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Maps of Intimate and Institutional Change in Merle Collins's *Angel* and Oonya Kempadoo's *Tide Running*

Cover Page Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Nancy Glazener, Shalini Puri, and my anonymous readers for their insightful suggestions and advice at various stages of this essay's composition.

Merle Collins's *Angel* (1987, revised edition 2011) and Oonya Kempadoo's *Tide Running* (2001) at first glance appear worlds apart in their concerns and approach. In many senses, they are. Writing about the Grenadian Revolution, Collins acts as the "living witness to a historical process" (Lima 44). Departing from an actual incident on the island of Tobago where Kempadoo lived, *Tide Running* imagines the backstory of a car theft, perhaps simply a joy ride that, nevertheless, has real consequences. Each novel carefully discloses a social and physical world, taking measure, as it does, of the social transformations wrought upon that world by both external and internal forces. The global forces of *Tide Running* are primarily present in the media but also present in an island economy where employment is scarce and often limited to service jobs. The global forces cutting through *Angel* make themselves felt in the transnational reality of Angel's father's migrant labor, and, at the novel's end, in the invasion of U.S. troops. With the novels' climactic moments separated by roughly two decades, the difference this makes is noticeable in the contrast between the way Angel encounters Black Power, through her education at the University of West Indies in Jamaica, and the way *Tide Running*'s protagonist encounters it, already endorsed, through the Spike Lee film, *Get on the Bus* (1996).

I compare these two different novels, then, primarily in an effort to think change both within and beyond the dramatic moments of a revolution and against theories of change that primarily limit themselves to large structural forces. Besides the difference that needs to be marked between the invasions of American troops and the invasion of American media, there are also important divergences in point of view, in the development of each protagonist, and most crucially for this study, in the emotional labor each novel requires its readers to perform as a result of their different discursive registers and their divergent approaches to temporal focalization. Comparing these two novels opens a conversation about what different temporal approaches can do for novels that engage politics. *Angel*'s "omniscient narrator speaks in Creole, embodying the community and telling the story of a communal rather than individual transformation" (Puri 59). Written after the fall of the Revolution, *Angel* is a strong example of a narrative with a tragic arc, one that departs from its author's retrospective gaze on traumatic events. Focusing more on individual transformation, *Tide Running* also embraces Creole but is a strong example of an alternative model. Whereas *Angel* reorders a political situation to make sense of it, *Tide Running* foils its readers' efforts to make sense of narrative events that do not line up to produce any coherent order. What unifies the two narratives is their choice to think change within the *bildungsroman* form.

Tide Running tells the story of young Tobagonian Cliff's encounter with a wealthy couple who recently moved from Trinidad. Their multiracial and class-crossing sexual encounter suggestively alludes to the problems tourism wreaks upon the Caribbean, and of the problems of sex tourism in particular. *Angel*

chronicles its title character through childhood into her political awakening as a young adult caught up in the fervor of the People's Revolutionary Government in Grenada (1979-1983). Within this developmental arc, *Angel* unfolds its project of illustrating "the possibility of revolutionary social transformation" (Lima 35). *Angel* indeed acts as a call to arms, as a map of social transformation across generations and through women's perspectives. Although *Tide Running*'s author is clearly concerned with exploring social transformations as well, the novel does not, like *Angel*, offer coordinates for such change. The resource of a multigenerational view of change, the community feeling, the educational structures as well as records of real political change do not find their way into Kempadoo's pages. Instead, *Tide Running*, as its author has said, was written, in part as "[a] reaction to the global obsession with 'women' and our problems." Rather than offer a map to social change, the novel feels its way through Cliff to a focal point for seeing "what is driving young men today and how this is impacting on society" (Gee).

Collins "dares to use narrative form to encode revolutionary experience" telling, as she does, a history from below (Taylor, qtd. in Scott 129). In the dual narration through Cliff's and Bella's voices, Kempadoo tracks her characters' daily experience outside the momentous frame of the world historical event. Accidental or incidental changes within this structure may be influenced by different factors than those of their revolutionary counterparts; however, I am invested in reading both types of change for the vistas of social transformation onto which they open. After a preliminary accounting of each novel's approach, this paper will ask what vistas each novel opens and how they can contribute to more robust models for noticing how social change occurs. The comparison between *Angel* and *Tide Running* brings me to a contemplation of the difference between a place to get our bearings and a place to lose them. When we enter its realm of encounter, a novel can offer experiences of both, the learning of a point and the experiencing of an effect. To think about the latter, we might recall what Teju Cole elsewhere has avowed: "I am a novelist. I traffic in subtleties, and my goal in writing a novel is to leave the reader not knowing what to think. A good novel shouldn't have a point."

