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Mauritius — the Paradise Island?

ABSTRACT: The article interprets the novel *There is a Tide* by Lindsey Collen against the background of her article “Another Side of Paradise” and in the perspective of the political history of Mauritius. Both in the article and in the novel the central image is that of Mauritius as a paradise island, *There is a Tide* evoking the edenic imagery of Bernardin de Saint-Pierres’s novel *Paul and Virginia*. In Saint-Pierre’s utopian society there are neither ethnic nor class antagonisms. The idea of Mauritius as a Paradise island, where neither class nor ethnic struggles disrupt the ideal harmony, is questioned by Lindsey Collen. Mauritius, as it is presented to the reader of *There is a Tide*, turns out to be a place where people are divided along ethnic lines and along class lines, both divisions making the image of the island state in Collen’s novel contradict the view of Mauritius presented in de Saint-Pierre’s *Paul and Virginia*.

KEY WORDS: Mauritius, paradise island, ethnicity, class, antagonisms

Introduction

Mauritius, a former French and afterwards a British colony, is a multicultural island country, about 2,000 kilometers off the eastern coast of southern Africa; with its mosaic of nations and its geographical location, Mauritius has become today an attractive tourist destination. In tourist guide books it is presented as an idyllic exotic island. “The edenic imagery of the island that is recreated in tourist brochures of this day,” Felicity Hand explains, has its origin in French literature; Mauritius as “the exotic paradise” was presented first by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre in his novel *Paul and Virginia* (HAND, 2010: 1).

In his novel, set in Mauritius in the French colonial era, de Saint-Pierre creates a vision of utopia. The island became a haven for French refugees. Before they left Europe, they had lived in an imperfect hierarchical society, divided by strong class antagonisms. As they settled in Mauritius they started an ideal

immigrant community, to which the notion of class hostility was totally repugnant. The questions of money and origin, the determinants of the social status, were here never taken into account. “Birth and riches” were less precious gifts for the settlers than friendship, love and talents (BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE). The settlers’ principle of love was also extended to people of different ethnic origin, that is, to the African natives. Ethnic rivalry was nonexistent in the island community; neither were there any cultural frictions; The French refugees did not try to impose European culture or the official doctrine of the institutional Christian church on their Black slaves.¹ Instead, they focused on religious practice that was based on spontaneous and sincere love of God and natural moral sentiment (“If they did not offer up long prayers in the church, wherever they were, in the house, in the fields, in the woods, they raised towards heaven their innocent hands, and hearts purified by virtuous affections” (BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE)).² In the utopian community on the island, there were thus neither ethnic/cultural nor class antagonisms and the highest ideals were “pleasures of love and blessings of equality” (BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE). Mauritian society of the refugees was an opposite of the European one, with its “cruel (class and ethnic) prejudices” (BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE).³ The opposition between the sentimentality and humanity of the immigrants on the island and the prejudices and evils of the Europeans was associated by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre with another opposition, the one between nature, of which the exotic island was a symbol, and civilization, represented by Europe. From this contrast we infer a Rousseauistic thesis that man in the state of nature used to be virtuous (like the islanders) while civilization (here: Europe) makes him corrupt. Furthermore, the island, which the refugees in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s novel treated as a shelter from the ills of the envious and hierarchical society of Europe, is described with Edenic imagery. The two children of the French refugees, brought up since

¹ Even if the status of the Black in the community is that of the slaves, they are treated as members of the family and their human dignity is not violated.

² Here reverberates an echo of J.J. Rousseau’s idea of natural religion or the true theism: “Religion, considered in relation to society, which is either general or particular, may also be divided into two kinds: the religion of man, and that of the citizen. The first, which has neither temples, nor altars, nor rites, and is confined to the purely internal cult of the supreme God and the eternal obligations of morality, is the religion of the Gospel pure and simple, the true theism, what may be called natural divine right or law. The other, which is codified in a single country, gives it its gods, its own tutelary patrons; it has its dogmas, its rites, and its external cult prescribed by law; outside the single nation that follows it, all the world is in its sight infidel, foreign and barbarous; the duties and rights of man extend for it only as far as its own altars. Of this kind were all the religions of early peoples, which we may define as civil or positive divine right or law” (ROUSSEAU, 1782: 106—107).

