

STUDIES IN WORLD LITERATURE

Vol. 3

From New National to World Literature

Essays and Reviews



Bruce King

ibidem

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Essays and Reviews

STUDIES IN WORLD LITERATURE

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Bruce King

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Essays and Reviews

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To Adele

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I.

Introduction

Chapter 1

Introduction

I have been writing about literature for sixty years. The following pages consist of a selection that I and others have made from my essays, articles, and reviews about what is variously called New National, Commonwealth, Postcolonial, International, and World English literature. The many names for a developing body of literature is itself significant and the republished pieces, besides their individual interest, can be read as a story about how a major area of literary study has developed and the political and cultural changes it represents. Such a story told through reviews of literature is bound to be personal, even autobiographical, influenced by where I taught and what interested me at the time along with what was happening in the literary and cultural world and the concepts and associations that were being created. Someone with a different life and different publications would tell a somewhat different story, but except for some juggling of the chronology it would probably tell a similar tale of how the centrality of British literature was challenged by the development of other national literatures until it was commonly accepted that we live during a time of International or World Literature.

This possibility was anticipated in the title of the journal *World Literature Written in English* (1973–2004), the direct progenitor of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* (2005–), founded and long edited by Janet Wilson who is also co-editor of the series in which these selected essays and reviews are republished. In what I now regard as the early stages of this literary and cultural revolution, I commissioned and edited a book titled *Literatures of the World in English* (1974); for those involved the scent of the future was already in the air.

The following pages are in eight sections: 1) Introduction and Derry Jeffares, 2) African Literature, 3) Commonwealth or New Literatures?, 4) West Indian Literature, 5) Writers from Australia, Canada,

New Zealand, 6) Internationalising British Literature, 7) Indian Literature, and 8) Pakistani and Muslim Writing.

Starting Irish and Commonwealth Studies

The collection starts with an autobiographical essay to introduce myself, but also so those unfamiliar with the history of this field can learn about A. Norman “Derry” Jeffares who shaped the organising and promotion of the study of the new English literatures in England, the Commonwealth, and in Europe. Those reading International English or Postcolonial literatures today are, probably without being aware of it, indebted to him. Although not a literary critic, theorist, and certainly not an intellectual, he changed the shape of literary studies at a time when it still primarily meant the literature of England.

Born in Ireland, trained as a classicist, he was not at ease in the many literary and cultural disputes of the period, but he was an organiser, an entrepreneur among literary studies, someone who saw signs of the future and knew how to speed it up while making use of it. Already as a schoolboy he had written to and obtained an unpublished poem from W. B. Yeats for his school magazine. After Yeats’s death he obtained Yeats’s papers from the widow and wrote a monumental study of the author’s life and work. He was 30 years old when appointed to a named university professorship in Australia, and when he moved to Leeds University, England, where I was working towards a doctorate, he began to reconstruct English studies by introducing courses in American literature (then rare in England) and Commonwealth Literature, holding the first conference for the study of Commonwealth Literature at Leeds during the summer of 1964; he was co-founder of the Association for the study of Anglo-Irish literature (1970). He also started the journal *ARIEL (A Review of International English Literature)*. If I and others taught in Africa, New Zealand, Canada, or Australia, it was because Jeffares made the contacts, wrote recommendations, and was persuasive.

While literary, social, and cultural snobs, and, yes, racists were still mocking “colonial” writers and manners, Jeffares was building a network of young scholars who would write about and teach courses in the literatures of Africa, Ireland, the Commonwealth and who often knew many of the writers personally. I shared in the excitement and opportunities of this period of decolonization when the political and cultural assertion of former colonies and British dominions required the establishment of many new universities and emphasis on local history, society, and arts. My essay was published in a collection titled *A Shaping of Connections* (1989) devoted to pioneers of Commonwealth literary studies intended to honor Jeffares’ role.

