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Going Nowhere, Being No One: Navigating Space and Identity in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*

Lisa van Straten

Identity has arguably been the most prominent theme in the works of postcolonial theorists and has been approached from various viewpoints that generally fall into two groups: a melancholic idiom of 'in-betweenness' or a celebratory focus on hybridity and multiculturalism.¹ These conceptions of identity implicitly rely on notions of (cultural) space as largely homogenous and demarcated by boundaries, which can either (I) exclude, resulting in artificial, essentialised identities and in-between non-identities, or (II) include, enabling connections that can result in multicultural assemblages. As such, they seem to reflect what Marie-Laure Ryan, Kenneth Foote and Maoz Azaryahu in their work *Narrating Space/Spatializing Narrative* (2016) have called the two principal ways for conceptualising space: space as container and space as network.² For writer and theorist Stephen Clingman, however, these abstractions fail to reflect the complexity of reality in which spaces, and by extension identities, are culturally entangled rather than determined by a single culture or a composite of cultures. Consequently, he seeks to transcend these categories by emphasising identity as a *transcultural* process of linguistic and physical navigation; an idea he maps out in his revolutionary work *The Grammar of Identity* (2009) aided by an analysis of several novels, including Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966).

In this paper, I will revisit Clingman's concept of navigational identity in relation to Rhys's novel in a way that combines his theory with concepts from the field of spatial literary studies, thus showcasing the fruitfulness of bringing this up-and-coming field into dialogue with postcolonial theory. This merged approach will subsequently form the basis of an alternative analysis of the novel that focuses on how the novel's heroine, Antoinette, ultimately proves unable to construct her identity precisely because she cannot move past this dual conceptualisation of space—an inability that is mirrored by her bodily movements which alternate between self-contained stillness and multicultural crossing. Moreover, through this analysis, I will attempt to refine Clingman's theory by foregrounding how navigation as a process of identity is not only concerned with a movement of the body (or mind) through (conceptual) space, but is also intrinsically connected to a movement of the gaze, which is central in perceiving boundaries as either transitive or intransitive, both between different places as well as between the self and the other. So, to start, I will briefly outline Clingman's views on identity and space before moving on to relating his theory to the two central space-metaphors emerging from spatial literary studies. I will, then, discuss *Wide Sargasso Sea* by exploring the intertwinement of Antoinette's psychological identity-

¹ Stephen Clingman, *The Grammar of Identity: Transnational Fiction and the Nature of the Boundary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 6.

² Marie-Laure Ryan, Kenneth Foote and Maoz Azaryahu, *Narrating Space/Spatializing Narrative: Where Narrative Theory and Geography Meet* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016), pp. 18-19.

navigation and her literal movements through space as a marginalised, white creole woman in 1890s Jamaica.

As touched on before, Stephen Clingman introduced his conceptualisation of identity as an act of navigation in order to promote an understanding of identity that ‘recognise[s] difference without assuming anything like hard and fast boundaries, [and] [...] cater[s] to the reality of differentiation without cutting off the possibility of connection’.³ For him, this idea of navigational identity is fundamentally connected to movement as he considers there to be a direct ‘correlation between how the self is put together and how we navigate ourselves through space and time’.⁴ A strong indicator of this correlation is that a child’s linguistic abilities develop concurrently with his/her ability to walk, which, more than functioning as an evolutionary mechanism of survival, seems to indicate a fundamental interconnection between movement, space and language in establishing a sense of self. Consequently, he argues, the construction of identity as a simultaneously mental and physical process is governed by an underlying structure similar to that of a ‘grammar’ or ‘syntax’; a system that allows meaning to emerge out of a multitude of possible meanings based on a literal and abstract movement across and along material and linguistic boundaries constructed by differences, divisions and gaps.⁵ In that sense, identity as ‘a kind of meaning’ in itself must not be understood as depending on intransitive boundaries and static same/other binaries as entrenched by earlier postcolonial conceptions of identity.⁶ Rather, it underlines how identity relies at its core on *transitive* boundaries that mark both the distance of ‘encounter [as well as] combination within and between selves’ in a complex dynamic between nearness, difference and (inter)relatedness.⁷