³ At one point, when one of the islanders, Virginia, an embodiment of all virtue, went to Europe, her friend “trembled” that the girl, exposed to the European culture “should become corrupted by it” and probably start looking down on him since he was a son of a woman of a low social status (BERNARDIN DE SAINT-PIERRE).

birth on the island (as Bernardin de Saint-Pierre calls them, “the children of nature”), were compared to the first parents in the Garden of Eden “coming from the Hand Hands of God,” that is, perfect creatures in their prelapsarian state. They were considered perfect, because of their natural propensity to love, empathize and to respect others regardless of their race or social status.

The idea of Mauritius as a Paradise island, where neither class nor ethnic struggles disrupt the ideal harmony, is questioned by Lindsey Collen, a contemporary South African writer. Collen insists that the society of Mauritius, is divided by harsh antagonisms. The aim of my article is to show that Collen, in her novel *There is a Tide*, challenges the image of Mauritius as a Paradise island and that the arguments which she presents in the novel are twofold: firstly, the Mauritian society is torn by class issues, and secondly, by ethnic-cultural conflicts. When it comes to class, Mauritians are divided into warring factions due to the manipulations of the moneyed classes, who destroy solidarity among people in order to pursue their own ends; when it comes to ethnicity, Mauritius, has a long tradition of cultural frictions.

In part 2 of this article I consider Collen's novel with regard to the problem of class and vested interest, in part 3 I discuss *There is a Tide* in the light of the ethnic rivalry problem. Part 1, meanwhile, is devoted to a historical background, because, to understand Collen's argumentation and her multiple historical allusions in *There is a Tide* we need to review a few facts from Mauritian history.

Part 1: Historical Background

Mauritius, controlled in the years 1715—1810 by the French, and then, until 1968, by the British, became home not only for the European colonizers, but also for their Black slaves and the Indian indentured workers, who later replaced slaves. As a result the society of the island became multiethnic and also hierarchical. The cultural variety, class inequality as well as some conflicts caused by the ethnic and social differences is the theme of the present overview of the Mauritian history.

The French, on their arrival to the island, made themselves owners of sugar cane plantations, grew in wealth and turned into opulent sugar cane barons. The production of sugar became the sole source of the country's income and was a lucrative business for the French sugar bosses. To reap maximum profit from the sugar cane business, French planters needed the labour force to be cheap, so they brought to the island slaves, mainly from Madagascar (SELVON, ANATA, 2012: 105).

The Black slaves under the French rule were gradually separated from their native traditions. The first factor which contributed to the erasure of their African culture was promulgation in Mauritius in 1723 of the Code Noir (SELVON, ANATA 2012: 120), the law imposed by Louis XIV in all the overseas French possessions. The articles 1—14⁴ of the Code concerned religion in the colonies. Catholic religion was considered the only rightful one. Consequently, Black slaves had to be educated by their French masters in the principles of Catholic faith (KLIMASZEWSKA, MOSAKOWSKI, 2013: 15) and to abandon their African beliefs. Secondly, Christianization and gradual estrangement of Black slaves from their traditions also resulted from the intermingling of the Black with the French colonizers giving rise to the generations of the Creoles.⁵ The hybrid Creoles were looked down on by the Franco-Mauritian sugar cane barons, but had ambitions to move up the social ladder, which was tantamount to forswearing their African roots and admitting only to their European ancestry. Thus both creolization as well as the enactment of the Code Noir led to the assimilation by the Mauritian Africans of the Christian culture.

