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Carrol Clarkson. *Drawing the Line: Toward an Aesthetics of Transitional Justice*. New York: Fordham UP, 2014. Pp. xi, 204. US\$24 (paper); US\$90 (cloth).

In this timely and trenchantly argued book, Carrol Clarkson makes a case for the significance of aesthetic enquiry in advancing projects of social transformation and highlights the limitations of attending exclusively to the political and legal dimensions of such initiatives. She explores her central trope of “drawing the line” in its multivalent registers: as artistic gesture, as legal dictum, as territorial imperative, as ultimatum, as moral limit, and as the plotting of conceptual parameters. She opens with the assertion that “[a] line drawn reconfigures space” and enumerates ways—albeit arbitrary—that lines delimit inclusions and exclusions, trace pathways and connections, and foreground juxtapositions or oppositions: “All of these lines could have been drawn somewhere else” (Clarkson 1). Rather than posit aesthetics as a function of taste and the artwork as a bounded and “self-contained *representation*” (80; emphasis in original), Clarkson defines the aesthetic act as “an incident

that brings about a different perception of one's standing in relation to others" (2) and the artwork as an "historically inflected appeal" that sends out "lines of address" to a range of differently situated potential audiences (80). She contends that "[i]t is in the understanding of the artwork as an appeal that it becomes possible to speak about art's *encounters*" (80; emphasis in original).

Accordingly, the book is structured around a range of such encounters, each precipitated by South Africa's transition from apartheid rule to liberal democracy. The case studies on which she focuses encompass a selection of literary texts, including Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf*, Ivan Vladislavić's *The Restless Supermarket*, and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and *The Lives of Animals*; art installations by Willem Boshoff; meanderings through Johannesburg's shifting urban spaces; interactions with street vendors at Cape Town's traffic lights; and iterations of Nelson Mandela's Rivonia trial speech, both as it was delivered in his statement from the dock in 1964 and as it was re-invoked in his speech in Cape Town following his release from prison on 11 February 1990. In each instance, Clarkson demonstrates that meticulous attention to aesthetic enquiry facilitates the drawing, crossing, and redrawing of lines that determine how social relations are imagined, legal directives constituted, and justice conceived and enacted. In her readings of each signifying act or event, she pursues and traces connections between the following questions:

In what ways and under what conditions do these aesthetic acts lead to a different way of perceiving the relation between the actual and the possible, say, or to a radically different appreciation of what counts as perceptible, or intelligible, or legitimate in a social order? . . . To what extent does an aesthetic act have the ethical potency to redraw the lines, altering the margins of exposure of one to the other thereby recalibrating the terms of cultural, political and legal interactions? (3)

Such questions are pertinent in contexts far beyond the study's immediate purview of South Africa's ongoing processes of transition.

Particularly fascinating is Clarkson's reading, via Jacques Derrida's essays "Force of Signification" (1978) and "Force of Law" (2002), of three of Boshoff's installation pieces in which conventional, if often unacknowledged, spatial and linguistic hierarchies that are the legacies of colonial and apartheid rule are inverted via the modes of address through which different audiences are hailed and, even more significantly, through which these differently positioned audience members are invited to encounter one another. Boshoff's installation pieces incapacitate, in relative terms, speakers of dominant lan-

guages and/or those accustomed to the greatest ease and degree of social and spatial mobility, emphasize the capacities of speakers and readers of “minor” languages (African languages or Braille), and create opportunities, which may or may not be taken up by their various audiences, for new relations of interdependence to be explored or embraced through collaborative processes of meaning-making.

In the context of South Africa’s transition to liberal democracy, it is hardly surprising that Clarkson focuses sustained attention on lines that have been historically drawn to distinguish racial, linguistic, and ethnic groups as well as economic and social classes from one another. Significantly, however, she takes the further step of examining lines that ostensibly divide species. In her readings of Coetzee and decision to set Charles Darwin’s *The Descent of Man* in dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas’ account of relations between human and non-human animals, Clarkson brings posthumanist scholarship to bear on questions of ethics and transitional justice.

One of the book’s strengths is the ease with which Clarkson moves between sophisticated theoretical analysis—she draws on, brings into dialogue, and extends the work of Derrida, Levinas, Jacques Ranciere, Judith Butler, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Drucilla Cornell, among others—and analyses of quotidian experiences of encounter, address, appeal, and response. Her facility for developing complex and densely layered arguments, and expressing them in prose that is at once spare and accessible, lends the book readily to classroom use at both undergraduate and graduate levels. For several years I have taught Clarkson’s chapter from *Justice and Reconciliation in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, an edited collection, in which she maps out the genesis of this book project, and I have been enormously impressed by the way that students, even those who are not highly conversant with the theoretical traditions on which she draws, are able to engage with her arguments and integrate them into their own research papers in imaginative and nuanced ways. I believe that any of the chapters from *Drawing the Line* will prove equally generative as assigned reading for a range of courses.

In addition to its suitability for classroom use, *Drawing the Line* will appeal to readers working in a variety of scholarly fields: it is an important text for anyone grounded in contemporary South African literary and cultural studies, offers rich contributions to interdisciplinary studies of transitional justice and jurisprudence, and will be valuable for scholars working at the intersection of ethics and aesthetics as well as those exploring the impacts of posthumanism on projects of social transformation.

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## Book Reviews

### Works Cited

Clarkson, Carrol. "Drawing the Line: Justice and the Art of Reconciliation." *Justice and Reconciliation in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. Ed. François du Bois and Antje du Bois-Pedain. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008. 267–88. Print.