There were others with different, wrong ideas, about how to shape the study of the then rapidly-evolving world English literature. An American professor at the University of Texas (and an influence on the creation of the journal *World Literature Written in English*) recognised that the world was changing and it was necessary to be aware of literature outside England and the USA, but he felt that the place in which the writing was set made it part of that national literature: a Graham Greene novel set in Sierra Leone was a work of African literature, an Anthony Burgess novel could be Malaysian literature. A few others teaching in the United States offered pioneering university courses in the English literature outside England and America, in other words writing from the British colonies and dominions. There were such literatures and a few dutiful books about them, but their histories began to be interesting only with the emergence of a body of writing and major authors that accompanied post-World War II decolonization. Just as the United States was promoting and helping financially to support American literature and American Studies during the Cold War, so England had an interest in transforming the British Commonwealth into a Commonwealth of independent nations, and this at first was the natural first stage for the study of world English literature before it became entangled with other awarenesses such as diasporas, gender, and the construction of society, nation and culture.

Jeffares was the creative outsider who ignored the snobberies, critical theories and academic cults that shaped English studies

at the time. He earned money and prestige from creating such influential series of books as *Writers and Critics*, and built up the study of Commonwealth Literature at Leeds University, other provincial English universities, and abroad, long before Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, and other, older, established universities recognised that literary studies had to change because of the writing that was coming from newly independent nations and cultural decolonization.

I had thought of including in this selection my early essay "Yeats's Irishry Prose" from *Centenary Essays on the Art of W. B. Yeats* (Ibadan University Press, 1965: 122-136). It might have seemed an oddity, especially as I had written about African literature earlier, but that was mostly about Francophonic African literature which along with black American writing was the starting place for many of us who became interested in the new English language literature that was appearing in Africa. I mention my essay on Yeats as transitional at a time when critics were asking how literature and the use of English from the United States, Ireland and England differ from each other. Soon we would be asking the same questions about writing from such nations as Nigeria, Australia, and India, but the issues first became apparent with American literature and how it might be unlike literature written in England. Not just different in setting and subject matter but also in language, rhythm, conventions, literary kinds. American literature could be said to be the primal postcolonial literature in English and from the nineteenth century onwards presented alternatives to writers from British colonies and dominions. Americans such as Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, and William Carlos Williams showed what might be done with local material, local speech and voices, and how to invent new literary styles distinctive from those common to England.

While the Irish literary movement that accompanied Irish nationalism provided examples of how to create national literature, its very characteristics, the association of the peasant and rural speech with authenticity, would eventually limit its influence. It essentialized folk culture and the past as the true nation, a useful position during a period of cultural assertion against a colonizer but reactionary when the independent nation needs to participate in the modern world. The

American example was more fruitful in offering both an alternative to England and in often being more at ease in modern literature, culture, and society. It had an immediacy formerly found in late Elizabethan and seventeenth-century British literature but which had been lost over the centuries.

Looking at my Yeats essay now, I can see how his prose belonged both to the search for authenticity and being part of contemporary literature. Throughout the English speaking world dialect was associated with nationalism as local political and cultural movements began to challenge the British Empire. Yeats also regarded his turn towards oral English, dialect, even Biblical English, as a rejection of the new mass culture, the tyranny of print, the ready-made language and clichés of the newspapers and received opinions. The turn towards dialect and the folk was part of modernism's reaction to the new mass culture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While the Irish literary movement anticipated the political assertion of dialect and local speech by West Indian, African, Australian, and Indian writers, the politics were already there; James Joyce's Stephen Daedalus for example was aware of the politics of language and how British and Irish usage of the same word differed.

African Literature

Later Irish studies would become part of postcolonial studies, but first there was the influential development of African literature, which became the engine leading to awareness that decolonization was changing the literary as well as the political order. The emergence of a modern African literature was associated with the independence period, but was complicated by claims to a continental African or even a transatlantic Black (the word then was "Negro") culture as opposed to European or white rationalism and rigidity. There were varieties of Negritude going back at least to the Harlem Renaissance but each proclaimed authenticity in emotions, rhythms, the past.