Additionally, in foregrounding this interplay between movement and identity both in language and in reality, Clingman also seems to work towards a new conceptualisation of space. Rejecting earlier notions of space as determined by singularity and static perimeters, he emphasises its metonymic nature, arguing that landscapes are always ‘confused and cross-cutting’, marked by ‘transition and transitivity’.⁸ Therefore, he argues, they must be understood as ‘environment[s]’ as opposed to ‘fixed place[s]’.⁹ However, such a shift in perspective does not call for a conceptual eradication of boundaries as their very existence as markers of difference allow meaning, as well as identity, to exist, as they do in language. Instead, it entails a rethinking of those boundaries as diffuse and ambiguous, as forming a web of overlapping and entangled cultural identities that reflect both the space’s own particular nature as well as its inherent interconnection with other places.

In doing so, one could say that Clingman attempts to combine and transcend the two principal conceptualisations that, according to spatial literary theorists, humans have used to ‘come to grips with the abstract notion of space’: (I) space as container, which ‘present[s] space as a bounded environment that encloses the subject’, thereby carrying connotations of ‘security and attachment [...] [or] passivity and entrapment’, and (II) space as network, which presents it as ‘a dynamic system of relation that allows movement, and

³ Clingman, p. 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 23.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

that is often actively created by the subject'.¹⁰ Clingman's understanding of space relies on the conceptual boundaries that transform spaces into containers, but reinvents those as ambivalent borders that reflect both the marked singularity of a space as well as the dynamic points of crossing into the other spaces that exist beyond. Space is thus conceived of as simultaneously grounded and bounded as well as dynamic and constructed through movement in a process where 'contiguity, difference, modulation and transformation [continually] unfold'.¹¹

As such, Clingman also diverges from scholars who have attempted to formulate theories of space from a deconstructionist or postcolonial perspective, many of whom worked from the 'assumption that borders [...] are inherently problematic'.¹² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, for example, placed 'smooth' space in opposition to striated space, namely space as divided 'by walls, enclosures, and roads between enclosures' that marks the space of the 'polis, politics, the policed, and the police'.¹³ Another example is Edward Soja's notion of 'Thirdspace', which is 'a space of radical openness, a vast territory of infinite possibilities and perils' that lies beyond conceptualisations of space rooted in binary structures, such as centres and peripheries.¹⁴ However, even though these theorists acknowledge how space is always multi-layered and never conceptually singular, their emphasis on complete borderlessness creates the pitfall of ignoring difference in favour of a too insistent emphasis on fluid interconnectedness. As such, they move too far into the direction of understanding space as a network and ignore the meaning the notion of space as container enables, a potential danger that Clingman seeks to evade.

By exploring a perception of space that relies on boundaries which simultaneously reflect difference and connection, Clingman's theory of identity as an act of navigation begins to come into focus more clearly. Rather than seeing identity as a static attribute connected to one's motherland or as a cultural hybrid without a centre of gravity, Clingman visualises it as a process of traversing boundaries whilst staying grounded, as a 'being in the space of crossing [...] accepting placement as *displacement*, position as *disposition*'.¹⁵ According to him, such a perspective is needed to shed light on how our sense of self is ultimately based much more on space as determined by routes—broken, obscure, linking yet distancing—than roots. Clingman's (re)interpretation of movement and space thus fundamentally supports his understanding of identity, to use Françoise Vergès' and Carpanin Marimoutou's words, as 'anchored' in specificity 'yet [continually] travelling' within and without the self.¹⁶

In applying his theoretical framework to *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Clingman places particular emphasis on how Jean Rhys's own experiences of being condemned to a state of

¹⁰ Clingman, p. 19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹² Dustin Crowley, 'Transgression, Boundaries, and Power: Rethinking the Space of Postcolonial Literature', in *Spatial Literary Studies: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Space, Geography, and the Imagination*, ed. by Robert T. Tally Jr. (New York: Routledge, 2021), p. 207.

¹³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, '1440: The Smooth and the Striated', in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Athlone Press, 1988), p. 353; Crowley, p. 207.

