

RADIO DRAMA AND ITS AVATARS IN THE WORK OF CARYL PHILLIPS

Bénédicte Ledent

University of Liège, Liège, Belgium

ABSTRACT

Between 1984 and 2016 Caryl Phillips wrote nine radio plays which were all broadcast on the BBC. Meant for a different circuit of communication than his novels, essays and published stage plays, Phillips's radio plays might be dismissed as minor writing, yet they constitute a fascinating, under-investigated body of texts which are worth exploring alongside the rest of his work. Thematically, Phillips's radio drama covers similar ground to his fiction and essays. Starting from this sense of familiarity, this article examines the formal and communicative specificities at play in Phillips's contributions to the radio drama genre. Focusing on two radio plays entitled *Crossing the River* (1985) and *A Kind of Home: James Baldwin in Paris* (2004), this piece discusses which features of this marginal genre inform Phillips's radio-dramatic characterization of protagonists with complex identities, but also, more generally, how these aspects infuse his formally experimental fiction.

KEYWORDS : Caryl Phillips; radio drama; minor genre; voice; intimacy; form

Even a cursory look at contemporary postcolonial literary criticism confirms the rather pedestrian observation that, in general, the novel gets the greatest attention, at the expense of minoritized genres – such as poetry and drama. One can further notice that generic concerns have received relatively little critical consideration in the field of postcolonial studies, possibly because, as Peter Hitchcock (2003) argues, postcoloniality is a genre in itself, a genre whose "generic object" is the "persistence of inequities" (300) and which is therefore more resistant to the logic of formal classification that can usually be associated with generic investigations. However, in a publishing world increasingly led by an economic rather than artistic logic, and which therefore prioritizes the publication and the sale of profitable genres, it is more necessary than ever to pay serious attention to literary writings that, due to their generic nature, have been given limited distribution and have therefore remained in the margins of criticism. One of the beliefs underlying this article is that these disregarded texts can enhance our understanding of specific authors or literary

traditions, and provide us with more nuanced responses to their widely accessible, therefore more popular, production.

This is certainly the case for Caryl Phillips's work, whose critical reception testifies to the double marginality affecting the postcolonial field that I have just outlined. While the great majority of critical studies on his writing concentrates on the ten novels that he has written so far (and less centrally so on his essays), his numerous stage plays, scripts and radio plays, some of which are admittedly unpublished, have in comparison been neglected, so much so that only a handful of essays discuss his dramatic production. Moreover, Phillips's oeuvre has not frequently been viewed from the perspective of the complex generic currents that traverse it, but more often through the lens of the historical, social or existential issues that it addresses, as seems to be generally the case in postcolonial criticism. If focus on content has tended to supersede interest in the vessel holding Phillips's writing, it should nevertheless be added that there have been studies of the main formal features of his work, such as narrative fragmentation or the use of voice, but these have not generally adopted a generic outlook.¹ In an attempt to contribute to remedying this twofold neglect in Phillipsian criticism and at the same time validate the benefits of approaching postcolonial literature through what might be regarded as "minor genres", I would like to undertake a concise examination of Caryl Phillips's radio drama, bringing together matters of form and content. In spite of the objective marginality of Phillips's plays for radio in his work, my contention is that they can prove a significant catalyst for a more perceptive grasp of his aesthetic and ideological choices across the genres in which he has expressed himself.

Radio drama is, in the words of Tim Crook (1999), "one of the most unappreciated and understated literary forms of the twentieth century" (3), even if it has been practised by such literary giants as Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter and Angela Carter. In the field of postcolonial studies too, and despite its relative success among famous African and Caribbean writers – Samuel Selvon, Wole Soyinka and Derek Walcott were all practitioners of the genre – it has left few traces of its existence. It is not mentioned at all, for example, in a study by Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins (1996), entitled *Post-Colonial Drama*, which focuses on performance arts only. This confirms the position of radio drama on what Charlotte Crofts (2003) has called "the edges of literary discourse" (24). In addition to its evanescence and potential marginality, however, the medium distinguishes itself, notably from stage drama, by its exclusive reliance on sound and therefore its heightened appeal to the listener's imagination. These two features undoubtedly

inform the writing of radio drama, as will be clear in the following discussion which, it needs to be stressed, starts from a reading of Phillips's scripts for radio and, as a consequence, does not consider the game of actors or the technical aspects of the plays' actual production.

