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The Location of Literature: The Transnational Book and the Migrant Writer

"Precisely where is English literature produced?" This is Gauri Viswanathan's question, from an essay about the transformation of English studies in the wake of postcolonial theory (22). Her answer—not only "in England, of course"—focuses on the genealogy of the discipline, its development within the British Empire and other dominions outside England through the education of colonial subjects and the efforts of strangers such as "Jews, Dissenters, and Catholics" (23). But her answer also focuses on the dynamic relationship between "sites of cultural production and institutionalization," the way that "English literature" names a mode of analysis and a collection of works as well as the way that modes of analysis establish collections. In fact, she suggests, there is no "English literature" before institutionalization: only with disciplinary protocols do cultural products become a field (20). "Where is English literature produced?" thus asks us to consider that the location of literature depends not only on the places where books are written but also on the places where they are classified and given social purpose.

In its emphasis on critical geographies, Viswanathan's question remains important to continuing debates about the "national attributes" of literature (21). Yet today we would be likely to ask several other questions as well: *In what language* does English literature circulate? *Where* is English literature read? *Who* counts as a producer (writers, but also editors, printers, designers, publishers, translators, reviewers)? And *how* has the global circulation of English literature shaped its strategies and forms of appearance? These questions turn from production to circulation, and back again, reflecting a new

emphasis on the history of the book and what Leah Price calls “the geography of the book” within postcolonial studies and world literature (“Tangible Page” 38). This work reinvigorates and reframes Homi K. Bhabha’s claim that disciplinary models of comparison and distinction will have to be tested by new ways of understanding community. In *The Location of Culture*, published in 1994, Bhabha argued, “The very concepts of homogenous national cultures, the consensual or contiguous transmission of historical traditions, or ‘organic’ ethnic communities—as the grounds of cultural comparativism—are in a profound process of redefinition” (5). A decade and more later, essays and reports about the future of literary studies assume the heterogeneity and discontinuity of national cultures, and many scholars now emphasize “networks” of tradition and the social processes through which those networks are established (Damrosch, “What Is World Literature” 3; Greene 216–21). Haun Saussy’s essay on the state of comparative literature, published with replies as *Comparative Literature in an Age of Globalization*, marks and elaborates this turn. Like Saussy’s volume, *Immigrant Fictions* suggests that literary studies will have to examine the global writing of books, in addition to their classification, design, publication, translation, anthologizing, and reception across multiple geographies. Books are no longer imagined to exist in a single literary system but may exist, now and in the future, in several literary systems, through various and uneven practices of world circulation.

Consider, for example, the literary systems represented on the cover of this volume, which displays in miniature the covers of five contemporary works of fiction in English—or, really, the covers of five editions of those works: they are, from left to right, the U.S. paperback reprint of George Lamming’s *Season of Adventure* (1999; first edition, 1960), the U.S. paperback reprint of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s *Dictée* (2001; first edition, 1982), the British paperback translation of Iva Pekárková’s *Gimme the Money* (2000; first edition, 1995), the Japanese paperback translation of David Peace’s *Nineteen Seventy-Seven* (2001; first edition, 2000), and the U.S. paperback reprint of Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane* (2004; first edition, 2003). These editions (as well as several others) are discussed in the volume’s essays, which follow *Contemporary Literature*’s stated mission by focusing only on literature in English. But as I have been suggesting,

it has become more difficult to assert with confidence that we know what literature in English is. Some of the books depicted on our cover were produced while their authors were living in a place whose principal language is English; but at least two (*Gimme the Money* and *Nineteen Seventy-Seven*) were not. Some of the books are original-language editions, while others are translations of several sorts: a translation into English (*Gimme the Money*, from Czech), a translation into Japanese (*Nineteen Seventy-Seven*, from English), and a multilingual text (*Dictée*, which moves among several languages, including English, French, and Korean). As the essays in this volume attest, Anglophone works of immigrant fiction are not always produced in an Anglophone country; some immigrant fictions produced in an Anglophone country are not originally Anglophone; and some do not exist in any one language at all. These variations test the presumed monolingualism of any nation, whether the U.S. or England, and remind us that there is a (largely invisible) misfit between the national and linguistic valences of the tradition we call "English literature." That misfit is not new, of course: for many centuries, works of Anglophone literature have been produced outside of England (think of Scotland, Ireland, Wales, India, Nigeria, Antigua, the U.S., Canada, and so on); works produced within England have not been uniformly Anglophone (think of Marie de France's lays and Thomas More's *Utopia*); and other important English works have mixed languages (think of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*) or were translated from other languages (think of the King James Bible and Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World*). Is today's literary multilingualism different in kind from the literary multilingualism of the past? My account of our volume's cover suggests that contemporary literature in an age of globalization is, in many ways, a comparative literature: works circulate in several literary systems at once, and can—some would say, need—to be read within several national traditions.

