immediate access to intimate others is perceived ambiguously, as it can easily lead to turmoil, distrust, and even break-ups. Chapter 5 engages with Inhambane's sexual economy, and illustrates how mobile phones allow for new registers to construct masculinity and femininity. In the exchange of air time, the handset itself, *bips*, and text messages, gendered negotiations in the intimate sphere are taking place. The final chapter points at practices of knowledge gathering and information sharing. Where Inhambane youth play with exposure and ignorance, at times they value opacity and confusion more than transparency. We learn how the mobile phone is keenly integrated in these highly dynamic oppositions of sharing and hiding, informing and keeping secrets.

In the conclusion, the question whether the mobile phone contributes to poverty eradication reappears. Archambault convincingly contends that this might be the wrong question after all. Isn't it more compelling to understand how these phones are integrated in attempts to lead a more fulfilling life rather than searching for evidence of cost efficiency, accumulation, and increase of material wealth?

This monograph is a fascinating read. The analysis has impressive depth, rigor, and complexity, as Archambault writes with command of key texts in the anthropological discipline, and seemingly effortlessly communicates utmost intimate insights into the interactions between men and women in Inhambane. Writing against the notion of "creativity," a popular rubric in the study of African popular culture, Archambault dissects how an incoming technology dialogues with indigenous repertoires of sociality and epistemologies. This is also a story about how "beginners" (new users) integrate, implement, and value technologies, and how these practices mesh with other forms of relating and futuremaking. Indeed, as this ethnography ably demonstrates, there is much more to say about mobile communication on the continent than tales of appropriation, economic empowerment, and political activism.

Katrien Pype
Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa, KU Leuven University, Leuven
Department of African Studies & Anthropology, University of Birmingham (UK)
Leuven, Belgium
katrien.pype@kuleuven.be

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Stephen Clingman. *Birth Mark*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016. Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2015. Contents. Afterword. 247pp. $24.95. Paper. ISBN: 978-1-62534-228-7.

Stephen Clingman, the acclaimed critic (*The Novels of Nadine Gordimer* 1986) and biographer (*Bram Fischer: Afrikaner Revolutionary* 1998), has turned his acute eye and limpid prose to a subject much nearer at hand—his own coming of age in the final decades of apartheid. In mid-century Johannesburg, "born into light, the most beautiful soft and bright sunlight

of the most beautiful place on earth" (6), Clingman ponders mysteries of identity, origin, migration, vision, visibility—how one sees and is seen—attempting answers to perennial, hard questions.

> Across time, across space, across perspective, in my mind my daughters (and through them, their children and children's children, if they have a care to know) are asking me: what was it really like to be there? What was it like to be white, to have servants, to be Jewish in an African land? (189)

The memoir begins with his forebears' journeying from Eastern Europe around the turn of the century. Down through the generations their travels and tales, "heard, misheard, remembered, misremembered" (8), serve as prelude to his own. His infancy, punctuated by a botched surgery to remove the birthmark under his eye, leaves him with a life-long focus on how he looks, in every meaning of that phrase. In time will come "daily eye exercises, which are also, inevitably, 'I' exercises" (73). But those later challenges of seeing do not at all hamper his extraordinary eye-hand/foot prowess as a young cricketer or "who I am, that inside-left soccer player" (35). Those boyhood moments are among the book's finest. As in J.M. Coetzee's *Boyhood* or—without too much of a stretch—Wordsworth or Joyce or Dylan Thomas, Clingman captures with poignant immediacy and no condescension the child in his element:

> Here everything seems magical, from the quietness of the road to the soft purple of the jacaranda buds and the spangled shadow cast by their leaves, the feel of the sun on my skin, the scents in the air of spring or summer. . . . My body feels new and strong and lithe, modular and light, my mind a zone of serene and transcendent contemplation. Here aesthetics, mind, body, spirit come together and I have a sense of understanding which I cannot explain but simply feel (52).

His distinctive idiom throughout is a lucid, lyrical English, interspersed with Yiddish, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Latin, and Italian.

But not all is Romantic bliss. In Lauret Savoy's simple words, "our lives *take place*." And for Clingman his place is Southern Africa in the latter part of the twentieth century. Middle-class privilege cannot insulate him from discord and injustice—in his family, in the schools where he flourishes, and "what others were suffering all around me in my own country because of the markings of their skin" (14). The incongruity intensifies as he ascends or at least survives the customary institutions: school and holidays, high school exchange to Nebraska(!), leaving university as protests erupt in 1976, and the banal farce of compulsory military service. Readers may likely find these episodes more mundane, less eye-catching than the boy's earlier breathless enchantment, before "the world became confusing" (75).

In his adult years, more striking, for me at least, is his meditation—and hard work—"to change the grammar of how I see" (210). From childhood his life has unfolded to a pattern, a recurring discipline that matches the

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boy's abandon: "From the very beginning my father is methodical, teaching everything like a grammar. . . . and in the next generation it was how I taught my daughters too" (25–7). Later, with a similar mastery as a middle-aged academic, he learns from a vision therapist how to correct the severe imbalance between his left and right eyes, to remedy, in the doctor's words, "the huge stress it puts on the visual architecture of your mind" (193). Clingman's account in these pages—"The Vision Notebooks"—offers a humanist's lay perspective to complement the intriguing science of Oliver Sachs in *The Mind's Eye* (2010), or that of Sachs's star patient, "Stereo Sue" (Susan Barry), *Fixing My Gaze: A Scientist's Journey into Seeing in Three Dimensions* (2009). In the middle of life's journey, he strikes a partial cadence, an insight: "Understand that you see not despite the fact you are marked; it is the way you are marked that gives you your sight. Let it become your form of navigation, lead you towards a deeper vision" (206).

As does Anthony Appiah in *In My Father's House* (1992), Clingman here ends with the death of his father, the book's most enigmatic character. Coming back from America, "home to South Africa" (237), after journeys abroad that echo his ancestors' migrations from Latvia, the mature and renowned scholar briefly becomes once more the son, tenderly exasperated by the man who "taught us how to measure the Southern Cross in the night sky, to find our way south" (241). No conclusions, no answers, only a rare, persistent curiosity and empathy. It is a fit ending to his wise, big-hearted book, worthy in time of a sequel, a further tracing of this good life.

John Lemly
Mount Holyoke College
South Hadley, Massachusetts
jlemly@mtholyoke.edu

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