In Cole's conception, a novel will help its reader reach a plane of not knowing what to think, offering an encounter with uncertainty. How productive this uncertainty can be will determine whether a novel need to tell the story of its characters' liberation (from stereotypes, inequality, and other forms of discrimination) to be liberatory. Perhaps in order to be liberatory a narrative need only be a catalyst, not an example. If *Angel* acts as a call to arms, as a map of social transformation, beside it, *Tide Running* acts as an anti-map, as a source of disorientation that prompts better wayfinding, whether through the book itself or through any number of life situations the book calls to mind.

While *Angel* presents a more straightforward mapping of historical events, its presentation of the story of the revolution is rendered in considerable

complexity. As a narrative about family, the novel offers an intricate portrait of how political change ripples through everyday family relations. For example, at the heart of the novel lies a considerable, complicated tenderness between Angel and her father, Allan—a relationship mediated by Allan’s wife and Angel’s mother, Doodsie. Angel and Allan’s relationship seems to change in tandem with the country’s changes. Early in the novel, Allan’s illegitimate children are introduced matter-of-factly. Without a backstory, their existence nevertheless implicitly explains why Doodsie does not receive money in the mail from her husband and partially accounts for, given her frustration, her harsh punishment of her children. Allan’s promiscuity had the indirect effects of visiting poverty and violence on his family. Remittances here could, seen in a certain light, speak both to the transnational economic flow of Caribbean migrant labor and to national economic flow to foreign investors. An analogy of family to state might see monies to legitimate sons and daughters siphoned off to support illegitimate (foreign) relations under the “corrupt,” read here as promiscuous, “post-independence regime” (Scott 127). Allan’s money, as the analogy would have it, flows in a similar pattern as Grenada’s money under Leader.

Doodsie and the younger revolutionary generation of which Angel is a part vocally rebuke this corruption, while Allan remains loyal to Leader. Collins captures this generational dynamic with acute complexity in her narration of the emotional ties within Allan and Doodsie’s family. For instance, emotional disorder references an unjust economic order in Angel’s anger against her father, an anger Angel insists on feeling in her mother’s place. Indeed, Angel seems, at times, to direct more anger at her mother for not feeling resentment against her husband than at Allan for acting as he does. Angel’s obstinate demand that her mother feel dissatisfaction, feel unrest, specifically that she object to Leader’s picture hung on the wall of their home, finally feels misplaced. The emotional pitch of the novel seems to side with Doodsie, leading the reader to search for what fortitude, vision, or logic Doodsie grasps that Angel misses. In this sense, the familial response suggests a political orientation that is more gradualist but not, as might first appear under a religious reading, that of a long-suffering martyr.¹

Doodsie faces reality, even when doing so comes at a personal cost. At the hopeful moment when the revolutionary government is organizing, Doodsie asks Allan to own his illegitimate children: she “quietly told him one day that he should tell the boys about them [...] to avoid any ‘shameful family mix-up’” (Collins 273). It is, notably, Doodsie’s actions as well that resolve the conflict between Angel and Allan when she tells Angel, “You mus come home. You father didn say anything but I notice he move the picture. Even though he not talkin about it, I know that is a concession to you. You must come home” (Collins 223). This request eventually

¹ See Helen Scott’s nuanced reading of “Christian forbearance” in “The Spice Isle” (137-38).

serves as a resolution to Angel's angry protest, hurt feelings, arguments, and even separation from her family. After all the preceding dramatic action, this change carries momentum. Most remarkable is the fundamentally apolitical nature of this change. Allan's love for his daughter brought the picture down and Doodsie's caring mediation brought the reconciliation about. In Angel's own psyche a change is wrought as well: "She didn't feel victorious. In fact, she felt a little ashamed" (Collins 223-224). This family incident delivers an education in sensibility that though apolitical, opens up a vista of compromise that could lead to political change. On another plane, the reader, too, receives an education here as she senses that there is something in the young and educated political style, a style the Party shares, that is being critiqued in *Angel*. In both movements toward a more nuanced perceptual frame, the plot carries us toward more open communication between opposing factions and greater dialogical richness.