"The distinguishing feature of plays conceived for radio, that we do not see them, is true not only literally, but also metaphorically" (Guralnick 1996, ix), says the opening sentence of a book called *Sight Unseen* that is devoted to the genre and how it is practised by a selection of anglophone dramatists. Caryl Phillips's radio drama is no exception to this negatively formulated, yet quite common, description of this form of artistic expression. Between 1984 and 2016 he had nine plays broadcast, all on BBC Radio.² While the scripts of Phillips's radio plays are available in his archives, held in the Beinecke Library (Yale University), only one of them saw its way into print: that of *The Wasted Years*, which was awarded the BBC Giles Cooper Award for radio drama in 1984 and was then published by Methuen in a special series devoted to the best radio plays of the year (Phillips 1985a).³ Touching a different circuit of communication from his novels, essays and published stage plays, Phillips's radio plays constitute a compelling, underexplored body of texts that are worth studying alongside the rest of his work, a type of investigation that has so far been carried out by a limited number of scholars. In a chapter devoted to Phillips's drama, his script *The Wasted Years* has been read alongside his first play *Strange Fruit* (1981; see Scafe 2015), while, more recently, Phillips's 1993 novel *Crossing the River* has been discussed in relation to his archives, which include three radio plays exploring, like the 1993 novel, transatlantic slavery and its aftermath (Ledent 2017). Like Phillips's stage drama, his radio plays indeed cover similar ground to the rest of his non-dramatic works, addressing the connections and disconnections engendered by the Middle Passage, the historical and cultural currents that bind Europe, Africa and the Americas, and the often ambiguous exchanges that took place in the wake of colonial encounters and still reverberate in our present lives at both the private and the institutional levels.⁴ To illustrate the continuity but also the evolution in Phillips's preoccupations in a way that has not yet been covered, it would, for example, be rewarding to read his first radiophonic script *The Wasted Years* in conjunction with his latest novel to date, *The Lost Child* (Phillips 2015). Both texts zoom in on a single mother, with more or less direct links to the Caribbean, who raises her black or mixed-race progeny on her own. In spite of variations in some specifics – for instance, the age of the children or the origins of the mother, who is a white Englishwoman in *The Lost Child* but an Afro-Caribbean immigrant in *The Wasted Years* – it is intriguing to see the many thematic correspondences between these two works. In a recent interview with Caryl Phillips about the 1970s and his early

career, Josiane Ranguin rightly points out that *The Wasted Years* and *The Lost Child* can be brought together by the fact that they both deal with the difficulty of raising second-generation black children in England in the second half of the 20th century (Phillips 2017a, 3-4). This is certainly one of the common subject matters of these two naturalistically orientated narratives which were written at a 30-year distance from each other. Yet they share other related topics, such as the issue of absent fathers or the strain of growing up black in an overwhelmingly white environment. Like Ben in *The Lost Child*, Solomon Daniels in *The Wasted Years* is the only black pupil in his class and becomes for this reason what his well-meaning teacher, Mr Teale, calls a "natural target" (Phillips 1985a, 88) for racists of all stripes. Understandably, this has a negative impact on the boy's budding love life and his relationship with his family, and feeds the character's anger at being continuously singled out. In the two cases, however, Phillips endows his protagonists with a quiet determination, which, in spite of open-ended conclusions, leaves some hope as to the young men's ability to cope with the tough hand that they have been dealt. A similar thematic comparison would be possible starting from another of Phillips's radio plays, *Hotel Cristobel* (Phillips 2005a; broadcast on the radio in 2005 but first written as a theatre play). Set in a Caribbean hotel, this play stages through its main characters the confrontation of English, American and Caribbean perspectives, and for this reason can be read together with the novel *A State of Independence* (Phillips 1986b).

Starting from this sense of familiarity between Phillips's radio production and the rest of his work, I would like to go beyond such a strictly thematic approach. Specifically, I wish to interrogate the formal and communicative specificities of the radio drama genre that he practises to examine instead how such features inform the characterization of his protagonists with complex identities as well as the representation of society and history in his entire work. There will be two main sections in the rest of this article: the first one will start from a short radio play called *Crossing the River* (1985), a precursor to Phillips's eponymous novel, and concentrate on the way it can enlighten us on his peculiar use of voice in the rest of his writing; the second section will consider *A Kind of Home: James Baldwin in Paris* (Phillips 2004a), one of Phillips's biographical radio plays, with a view to shedding light on the author's particular way of exploring the universe of his protagonists which is very much linked to the intimacy typical of the radio drama genre.