By the first half of the nineteenth century Mauritius witnessed the arrival of yet more nations and ethnic groups. In 1810, the colony passed from the French to the British. The tightening of the bonds with Britain in the first half of the nineteenth century coincided with the mass immigration of Hindus from Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, who were later employed on sugar cane plantations (TINKER, 1993: 75). The reason for bringing Indian (mainly Hindu) labourers to Mauritius was the acute demand for a cheap labour force which occurred after the abolition of slavery in 1835 (see TINKER, 1993: 61). The Hindus transported to Mauritius had to sign 5-year contracts for indentured labour. After completing their contracts, some of them stayed in Mauritius and managed to advance up the social ladder, becoming, for instance, small landowners (HAND, 2010: 90).

Apart from the Hindu indentured workers, there was also a group of Muslim immigrants from India. Their main occupation was trade and their social position was relatively high. When it comes to culture, both the Hindu indentured labourers and the Muslim merchants acted differently from the Black slaves, in

⁴ Art. 2: “Tous les esclaves, qui seront dans nos îles, seront baptisés et instruits dans la religion catholique, apostolique et romaine” (see KLIMASZEWSKA, MOSAKOWSKI, 2013: 96).

⁵ The children of such mixed parents were called Creoles. Due to their in-betweenness, they could not fit into any ethnic or class category (in those days class was coextensive with ethnicity: upper rungs were reserved for the Franco-Mauritians, lower for the coloured slaves). Felicity Hand explains, “as the offspring of slavewomen and plantation owners they could not aspire to join the same social category as their fathers but neither would they be relegated to the bottom rungs of society. Many received European education, became fluent in French and would in time occupy low level posts in the administration, those with relatively pale skins even managing to ‘pass for whites.’ Their desire to assimilate to French metropolitan culture encouraged them to identify politically with Franco-Mauritians and thus disavow their own histories” (HAND, 2010: 90).

that they stubbornly kept up their traditions and remained closely knit as cultural communities (HAND, 2010: 90).

The Hindu diaspora, by the mid-twentieth century, started to stand out from the rest of Mauritian society, as it had grown in number, wealth and power. It was looked at by other ethnic groups as a potential danger to their position in the society. The Franco-Mauritians and Creoles, afraid of the “Hindu peril,” or the danger of gradual Hinduization of the island and the smothering of other ethnic communities, gave expression to their fears of the Hindus by making them targets of their aggression (SELVON, 2012: 150—154).

Ethnic animosities persisted in the 1960s, that is, a few years before Mauritius was declared an independent republic. Liberation of the island country, which was a part of a larger project of decolonization of the British empire started after the Second World War (SELVON, 2012: 142—143), came on the agenda of the Westminster parliament in 1959 but was not welcomed by all Mauritians. The island colony was divided on the issue of independence and the division was along ethnic lines. Most Hindus, now numerous and fairly powerful, were for liberation. They gathered around the pro-independence Labour Party, with a Hindu leader, Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. Meanwhile, the Franco-Mauritians, the richest, though now in the minority, allied with the Europeanized Catholic Creoles to oppose liberation. They were attracted to the anti-independence Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate — PMSD, run by Jules Koenig and, after 1967, by a Creole, Gaetan Duval, a charismatic though controversial figure, who called himself “The King of Creoles” (SELVON, 2012: 139), had connections with the Franco-Mauritian sugar cane barons, supported their financial interests, was keenly opposed to the freedom of Mauritius, and led an anti-Hindu policy. When it comes to the Muslim community, they had their own party, Comité d'Action Muselman (CAM), led by Abdool Razack Mohamed. Their sympathies were alternate with the Labour Party or with the PMSD, but most of the time they were in coalition with the pro-independence Labour Party. The Labour Party and PMSD remained the leading political factions whose political programmes contrasted with each other, as the former strove for the liberation of Mauritius from British rule, and the latter wanted Mauritius to remain a British colony. Each of these two parties used their supporters (Labour Party, Hindus; PMSD, Creoles) to put into effect their own political plans. Thus, the war between Ramgoolam and Duval about the issue of liberation was a struggle between racial communities associated with their respective parties. Ethnic tensions grew high in 1965 when the Hindus (siding with the pro-independence Labour Party) were opposed by Christian Creoles (SELVON, 2012: 153).