Indeed, Angel's description of Allan's exploitation of Doodsie in "Papa-mèt oh!" offers communication as a partial solution to marital tension, but the chapter also opens by identifying a land and agricultural problem at its center (Collins 271-273). As crop yield and worker compensation is complicated by price fluctuations in the market, Angel's model of exploitation of her mother by her father finally misses accounting for outside forces. The absolutely complex emotional economy Doodsie grasps may be seen in her acts of advocacy on Allan's behalf: "Hearing Angel say she feels sorry for the Leaderite Eva, who has been jailed six months for looting, Doodsie replies, "It good to see how in the struggle allyou talkin about you understand how people could get fooled an support people who not really workin for them! [...] Is a pity you caan understand with you own father, though. Like somebody wrong someway about where this charity ting does begin"" (Collins 237). And because of Doodsie's position in the household, hers is an effective act of advocacy: "the comment stayed somewhere at the back of [Angel's] mind" (Collins 237). The circuitous emotional economy of Allan and Doodsie's household, made vivid through Doodsie's agential acts as a wife presents a contrast to the novel's depiction of the relationship between political leader and followers and an elaboration of the relation between crop workers and landowners.

These are comparisons the novel's own project forwards. Consider the use of the word *suddenly* and the seemingly disjointed nature of the association that grant this comparison prominence: "Angel looked up at the framed Christ is the Head of this House. Christ ruled in Eva's house. *Is like marriage, she thought suddenly*. Ah wonder why ah tink about dat now? She searched her mind, looking for the link. Anyway, she thought, is just the same way people always makin excuse for whoever they married!" (Collins 238, emphasis added) Making excuses refers to Doodsie's way of relating to Allan and to Leader's followers' way of accepting less than perfect behavior from him. More generously interpreted, making excuses could mean allowing for compromises that continue a commitment, for assuming a

posture that is not absolutist. Angel often sees it more as a defeat, however. Again, this tendency could be the novel's way of delivering a subtle critique about the mindset of those in power in the PRG.

The novel's way of thinking about making excuses does not align with the young revolutionary's way of understanding change, as represented through Angel. Instead it is Doodsie's commitment and love for Allan, depicted with a realistic opacity that achieves one of the most compelling moments in the novel. Doodsie, impassioned, nonetheless censors her speech to respect her husband's view about Leader:

“You an you people, Angel, allyou know what you see on the surface. Allyou know ting allyou read in book, but come an ask people like us, so—me an you father and you aunt—come an ask people like us that know life in the trenches...”

Jessie laughed. “Wi-i-i! In the trenches? So we fighting war den?”

“Is war we fightin, yes. Every day for howmuch years. Angel an she people just reach, and because of us they reach with education. They have to ask *us* what life is all about. I supporting them, because they have the education, an, well...” she stopped, and Angel knew that she wasn't going to finish that sentence as she wanted to, with something about getting rid of Leader. “But,” Doodsie continued, “they have to ask *us*.” (Collins 280)

I do not see this stop as showing Doodsie's subservience to Allan. In fact, it brings to the fore her more important point: they have to ask us. Angel, the reader will perceive, understands full well her mother's view and its difference from her father's. After this complex display of fervor, Allan continues his story, one that holds the power to alter Angel's view, and another stop almost occurs. “You know what war is, boy?” Allan narrates. Indignant, Angel asks, “Boy? He call you ‘boy’?” Doodsie says, “let the story continue. Don't keep interrupting. Boy, yes, he was...” (Collins 281) Here Doodsie seems to be instructing Angel in a way that moves her past the type of seeing “on the surface” she critiqued just a page before. Here again and by analogy, a different understanding of political change develops within the narrative's logic. In Doodsie's bearing, there is a dignity beyond the surface dignity Angel wishes to vie for when she protests against the word *boy*.

Doodsie's character emerges from the novel as a model; her character, a coordinate on the map of political transformation: “Doodsie's is the voice that first anticipates the government's increasing isolation from the people” (Scott 144). Later, “Doodsie is again the one who identifies the crisis in terms of the yawning gulf between leaders and people” (Scott 144). The promise of the revolution lives deepest in Doodsie when she declares, “dis Revolution [...] is not youall own alone” (Collins 284). Doodsie's character stands for the potential of the

Grenadians' story to continue and include the most people in it. As she expresses care and respect for her husband, Doodsie helps her daughter toward a similar expression of love. In this sense, Doodsie is a model of heroism in the trenches of her everyday life as well as in her political participation. Perhaps this is partly owing to her way of defying, for the most part, the snare of resentment. She is able to speak to the political situation of her country without it. And her political stake parallels her marital stake: commitment, ownership, and compromise comprise each.