¹⁴ Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 208.

¹⁵ Clingman, p. 25.

¹⁶ Françoise Vergès and Carpanin Marimoutou, 'Mooring: Indian Ocean Creolisations', trans. by Stephen Muecke and Françoise Vergès, *Portal Journal of Multidisciplinary International Studies*, 9.1 (2012), p. 15.

unbelonging are reflected in the character of Antoinette, who shares her paradoxical position as a white, creole woman. Born on the Caribbean island of Dominica and coming ‘from a long-standing slave-owning Dominican patrimony’, Rhys was profoundly traumatised by her continual state of cultural in-betweenness as she was never truly accepted by the black island population nor the white community of European settlers.¹⁷ Even her time spent in England and on the European continent could not diminish this intense despair, which drove her to the brink of suicide in her conviction that: ‘I would never belong anywhere, and I knew it, and all my life would be the same, trying to belong and failing [...] I am a stranger and I always will be’.¹⁸ As such, in many ways, this inability to ‘conjoin the different parts of her life’ can be said to have left a mark not only on her own life story, but also on that of Antoinette, who is depicted as likewise occupying what Clingman calls ‘the non-place of identity, between but not connective, contiguous but not transitive’.¹⁹ Almost as Rhys’s alter ego, Antoinette keeps getting confronted with seemingly intransitive boundaries, racial and otherwise, that mark a division ‘across which acts of normalisation and suppression take place’, leading her to experience in a similar manner a ‘breakdown in personal geography, without continuity, transition, connection’.²⁰

As Clingman points out, these boundaries are most prominently symbolised in the novel through the series of rejections Antoinette encounters from the people in her life. These include her mother as well as Rochester, but also the little girl Tia, who, despite her metaphoric embodying of ‘possibilities of connection’ as Antoinette’s mirror image, ends up hitting her with a rock in the ultimate gesture of repudiation.²¹ Since, as Clingman argues, the opportunities for creating horizontal bonds are thwarted and with it ‘any version of equality, connection, [and] transitivity’, Antoinette becomes condemned to a ‘vertical containment’ characterised by ‘substitution and repression’ based on ‘desire [and] fear’.²² This is particularly the case in her relationship with Rochester, who, threatened by the many likenesses between himself and Antoinette, represses both her as well as parts of his own identity. Refusing to perceive the literal and figural space between them as transitive, he puts up boundaries in an attempt to keep her out and himself closed in, as if no ties connected them. As such, he exhibits, as Clingman indicates, how ‘[a]cknowledging points of contact between the self and another can be immensely difficult—especially when internal differentiation is not accepted’ and no mental or physical navigation is attempted.²³

Even though Clingman’s analysis of Rhys’s novel is based on an abstract conceptualisation of movement and identity, his alternative understanding of actual space nonetheless appears at its foundation. As he indicates, the geographical locations in *Wide Sargasso Sea* are continually overlain by ‘a transnational cartography of the psyche’ which foregrounds how every space is always inextricably connected—through emotions, experiences, associations and thoughts—with other places.²⁴ In this ‘dreamworld’, as Clingman calls it, ‘navigations [...] can only be obscure’ as the concept of differentiating

¹⁷ Clingman, p. 136.

¹⁸ Qtd. in Clingman, p. 138.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139, 147.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-150.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 155-156.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

borders is fundamentally problematised.²⁵ Consequently, the characters seem forced to shift their perspective on identity as determined by seemingly stable, singular spaces or multicultural hybridity towards an understanding of identity as a continual journey that is determined by their moorings as well as their transcultural connections. Yet adopting this attitude of accepting difference whilst embracing similarity and entanglement seems to be too much for them, just like for Rhys herself, who, in being confronted with seemingly impenetrable social walls throughout her life, was no longer able to envision a way past the boundaries that condemned her to otherness.