The Transnational Book

The contributors to *Immigrant Fictions* affirm that thinking about the migration of writers and about the effects of migration on literary culture will benefit from thinking about the migration of books.

They approach this project variously. In his interview with Tokyo-Yorkshire writer David Peace, Matthew Hart asks what it means, in terms of research and career, to produce strongly regional and historical novels about England while living in Japan. Peace relates that his émigré experience has led him to think all the more carefully about the production and reception of regional texts. In addition, he explains with equanimity the changes he allowed in the recent French translation of his novel about the 1984–85 miners' strike, *GB84*. These changes involved switching the narrative voice of an anti-Semitic character from third person to first, in order to accommodate "the cultural and historical context of anti-Semitism within France" (567). By making substantial textual changes, Peace enters into several literary traditions, French as well as Japanese and English. Strategies of translation are also a concern in Wen Jin's article about *Fusang*, a novel first published in Chinese (1995) and later in English (2001) by the U.S.-Chinese writer Geling Yan. Well-known in mainland China, Yan now writes directly in English as well as in Chinese; she published her first Anglophone novel (not from translation) in July 2006. Examining the textual differences between the Chinese and English versions of *Fusang*, Jin argues that the multilingual circulation of immigrant fiction destabilizes nation-based conceptions of literary culture. She suggests that Asian American studies will need to adopt a more transnational perspective if it is to accommodate the several communities in which cultural products are produced and received. Jin's reading strategies allow us to see that the sexuality of the novel's eponymous character operates differently in Chinese and U.S. literary culture, and that readers' conceptions of the book's achievement often depend on local assumptions about the desires of Chinese women.

Eric Hayot's article about translation and mediation in *Dictée*, by the U.S.-Korean writer Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, and *Becoming Madame Mao*, by the U.S.-Chinese writer Anchee Min, suggests that immigrant fictions often mobilize two or more cultural vocabularies. In the case of Min's novel, this involves Chinese theatrical practice and Euro-American melodrama. Hayot argues that *Dictée* and *Becoming Madame Mao*, despite significant differences in genre and style, can be seen to share in the resistance to what he calls the

“ethnic bildungsroman,” the novel of successful assimilation. They resist this genre, Hayot contends, by bringing their readers into contact with the media of immigration, both the processes of fiction-writing and those of cultural pedagogy such as dictation and social performance. Directly, as in the case *Dictée*, and indirectly, as in *Becoming Madame Mao*, these texts reflect on the literary and political activities of making, translating, and becoming a work of art.

From the emphasis in the first three contributions on the cultural and linguistic translation of books, the volume shifts to an analysis of mobility’s tropes. Věra Eliášová’s essay takes up Iva Pekárková’s *Gimme the Money*, a novel about a Czech woman who works as a taxi driver in New York City. Pekárková wrote and published *Gimme the Money* in Czech while she was living in the U.S.; she later translated the novel into English after returning to the Czech Republic; she now lives in London. Eliášová presents Pekárková’s novel as a book that theorizes its own cultural mobility: she argues that the novel figures migration as a circular movement, like the itinerary of a taxi, rather than as a single journey. In addition, she suggests, *Gimme the Money* has its own complex “multidimensional mobility” because it operates within several literary genres, including the Eastern European immigrant autobiography, the modernist novel about women in the city, and the new writing from postcommunist Europe. The mix of genres and traditions in Pekárková’s work, Eliášová suggests, complicates efforts to place her novels within a national geography: because she wrote *Gimme the Money* as a Czech expatriate in New York but now lives in London, Pekárková fits imperfectly in both U.S. and Czech literary cultures.