If the revolution is Doodsie's to foresee, the novel's developing consciousness, its education in sensibility, is Angel's. One incident comes vividly to mind as an illustration of the novel's relationship with education. Toward the end, Marva asks Angel, "You cant see for yourself? I ain have your education and I could see. Why you cant see?" (Collins 318) Like Marva's vision, it seems Doodsie, though uneducated, sees reality more clearly than Angel. Marva illustrates what seems to be a returning truth of the narrative that knowledge and foresight do not originate from quite the same source. Helen Scott also notes that Angel's education aligns her with the PRG, and therefore ambiguously depicts formal education as both "vital tool" and "double-edged sword" (139).

Despite the suggestion that a well-schooled mind is not necessarily a revolutionary mind, *Angel* is somehow still fittingly identified as a *bildungsroman*.² As Scott writes, "The barrage, from students, nuns, and racist literature such as that of children's writer Enid Blyton, is for a time too much for Angel, who begins to see herself as inferior and wish she could change her identity" (139). When viewing Angel's and Cliff's struggles with discrimination together under the category of *bildungsroman*, the novels can be seen as performing a certain emotional labor in mapping the effects of discrimination. In the case of *Angel*, as Lima perceives, "knowledge of injustice" becomes a crucial step in the protagonist's move toward growth and national belonging (49). Given the realities of Tobago, it is no surprise that the idea of national belonging could not be further from the concept of *Tide Running*. Yet both Cliff and Angel confront discrimination and struggle with feelings of inferiority. As Michèle Lamont reports from several ethnographic studies, "Perceived discrimination can bring about emotions such as shame, anger, distancing, privatizing, and stereotyping, as well as envy, resentment, compassion, contempt, pride, deference, and condescension. These emotions are intimately tied to the experience of inequality and misrecognition" (152). *Perceived* is a crucial qualifier to note here. While Angel's feelings of inferiority are eventually recognized and confronted, Cliff's are harder to identify and consequently are not worked through and resolved within the space of the novel. Cliff's encounters with discrimination are not fixed within the colonial school system, or found in print

² See Maria Helena Lima, Andrew Salkey, and Helen Scott.

culture. Where in *Angel* more overt racist aggressions could be named and addressed, in *Tide Running* discrimination seems to hide in the form of microaggressions.³ In this sense, the comparison draws out a shift from anticolonial *bildungsroman* to postcolonial *bildungsroman* and enacts a modification in the form while still retaining its contrast to a European *bildungsroman* as an education away from racist colonial teachings. It follows then that *Tide Running* will both fit and challenge the *bildungsroman*'s emancipatory potential, especially given Cliff's apparent illiteracy.⁴ When each novel's power to render its protagonist's interiority is taken into account, the contrast between the two novels' sheds light on how aesthetic choices affect the kind of political work a novel is able to do.

Viewed in this comparative frame, we encounter in *Tide Running* an entirely different type of education, following a different developmental arc, with different formal qualities executing its portrayal. If Collins's delivers "a close-up focus on the inner emotions of the physically and emotionally traumatized central character," Kempadoo "illustrates the psycho-social dissonance that ultimately results from foreign invasion of Tobagonian life" (Scott 152, Bennett 67). In her reading of *Tide Running*, Consuela Bennett stresses the importance of the physical shock Cliff experiences when he first meets the couple, their deeper differences foreshadowed in the way each perceives the sea. It is dark-skinned Bella, recently moved from Trinidad, and not her white, British husband, who comments on the view and thus aligns herself with a tourist gaze. The moment is told through Cliff's perspective.

"It's a nice view, eh?" She say quiet.

I look around. A "view" they call it. I can't say if it nice, I been seeing it

every day since I born. So I say nuthing. (Kempadoo 47)

A habit of objectifying a relation—to land, in this case—marks perception. While the couple sees a view, Cliff does not. His inner monologue "reflects his emotional and aesthetic distance from them" (Bennett 74).

A few pages later, a structural correspondence in the text calls even more attention to Bella's aesthetic gaze. In Bella's bedroom, Cliff finds "[a] black boy stand up in there silent, arm stretch up resting on he head, looking out to the sea." Bella renames and thus normalizes the object: "A dolly? It's a sculpture. A sculptor

³ As defined by Derald Wing Sue, microaggressions are "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership (people of color, women, or LGBTs). The term was coined by Pierce in 1970 in his work with Black Americans where he defined it as 'subtle, stunning, often automatic, and nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously'" (24).