When his novel *Crossing the River* came out in 1993, Caryl Phillips was asked by Maya Jaggi to speak about his earlier radio play of the same title, which had been aired by the BBC in 1985, and

he answered: "It was just voices, a strange haunting piece which I'm not sure many people understood" (Phillips 1994, 25). In spite of this dismissive response, which in a sense reflects the marginal status of the radiophonic medium in contemporary literature, I would like to contend that this early script provides a useful stepping stone to exploring what I would call the "radiogenic" quality of Phillips's fiction, to borrow a term that Hugh Chignell (2015) has used to describe Samuel Beckett's "sparse, non-visual and word-driven drama" (360). By using "radiogenic" in relation to Phillips's novels, I more particularly refer to the eminently vocal nature of his prose, its reliance on rather abstract voices, which has long been regarded as characteristic of his writing (see, for example, Birat 2008).⁵

A mere 12 pages long, the script of the radio play *Crossing the River* comprises three characters, whose disembodied voices tell a gruesome tale of separation and suffering. Sold to a slave trader by their impoverished African father, they find themselves decades or centuries later in different places – Sarah, a slave on a pre-emancipation Caribbean plantation; Ben, a black face artiste in turn-of-the-century New Orleans; and Will, an angry young man, who has problems with the police in 20th-century England. The issues at the heart of this multi-stranded narrative should sound familiar to anyone who has read Phillips's novel *Crossing the River*, or even the rest of his fiction. Still, what I would like to follow up here is not so much what this radiophonic story tells us about the history of slavery and the African diaspora. What I am more interested in is how this radio play conveys a complex past through individual voices. I would also like to explore what the artistic and epistemological implications of such a narrative choice can be, in the context not only of this script but of Phillips's work as a whole, since the experimentation that Phillips carried out in this early radio play was to leave evident traces in his subsequent writing, teaching him, as he said himself in an email interview, "what was possible in the form of the novel" (Phillips, email to author, July 20, 2013).

In *A Voice and Nothing More* philosopher Mladen Dolar (2006) demonstrates that voices are not a mere matter of language, whose messages boil down to what they actually say, but that there is a surplus of meaning attached to them, since they constitute, among other things, "the texture of the social, as well as the intimate kernel of subjectivity" (14). In Phillips's work too, whether dramatic or novelistic, voices carry connotations that go well beyond the characters' utterances and, in the case of his second radio play, whose import is best brought forward through an examination of its challenging features.

One of the most obvious consequences of this play's reliance on the characters' voices is that it has allowed Phillips to subvert the "dominant visual economy" (Crofts 2003, 36) that still informs traditional fictional representations and even more importantly undergirds most systems of discrimination and exclusion, including racism. This is also conveyed by Solomon Daniels, the protagonist of Phillips's first radio play, who in response to his mother's reconciliatory discourse and her rejection of an "us" and "them" vision of society, declares: "I'm different! *They can see that*" (Phillips 1985a, 100; my emphasis). There is something self-reflexive about this statement for, while it highlights the unavoidable visibility of racial difference, it paradoxically emphasizes the fact that this element of Solomon's identity is not readily available through the medium of radio drama. Like much of Phillips's fiction, *Crossing the River*, the radio play, does not dwell on his characters' physical appearance, focusing instead on what they say, which provides enough information to figure out their identity, all the more so as this comes in addition to the linguistic and thematic consistency of their interventions. Even though Ben's blackness is problematized through the humiliation involved in his minstrelsy and the readers know that the three characters come from Africa, what captures the imagination is not so much the three siblings' blackness, but their tragic experiences, their feelings of dejection, their loneliness, all elements that create a sense of closeness, escaping the tyranny of visually perceptible identificatory details such as the characters' skin complexion.