Even more acute disturbances, referred to as the Race Wars, occurred 3 years later, in January 1968, this time, surprisingly, not between Hindus and Creoles but between Catholic Creoles and Muslims. Two months later, the controversial act of independence was signed on March 12, 1968.

The foregoing short outline of Mauritian history shows that from its inception, Mauritian society was harassed by ethnic animosities and that, in the Mauritian context, ethnicity has always been closely linked with class and position in the social structure (see HAND, 2010: 89).

Part 2: Lindsey Collen: Vested interest and the Race Wars

Lindsey Collen addresses the conflicts in Mauritius challenging the traditional utopian image of the island. Collen writes:

Almost everyone uses the cliché, [...] ‘Mauritius is a multicultural paradise where different communities live side by side in harmony.’ When I try to situate the cliché in my mind, I think of three defining flashpoints in recent Mauritian history: the so-called ‘race wars’ at Independence in 1968, the general strike movement in 1979, and the uprising against the police in 1999.

COLLEN, 2009

In this fragment of “Another Side of Paradise” Collen insists that the fight between the two involved ethnic groups was stimulated not so much by hostilities between the races, but rather by “vested interests hid[den] behind this ‘conflict of cultures’” (COLLEN, 2009). This thesis, namely blaming the moneyed elite rather than the Muslims and Creoles for the outbreak of the Race Wars, is an important one for the Collen’s novel *There is a Tide*, which I want to show in this part of my paper. I will refer to the already quoted article because it discusses, in a straightforward way, what the novel communicates indirectly.

The Race Wars broke out two months before Mauritius ceased to be a British colony and was declared an independent republic. The reason for the outburst of riots between the Muslims and the Christian Creole communities of Port Louis has not yet been found, there being much speculation. George Thomson, the Secretary of State in 1968, in his official statement to parliament claimed that the confrontation was no more than a “series of brawls between communal gangs” and had no racial grounds, but later “escalated in violence and extent” to spread around the entire capital, involving Muslim and Creole groups who lived there (qtd. in SELVON, 2012: 190). Historian Sydney Selvon explains that violence in those days in Mauritius was quick to flare up due to the social atmosphere caused by “the economic situation, which was extremely difficult” (190), further aggravated by unemployment.

Lindsey Collen in “Another Side of Paradise” refuses to admit that the tense atmosphere alone was to blame. In her opinion the aforesaid air of nervousness and frustration caused by poverty and joblessness was a conducive circumstance which was intentionally used by sugar cane oligarchs to provoke disorder, to finally precipitate the explosion of the Muslim-Creole War. The rationale behind the sugar cane bosses’ actions is explained in the following excerpt from Collen’s article:

The sugar oligarchs opposed Independence, instinctively fearing it and the nationalization they thought it would bring. They believed they stood to gain from a bit of communal strife. So they paid thugs of one community to attack neighbourhoods of another, and vice versa. This desperate plan interacted with ongoing disputes in the harbour area of the capital between gangs that ran drugs, prostitution and meat rackets around the market. People fled their homes while others looted in their wake. Port Louis separated out into predominantly Catholic Creole areas and areas where mostly Muslims lived.

COLLEN, 2009

According to the article, the rich sugar cane field owners believed that street fights and gang battles, which eventually grew into the Muslim-Creole war, would stave off the declaration of independence, which they desperately wanted to delay, because they were afraid that independence would interfere with their vested interests.

The question of who was guilty of provoking the Race Wars is taken up by Collen in *There is a Tide*. Reading this literary work in the light of “Another Side of Paradise,” we see that its major aim is to accuse the sugar cane barons and the richest business class. The moneyed elite is in the novel identified as the force behind the politics of PMSD and its tactics to sabotage independence. The conflict between the Muslims and Catholic Creoles is shown here through the eyes of one of the characters, Larmwar, entangled in the Race Wars by the tycoons who resisted independence.