⁴ In an interview with Lisa Gee, Kempadoo remarked, "most of the people I write about don't read, and many of them can't. And I don't like talking about it, the 'literati' side of it."

friend of ours made him. Beautiful, eh?” Like the observation “nice view, eh?” before it, this question presents an aesthetic standard that Cliff does not verbally assent to. Yet Cliff sees himself in the statue when he reflects, “Bumsey small and high, legs tight and shining, down to ’e foot real as life, standing same size as a shadow, silent as a jumbie. *Little Black Boy*. Could’a be me or Ossi when we was young” (Kempadoo 55). Without verbally assenting to Bella’s erotic gaze, Cliff nevertheless absorbs it in his own inner monologue. This bedroom scene showcases an objectifying tendency in certain art objects, a tendency Bennett also underscores when she connects Bella’s practice of photography to her use of “libidinous imagery” in a car ride: “Downhill. Parting the flesh of the valley. A hidden grazing field” (59). Like an imperial cartographer, Bella merges body and land in her erotic gaze on both.⁵

The novel shows that Cliff shares this cultural proclivity but from a position within it more susceptible to objectification and its fantasies:

We starring now. I move me famous foot. You know how much people go pay for me two-foot to be in a ad? For me to wear a Nike trackpant? Thousands’a U.S. dollars. Better yet if I smile and say, “Just do it.” Millions. I watch me brother, Magic, relaxing, chatting in the talk show. Everybody like he. But I have the looks. Watch me nuh. (Kempadoo 56-57)

Here the novel explores objectification within the larger engine of commercialism without making the immediate argument about its tendency toward the monolithic, categorical thinking of stereotype. The plot will later perform rather than argue such a point when it presents the *Little Black Boy*’s sculptor, Hilda Schmitz. Hilda’s first comment to Cliff is not directly addressed to him. She asks, “And who’s this gorgeous young man you have with you, eh?” In the third recurrence of the question form “eh?” the reader may register its correspondence with each speaker’s objectifying gaze. Without waiting for a reply, Hilda affirms her connoisseur view that Cliff’s a “Knockout. Real good-looking” (Kempadoo 103). With this visit, Cliff experiences one of the many microaggressions that come with his partial entry into Cliff and Bella’s world.

It is helpful to consider Cliff’s encounter with discrimination in the form of microaggressions through the frame Jennifer Rahim offers in her reading of *Tide*

⁵ Anne McClintock’s *Imperial Leather* opens with a discussion of the map at the beginning of Henry Rider Haggard’s bestselling novel *King Solomon’s Mines* (1885): “What sets Haggard’s map apart from the scores of treasure maps that emblazon colonial narratives is that it is explicitly sexualized. The land, which is also the female, is literally mapped in male body fluids. [...] At the center of the map lie the two mountain peaks called Sheba’s Breasts” (3). While McClintock writes about white patriarchal fantasy dominating a feminized colonial landscape, it is likely no accident that Bella’s sexualized gaze resembles that of the male colonizers.

Running, where electronically mediated culture forms a part of what Hardt and Negri describe as late capitalism's Empire, "a *decentered* and *detrterritorialized* apparatus of rule" (1). Within this media-simulated reality, Cliff's experience of discrimination at times falls below the radar of perception, and thus fails to rise to the level of conscious awareness that would make room for a confrontation with and overthrowing of racist thinking in the novel's plot. In this sense, *Tide Running* departs from the pattern of the *bildungsroman* form that *Angel*, though modifying it for a postcolonial context, nonetheless fits. *Tide Running*'s inability to fit this model makes its *bildungsroman* plot more tragic; the stakes, seemingly more dire. When Peter, Bella, and Cliff begin covertly shaping their *ménage à trois* arrangement, Cliff encounters a new form of discrimination by microaggression. As Rahim argues, Peter and Bella's "'flim-style house' becomes a virtual other-space outside normative restrictions, where the double suspension of disbelief required by electronic imaging facilitates the free-play of ungoverned imaginary. Peter, Bella and Cliff, therefore, live out their triangular, erotic fantasia in a kind of meta-social holding bay that operates according to its own rules," rules that conceives of human relations under a "consumption principle...divorce[d] from intimacy and personal responsibility" (10, 14).