Like David Peace and Anchee Min, who live in one place but write about another, George Lamming helped to establish the modern Caribbean novel while living in metropolitan London. J. Dillon Brown argues in his essay that the disjunction between the geography of Lamming’s production and initial circulation (England) and the geography of his origin and themes (Barbados) helps to explain his work’s infamous “difficulty” and its relationship to modernist precursors. Brown argues, moreover, that any analysis of the post-colonial novel needs to take into account its metropolitan development. He suggests that readers must see Lamming in the context of British literary history, as well as in the context of Caribbean literary

history. But more specifically he proposes that Lamming's presence within the literary history of Britain gives a different shape to the literary history of the Caribbean. It is not simply a matter of acknowledging Lamming's participation in one more tradition but rather of examining the transnational context of publishing in the 1950s. "Placing Lamming's work into its metropolitan contexts," Brown writes, "allows more space for emphasizing how his novels foreground the practical impossibility of claims for pure cultural absolutism or an unproblematically static, rooted cultural identity." His essay asks, in both literal and figurative registers, what is the *source* of Lamming's fiction and especially of his literary style?

The final essay in the volume, Alistair Cormack's analysis of Monica Ali's blockbuster, *Brick Lane*, asks whether migration has a proper literary form, and whether migration transforms realist fiction. Taking Ali's novel as his test case, Cormack suggests that the struggle with language and subjectivity at the center of many immigrant novels does not fit well with realism's emphasis on individual agency. Cormack argues that scenes of translation in *Brick Lane*, which involve the interpretation of manners as well as of writing, draw attention to the narration's seamless movement between English and Bengali, and between a sense of estrangement in England and a sense of knowledge about that estrangement. For all its *Bildung*, Cormack proposes, Ali's novel fits uneasily within the bildungsroman tradition. "The demands of representing different cultural signifying systems," Cormack writes, "render unstable the novel's transparency." Cormack concludes that the experience of immigration, once it is represented in fiction, alters the way that mimetic genres function. At the same time, Cormack suggests that novels such as *Brick Lane* are exceptionally popular as immigrant fictions in good part because they mostly avoid the analysis of transnational writing and circulating that Hayot, Eliášová, and Brown see in works by Cha, Pekárková, and Lamming.

The Migrant Writer

Not every book that travels is produced by a writer who travels, though today it is common for writers whose works circulate in many areas of the globe to participate in book fairs and tours that

take them beyond their original continent and hemisphere. In this limited sense, most successful writers are also migrant writers. The globalization of publishing, which generates immigrating books as well as immigrating writers, is discussed in several of the essays in this volume. But contributors also investigate a kind of immigration that is more familiar and in some ways more old-fashioned: they look at writers who have belonged or who continue to belong to more than one nation, region, or state and who now participate in a literary system that is different from the system in which they were born, educated, or first published. Of course, even this understanding of immigration is relatively new, as Susan Stanford Friedman has argued in a survey of the field, because it reflects a shift from nation-based paradigms to “transnational models emphasizing the global space of ongoing travel and transcontinental connection” (906). Several contributors suggest that it is not simply a matter of leaving one system for another, both because most literary systems rely on networks of publishing and distribution that are international if not global and because one is not always welcomed in new systems; one may not fit comfortably in any system; and one does not necessarily give up past affiliations while forging new ones.

These ways of thinking about the varieties and complexities of literary participation correspond to new ways of thinking about whose lives and which objects are transformed by migration. One of the important turns in the analysis of what this volume calls “immigrant fiction” has been a new emphasis on disciplinary paradigms of tradition, language, and classification. That is, scholars have argued that the political and social processes of immigration shape the whole literary system, the relationships among all of the works in a literary culture, and not simply the part of that system that involves books generated by immigrant populations. This means that “the literature of migration,” to use Leslie Adelson’s term of art, would have to include all works that are produced in a time of migration or that can be said to reflect on migration. Whether one privileges social contexts or literary content, it is no longer principally a matter of distinguishing immigrant from non-immigrant authors. “The literature of migration,” Adelson argues, “is not written by migrants alone” (23). Conversely, Carine Mardorossian proposes, being a migrant writer or even writing

about the experience of migration does not guarantee that one will produce migrant literature. Mardorossian associates migrant literature with an aesthetic program rather than an origin or topic; for her, that program involves rejecting the “opposition between the modern and the traditional, the country of destination and the country of origin” (21). Accordingly, nonimmigrant writers who are engaged intellectually with the movement of people and objects across geographies and cultures, and who articulate in their work a “cosmopolitan, transnational, and hybrid vision of social life,” could be producers of immigrant fiction. Likewise, this volume queries the genre it names. Is the immigrant in *immigrant fictions* like the English in *English studies*? Does it name a kind of writer? A kind of book? A kind of writing? A kind of criticism?