Larmwar met a group of wealthy men, the “sugar estate bosses and lawyers and doctors” when he was hanging out around one of the brothels of Port Louis (COLLEN, 1990: 88—89). He was frequently there passing his time, because he was unemployed, and, for that reason, felt bored and frustrated (COLLEN, 1990: 77). He shared the lot of many youths, crisis, poverty and unemployment being a part of the Mauritian reality of the 1960s. The growing stress and disillusionment of Larmwar and his young friends, stemming from the difficult economic situation, was used by the rich men as an argument against independence. They took Larmwar to their camp to indoctrinate him, insisting that there was

a job to do. Enemies. If we don't act now. Taking over the country. Famine if there's independence. It's them that's cause of it. And we who were here first. There'll be money in it. And a full time job afterwards. And in the meantime there were tools that would be necessary.

COLLEN, 1990: 90

Larmwar was thus persuaded that independence meant the collapse of the sugar cane business, which had since the time of French domination been a monoculture in Mauritius. The collapse of the only business would cause, he thought, an emergency situation, the fall of the country's economy, and, consequently, still more poverty and unemployment. Staying within Britain was, he believed, the only way to alleviate the economic plight. The arguments against liberation were strong enough for him to try to oppose independence. The "enemies" mentioned in the above quotation were those who cooperated with the British government to enact independence, that is, the Labour Party. To thwart their plans Larmwar was supposed just to "break the Labour Party" (COLLEN, 1990: 90), and take sides with the opposing faction, PMSD.

Larmwar, collaborating with PMSD against independence, acted in the same way as many people in Mauritius did back in those days. In the 1960s a lot of Mauritians, explains Selvon, especially those of Creole ancestry, whatever views on independence they had, became easily proselytized by the PMSD activists to support their party in its campaign against detachment from Britain and, consequently, against the pro-liberation Labour Party. Fear that losing the bonds with Britain would aggravate the already serious economic crisis made people susceptible to "brainwashing to which they have been subjected to by most of the leading members of the political establishment" (SELVON, 2012: 150—151). The leader of PMSD, Gaetan Duval, was a particularly talented speaker who was able to intensify the concerns about the economic consequences of independence. He was working on behalf of the Franco-Mauritian elite and had the biggest influence over the Christian Creole population (SELVON, 2012: 150).

Agitation of the masses against independence was, in Collen's view, not the only manner in which PMSD struggled to delay decolonization of Mauritius. The other way, as she has noted in "Another Side of Paradise," was by causing chaos and internal conflicts in Mauritian society. The implication of PMSD and its rich bourgeois supporters in stirring up gang fights and, eventually, the Race Wars is a theme broadly discussed in *There is a Tide*. Here the wealthy bosses were setting the Creole Christian community against the Muslims and the Muslims against the Creoles (COLLEN, 1990: 92—93) and, simultaneously instigating the gangs of Port Louis to begin street fighting. First the battle was confined to the criminal world. It was a struggle "between Larmwar's brothel keepers and the neighbouring brothel keepers from Plein Vert [the Muslim quarter of Port Louis]" (COLLEN, 1990: 92). The dispute between the gangs and related brothel

keepers “turned into race war in turn. Because the owners of the other brothels were Muslim people” (92). The people of Port Louis end up fighting brother against brother instead of joining their powers in a common fight for the independence of their country. And so did Larmwar, who “instead of fighting for independence, as was his interest, [was] fighting against it” (92). Larmwar is made by Collen to be a representative of the Port Louis men, who, as she believes, were instruments in the game of the oligarchs, whose real purpose was to re-channel the energy of Mauritians from pursuit of independence to brutal street brawling.

As an effect of the machinations of the richest, assembled in the PMSD, the confrontation between Creoles and Muslims in January 1968 had, Collen insists, nothing to do with the cultural distinctness of the groups involved. “How could cultural richness be blamed for this?” she asks rhetorically (COLLEN, 2009). She even suggests the existence of solidarity between some Catholic Creoles and Muslims during the riots. In her article she talks about a Muslim woman, a resident of Rouche Bois (a quarter of Port Louis that after the outbreak of the Race Wars became an exclusively Creole district; all the Muslims being forcefully deported to Plein Vert, another Port Louis suburb), who did not manage to flee from that Creole occupied part of the town before the riots reached their peak and, to avoid danger, was hidden in the household of her Creole neighbours. The same case is referred to in *There is a Tide*, where a Muslim woman, having failed to leave Rouche Bois on time, was “hid at [...] neighbour’s house,” who “were Kreol” (COLLEN, 1990: 93). The instances of mutual assistance among the Creole and the Muslim people are recalled in Collen’s texts as evidence against resentment between the two ethnic groups and as a proof that the Race Wars were provoked by the economic interests of the dominant classes.