Another consequence of Phillips's focus on voices in *Crossing the River* is that the radio play easily escapes unities of time and space, travelling effortlessly between "then and now" (Phillips 1985b, 1), between the time when the three children were captured in Africa and the present of their respective narratives in various venues in the western world. Such a "temporal and spatial agility" (Crofts 2003, 25) is typical of radio drama because, as Angela Carter (1985) explains in her preface to an edited collection of four of her radio plays, "the eye takes longer to register changing images than does the ear" (7). In the case of Phillips's script, this almost compulsory spatial and temporal movement further conjures up the age-long displacement imposed on the members of the African diaspora, while also forcefully suggesting that their predicament is not likely to improve with time, thus negating any narrative of progress that might have been evoked by a more linear structure. In addition, these "Tricks with time [...] and place" (Carter 1985, 7) enable Phillips, like any radiophonic playwright, to come up with, in extremely concise form, an evocative and moving dramatization of events that relies on "extraordinary collage and montage effects" (Carter 1985, 7). While such a flexible, occasionally unsettling, narrative architecture was ground-breaking in the

1980s, which testifies to the avant-garde potential of radio drama, it has certainly become one of the trademarks of Phillips's fiction from *Higher Ground* (1989) onwards, one that readers familiar with his style can navigate meaningfully.

Finally, Phillips's use of voices in *Crossing the River*, the radio play, can help us to elucidate yet another trait of his writing: the fact that it involves the reader actively in the meaning-making process attached to the understanding of the literary text. As William Stanton (2004) has argued, this is also typical of radio drama for, not being "engaged with the specular but the oral and aural [...] we are required to use our imagination in a different way" (95). How does this operate in the radio-dramatic *Crossing the River*? The three voices that alternate in the script express themselves in a very economical language, made of short, sometimes verbless, sentences, as Sarah's opening speech illustrates:

SARAH: Two men in my life. Both then and now. I cannot include my father. A daughter is nothing to a father. I just watched my father.

(PAUSE)

No rain.

(PAUSE)

I listened to my two men. Brothers. (Phillips 1985b, 1)

These puzzling lines are just an example among many of the laconic, apparently disjointed monologues that the listener (or reader) has to process without being given considerable contextual information. In addition, there is hardly any real interaction between the three speakers. The "lack of dramatic tension" (Scafe 2015, 70) caused by this deficit in communication obliges the attentive recipient of the radiophonic play or of its script to exert concentration in order to connect the various narrative threads together and fill in the blanks to reconstruct the three protagonists' tragic life stories after their "crossing of the river", that is, their transportation across the Atlantic. One might even add here that the listener's (or reader's) duty of attentiveness compensates for the fact that, as Sarah complains at the very end of the play, "nobody [including their father] listens" to herself and her siblings (Phillips 1985b, 12). For all its textual spareness, the play still suggests through its vignette-like speeches that Sarah is repeatedly raped and is prevented from breastfeeding her baby Mary, who is left to die; submissive Ben humiliates himself by black-facing for a white audience – a fate evocative of Bert Williams's in Phillips (2005b) novel

Dancing in the Dark – while his rebellious brother Will is entangled in a fateful spiral of violence. Nevertheless, as Suzanne Scafe has concluded, "the play refuses closure or the reassuring linearity of cause and effect" (2015, 70). These features, together with the dependence on the vocal at the expense of the visual mentioned above, might very well constitute what is, for some, the incompleteness of the radio-dramatic genre. Clive Cazeaux (2005) has questioned this negative judgement to suggest, relying on the interrelatedness of the senses proposed by phenomenology, that, on the contrary, this so-called generic deficiency constitutes "the invitational character of radio drama" (166, 167), that is, "the gap or opening wherein invitational relationships constitutive of a work's expressive potential can be constructed" (167).