Although Clingman's reading of *Wide Sargasso Sea* is insightful and original, his analysis seems to disregard how Antoinette's psychological attempts to construct a sense of self are intertwined with her literal movements throughout the novel, in which not only her body but also her gaze is of central importance in negotiating self-other boundaries. As I will demonstrate in the next part of this paper, Antoinette's continual experience of rejection leads her not only to have trouble in establishing a sense of self, but also profoundly impacts how she moves and, both literally and figuratively, looks at the world. Finding her attempts at physical and psychological navigation repeatedly thwarted by people who block her way and perceive her as an absolute other, Antoinette at intervals ceases all efforts to explore her surroundings and, by extension, the multilayered reality of her own self. As a result, she often adopts a state of paralysis to gain a grounded sense of static, singular identity. In doing so, she seems to construct for herself a liminal, container-space to serve as a foundation for and reflection of her in-between white creole identity, even though this containment simultaneously gives rise to a paranoid sense of being closed-in that blurs her gaze, leading her to see all others as a threat. Nevertheless, she is confronted time and again with the impossibility of immobilising and homogenising identity as it can only meaningfully emerge in an ongoing dialogue of connection with, even in the midst of a rejection of, other spaces and people. Consequently, Antoinette cannot escape the realisation that the identity she attempts to construct is no more than a non-identity, one that ultimately becomes her only way out.

This complex process of identity-construction starts in Antoinette's childhood as she begins navigating different spaces as a symbolic exploration of herself; a quest that is continually obstructed through her encounters with people who refuse to accept her. For example, she looks at and moves towards Tia to affirm her black identity at the bathing pool in the forest—a space that for her represents the female, black community as the 'women all [brought] their washing down [there]' with their 'skirt[s] hitched up' like Christophine—but is deserted by the girl in angry scorn.²⁶ Likewise, she seems to venture in the direction of Spanish Town, the island's principal European settlement, to strengthen her connection to her white identity, but is harassed by 'a little girl', who 'follows [her] singing, "Go away white cockroach, go away, go away"' (8). On both these occasions, Antoinette flees to Coulibri estate, her home, which becomes for her a refuge, a container-type space marked by the physical border of 'the old wall [...] covered with green moss soft as velvet' (8). It is a space that resembles and safeguards her, situated between the native forests of Jamaica and Spanish Town, as a symbol of her being in-between the black and white communities. Moreover, this desire for containment is also quite literally mirrored in her process of (non-)navigation as she begins to adopt a state of paralysis, saying: 'I never wanted to move again. Everything would be worse if I moved' (8). This is also

²⁵ Clingman, p. 156.

²⁶ Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (London: Penguin, 2011), pp. 9, 81. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

exemplified by the fact that she feels most secure lying still in bed, having to look only at her 'friendly furniture' without an alien face in sight (3). In other words, she wishes to cease her process of painfully navigating routes in both body and gaze by clutching at the seemingly stable roots of her home. However, in doing so, she is unaware that the security she is looking for is just an illusion; a mirage based on a disregard of how Coulibri itself, being spatially overlain with different identities and cultures, actually embodies the transcultural entanglement between the black, the white and the white creole that characterises her own identity.

Additionally, Antoinette attempts to affirm this artificially singular and fixed identity of in-betweenness by strengthening her connection with her mother, who occupies in a similarly paralysed way the same liminal space and identity. As 'a Martinique girl' who married an English slaveowner, she has become a pariah of society, condemned to isolation and invisibility: 'They didn't look at us, nobody see them come near us' (9). Consequently, Annette, like her daughter, eventually gives up all efforts to navigate her surroundings and connect with people, which leads her to 'refuse to leave the house at all' and spend her days resting listlessly or 'walk[ing] up and down the *glacis*' like a caged animal, unable to be at peace with herself or her environment (3, 5). Recognising their mutual predicament and trying to create a stronger sense of self from their shared position as outcasts, Antoinette continually seeks to be near her, imagining her mother's hair to be a 'soft black cloak' that is able to 'cover [her], hide [her], keep [her] safe' from the world outside, much like Coulibri's walls (8). However, in response to her daughter's implicit appeal to acknowledge her and identify with her, her mother time and again averts her gaze or pushes her away, thereby symbolically marking the futility of Antoinette's attempted static identity-construction.

