin* suggested ALA members might be motivated to smuggle out bootleg copies from the local outlet directly.

In my summary of what had been an unprecedented furore in such a supposedly tranquil backwater, a controversy that brought Collen's work to the outside world's attention, I noted how the conservative establishment had been so affronted by the very clear implication that that inversion of love – the penis as prod – could come to symbolise the whole ghastly colonial inheritance, the pillage, the stripping bare, the taking of pleasure and profit and giving only pain. Stomach-churning stuff. Inhuman. Too wretched to be reminded of. Let alone in a beautifully gentle, arid, subtle novel.

By 21 November, 1997, in the *Mail & Guardian*, in another unpaginated piece dealing with Collen's work, Judith Watt quotes her as saying that winning that prize for *The Rape of Sita*, after all the hullabaloo, was a "vindication: it acknowledged that I was a writer; I had to take my work seriously" – that is, in response to "Muslim fundamentalists." But in the Sean O'Brien piece mentioned above, the opposition issuing those curdling death threats are "Hindu fundamentalists," as if any old bogey will serve in the Western media. About that crisis O'Brien reports that Collen said, "All the writers and artists in Mauritius stood by me very well. I had a lot of solidarity," adding: "Perhaps this even helped to create a literary community."

Two decades on, *The Rape of Sita* still reads as a challenging and innovative work. For a start, it is a written-down version of an oral interchange made by a local male narrator, Iqbal the Umpire of Surinam village in the south. He wishes he were a woman with, as he warns the reader in his preface, many a digression or "sub-story" and interruptions for questioning. But he is the familiar of Sita and her family, her husband Dharma and of their mutual friend Ton Tipyer, the stonemason who as he says acts as chorus. Iqbal has to remind his listeners, "There was slavery. Now there is not. There was indenture. Now there is not. There was colonisation. Now there is independence. There was no right to vote. Now there is." Yet "now, there is no equality between humans, some of whom sell their labour, others of whom buy labour. This also will not be" – with his injunction to Sita to "[h]elp it along" (Collen, *Sita* 64).

But despite labelling her stalwart Sita, Collen is not really making oblique reference to any classical texts, as is the case in, for example, O. A. Mathur's "Two Modern Versions of the Sita Myth," published in 1986. This article details how 'Sita' in Hindu mythology is a byword for wifely devotion and meek suffering, self-effacement and giving in with total

submission, as portrayed for instance in R. K. Narayan's *The Dark Room* of 1972 and Mulk Raj Anand's *Gauri* of 1976.

Nor is the alternative reference to Shakespeare's "The Rape of Lucrece" of much interpretative use either, as Shawkat M. Toorawa has suggested in two articles. Although Shakespearean texts are still the basis of official English-language education on the island, so that uses of his material may be made directly without the obstacle of intervening centuries, Collen's text is by no means a mere repeat of the Shakespeare poem, even though after her ravishment this Sita may actually quote it ("I alone alone must sit and pine," 130).

Sita herself asserts that she is "a modern day human not a real goddess, the long ago Sita" (161). In fact, this Sita is just short for 'Sister,' as her mother named her, training her to be an equal companion rather than anyone's dependent.

While the action of the novel is set in 1991, on the eve of the nearby Desert Storm invasion of Iraq, there are several dives back into the past on Sita's part: to the first Mauritian workers' mutiny of 1937 (with a quote from Ingrid Jonker: "The child is not dead"), and even to Ana of Bengal's defiant burning down of the Dutch East India Company's quartermaster's stores in 1695. Other demonstrations of resistance are remembered by Sita with Iqbal (for instance, "No to apartheid. No to Mauritius colluding," 100; or the astounding mass protest in the Company Gardens of Diego Garcian women wishing to be returned to *their* island, taken over as a military base). But the crucial event for Sita is the Women's Liberation Conference held in the Seychelles in 1982, after which on her flying stopover at still Europe-controlled Réunion the violation intended to silence her occurs.

Part of her speaking out then naturally has to involve her and her team using, and even thinking, in anything but the standard southern master-language. Hence Collen's text is coloured with the assertive idiom which she is adept at explaining as she goes along (*menaz* = from the French for household; *marmit* = a three-legged pot). Several South African common terms have crept into the text as well (*stompie* for cigarette butt; *meerkat*; *donga* for ditch). Their *veld* is still measured out in pre-British *arpents* as well.

Readers unfamiliar with Mauritian geography would have to consult their guidebooks (Maybur is the former Dutch capital of Mahébourg; Kirpip the cultural centre of Curepipe; Rozil the affluent suburb of residential luxury, Rose Hill). But best of all is Collen's unflagging ability to capture the real-seeming expressive rhetoric of her characters that is anything but tourist brochure-slick.