Adelson’s and Mardorossian’s arguments overlap to some extent but not entirely: while Adelson focuses on the transformation of a literary culture, Mardorossian is more concerned with the arguments of individual texts. Both, however, assert that changes in thinking about migration require changes in thinking about belonging, community, and civic recognition. They reject two assumptions: that migrants move “between two worlds” that are distinct and coherent, and that migrants bring with them or enter into literary systems that are unique and strictly local (Adelson 4, 7). These arguments about migration suggest that literary classification might depend more on a book’s future than on a writer’s past. What has happened to the writer is less important, in these accounts, than what happens in the writing and in the reading, though the biography of the writer may influence the way that books are written and received.

The contributors to this volume also emphasize analytic paradigms of migration and migration’s transformation of literary cultures. And the range of authors they consider points to a broad conception of our eponymous term. All of the writers considered in this collection have moved from one place to another at some point in their lives, but the causes and processes of those movements are remarkably different, as are the ways that the writers display mobility in their work. All may respond to immigration, but some do so in a direct manner, by writing about characters who have been transplanted; others treat immigration much less directly, by writing about characters who believe themselves to be very much at home.

Reading beyond the Nation

What happens when the migrant writer reflects on the transnational book? My own approach to this question leads me to look at a range of literary and paraliterary texts—anthologies, essays, memoirs, public lectures, interviews, as well as fiction—and at those examples of *comparative writing* that have sought to preempt or replace national models of literary culture. I share with Franco Moretti, David Damrosch, and other scholars of world literature an interest in the circulation and reception of books, but I examine in addition how writers, translators, and anthologists have helped to shape the field. Consider, for example, Caryl Phillips, who was born in Saint Kitts, raised in Leeds, and now lives and works in New York, London, and New Haven. Phillips mentions these locations on his professional Web site and in the biographies that introduce each of the U.S. paperback editions of his work. The language of the biographies varies slightly, but there are some constants: he emphasizes cities and smaller regions rather more than continents, empires, or nations. Here are a few samples:

Caryl Phillips was born in 1958 in St. Kitts, West Indies, and went with his family to England that same year. He was brought up in Leeds and educated at Oxford.

(Higher Ground)

Caryl Phillips was born in St. Kitts, West Indies. Brought up in England, he has written for television, radio, theater, and cinema. . . . He divides his time between London and New York.

(Extravagant Strangers)

Caryl Phillips was born in St. Kitts, West Indies. Brought up in England, he has written for television, radio, theater, and film. . . . Phillips lives in New York.

(New World Order)

In each biography, Phillips suggests that the book we are about to read has many sources and has been shaped, like Lamming's work, by the interplay among several literary cultures.

A Caribbean-British-U.S. writer, Phillips presents his books both as products and as philosophies of migration. In this doubling, they can seem to stand at once inside and outside the immigrant fiction

tradition. His books are products of migration because they are built on literary and political histories that correspond to the several places Phillips or Phillips's family has lived. Building on these histories, they make Anglophone literary culture more inclusive of writers born outside of England. Yet they are philosophies of migration because they seem ambivalent about the process of equating culture with community (literary inclusion as national inclusion) and about the ways that cultural expressivity has been used both to justify and to resist anti-immigrant violence. In his work, Phillips tries to make cultural institutions responsive to migration without simply reproducing the forms and strategies of the nation. What new shapes of collectivity, he seems to ask, can histories of migration help us to imagine?

Phillips's novels, anthologies, and essays offer compelling examples of the new world literature and of what I call "comparison literature," an emerging genre of world literature for which global comparison is a formal as well as a thematic preoccupation. By using the term *comparison literature*, I mean to consider the relationship between the writing of world literature and the protocols of reading we bring to those texts. And I mean to draw our attention to the traditional distinction between the disciplines of national literature, which typically refer to what books are, who wrote them, or where they were produced, and the discipline of comparative literature, which typically refers to what we do with books. Comparison literature implies both of these projects, asking us to understand comparison as the work of scholars, to be sure, but also as the work of books that analyze—as Phillips's do—the transnational contexts of their own production, circulation, and study.