Moreover, by assuming this fixed position, Antoinette, like her mother, relinquishes the agency that is at the core of navigation, thereby investing others with excessive power as they are granted the ability to either approach or leave her at will. This is reflected most prominently in the first part of Antoinette's narrative which abounds in terms like 'abandoned', 'left' and 'marooned' (7, 8, 10-11). Additionally, her immobile position also fosters a static *psychological* relation to her environment, as she quite literally keeps seeing places and people from the same perspective, causing her to adopt a rather rigid perception of the world, singularly focused on difference and tainted by paranoia. In a sense, Antoinette drives herself into a corner, from which everyone who comes near is seen as a threatening other, leading her to no longer be able to look people in the eye and make connections based on a self-assured acknowledgement of shared attachment. Consequently, in her paralysis, she repeatedly looks away or closes her eyes in order to ignore the fact that in standing still, she is running away from the necessarily painful process of navigating the complex landscape of difference and similarity.

The period after the burning down of Coulibri—the spatial metaphor for her artificially homogenised white creole identity—marks a period of transition for Antoinette, one that seemingly forces her to reconsider her experience of space. This transformation is marked by her deathly fever, which can be interpreted as a symbolic sickness resulting from her impossible identity-process, and which afterwards leads her to acknowledge the importance of moving within space both literally and figuratively for constructing a sense of self. As such, this sudden illness can be said to break through the illusion of immobile security that is upheld by her aunt, who insists "'But you are safe with me now. [...] You must stay in bed though. Why are you wandering about the room?'" which is subsequently rejected by Antoinette: "'I got up because I wanted to know where I was'" (28). However, soon after, this renewed agency is challenged, as she is accosted by two children on her way

to the convent. Their hateful behaviour prompts her to resort to her old tactic of ignoring her surroundings, which does not go unnoticed by the girl: “You don’t want to look at me, eh, I make you look at me” (32). Thereupon, Antoinette runs to hide within the walls of the convent, collapsing again in a state of paranoid immobility.

The convent becomes a place of rehabilitation for Antoinette as she learns to navigate the private world that exists within its walls, alternating between immobility and movement almost as a simulation for how she must proceed in the real world. However, here, she begins to learn to see those around her not in an anxious and blurry daze, as other, but as potential connections that are necessary for constructing her own identity. This is best exemplified by her first moments in the convent, where she is welcomed by a nun who emphasises the need for truly looking at your environment in order to minimise the diffuse feeling of threat that emerges when difficult encounters with others are evaded: “You are Antoinette Cosway, that is to say Antoinette Mason. Has someone frightened you?” “Yes.” “Now look at me,” she said. “You will not be frightened of me” (33).

However, as Antoinette becomes part of the nuns’ community, she begins to realise that her gaze has no value within this bounded space where not only navigational agency but also difference is wholly eradicated. Within the convent, the girls are all encouraged to become one and the same, and any marker of individuality is eliminated—a fact reflected by the convent’s lack of mirrors—or pressed on the group as a whole to make them into anonymous servants of God. This is the case, for example, when the nuns urge the girls to all adopt the same hairstyle and deportment as well as dental hygiene. As such, one could say that Antoinette’s time at the convent is comparable to her periods of lying in bed at Coulibri as she is similarly paralysed, surrounded by a sense of sameness and familiarity without others to challenge her gaze. Yet, even though this situation brings her more joy than ever, it also instills in her a profound feeling of threat: ‘I felt bolder, happier, more free. But not so safe’ (38). When in the past she experienced this state of immobility and lack of otherness as a relatively peaceful refuge from all the rejections of others, now the sheer lack of encounters with difference makes her increasingly anxious and aware of the impossibility of constructing an identity without it, leading her to long more and more for the solid non-identity that resides in death.