As more Africans began to articulate what they saw as their own culture, such generalities were questioned and often replaced by

tribe or ethnicity rather than nationality. If European history was about heroes, wars and conquests, why not celebrate African warriors and emperors? For some it seemed more intelligent to contextualize an author's work in relationship to tribe (Yoruba, Igbo) or directly to political and social history (sometimes colonialism but also to inter-tribal relationships in the past). It was also important to separate writings in different languages as it was becoming obvious that, say, writers in English were influenced differently than those in Spanish, Portuguese, or French; present in their work were literary and cultural traditions in their own tribal language. This was made obvious by Wole Soyinka but could also be seen in the works of other African authors. Amos Tutuola's reading of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* was unlikely to be duplicated by Francophonic African writers as was the relationship of his tales to the Yoruba fiction of D. O. Fagunwa.

The related issues I discuss in reviews and essays of this period are whether the African novel is about community rather than the individual (a more theorized version of this was later offered as the novel about the nation rather than the individual), whether African literature was an assertion of African culture (yes as far as a reply to the colonizer or racists, but cultural assertion would be a passing phase and would become reactionary and inhibit larger perspectives) or whether it was another version of contemporary European and American literature.

It can now be seen that such writing was of its period, the search for authenticity (tribal, racial, social) that accompanied independence. Achebe for example questioned the authenticity of Nigeria in contrast to the village and tribe. He and Soyinka were responding to the obvious corruption in their society while at the same time replying to simplifications made about the African past. Achebe, for example, wanted to show that Africa had not been unchanging before the arrival of the white man, and he blamed the corruption common to Nigeria upon a class of interpreters who translated between Europeans and Africans. Soyinka was less sympathetic to the idealization of the African past, more fascinated by those transitional between cul-

tures, and based his writings on his own synergetic mythology of Yoruba traditions and symbolism. It might be argued that the various attempts to find a tribal basis for African literatures ended with Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (1991), which synthesized mythologies and symbols from various tribal groups to write an allegorical fantasy that was felt to be about Nigeria. From my standpoint the question of whether there were tribal writings or a Nigerian literature was ended by the Nigerian civil war (1967-70) that was fought to prove that there was one nation. I edited the first book-length *Introduction to Nigerian Literature* (1971) during the war against the Biafran succession and had friends on both sides.

As I have written on Soyinka and Achebe in my *New English Literatures* (1980) I decided to include here essays on two slightly earlier writers who are often overlooked although they are very good, Gabriel Okara and Abioseh Nicol. They were, I think, more concerned with the problems of biculturalism and the racial overtones of using English than Achebe or Soyinka. National boundaries were vague to such writers, who regarded British West Africa as a continuum. I do include an essay on Achebe's revisions to *The Arrow of God*, as his re-writings within the novel demonstrate his concern with the art of fiction; he was not just writing back against Imperialism. I wrote mostly about the literature of Nigeria, as that was where I lived and taught for ten years. There was at that time a cultural nervous system that ran through West Africa from Paris and London to South Africa. I have not reprinted small articles I wrote on some writers from Ghana and South Africa, which can be found in such books as the *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Postcolonial Literatures*. (1994), but I did not write about East African authors. Although I read their books they were not part of my immediate world and their concerns were different: I felt that they too often were sacrificing their art to politics and I privately questioned the direction of their politics. My African literary and cultural world at the time was Nigerian; I say cultural because I occasionally wrote on African music and would have included some of those writings here if (my continuing lament) I had more space.

There are always those who claim that you should not judge foreign literature or art by the standards you have learned in your own culture, but I would not have instinctively known who were the best writers in Africa if I, and the writers themselves, were unfamiliar with the classics of English and European literature. I thought it patronizing to talk of Nigerian or any African writing in English as if it were something requiring an anthropological perspective.