To sum up, when we explain the episode of the Race Wars in *There is a Tide* through reference to “Another Side of the Paradise,” it becomes clear that the author’s final word on the debate on the reason of the Muslim-Creole conflict is that “class strife disguises itself as culture clash” (COLLEN, 2009). To put it in other words, according to the writer, the violent incidents between the two warring populations of Port Louis were not an effect of cultural differences between the Muslims and the Creoles but a result of the plotting of the upper class, that is the sugar cane bosses, who wanted the society to engage in communal strife, thus preventing independence, which might bring a collapse of the economically privileged class and their wealth (COLLEN, 1990: 94—95). Collen thus disputes with Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s utopian image of Mauritius as a Paradise island. In *Paul and Virginia* the islanders were able to create a community of equal citizens; there were no financial elites to disrupt social order in an attempt to defend their particular interests. In Collen’s *There is a Tide*, meanwhile, the island society is a hierarchical one and it is divided by the conflicts incited by financial aristocracy in the upper rungs.

Part 3: Lindsey Collen: Ethnic Strife and the Race Wars

There is a Tide, viewed in the perspective of “Another Side of Paradise,” can be considered as a literary text which develops the main idea of that article, namely that Race Wars and other communal struggles in Mauritius in the twentieth century, “had never been about cultural differences” (COLLEN, 2009). However, the problem of the rivalry of cultures as a factor which endangers unity of the Mauritian society is also referred to in *There is a Tide*, though it is not as prominent as the issue of class and vested interest. In this part of my paper I will try to show that ethnicity, culture and religion, though perhaps in a lesser degree than particularism of the richest class, is not without meaning in Collen’s critique of the clichéd idea of Mauritius as a “paradise tropical island, where everyone lives in harmony” and “an example to the world of how different cultures live together” (HAND, 2010: 36).

The rivalry of cultures is referred to in *There is a Tide* in the context of the Race Wars of 1968, though not that between Muslims and Creoles, the direct participants in the Race Wars. Rather, ethnic strife is present here in a more generalized form, as an element of the multiracial Mauritian society, a component of the tense situation of the 1950s and 1960s and, in a larger perspective, as an issue permanently woven into the colonial history of the island. In *There is a Tide* the cultural tensions that Collen mentions in the context of the 1968 riots were not those between the main *dramatis personae* of the Race Wars (i.e. Muslims and Creoles) but rather those between the so-called general population (Catholic Creoles plus Christian Franco-Mauritians) and the Hindu majority, which, indeed, for several years before 1968, had been a part of the political atmosphere in Mauritius (SELVON, 2012: 150—151). Collen brings to the fore the question of ethnic hostilities in the scene of Larmwar’s conversion to Christianity. Larmwar was apparently a Hindu and a supporter of the Labour Party, as the majority of the Hindus were in the 1960s. After being forced to switch loyalty from the Labour Party to PMSD he was also expected to defect the Hindu community to the Christian Church and, in this way, to conform to the religious profile of PMSD. Selvon in his *New Comprehensive History of Mauritius* explains that in the 1960s PMSD consisted mainly of Christian Franco-Mauritians and Christian Creoles, driven into fear of the Hindus, who due to their strength and numbers could enter the Mauritian government and dominate the other ethnic groups in the country after the declaration of independence (SELVON, 2012: 150—151, 153). Perhaps the anxiety concerning the “Hindu peril” was exaggerated, kindled by such PMSD leaders as Gaetan Duval, who excelled in agitation against the Hindu community simply because they supported the Labour Party (SELVON, 2012: 151). Duval’s anti-Hindu propaganda is echoed in *There is a Tide*

in the passage when Larmwar overhears “a talk against pagans [...] he heard people swearing against vegetarians [i.e. the Hindu] [...]. Or the hindu peril” (COLLEN, 1990: 90).