In the second part of the novel, the estate of Granbois functions in many ways as a mirror image of Coulibri as Antoinette again attempts to construct a sense of self by navigating the Jamaican and English sides of her identity. However, this time she determinately moves and acts as a medium between the Jamaican servants and Rochester, with the house itself—an imitation of an English summer house run by Creole people—as a symbol of her carefully constructed hybrid identity. However, in conceiving of her identity as a multicultural composite that is part black and part white, she again invests others with the power to accept or reject her, and thus, to potentially eradicate her sense of self. Consequently, Antoinette puts herself again into a profoundly vulnerable and unstable position, which is reflected in her explosive reactions when she is met with rejection from people representing those two sides of her character: on the one hand, from the servant girl Amélie, who calls her a ‘white cockroach’, followed by Christophine, who leaves to live in her own house, and on the other Rochester, who cannot accept a connection with her and increasingly refuses to come near her and look at her. Moreover, by adopting this perspective, she disregards the way in which her identity is not *multicultural*—product of a combination of cultures—but fundamentally ambiguous and *transculturally* entangled, which leads her relation to these cultural groups to be far more complex, characterised by

similarity as well as difference; a relationship that will always make their full acceptance of her impossible.

Thus, unable to find some form of stability in this continual process of exploration and displacement, Antoinette becomes incapable of perceiving the boundaries she encounters as transitive, leading her again to feel closed-in and condemned to cease all movement. In a manner that recalls her childhood, she once more chooses to spend her time lying in bed as if to adopt a state of non-identity. This lifeless state is reflected in Rochester and Christophine's characterisations of her as doll-like, asleep or even as dead. The only way out of this misery seems to be, like Christophine indicates, to 'pack up and go', to reclaim her own navigational agency and recognise the strength of her own body and gaze in moving through space (82). Only then would she be able to recalibrate her psychological course in a way that would allow her to acknowledge the particularity of her own self whilst embracing the transitive self-other boundaries as a compass for meaningfully negotiating connections. As such, Christophine seems to warn Antoinette against both perceiving others as a threat out of anxious paranoia as well as adopting a state of stifling isolation and paralysis in which she no longer wants to acknowledge those around her. In doing so, she seems to draw attention to a key idea of Frantz Fanon's work, as summarised by Homi Bhabha: 'to exist is to be called into being in relation to an Otherness, its look or locus'; an observation that again underlines the importance of thinking about navigation both in terms of the body and of the gaze.²⁷

However, when Rochester completely takes away her agency and forces Antoinette to leave Granbois, she has lost all ability to see, leading her to look out at the world with 'blank, lovely eyes' (135). Moreover, when she becomes literally condemned to immobility in her prisoner's cell in England with no way to orient herself, her own gaze becomes blurred and fixated more on objects than people. This ultimately leads her to become incapable of differentiating between her own self and the other, which is symbolised by her misrecognition of her own face in the dream-mirror. Consequently, when she does manage to break free from her confinement, she has lost all sense of direction and time, saying 'They tell me I am in England but I don't believe them. We lost our way to England. When? Where? I don't remember, but we lost it' (144). Moreover, in her dreams she cannot escape the feeling that she is being chased by a 'ghost of a woman', unaware that this ghost is actually her projection of the unknown self that has haunted her throughout her life: 'someone was following me, someone was chasing me, laughing' (150). She has become a mouse caught in a trap; at first one of her own making, but now one forced upon her, which, previously leading her to imitate death in her paralysed stillness, now forces her to become it. As such, it seems almost unavoidable that she plummets in flight from her own face onto the shiny surface of the stones that she imagines to be 'the pool at Coulibri' where she first felt herself to be a stranger (152).

Thus, in portraying Antoinette's inability to conceive of the boundaries between herself and others as transitive, Rhys seems to showcase how physical and psychological movement not only relies on the body, but also on the gaze in acknowledging points of contact and distance between ourselves and the world beyond. As such, her novel suggests that even though Clingman's conceptualization of space, movement and identity is a step towards a more complex, conceptual framework of reality, more work still needs to be

²⁷ Homi Bhabha, 'Foreword: Remembering Fanon', in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), p. xv <www.monos-kop.org/images/a/a5/Fanon_Frantz_Black_Skin_White_Masks_1986.pdf> [accessed April 26 2023].

done in order to better understand how we position ourselves in relation to the world outside and the world within. Because despite what Clingman seems to indicate, identity emerges not only from stepping out into the world and establishing connections with other people and places, but also relies on having the courage to see and be seen, even if that means at times finding no recognition in someone else's eyes.

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