There is continuity between past and present within the arts; the present builds upon the past even as it changes and claims to revolutionize it. If I taught and wrote about seventeenth-century English literature, it was because Shakespeare, Donne, and Marvell were part of a modern, or at least Modernist, literary sensibility. If my interest in jazz and drumming had not led me to Africa, I probably would have written about my contemporaries Tony Harrison, Geoffrey Hill and others I knew in England. They were part of the English literature that I read and among the writers that I knew, successors of the writers of the past. At first I did not need to choose as there was a continuum between African and European writing at that time and Tony Harrison, James Simmons, and Geoffrey Hill (all of whom I knew in Leeds along with Wole Soyinka) taught for periods at universities in Nigeria, just as writers in Ghana, Kenya and India often had a Leeds, or other British university connection, and were appointed to the new universities when they returned home.

The universities created after the Second World War to provide a governing elite through the former British Empire were also where the new national literatures flourished. The writers were lecturers, research fellows, students or in other ways affiliated; there were literary journals and publishing houses; new courses were created for national, regional, or Commonwealth writing. The University of Ibadan was regarded as where the new Nigerian literature began. Literary and other cultural movements often begin at universities or in urban areas where there is a concentration of young restless talents and energies. That there was in the 1960s and 70s a contradiction between such places and notions that authenticity was rural, tribal, or in

the past is obvious now as is the theme in Nigerian and other Commonwealth writings of the period. Many of my essays and reviews questioned what were then received notions of African culture.

New English Literatures?

My decade of teaching in Nigeria and interest in Nigerian and other African literatures in English led on to what was then known as Commonwealth or New English Literature as the various former parts of the British Empire found themselves independent yet with shared commonalities, one of which was that each nation around the same period found itself with an emerging literature that required attention because of quality, quantity and politics. The literatures were taught at the new universities and the texts often had similar themes treating aspects of decolonization whether critical of the colonizer or defending what remained useful from the imperial culture against those who wanted some immediate nativisation. What, we were asking, did Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, India, Canada, New Zealand, Australia have in common beyond having been ruled in the past by the British. How and why did they differ? Because of their shared history of British rule, law, culture, manners and society, an Indian, Nigerian, Australian, or Canadian might find more in common than with an American. The mutual support and recognition of a shared heritage continues in the international Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (ACLALS), its many regional and national branches, their conferences and publications. The Commonwealth also provides some protection and familiarity against American dominance.

Many of the authors I was writing about are now famous, some were awarded international prizes, Soyinka, Gordimer, Walcott, Naipaul became Nobel Laureates; what had seemed a few decades ago a novelty rapidly became the most important literary movement since Modernism. What was it to be called? Commonwealth Literature too obviously recalled British Commonwealth, but New English or New National ignored what were long local histories. When I told a cousin I was now writing about Commonwealth Literature she thought I

meant mid-seventeenth-century England under Oliver Cromwell. Eventually Postcolonial would become a generally used term, but instead of being descriptive of an historical period it implied that the common and continuing concern of the writers was the encounter with Europe and still on-going challenges to its political, cultural, social effects. It is possible that the future will divide the emergence of World English Literature into two phases: New National and Commonwealth Literature followed by Postcolonial and World English Literature, similar to how we now see the years before 1940 as Modernist and after as Late Modernism.

There is also the problem of minorities. The writers in the newly independent nations had a direct relationship to former elites and were part of a minority well educated in English language and culture; they were products of universities abroad or of the new universities that were founded at independence. Writers were often raised in families of teachers, journalists, pastors, those with cultural interests. They were from educated minorities within their own communities. So the new literatures were products of natives educated in the languages, values, and thinking of the colonizer and this caused a continuing tension in their relationship to independence. Often it was a minority who had mastered the codes of their masters and became the so-called clerks of the empire.