Within these terms of relation, the novel presents Bella and Peter as serving in some capacity as Cliff's educators in intimacy. Upon first observing them he thinks, "I don't know what it is they have to talk about so much. One day they come about four-thirty and talks till six-thirty. They come the next day too, same thing, talk till the sun gone down. [...] Three days running I see dem people talking. Them good for theyself, good for each another. [...] Them is people, boy. I does watch them" (Kempadoo 20). Viewed against the background of Cliff's own family, where his sister Lynette acts as a single mother while Cliff's own mother "scrunt[s] [her] arse in town all day" struggling to eke out a living, Peter and Bella's intimacy seems a luxury (Kempadoo 18). Such luxury leads to a level of play within Peter and Bella's marriage that Cliff, at first, struggles to understand:

I does can't hold-back meself. But I could handle meself. Sweet sexing skin, and Peter only encouraging. How a man could do that, boy? He own wife. [...] And is not to say he don't love she, you could see it in he eye. He ain' shame to tell she he love she right in front'a me. I never see people so. Sexing up and down, talking 'bout everything and loving each another so. If I was he I couldn'a able with that nuh. I just like how he is though, Peeta. He don't watch he mouth for nobody and he ain' checking on people. Peeta is a cool fella. And Bella—Lawd, is who she send to test? I don't know what it is nuh. The way how she does watch me sometimes, and then how

she touch me. I doesn' know what she want with me. Who know?
In dis life. Who the hell know anything anyway. (Kempadoo 95)

While Bennett would note the fact that “[Cliff] alone of the three questions the morality of the relationship,” it seems finally more important to emphasize the exposure to new models of relating mapped here, particularly in terms of Peter for Cliff and for the way in which Cliff’s questioning diffuses itself so much so that the question’s punctuation turns to a period (76). Cliff clearly admires Peter here and that admiration moves him into degrees of adjustment to a situation to which he voices some modicum of misgiving. His accommodation to a role in a *ménage à trois* arrangement that he does not understand and has never explicitly discussed with Bella and Peter is not so easily tracked in the novel. Indeed, Cliff seems to talk and hang out as much with the couple’s son Oliver as he does with the couple alone. He even goes so far as to verbalize this position, playfully telling Peter, “Adop’ me nuh” (Kempadoo 126). This has the effect of infantilizing Cliff, of underscoring his objectified status as sex toy, rather than co-participant in sex play, and, most crucially, of revealing that the form of intimacy Bella and Peter share excludes him as it is after all partially a product of socioeconomic position. It is an intimacy, despite first appearances, that Cliff cannot “learn.”

What he learns instead is how to adapt to his outsider position. If this adaptation causes Cliff strain, his surface calm does not betray it. The closest Cliff comes to commenting on his role occurs in his repetition of the phrase, “Watch me nuh.” Remarking on the phrase, Bennett writes:

[Cliff] is tragically unaware that he, like his island Tobago, will always be viewed as the exotic other, to be used only as a touristic thrill. His frequent use of the expression ‘watch me nuh’ fixes him a constant pose, signaling his need for attention and affirmation. His stream of consciousness: “Watch me nuh, here in dis room. The style doorway frame outside like one’a Bella pi’tures ... Four bedpost posing ‘round me, design like crown. Watch me nuh,” ironically and symbolically capture him in an artificial setting created to satisfy the desire Peter and Bella desire for adventure. But this arrangement was never meant to be permanent. Herein lies Cliff’s dilemma: how does he reconcile yearning and ambition with the couple’s tacit desire for purely sexual excitement? (76-77)

As an objectified, disadvantaged player in an erotic fantasy, Cliff might appear to need affirmation and attention, but as a human being, Cliff needs equal standing within the sexual transaction. Cliff’s behavior, then, cannot originate from an innate or natural need for affirmation and attention, which again adopts a view of Cliff that is infantilizing, as much as it arises as a simulated need under undeniably real

inequalities. Once these inequalities are acknowledged, the dilemma cannot be seen as Cliff's alone even if the power relations at play in the narrative make it appear so. Yet Cliff's experience is not only archetypal. It is also particular insofar as his experience of inequality intersects in specific ways with his own particular needs and resources. Dorsía Smith and Veronica Crichlow see what is at stake when they write, "in reality, [Cliff's] status is always in question: he may be accepted into the family as a 'friend' for the sake of appearances, but Bella and Peter hold the power in the relationship. When they tire of him, [...] he will be cut from the advantages he has become accustomed to" (376). Fantasy nears reality in this case, for if Cliff were to be adopted, he would secure those advantages indefinitely.