In *Mutiny*, the novel of 2001, the use of English is somewhat less localised, on account of her narrator and main character, Juna Bhim, being an autodidact who has risen to

be the secretary and computer language technician of a commercial organisation. As she has come to realise, this is one of many institutions retarding the progress of her society. She is imprisoned for threatening to take part in a trade dispute, leading to a possible strike. She has done her homework too, on Tuesdays in the Alliance Française reading up her Chomsky, and other revolutionaries in the British Council on her Fridays off. As John Berger himself tags the result, *Mutiny* is “[a] break-out and a breakthrough.” Juna has had to learn to resist, as she notes,

the *inevitability* of things. Of almost everything: wage cuts, the weather, redundancies, illness, price rises, factory closures, time elongation and false charges. Imprisonment itself becomes inevitable, if you get to like the inevitability of things, if you thwart your own rage.

(Collen, *Mutiny* 189)

In the neighbourhood borstal, converted into a Women’s High Security Prison, for which she happens to know the electronic codes to enable a mass escape, she must meanwhile be content to record this text with an eyebrow pencil on toilet paper. With her is her cellmate, young Leila, also as it happens pregnant, and an elderly matron protesting over her eviction from a dependent outer property of the archipelago. Their own biographies of woe are woven into Juna’s fragmented record, adapted into more standard English, presumably from the two Kreol texts by Henri Favory mentioned in Collen’s acknowledgements, making for virtuoso sequences.

The time of the women’s jail sentences is passed with intricate storytelling, swapping of fantasy recipes, quotations from the Mauritian Prisons Act of 1888, etc. But it is the impending Class Four mega-cyclone which gives the work its nail-biting impetus – that, and the simultaneous uprising on the part of all the prisoners once their daily breakfast allocation of two bananas each is halved.

*Boy* also includes acknowledged quotations from outside sources (in this case from Alain Fanchon on page 86) as part of the text. “Oh my god, the things I don’t know” reflects seventeen-year-old Krishnadev Burton, known as ‘Boy’ for short, as he sets out from the protection of his parents on a chore that will pitch him into adulthood almost overnight. Although we may assume that the high school classes which he has just failed have nevertheless rendered him fluent in English, his thinking is still flecked with patois and slang (distances to run are still per *golet* = 3 yards; hearts beat to the *ravan* = cowhide drum; he must escape from those felons with a *previous* = prior conviction; not get caught couriering the now illegal *bhang* = marijuana; and return safely to *lakaz mama* = his birthplace and home).

Among the parties he falls in with on his mission are the trade unionists preparing for a general strike, once again to avert the slide of workers into past victimhood. But as Collen observes, it will be their newly literate children who will have to interpret the pamphlets they are not to be caught distributing to their elders. Subtly she shows that the shift of consciousness the entire country is undergoing is a generational one.

Krish expresses his graduation from *zanfán* (child) to *zom* (man) as follows, once he has been kidnapped and thrown out on his own resources:

I lift up my two hands in front of my eyes, and look at them. They are my own. I can use them how I want to. They are not tied any more. My eyes are not blindfolded either. I can look where I want to and see what I want to see. This pleases me. My mouth is not gagged. This means I can sing any songs I like. Say what I want to. I can judge things. I can discern people [...].

(Collen, *Boy* 164)

Such is Collen's realisation of a maturity ritual which allegorises the hoped-for experience of her entire land, with a new order of citizenship in the offing.

Her most recent novel, which as already noted has the gender-twisting title of *The Malaria Man and Her Neighbours*, was published in Port Louis in 2009. Harking back to *Mutiny*, as the second volume of a possible trilogy, it deals with similar material: a people's rebellion against the impunity of their overlords and another jailbreak, though this time round at Gran Rivyer Nord Wes prison. It is viewed from the outside, with the enemy now being multinationals in cahoots with the sugar barons, intending to privatise even the island's water supply (as actually happened!).

Once more the text fictionalises much documentary material, as Collen notes in her acknowledgements, dating back to articles she wrote as an investigative journalist from *Lalit de Klas* in the late 1970s. Calling it "this most redrafted book," she notes that it also refashions her *Teddy Rant* from the Kreol.

Here Collen's leading character 'getting out of hand' is the title figure, also known as Zan Pol (Jean-Paul), whom we duly realise is a transvestite. When he confronts the road blocked with burning tyres as the insurrection he partly causes gets underway, he "nearly faints with fright. He lets go his bicycle, *he becoming she, and back to he again, his her and back his again*" (Collen, *Malaria Man* 134). The Christian church will refuse him burial for wearing a sari.

