

matched by comparable changes outside it” (340). *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism's* seventeen essays illustrate how feminist literary criticism has and therefore can continue to adapt to and reflect women's concerns within every era, including our own.

Kate Faber Oestreich

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Stephen Clingman. *The Grammar of Identity: Transnational Fiction and the Nature of the Boundary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. xiv, 266. \$120.00.

Stephen Clingman's *The Grammar of Identity* unfolds a comparative reading of literary fiction in English that ranges around the globe and reaches back to the mid-nineteenth century. As a South African-born University of Massachusetts professor, Clingman remarks, in his preface, his personal investment in the theory his book develops: a theory of identity as navigation, articulated through novels that construct a transnational form of fiction, which he dubs *transfiction*.

Theoretically, Clingman takes cues from Benedict Anderson and Arjun Appadurai, on the national and the global; from Homi Bhabha and James Clifford, on hybridity and mobility; from Walter Benjamin, on the idea of constellation; from Levinas, on the ethics of encounter; and from Freud, on the uncanny—and on metonymy, the representative connections and contiguities which assume a central importance for his reading of transnational traversals, both social and psychological.

Clingman brings a similarly eclectic group of authors into dialogue with each other: Caryl Phillips, Salman Rushdie, Anne Michaels, W. G. Sebald, J. M. Coetzee, and Nadine Gordimer—but also Joseph Conrad, Charlotte Brontë, and Jean Rhys. The works of these writers “become an inner map of our world where the transnational is still a space of crossing”—a theoretical crossing that entails the critic's practical crossing of “prevailing categories of analysis ... the modern and postmodern, the colonial and postcolonial.” He continues, “The idea is to set both Sebald and Rushdie together, and to put them both in relation to Conrad [for] a different kind of navigation ... to see if it can tell a different kind of story” (31–32). The co-ordination of canonical “world literature” and postcolonial texts takes a fresh approach to comparative studies in English literature, in part through the priority he places on metonymy and the poetics of contact and boundary-crossing.

Clingman's poetics of the transnational carries a modest cost, in the odd

muting of its corresponding politics. *The Grammar of Identity* focuses much more on textual form and theme than on the institutional and economic contexts of literary production. But this seems more a matter of taking these contexts for granted, not deliberately omitting them. Both the Holocaust and apartheid recur as major historical backdrops for Clingman's readings of Phillips, Michaels, Sebald, Coetzee, and Gordimer; and postcolonial issues inform his treatment of Conrad, Rushdie, Brontë, and Rhys. He also revisits two moments in literary politics that usefully exemplify "transfiction" as a conjunction of the writing life, narrative form, and "transitive" thematics: the fatwa against Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (130), and Sebald's alleged appropriation of the Holocaust autobiography *Rosa's Child* (193–95).

The muted quality of the book's politics, then, lies more in how it idealizes the transnational, as a subjective mobility that is transformative and empowering. Clingman theorizes the transnational as "the uncanny of the national" (129)—its disruptive "alternation" (104), the shifting ground of a novel form of identity that transgresses the nation's boundaries and transcends its atavistic imaginings. He cites Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines* as his self-consciously "idealized" exemplar of this idea of the transnational, "the syntax of the self in motion" (243–44). Valorized in this way, Clingman's image of the transnational becomes "mythographic" (to borrow his description of a passage in *Midnight's Children* [119]); it assumes an ethical aspect, as the condition for translation, inclusivity, identification, and sympathy. This sense of the transnational has suggestive theoretical potential for work in comparative, world, and postcolonial literatures (especially work on the disciplinary delimitations and periodizations of these fields). And yet the transnational describes not only what transgresses and transcends the space and time of the nation, but also what translates and transplants it: diasporic nationalism, for one example, or corporate globalization, for a very different example. So more attention might be paid to what Clingman calls "bad" transitivity (213), more precision brought to bear on making his categorical distinction between the transnational and "the global" (241), a distinction put most clearly in his discussion of Hardt and Negri:

Whether or not we call it 'Empire', we inhabit a global system which seems interconnected and encompassing, with very few venues of meaningful opposition or escape. Let us also grant a conceptual distinction, between the 'global' per se—the system which encompasses—and the 'transnational' in the sense it has been used in this book, as a connective grammar of navigation which offers a different kind of mapping in the world. (230)

Clingman refers reflexively to his own writing life as a basis for his idealization of the transnational. “The end of apartheid,” he writes, “was transitive and transitional ... the product itself of quite serious political ‘navigation, new forms of syntax’” (208–9). And his abstractions are not to be dismissed as such—they sometimes offer superb heuristic insights. His discussion of Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians*, with its allegorical minimalism, segues smoothly to that of Hardt and Negri, and outlines the political formulae that govern Empire as the national writ large: its “total environment,” its “*regime of indifference*” (222, emphasis in original). “Unfortunately,” Clingman writes of *Waiting for the Barbarians*, in a claim that applies just as well to *Heart of Darkness* or *Wide Sargasso Sea*, “the world keeps inventing new contexts for this novel” (221).

The aphoristic quality of such statements reflects the lucid and lyrical polish of Clingman’s vivid prose style: *Jane Eyre*’s Bertha is the “ghost in the national machine” (140); in *Fugitive Pieces*, “the horror of the global is the omnipresence of atrocity” (161). Clingman thus delivers ably on his introductory alignment of the book’s exploratory form with its boundary-navigating content, and his sense of navigation—a “generative capacity that links questions of journey and search in the external world to linguistic and ... syntactic structures” (208)—charts an iconoclastic and illuminating course across the waterways of the world’s Anglophone literature.

Mark A. McCutcheon