As objects and as containers, Phillips's books function as world literature in several respects: they are written, printed, translated, and read in multiple places; and they analyze the relationship among multiple instances of global travel, not only sampling and collating an array of migration narratives but also rehearsing different strategies of sampling and collating. Phillips's work offers an opportunity to consider the relationship between the production and circulation of world literature because—apart from being read within several literary systems—it is written to make those systems less unique. In his concern with uniqueness,

Phillips is engaged with debates about *historical* distinctiveness, such as whether the Holocaust can be usefully compared to other examples of racism and genocide; and he is engaged with debates about *national* distinctiveness, such as whether works of literature or other cultural products can be usefully classified by the national origin of their makers, however that origin is defined. It would be possible to look at works of contemporary literature that reflect on the geography of their circulation and translation (Walkowitz, "Unimaginable Largeness"), but here I will focus on works that reflect on the geography of classification and promotion.

Over the past two decades, Phillips has published in an extraordinary number of genres, including the stage play, the screenplay, the radio play, the literary review, the memoir, the anthology, and the novel. Even more striking than the variety of his publications, however, is their consistent borrowing from a single genre—the anthology—whose structure and strategies Phillips uses to shape each of his novels and many of his nonfiction works as well. Patently, the anthology form is an odd choice for a writer committed to literary classifications that exceed or abjure the nation. As Phillips well knows, literary anthologies have been used throughout the twentieth century to affirm the expressive cultures of national or micronational communities (Walkowitz, "Shakespeare"). Given this history, the anthology offers an unlikely fit for the discontinuities of migration, and for ideas of community based on social contact and hospitality rather than on collective memory or cultural sameness.

And yet, for Phillips, the anthology is useful because it articulates at the level of form the problems of order, inclusion, and comparison that migration narratives articulate at the level of content. Put another way, thinking about the anthology and migration together allows Phillips to reflect on the intersection between literary and political histories of belonging. Of course, Phillips is not alone in his effort to accommodate migration within the tradition of the anthology. The sheer proliferation of new anthologies of world literature and the new debates about anthologies of national literature are telling. Indeed, one might observe that Phillips has been rethinking world literature through the anthology at the very same time that

many editors, including Phillips, have been rethinking the anthology through world literature.¹ Since the 1980s, when Phillips began writing his novels, trade publishers have been producing anthologies devoted to writing by women, writing by African Americans, writing by Jewish authors in Britain and Ireland, and so on. But the substantial revision and diversification of the major anthologies—English literature, American literature, world literature—is a much more recent trend, and it coincides with a critical turn to multilingualism, micronationalisms, postcolonial writing, and migration. In the Norton anthology series, the addition of an anthology of “world literature” to the anthology of “world masterpieces” suggests a new self-consciousness about the rhetoric of timeless value and about the relationship of that rhetoric to histories of imperialism. New thinking about migration has had an effect, too, on anthologies that do not seem to be about language or geography at all: the landmark *Norton Anthology of Writing by Women*, which arguably started the minor anthology trend within major anthology publishing in 1985, now carries the subtitle *The Traditions in English*, a feature that is surely related to a greater awareness about the uneven geography of women’s writing. Within the African American literary tradition, which constitutes one of Phillips’s touchstones, many writers have also been anthology-makers and have been wary at times of the logic of cultural nationalism that the anthology’s tone of celebration often serves.²

Ambivalent about the social function of the anthology while relying on its form, Phillips generates a kind of collectivity in his work—but it is a collectivity of negative belonging, what Virginia Woolf famously dubbed a “Society of Outsiders.” One of his anthologies brings together nonnative British writers in a book called *Extravagant Strangers*. In that volume, Phillips creates a tradition of very loose affiliation: his contributors have different ways of being “strangers” in Britain, and some only seem to be strangers by technicality, like William Makepeace Thackeray, who

1. See Bate, Damrosch, Greenblatt, and King, who engage with this issue in their prefaces. Leah Price offers further discussion in two reviews.