There were other minorities. In many of the Commonwealth nations Jews played a disproportionate role in the creation of a national culture and literature. In writing about this I was not concerned about the emphasis on literature and culture among Jews nor the role of culture in assimilation; I was more interested in how their otherness helped shape their ethnicity as writers, a smaller topic, but a starting place. Some more politically attuned would question the right of minorities to be considered voices of the majority, others would see that throughout the former empires it would be those who both belonged locally and shared in the imperial cultures who had to take over leadership roles and also become the writers of the decolonizing nations. Still later, other kinds of "minorities", such as women, femi-

nists, less powerful social and tribal groups, sexual minorities, diasporas, regions, would claim the right to be represented in the national culture and they would be supported by the questioning of the nation and its culture as a unity; such deconstruction of the social imaginary would become common to postcolonialism as it challenged the nationalism that was part of the first stage of the decolonization.

Commonwealth and New English Literature were followed by Postcolonialism. One reason was that American academics felt left out by the term Commonwealth, but more significantly Postcolonialism was a product of those against what was thought of as a history of Western imperialism, a movement that was developing on the political Left after the war in Vietnam. Books written by some Commonwealth literary critics tried to head off the potential delegitimatization of the white settlers by claiming that they as much as third world people were opponents of imperialism and that their authors wrote back against the empire. This, however, also meant recognizing and promoting the literature of the supposed original peoples whether metropolitans who wrote in English or the oral literature in precolonial languages. There was another problem.

Postcolonialism was and remains shaped by political concerns, but it also moved away from the evaluation and promotion of literature into realms of theory, then fashionable in universities. There were serious discussions of the differences between Postcolonial, Post-colonial, Post-Colonial, even how Post-colonial differs from postcolonialism, etc, etc, etc. If you think I am being humorous read the three essays on postcolonialism in the book I edited, *New National and Post-Colonial Literatures* (1996).

I seldom wrote about Postcolonial Theory. I found its assumptions and rhetoric confusing as it seemed wedded to notions of opposing all forms of colonialism and quibbling over authenticity and what was or was not politically correct. I find such politics boring, safe rather than revolutionary. Under colonialism it was dangerous to question the governing culture; after independence decolonization became government policy and the academics who proclaimed it had

safe university jobs. The purposefully abstract language and generalizations of theorists were contrary to the plain descriptive prose I continued to train myself to write. I read the basic texts on literary and postcolonial theory as they appeared and they are sometimes reflected in my essays but I decided not to include any of my writings about theory here as I continue to question its methods and use, although it still dominates academic studies.

It remains possible to be a literary critic and still imagine that you are writing for readers who enjoy literature and who do not regard it and all culture as disguised politics. I wrote about many authors who I do not have space to include here—Nadine Gordimer, Janet Frame, Patrick White, Wilson Harris, R. K. Narayan, Robertson Davies, Doris Lessing, Frank Sargeson, Edward Brathwaite, Ruth Praver Jhabvala. I reviewed and wrote short encyclopedic pieces about too many others—Trevor Rhone, George Walker, Kofi Anyidoho, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Francis Ebejer, Al Purdy. But I was discovering a seemingly ever expanding literary universe before it would be fragmented into specialized courses, postcolonialism, and aspects of this and that.

Some Commonwealth Writers

The “White Commonwealth” and India were British dominions rather than colonies and they had for longer periods creative writing in English, although they lacked good critical studies in contrast to chronological enumerations; university courses about their literature were rare. Beyond the politics of culture there were the tasks of trying to trace the history of such literatures (my essay on A. D. Hope) and writing about the new authors who were then publishing (Randolph Stow, Frank Moorhouse, Margaret Atwood). Older national literary histories seldom showed much analysis, evaluation and judgment; newer histories by contrast were aware of creating a canon of major or significant authors and texts along the lines of the British canon that they were challenging and replacing. Later such high

standards would be challenged by those committed to feminist, environmental, materialist, or other movements but first they had to be proclaimed, explained and demonstrated.