His neighbours include Brij Kalapen, whose uncompleted thoughts contribute much pleasure for the reader: when he "wakes up at his usual ungodly," he looks up "at the endless blue cloudless" (32). Then there is Eshan Zukahi, the potato-planter on the co-op farm; and the huge, robust Melomann who, when he is not rehearsing on his saxophone, works with

Zan Pol, raking over and spraying mosquito breeding-places – an unlikely quartet of insurgents, though it is the uncredited and supposedly unrelated way in which they are disposed of by the *raison d'État* which tips the country into a possible coup. Soon youth are marching against the *sirdahs* with their *sandokanns* (cane-cutting machetes or pangas) pillaged from the *godown* (Malay for warehouse), setting alight the Pope Hennessy Police Station with Dodo matches. All as a result of a spring music festival during which “[t]he wretched of the earth are here. Transformed into the heirs of everything” (143). But as Collen notes, the repressive exactions of so-called ‘race riots’ in reprisal are swift and bloodily over the top.

The work itself is surprisingly cool and unmelodramatic, a monument of praise to how her working poor mean to unionise for basic survival, discovering common truths rather than being divided and repressed into sects. In the local abattoir, for example, Brij the Malbar Tamil slaughters the pigs, the Laskar worker the goats and the Creole Shinnwa everything else. When their officious overseer insists that a Muslim should rather be handling beef, Brij refuses, saying “[t]his is not an apartheid state” (120) – their offcuts all go to the same *banian* (Hindu trader) indiscriminately, while their young communally cherish their *dagga* (from Durban).

To conclude on a positive note, as Collen herself always does, the *Malaria Man* is really about an actual campaign in which she took part herself. This was to clean up and control the mosquito spawning grounds along rivers and in marshes which once in the Mauritian past had caused an epidemic of malaria so severe that it wiped out a third of the population, rendering the island off limits to the shipping on which it depended.

No more malaria: on the Mauritius of today, as she mentioned to me in passing, like so many other social evils, it has been successfully eradicated. So it went. But then bilharzia is next on the list of handicaps, at which the egalitarian Koko Bi Panchoo must have sniffed.

## WORKS CITED

- Bhautoo-Dewnarain, Nandini. "Mauritian Writing in English: A Survey." *Wasafiri* 30 (1999): 21–24.
- Butlin, Ron, ed. *Mauritian Voices: New Writing in English*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Flambard, 1997.
- Collen, Lindsey. *There Is a Tide*. Port Louis: Ledikasyon Pu Travvyer, 1990.
- . *The Rape of Sita*. Port Louis: LPT, 1993.
- . *Getting Rid of It*. Oxford: Granta, 1997.
- . *Mutiny*. London: Bloomsbury, 2001.
- . *Boy*. London: Bloomsbury, 2004.
- . *The Malaria Man and Her Neighbours*. Port Louis: LPT, 2009.
- Gray, Stephen. "Exposing the Secrets of Violence." *Mail & Guardian* supplement: June 1995.
- Hand, Felicity. *The Subversion of Class and Gender Roles in the Novels of Lindsey Collen, Mauritian Social Activist and Writer*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2010.
- Lionnet, Françoise. Rev. of Felicity Hand, *The Subversion of Class and Gender Roles in the Novels of Lindsey Collen*. *Research in African Literatures* 42.4 (2011): .
- . "Hunger Artists in the Global Economy: Lindsey Collen's *There Is a Tide*." *Writing Women and Critical Dialogues, Subjectivity, Gender and Irony*. La Pelouse, Trou d'Eau Douce: L'Atelier d'Écriture, 2012. 113–147.
- Mathur, O. A. "Two Modern Versions of the Sita Myth." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 21.1 (1986): 16–25.
- Mooneeram, Roshni 'Prospero's Island Revisited', *Kunapipi*, 1, (1999), 17–21
- O'Brien, Sean. "Letter from Port Louis." *Times Literary Supplement* 5 November 2004: 17.
- Perrin, Héléna. "Lindsey Collen in Conversation." Eileen Williams-Wanquet and Mohammed Aït-Aarab (eds.), *Repenser les Mythes Fondateurs et l'Écriture de l'Histoire dans l'Éspace Océan Indien*. Saint-Denis: Université de la Réunion, 2011.
- Samlong, Jean-François. "Littératures de l'Océan Indien: Une Ouverture sur le Monde." *Notre Librairie* 128 (1996): 30–37.
- Toorawa, Shawkat M. "'Strange Bedfellows'?: Mauritian Writers and Shakespeare." *Wasafiri* 30 (1999): 27–31.
- . "'Translating' *The Tempest*." *African Theatre Playwrights and Politics*, ed. Martin Banham, James Gibbs and Femi Osofisan. Oxford: James Currey, 2001. 125–38.
- Vera, Yvonne, ed. Preface. *Opening Spaces: Contemporary African Women's Writing*. Harare: Baobab, 1999.
- Watt, Judith. "The Power of Ordinary Women." *Mail & Guardian* 21 November 1997.
- Wilson, Jason. "Letter from Port Louis." *Times Literary Supplement* 12 January 2001: 15.