The role of the reader in Caryl Phillips's novels operates along very similar lines, probably because his fiction is, like his radio drama, mostly made up of voices. As Kathie Birat (2008) has pointed out, "much of the resonance of [the] voices [in his fiction] comes from the absence in the minds of the speakers of any context which could make sense of their predicament. There is no ideological closure" (290). As we have seen, this is also the case of *Crossing the River* where the lack of narrative guidance obliges the readers to pay close attention to everything that the characters say. Phillips's novel of the same title, *Crossing the River*, is one of the most obvious examples of the centrality of the vocal in his fiction⁶ and of the need for the reader to participate in the construction of the narrative. There is indeed something akin to the radio play in the way the disembodied voice of the African father speaks at the beginning and end of this book, even if the narratives of the three children are, probably for the sake of intelligibility, given individual space and channelled, at least in part, through fragmented written media, whether Nash's letters or Joyce's diary. It is almost as if in those two cases the written word helps to give more weight and substance to the pure, apparently evanescent, voices which Phillips wrote for the radio waves, notwithstanding the fact that these voices are still heard in the epilogue, as part of the "many-tongued chorus of the common memory" that closes the book (Phillips 1993, 235). It is of course impossible to gauge the exact impact that the 1985 radio play as a medium had on the form of Phillips's 1993 fiction, but one can safely say that the former's experimental nature has fed Phillips's formal audacity. Other instances of the use of blind voices abound in Phillips's work in the same experimental way as in radio drama. Among the most obvious, one could mention the incorporeal voice that erupts in the Othello narrative in *The Nature of Blood* (Phillips 1997), questioning the black general's life choices, or in *The Lost Child* (Phillips 2015) the inner voice of psychologically fragile Monica, who tries to cope with her crumbling world.

The point of this reading of Phillips's second radio play – which could to a certain extent equally apply to his third, *The Prince of Africa* (Phillips 1986a), a text also addressing the Middle Passage and its aftermath – is to highlight how the formally subversive use of voices typical of the genre has seeped into Phillips's novels and affected his artistic form (as well as its reception) from the end of the 1980s onwards. In the 2000s he wrote another set of radio plays, more conventional in form and with a biographical dimension this time, which include *A Kind of Home: James Baldwin in Paris* (Phillips 2004a), whose title speaks for itself; *A Long Way From Home* (Phillips 2008), focusing in part on the time that Marvin Gaye spent in Ostend, Belgium; and *Dinner in the Village* (Phillips 2011a), which concentrates on two literary stars, Richard Wright and C.L.R. James, together with their respective wives, and examines the interactions between the two mixed-race couples. Writing these plays did not inspire Phillips to resort to new techniques in his fiction, as was the case with the two radio plays of the 1980s focusing on slavery. Rather, like Samuel Selvon (2008) when he wrote *Eldorado West One*, the radio play adaptation of his famous novel *The Lonely Londoners* (Selvon 1956), authoring these three scripts gave Phillips the chance to "examine further and elaborate on some of the central preoccupations of his art but in an alternative mode" (Nasta 1988, 5). It is indeed quite intriguing to see that Phillips's three radio plays devoted to famous black artists have several companion pieces in his non-fiction, notably the essays "Dinner at Jimmy's" in *The European Tribe* (Phillips 1987); "James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket" (2007), published in *Colour Me English* (Phillips 2011); and "Nothing Personal: James Baldwin, Richard Avedon, and the Pursuit of Celebrity" (Phillips 2017b) plus "Marvin Gaye" (2000), published in *A New World Order* (Phillips 2001); as well as a few pieces on Wright, James and the latter's wife, Constance Webb, whose memoirs *Not Without Love* Phillips (2004b) reviewed. If the echoic relationships between all these texts – that is, the three biographical radio plays on the one hand, and the related essays on the other – testify to the prominence of these figures in Phillips's own development as artist, they also warrant an investigation into what generic specificities of radio drama Phillips has mobilized in these plays for radio in order to explore aspects of his subjects that he has not been able to fathom in his non-fiction. Central to the discussion will no longer be the breaches of realism mentioned in the first part of this article that were facilitated by the radio-dramatic format, but rather the particular intimacy that this medium can generate and which literally draws the reader (or listener) into the affective world of the protagonist.

In what follows, I am going to engage in more detail with only one of Phillips's biographical radio plays, which I regard as representative of his practice of this particular genre within a genre:

the script that he wrote on James Baldwin, one of Phillips's major literary influences and the topic of several non-fiction pieces (in addition to the above-mentioned essays, Phillips is the author of a few other texts on Baldwin, including reviews and a tribute, plus one television and one radio documentary). Why, then, one may wonder, should Phillips dedicate a radio play to such a towering figure in his literary pantheon, after having already written on him on several occasions? Some kind of answer can be found in the essays which Phillips has devoted to Baldwin: while they always convey the admiration that the younger writer feels for his elder, for his inimitable literary style and his determination to be himself, they are at the same time often critical of his professional choices, of how he gave way to fame; in other words, of "the price that he paid to become the extraordinary man that he was" (Phillips 2011b, 248). Unlike in the essays, however, there is nothing judgmental or critical of the man or the writer in the radio play itself which concentrates on the years that Baldwin spent in Paris at the beginning of his career. The medium has allowed Phillips, as it did Carter when she wrote her own biographical radio plays, to subtly "cross cut from subjective to objective reality, from the inner, personal voice to the conflicting voices of those bearing witness to the diverse manifestations of the inner voice" (Carter 1985, 12).