2. See the discussions in Edwards and Mason. See also Walkowitz, “Shakespeare.”

was born in Calcutta before moving to England at the age of five. One might say that *Extravagant Strangers* does more to deflate the coherence of other anthologies than it does to assert its own. It includes not only famous English writers who are in some ways strangers in England but also less famous strangers, such as Ignatius Sancho, who made contributions to English prose. Phillips's anthology, from 1997, creates a new order of literary belonging. That belonging is defined by the geography of production, and thus Phillips's collection follows the path of the Longman and Oxford anthologies, which privilege places of making over language and cultural origin.

Phillips's novels and nonfiction works are like anthologies in that they sample and collate stories of racism, slavery, European anti-Semitism, and recent violence against immigrants. But unlike other anthologies, which create a single series, Phillips's books tend to promote various microseries within them. In addition to collating the lives of several migrants, his books also represent the life of any single migrant, including their author, as yet another collated account. In the short biographies that preface each of his books, Phillips mentions the places through which he has moved and continues to move. In a 2001 anthology of his own essays, called *A New World Order*, Phillips describes his collated self as "one harmonious entity" (6). And yet there is something not especially harmonious about the relationship among the parts he names—Africa, the Caribbean, Britain, and the United States—or about the collective stories that these places are meant to represent. Phillips intimates this discord by emphasizing what Theodore Mason has called the "historicity" of anthology production—the procedures of selection, arrangement, and framing that allow one series to emerge rather than another (191). Instead of a single progression through places whose meanings are fixed, Phillips presents multiple progressions through places whose meanings vary according to the framework he establishes for them.

For example, the structure of Phillips's introduction to *A New World Order* presents an autobiographical story of migration that is rather different from the one in his paratextual biography. Emphasizing fantasy and memory rather than legal homes, the introduction begins and ends in different parts of Africa, where in one case Phillips is

hosted by a British official eager to display his graciousness toward an African porter; and, in another, he is served by an African waiter who assumes that Phillips, like any other loyal subject of the British Crown, must be mourning the death of Princess Diana. Each of these anecdotes serves to register Phillips's discomfort both with British attitudes toward Africa and with African attitudes toward Britain. And Phillips seems to be acknowledging that there is something limited and perhaps false about identity claims based on a distant past: the slave trade may have transported his family from Africa, but an African local treats him simply as a patriot of Britain. Within the book's introduction, there are additional collections: the collection constituted by classmates from Phillips's childhood school, whose surnames a teacher matches to various geographic origins, though not in Phillips's case; and the collection constituted by new technologies of migration, such as worldwide CNN broadcasts, inexpensive airplane travel, and a tourism industry in the former slave ports of West Africa. These different ways of arranging geography and of arranging the ways that people move through geography today suggest to us the several different anthologies in which Phillips's story takes part. The structure of the chapters of Phillips's book follows yet another order, beginning in the U.S. and moving to Africa, to the Caribbean, and then finally to Britain. Taken as a narrative, the chapters seem to tell the history of Phillips's professional life, whereas the series in the biography and in the introduction display the history of his postcolonial consciousness, the history of his passports, and the history of the African diaspora. *A New World Order*, despite the singular name, offers up many orders of migration. With its multiple framings and allegorical constructions, Phillips's anthology aspires to the ingenuity and artifice of fiction.

His fiction, in turn, hews to the anthology but unsettles the logic of representativeness by introducing comparisons among several narratives and by emphasizing regions and cities rather than nations and continents. Reading beyond the nation in the way that Phillips suggests means recognizing literary cultures and political histories that exceed the nation, and also recognizing those that are narrower than the nation, or those that emphasize alternative grounds of collectivity. Phillips's most recent book, *Dancing in the Dark*, is a fictionalized history of the Bahamas-born, Southern

California-raised minstrel performer Bert Williams, who traveled across the U.S. and throughout England, and who died as a resident of Harlem in upper Manhattan. Presenting Williams as an Afro-Caribbean performer who is taken for an African American performer who is taken for the racist stereotype of a Southern “coon” that he imitates so well, Phillips wants us to understand the regional and international migrancy that complicates the geography of African American culture, which includes not only the story of Bert Williams but also the frame of that story—a novel by Caryl Phillips. *Dancing in the Dark* emphasizes the international and regional journeys that make up the typical artifacts of national culture. In this case, the African American minstrel performer *par excellence* turns out to be a native not of the American South or of a Northern city, but of the Caribbean and the Pacific coast.