While Bennett is right to describe Cliff as "experienc[ing] disappointment, disillusionment, and internal conflict," the description fails to capture the whole truth because it misses accounting for what the plot withholds from its reader, namely an ability to say for certain how Cliff experiences this situation and how he reacts and responds to it (76). Rahim sees the novel's dual narration as exposing the contradictions in a social order. In narrative terms, Rahim calls this phenomenon "the fallacy of so-called democratization of social life [under] postmodern culture." She observes, "The leveling of fields that the author engineers by allowing access to the consciousness of both Cliff and Bella strategically works with the plot to undermine the performance of social equality, and the false 'politics of recognition' staged by the superficial meeting of worlds" between native and visitors (Rahim 4-5).

As Cliff is denied entry into a certain degree of intimacy with Bella and Peter, the reader is also denied access to Cliff's interiority during a crucial moment in the plot. After their relationship has developed to a degree of familiarity so that Bella and Peter feel the need "to put Cliff straight" about his position with them, Bella hears Peter ask, "Where'd you put the cash we had?" (Kempadoo 101, 142) Unable to find it, Bella feels "[g]uilty shame" and "something else leaking under [her] skin" (Kempadoo 144-145). Soon afterward she sees "a smear of shame on [Cliff's] face" (Kempadoo 146). At this moment the narrative stays with Bella, and with her we "know Thomas [her caretaker] had expected something like this to happen but wasn't going to say" (Kempadoo 150). Without hearing the incident from Cliff's perspective, the reader, too, is implicated in this doubt. As Evelyn O'Callaghan notes, "neither narrators nor narrative is innocent" (334). The novel "uncover[s] a corrosive lack of trust across the entire society," even spreading this distrust to the reader for the narrative (O'Callaghan 336). This formal choice on the author's part not to narrate this moment through Cliff's interiority may have been an artistic choice as much as a creative constraint. Bella's mind is more available to the reader; hers is also the more literate mind; and, the novel's ability to represent may be greater for characters with higher levels of literacy, revealing the mind of a middle class subject more easily than a lower class subject. Regardless, the formal

emphasis on Bella's voice means that the narrative interrogates her position more closely by revealing more about it. Whether generic constraint or aesthetic choice, this presentation produces interesting ramifications when considering the sociological reality a novelistic perspective accesses, when a novel reduces the representation of subjects who are more frequently victims of racial profiling. Smith and Crichlow capture the full force of unequal access to representation when they remark on the untruth Bella concocts when she finally voices her anger at "Cliff's betrayal and violation of their 'honest' relationship" (Smith and Crichlow 376). When the couple's middle class Trinidadian friend asks, "You sure he not after something?" Peter replies by denying that their relationship to Cliff is in any jeopardy of turning sour in the manner other sexual encounters with natives often have. Peter says, "you know how we live—everything open" (Kempadoo 138). By presenting Peter's misleading description, on the one hand, and withholding Cliff's view of their relationship, on the other, *Tide Running* offers its readers no satisfying place in the novel in which to stand. A reader's stability as an interpreter, in this case, would mean possessing both sides of the dispute in question: the story of the missing money. In withholding one side, the narrative denies its readers that special sense-making capacity. Perhaps Kempadoo chooses to withhold that capacity for a reason, for it is highly likely that her readers might assign blame to Cliff, causing the structural inequalities that tempted him in the first place to recede into the background of the reader's sense making process. Without a stable place to see, experience, and feel its world, the reader is left in a productive place of frustration, desiring something different.

By contrast, the emotional work of the novel's project is unambiguous in *Angel*, at least insofar as the characters emote in ways that release the tragic story into historical meaning, even if the project of that meaning continues to be ongoing. Shalini Puri deftly captures this feature of *Angel*'s narrative resolution in characterizing it as a novel that "attempts to work through a sorrow that has been neither resolved nor transcended" (14). In *Tide Running*, by contrast, the emoting finds no space of accommodation within the logic of the plot and its dual representation. Through Sissy Helff's insightful observation, one could read even the division of labor within the novel's narration as class coded:

By confronting Cliff's voice, which is mainly employed to describe his inner world of thought, with Bella's perspective, which narrates the plot and thus propels the storyline, the novel sets up a frictional interface between the narrator-protagonists' dissimilar perceptions, which materialize in a mode of narrative unreliability. (85)

My own sense is that this is an unreliability shot through with class and gender difference. As a way to take these factors into account, I propose that unreliability here is more precisely named as interpretive uncertainty and seen either as resulting

from the novelist's own encounter with gender difference and socioeconomic inequality or as an aesthetic choice to focalize through the character whose positionality most obliges the reader's closer scrutiny. This artistic encounter with real world constraints manifests an uncertainty that, yes, thwarts readerly desires for full knowledge, but in so doing, presents an ethical call in the space this discomfort opens. *Tide Running*'s plot twist calls its readers to identify themselves as interpreters that go on interpreting even without full knowledge, interpreters that may even leap to conclusions in formulaic, discriminatory ways. It calls our bluff. To a larger degree than *Angel*, then, *Tide Running* empties the emotional work of its plot onto its readers to resolve; and, it is in writing in a way that locates Cliff's emotional life beyond the text's representative field that Kempadoo realizes this effect. That *Angel*'s characters perform this emotional work, of course, does not preclude readers from also entering into an affective identification with the kind of emotional labor it models, but there is a degree of satisfaction *Angel* contains in terms of witnessing meaningful change that *Tide Running* does not.