A Kind of Home is made up of 38 short, very evocative scenes, focusing on the African American authors familial, personal and professional relationships. The 50-page script provides a multifaceted exploration of the many quandaries that the young Baldwin faced, and of the dignity with which he confronted racism, homophobia and other forms of rejection. That Phillips was able here to pay what has been called a "generous tribute" (Bailey 2004) to Baldwin, one combining scope and depth, was made possible thanks to the flexibility of the radio play format, a marginal genre which, quite fittingly, is particularly adept at capturing the predicament of marginal beings. As Angela Carter again reminds us, because radio is especially able to render "the subjective interpretation of the world", it is "*par excellence*, the medium for the depiction of madness; for the exploration of the private worlds of the old, the alienated, the lonely" (1985,8), and unsurprisingly these are frequent types in Phillips's fictional universe.

If such intimacy is hardly possible in a traditional essay, it can arguably be more easily attained in a novel, especially of the non-realistic kind. The advantage of the radiophonic format, however, is that it makes proximity with the protagonists much more economically achievable and possibly more effectual. There is a scene in Phillips's *The Wasted Years* that seems to dramatize the privileged closeness produced by the medium: Solomon approaches Jenny, the girl he likes, who is

busy talking to her best friend, Tracey. The boy wants to explain to Jenny why he stood her up the night before and at that moment, Jenny tells her friend: "Why don't you leave us alone for a minute, Trace?" (Phillips 1985a, 124). While Tracey is excluded from the scene, the listener (or the reader) is still privy to the young lovers' conversation. One has the same feeling in *A Kind of Home* where the overwhelming majority of the scenes significantly stage private exchanges between Baldwin and one of those close to him, whether his mother, Richard Wright or his friends Alice, Gina or Theo, which we are given to overhear, so to speak. Five scenes are also confessional monologues by Jean-Claude, Baldwin's lover, who reminisces, in a personal and confidential way, about his meeting with Baldwin, "this lonely negro boy in Paris" (Phillips 2004a, 2), but also provides us with a singular access to the famous African American writer's professional and existential anguish. In the 37th scene, Jean-Claude describes Baldwin admiringly in these terms: "A man who understood black and white, man and woman, Europe and America, a man whose work spoke eloquently of the connections between these different states. A man of supreme understanding whose writing helped us to understand ourselves" (Phillips 2004a, 48). This time, however, the play suggests, it is Baldwin himself who deserves to be understood. Quite fittingly, the play concludes with an extract from an interview Phillips conducted with Baldwin in the context of a TV programme he made in 1985, with Baldwin saying "Does this make sense to you?" (49), as if he was actually present and putting the onus on readers to interpret and digest what they have read. Such a patchwork of perspectives in a mere 50 pages allows Phillips to work out the human being in Baldwin, and he does so by firing our emotional imagination instead of focusing in a more rational way on the novelist, the essayist or the artist, as Phillips does in his essays. This, in a sense, lives up to Baldwin's pressing need to be understood as he is and his adamant refusal "to be defined" (Phillips 2004a, 22) by others and to be a mere "exotic entertainment" (37).

Like Baldwin, radio drama too deserves to be examined away from the exclusionary taxonomy that has labelled it as peripheral. One way of doing so in relation to Caryl Phillips's work is by adopting a cross-generic approach, bringing his radio plays side by side with his more mainstream works. Quite clearly, far from constituting a fringe writing exercise that is best ignored, radio drama, and the special techniques that it promotes, are part and parcel of what could be called Phillips's "demythologizing practice" (Crofts 2003,7). Radio drama enables him, as it did Angela Carter – another passionate practitioner of the genre and a writer whom Phillips (2006) has acknowledged as an artistic soul mate – to go against the traditional representational currents

that privilege the unity and stability of situations and individuals instead of their polymorphous and complex nature.