Phillips’s novel-anthologies eschew two aspects of the anthology tradition: its claim to express a distinctive literary culture based on race or national origin; and its tone of celebration, which has tended to affirm a group’s expressivity without acknowledging the violent history of such affirmations. This ambivalence about the celebration of cultural heritage helps to explain Phillips’s choice to put a black minstrel performer at the center of a story about the history of African American theater. Phillips’s anthologies tend to emphasize violence rather than creativity, and they use various devices of comparison to create a proliferation of overlapping groups. Phillips values the collective, but his communities are made up of strangers whose affiliation is fragile, provisional, and often temporary.

If *Dancing in the Dark* serves to display the international history of African American and U.S. cultural traditions, Phillips’s previous novel, *A Distant Shore*, counters stereotypes about British natives and non-British strangers by sounding national histories of violence in both regional and international registers. Engaging with debates about Britain’s treatment of refugees and immigrants, *A Distant Shore*, from 2003, sets a story about the strangeness of an English woman in a new housing development beside a story about the strangeness of a man, also new to that development, who is a refugee from genocidal violence in an African country, perhaps Rwanda. By comparing the condition of being a stranger in a village to the more expansive condition of being a stranger in a nation, the novel asks us

to think from the beginning about several scales of belonging. The first line of the novel, "England has changed," turns out to refer not to the arrival of immigrants like the man from Africa but to the arrival of gentrification and of people, like the woman from the town, who buy new bungalows outside small, traditional villages (3). It is in some ways disturbing that Phillips would compare the man's experience of racism in this town with the woman's experience of loneliness and ostracism, but this comparison allows Phillips to suggest that the town's exclusion of strangers like the woman is motivated by nativist values that are similar to those that motivate, or at least excuse, the attack on strangers from other nations and other cultures. The novel also seeks to question the cultural heritage that the villagers think they are preserving. Our only initial hint that national histories may have regional variations and that regional variations can complicate assumptions about ethical superiority comes in the novel's first description of the town: a place "twinned," we are told, with a town in Germany that was utterly destroyed during World War II and a village in the south of France where in those same years Jews were deported to extermination camps (4). The identity of the English town seems to depend on its status as a place where bombing and deportation did not take place. But the descriptions of the French and German towns hint at an incongruity that reflects on England. By selecting a victimized town to represent Germany and a victimizing village to represent France, Phillips asks us to consider the difference between what we assume about English hospitality—its comparative liberalism, for example—and what we might learn about the local treatment of strangers.

In *A Distant Shore* and *Dancing in the Dark*, narratives of migration violate the epithets of place ("liberal England," "fascist Germany," and so on) that have allowed us to classify books and, in turn, to classify writers. By creating new anthologies, Phillips tries to modify the way his books will be contained. He does this by troubling the distinction between container and object: his books may seem like objects, but they are full of containers: comparative frameworks that impose new classifications and ask us to question what we know about the location of literature. Within his novels and nonfiction works, embedded anthologies give dynamic form to the history of migration. Instead of suggesting that books by new arrivals expand or simply

disable literary histories based on the nation, Phillips suggests that these works can help us to imagine new literary histories, ones whose scale includes the town, the region, and the housing development, and whose object includes not only the production of books but also their translation, circulation, and comparison. It is these multiple scales and multiple objects that reading beyond the nation, if we are to take up such a charge, will have to accommodate.

In the essays that follow, the contributors to this volume examine multiple ways that works of immigrant fiction travel and make their home today. For books, making a home can refer to processes as different as production, translation, circulation, reception, allusion, and curricular adoption; and these kinds of home-making are not necessarily, or now even principally, exclusive or permanent. By thinking about the migration of books, in addition to the migration of writers, this volume urges readers to imagine that the location of any literary work is achieved and unfinished, indebted to a network of past collaborations and contestations, and to collaborations and contestations that have not yet taken place. In this age of globalization, a new work of English literature has its life in many places. The essays collected here show how contemporary writers such as Caryl Phillips, David Peace, Geling Yan, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Anchee Min, Iva Pekárková, George Lamming, and Monica Ali have helped to imagine and create that condition.

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