Larmwar's drama of enforced conversion to Christianity and the ripping out of him his ancestral traditions may intuitively be linked by a careful reader with a similar story narrated by Collen a few chapters earlier. Larmwar's painful experience of conversion (Chapter Fourteen) seems to have parallels with the tragedy of the Black slaves back in the eighteenth century who were forced by French sugar estate owners to forswear their roots and become Catholics (Chapter Ten). Larmwar is acting under threat. He is afraid “he might get the damn acid in his own goddammed face,” so “he had to get baptized” (COLLEN, 1990: 90). And similarly, the Blacks got baptized to avoid the danger of punishment: The French, the slaves complain, “Forced the Code Noir on us, a black code, baptised by force. All Catholics in a fell swoop. [...] Anything to avoid the whip” (64). Furthermore, Larmwar, who does not dare to resist his oppressors, gets the nickname the *Broken Man* (122). And so the slaves were *broken* by the Christian colonizers to submission (“They *broke* the ‘no’ in us” (64)). Moreover, Larmwar is to give up his principles and adopt Christian rules and observe Christian rituals (90) in the same manner as the Black slaves were to “pray your (Catholic) prayers, and forget ours” (65).

The analogy between Larmwar's conversion on the eve of the Race Wars, and the conversion of the Afro-Mauritians in the times of slavery, situates the events of the 1960s, described by Collen, in the larger context of an ethno-religious contest that had been an integral part of Mauritian history since the island's colonization by the French. In the times when the Code Noir was imposed by the French on the Africans, the purpose was to consolidate French domination and culture in Mauritius, while eradicating other religions and cultures on the island. In the 1960s, meanwhile, the aim of the action of Catholics against the Hindus was to limit the perhaps imaginary danger of a Hindu regime and to keep the Hindus' power within limits acceptable to the Catholics. The issue of a power struggle between cultures and the peril (true or imaginary) of domination of one culture by another was thus still valid in the 1960s, though it had assumed a different character than in the times of the Code Noir, for the contestants changed and the odds against which they fought were not the same. Still, the rivalry of cultures did not disappear from the scene.

As Rosaly Boswell explains, “what is clear from diverse accounts of the Mauritian history, is that even after the abolition of slavery in 1835 [...] attempts were made to maintain racial and ethnic ideologies” (BOSWELL, 2006: 28). Ethnicity and the contest of cultures remains an element of the Mauritian reality. Even if Collen wanted to deny it in “Another Side of Paradise,” putting all the blame for the 1968 riots on the machinations of the richest, she does not overlook the ethnic factor in *There is a Tide*.

Conclusions

Mauritius, as it is presented to the reader of *There is a Tide*, turns out to be a place where people are divided along ethnic lines and along class lines, both divisions making the image of the island state in Collen's novel contradict the view of Mauritius presented in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul and Virginia*. When it comes to class issues, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's ideal island community, with its social equality and universal friendship and disinterestedness is set in contrast to the European class society where possession decides about one's power and status. In Collen's novel, on the other hand, the island is a place where the richest, to defend their vested interests, do not hesitate to stir up social trouble, as it happened a few months before independence. Furthermore, with regard to the ethnic and cultural issues, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre shows his White protagonists on the island living in harmony with the Black. He presents them as theists with naive faith, natural piety and spontaneous benevolence; they do not intend to impose on Africans the official Christian doctrine, of which, in fact, they are ignorant. Conversely, in Collen's novel we read about hostility of the White and Creole Christians against the Hindu and about their lack of reverence for the culture and religion of the Hindu or the Black. Collen thus proves in her novel that the vision of Mauritius as a "paradise tropical island, where everyone lives in harmony" (HAND, 2010: 36), is utopian, for it ignores bitter frictions between both, classes as well as cultures.

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