A difference between writing about Shakespeare and a modern writer is that you can meet your contemporaries and even sometimes discuss their work with them. I knew or came to know many of those I wrote about. I knew Soyinka, Okigbo, Clark and others in Nigeria. I had long admired A. D. Hope as a literary critic and as a poet; I went to see him the first time I visited Australia. I had republished his essay on John Dryden's play *All for Love* in one of the first books that I edited and I invited Hope to contribute an essay to my *Dryden's Mind and Art*. Which brings me back to Derry Jeffares. Derry had started the Mind and Art series of books about major writers.

I met Randolph Stow at Jeffares' house in Leeds as he was staying with them and was, I understood, an old friend from Australia. When Stow's novels were first published in the USA I was teaching at an American university and I was a founding member of the American Association of Australian Literary Studies and wrote my essay for its new journal *Antipodes*. Stow interested me as he was regarded as a follower of Patrick White and had a similar mix of mysticism, international travel, and experimental writing; both wrote about the less urban areas of Australia as if they were the authentic nation. Stow's involvement with linguistics, Taoism, even his retreat to England as a cultural home seemed personal and unlike others I was reading.

Moorhouse was someone I had met when I was teaching in Paris; he read from his work at a conference I organized on the New Literatures. I had already known his earlier publications as they were part of an Australian breakthrough into what at the time, the 1970s, was thought of as a post-modernism as Peter Carey, Michael Wilding and others portrayed contemporary urban life and enjoyed using up-to-date speech and playing with the conventions of fiction. Whereas Australian fiction had too often been gray, serious, realistic, they were self-consciously scandalous, amusing, and a sign that rebellious times had reached down under. I was a Professor of English in New Zealand and regularly reviewing new books by Australian writers.

I had seen and briefly spoken with Atwood at several Commonwealth Literature conferences. More important I was teaching in Canada when Canadians were going through a phase of nationalist cultural assertion and I knew the context in which her early works were written. That coincided with the feminist movement, another strong, perhaps more lasting, influence in her work.

I have included my essay on Atwood's *Surfacing* as having concerns about the United States—their powerful southern neighbor being an obvious threat to Canadians—but also because the American influence was especially strong and attractive during the period after the Second World War and the Cold War with the Soviet Union. As the world became increasingly Americanized there was a reaction and what had been liberating now felt like a new colonization. It was perhaps the lack of success of the Americans in Vietnam, the American invasion of Iraq, and the American attempt to drag others along as allies, which caused a reaction.

West Indian Literature

My interests in African and Commonwealth literature led to West Indian literature. After organizing a book of essays about Nigerian literature it seemed natural to next plan a book about *West Indian Literature* (1979) as my students would see it as a kindred literature because of its themes, its supposed racial affiliations, its troubled relationship to England, and because the West Indies were being given political independence around the same time as Nigeria; they shared in the great movement for political and cultural decolonization and their literatures came to general attention in the same historical period.

Nigeria and the West Indies in fact were socially and culturally very different. The hopes of a West Indian Federation soon shattered into many independent states, but the notion of a West Indian literature remained although each nation differed in its history, society, cultures, and racial composition.

V. S. Naipaul is obviously a great writer and disliked by many for his politics and attitudes. His ironies and skepticism and the details of his fiction called into question the entire notion that decolonization was an absolute universal good for the formerly colonized. Here was a new writer from the Indian community in Trinidad mocking the transatlantic black celebration of independence and suggesting that there was still much to be said for the European empires and their culture.

Although I have only included two essays on Naipaul—both concerned with his art—my critical study *V. S. Naipaul* (1993, revised 2003) begins by examining the social and political contexts of the Trinidad in which he was raised, where indentured Indian immigrants replaced the freed black slaves on plantations and themselves were ruled by black politicians, a situation that caused much violence in the decades leading up to and after independence. This was a different view of decolonization than the supposed absolute good I and most liberals held. There were intellectuals who demanded Marxist nations, opposed national governments as neo-colonial, argued for the return to imagined ancient communities, and other further decolonization, but they seemed unaware or unconcerned with the minorities who claimed to be oppressed or outsiders, although they did discover that the white dominions, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, were established, often violently, over earlier occupants (Indians, aboriginals, Maoris) and it became a social-cultural necessity among the progressive-minded to use the latest vocabulary to describe such “original people”, the imperial history that led to their oppression, and their present condition.