In Doodsie, the novel's project finds its exemplar, its political visionary: she foresees, witnesses, and mourns the revolution's mistakes. Exhibiting an altogether different character arc, Cliff moves from character to image to obscured image to tragic figure. Cliff exists, not as an example, but as a figure that blocks interpretation. The novel forces us to question his place within the social system when it leaves us not knowing what to think. In this space of doubt, the novel opens the possibility of prompting its readers into an affective realignment of their readerly software. But what is to assure this affective realignment lasts beyond its momentary reading experience? How might this experience that the novel orchestrates transfer beyond it to other encounters outside of fiction and into the desperate economic reality for which Cliff stands as a figure?

In a therapeutic relationship with an analyst, the analysand may, through narrative encounter, arrive at a place of insight, yet this momentary vista does not assure a corresponding change in behavior. A person may just as likely continue, with deepened consciousness, to repeat old patterns. One of the aesthetic insights of *Angel*, as Scott identifies it, may be found in "[t]he formulation, 'without Leader we are nothing,' [which] gives way to its opposite, 'without the people the leaders are nothing.'" If Chief represents this incomplete break, Scott argues that "[t]he novel expresses this failure not through argument or symbol, but through structural correspondences" (143). Like *Tide Running*'s use of the question "eh?" to distinguish the exoticizing aesthetic gaze, structural correspondences can lead to an intellectual grasping of a problem. Structural correspondences can make a political point in a novel, but I wonder if they complete its project. When each novel is at its most compelling, pathos in the plot realizes these correspondences in a lived reading experience. If we continue *Angel*'s logic and the map of social change it draws, a person in a loving relationship might not have the incisive vision that the

former's educated vision brings, but that person may still be inspired to break with old patterns and move toward loving encounter. In the case of Allan taking down Leader's picture, his action, though utterly apolitical, may, nonetheless, open the possibility for a more integrated, on-the-ground political change, a model of dialogue and compromise leading to a more robust culture of change.

Beyond its characters or any politics it might offer, a novel constructs dramatic emotional allegiances and in so doing extends to its readers a particular encounter with the world, and even, at times, in the case of *Tide Running*, with doubt about the image of the world encountered. While *Angel* indirectly makes its point about the historical record of the Grenadian Revolution, seeming to argue, as it does, that the Party took too authoritarian a stance, *Tide Running*, although it documents socioeconomic inequality, media's harmful effects, and the law's violence, remains more affective than persuasive. To play back an effect of Cliff's transformation—which Kempadoo effectively does by taking a real incident in Tobago as her novel's creative kernel—reader and author alike might feel certain moves with new precision. This new precision could allow a reader to disentangle cognitive shifts from affective shifts when processing narrative events. Yet Kempadoo narrates the changes in Cliff in a way that frustrates and dislodges readerly expectation for a certain kind of explanatory precision (Cliff's guilt remains indeterminate). This emplotment is able to stress the way affective shifts in perception sometimes take the upper hand over cognitive shifts.

A sociological reading of *Tide Running* as a commentary on sex tourism falls short of an engagement of the novel on its own terms, which are broader and include many narrative subtleties that disrupt categories, that frustrate the reader's ability to turn to stereotypes for understanding. Readings that operate on an intellectual level of analysis, searching for the sociological insight a novel might prod its audience toward, risk missing the novel's formal qualities, the particular narrative structure that creates a singular effect. Identifying the novel's effect, to an important degree, requires the reader to come clean and admit to having software that may program him or her for prejudicial processing of events, maybe not at the cognitive level but at the more elusive and hence, perhaps more critical, affective level. By plotting an encounter with racial profiling and recording, and all the discriminatory microaggressions Cliff encounters, *Tide Running* operates at the level of exposure, disorienting and reorienting readers, in turn, prompting them to take account of their own affective processes as they remember them and, hopefully, as they are remade.

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