If I sound disillusioning it is not because I oppose or disagree, but because such causes seemed a distraction and too often influenced literary judgment. Achebe and Soyinka were critical of what national independence and decolonization had brought; Naipaul and Derek Walcott, although they would end up polar opposites to each other, were both clearly major writers, and both were disdainful about how Trinidad and the West Indies were developing politically since independence. As I was more interested in poetry and drama than the

novel, I wrote often about Walcott. I wanted to look into his life and its contexts, the results of which can be found in my two books *Derek Walcott and West Indian Drama* (1995) and *Derek Walcott: A Caribbean Life* (2000).

I began decades previously reading Naipaul and Walcott and writing about them as early in their careers they gained international attention. I decided not to reprint here chapters about them from my books and a long review essay on Walcott's poetry and plays that has been anthologized. I decided instead to republish an early essay from a French academic magazine on Garth St Omer, a now forgotten novelist from Walcott's St Lucia, as he has fallen out of the West Indian canon. I also decided to include several essays showing the range of Walcott's interests and contexts, including establishing a West Indian theatre, the importance of the Methodists in the Caribbean, and that Walcott shares many of the same concerns as his contemporaries.

Despite the differences between St Lucia and Trinidad, and between Walcott and Naipaul politically and ethnically, they both, as does St Omer, come from the Eastern Caribbean, which is unlike Jamaica, the region that has too often been perceived as the model for writing about the West Indies. To claim that the new literatures were mostly about the empire writing back is a simplification. Each society has its own history, conflicts, influences, and politics; literary critics should either stick to describing the characteristics of a text or spend time learning about the actual contexts in which the author was raised and lives. The good will and generalities that were part of the promotion of African and other new literatures were being overtaken by the need for more serious study of the life and specific context of an author.

Internationalizing British Literature

There were now too many authors and many had become too successful to pretend we were still discovering a new world. When preparing a second edition of my *West Indian Literature* (1995) I felt I had to have chapters on writers outside the Caribbean, but how was

it possible to squeeze into one chapter discussion of the works of such significant different British West Indians as David Dabydeen, Caryl Phillips, James Berry, Pauline Melville, E. A. Markham, Linton Kwesi Johnson and Fred D'Aguiar? And there were Mike Phillips, Grace Nichols, John Agard and many others. Probably as many West Indian writers in England deserved attention as those remaining in the Caribbean. The days and nights of Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) were over. Decades passed, and West Indians such as V S Naipaul and Wilson Harris had settled in England. Others had come to England when young, or were born in England, many were second generation British, and had their own stories to tell. England had also attracted communities of Africans, East African Indians, Indians, Pakistani, Sri Lankans, along with Australians, New Zealanders, Canadians, and Americans. It was a different, more cosmopolitan and international England than in the past as could be seen from the changing literary scene. Asked to contribute a chapter to James Acheson's book on *The English and Irish Novel since 1960* (1991), I discussed Shiva Naipaul, Buchi Emechta, Salman Rushdie, Timothy Mo, and Kazuo Ishiguro as examples of "The New Internationalism".

I was later invited to propose a volume of the new Oxford English Literary History, which became *The Internationalization of English Literature: 1948-2000* (2004). 1948 was a starting point symbolized by the arrival after the war of many West Indian immigrants on S.S. Windrush and the story line became the change in consciousness as the early immigrants settled, were followed by communities of other immigrants, intermarried and had children of mixed origins, and became increasingly British, although British with a difference. The students, exiles, expatriates, and diasporas of the past were a recognized history of contemporary England and would seem parts of the society and culture; it was the more recent immigrants from Eastern Europe and Muslim and Arab lands who were now regarded as problems.

I include here a conference talk I gave on Mike Phillips, whose "black" West Indian detective novels showed that the former immi-