NOTES

1. Among possible exceptions, one could mention Birat (2013), who addresses the generic hybridity of Phillips's (2007) *Foreigners: Three English Lives*, or articles focusing on how Phillips uses generic pastiche (see, for example, López-Ropero 2002).
2. As Laurence A. Breiner (2003) reminds us, this radio station promoted the work of several of Phillips's Caribbean literary predecessors in England through the programme *Caribbean Voices*, which was broadcast between the Second World War and 1958, and thereby "played a crucial role in the emergence of Anglophone Caribbean literature, especially poetry" (98).
3. It is interesting to note that *The Wasted Years* was aired again by the BBC on August 27, 2017, which bespeaks the quality of its script and the continued relevance of its preoccupations.
4. See Ledent's (2015) reading of Phillips's (2009) novel *In the Falling Snow* as a development of his early stage plays.
5. It should nevertheless be added that some recent studies have also called attention to the importance of the visual, notably the filmic, in his work, which is not incompatible with the importance of the vocal that pervades his writing. See Ranguin (2016) and Su (2013).
6. This also explains why this novel has been analysed in terms of musicality (see Mascoli 2017).

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTOR

Bénédicte Ledent teaches at the University of Liège, Belgium, and is the co-director of the postcolonial research group Centre d'Enseignement et de Recherche en Études Postcoloniales (CEREP). She has extensively published on contemporary Caribbean and black British literature and is the author of a monograph on Caryl Phillips (2002). She has edited or co-edited several

volumes, the latest of which is a special issue of *Ariel* on Caryl Phillips. She is co-editor of the book series *Cross/Cultures* (Brill).

References

- Bailey, Paul. 2004. "Extended Codas." *Times Literary Supplement*, February 17.
- Birat, Kathie. 2008. "'Neither "Written" nor "Spoken": The Ambiguities of Voice in the Fiction of Caryl Phillips.'" In *The Caribbean Writer as Warrior of the Imaginary / L'Écrivain caribéen, Guerrier de l'imaginaire*, edited by Kathleen Gyssels and Bénédicte Ledent, 287-306. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.
- Birat, Kathie. 2013. "'Creative Biography': Fiction and Non-fiction in Caryl Phillips's *Foreigners: Three English Lives*." *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* 36 (1): 57-67.
- Breiner, Laurence A. 2003. "Caribbean Voices on the Air: Radio, Poetry, and Nationalism in the Anglophone Caribbean." In *Communities of the Air: Radio Century, Radio Culture*, edited by Susan Merrill Squier, 93-108. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Carter, Angela. 1985. "Preface." In *Come unto these Yellow Sands: Four Radio Plays by Angela Carter Including "The Company of Wolves"*, 7-13. Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe.
- Cazeaux, Clive. 2005. "Phenomenology and Radio Drama." *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 45 (2): 157-174.
- Chignell, Hugh. 2015. "Radio Drama." In *The Routledge Companion to British Media History*, edited by Martin Conboy and John Steel, 356-365. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Crofts, Charlotte. 2003. *Anagrams of Desire: Angela Carter's Writing for Radio, Film and Television*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Crook, Tim. 1999. *Radio Drama: Theory and Practice*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Dolar, Mladen. 2006. *A Voice and Nothing More*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Gilbert, Helen, and Joanne Tompkins. 1996. *Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Guralnick, Elissa S. 1996. "Preface." *Sight Unseen: Beckett, Pinter, Stoppard, and Other Contemporary Dramatists on Radio*, ix-xviii. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
- Hitchcock, Peter. 2003. "The Genre of Postcoloniality" *New Literary History* 34 (2): 299-330.
- Ledent, Bénédicte. 2015. "Caryl Phillips's Drama: Liminal Fiction Under Construction?" *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 51 (1): 84-94.
- Ledent, Bénédicte. 2017. "Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River* and the Chorus of Archival Memory." Forthcoming in a special issue of *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* on Caryl Phillips.
- López-Roper, Lourdes. 2002. "Irony's Political Edge: Genre Pastiche in Caryl Phillips' *Cambridge*." In *Beyond Borders: Redefining Generic and Ontological Boundaries*, edited by Ramón Plo-Alastrué and Mariá Jesús Martínez-Alfaro, 131-137. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter.
- Mascoli, Giulia. 2017. "Remembering Beyond Words: Jazz and Musicality in Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River* [1993]." *Lamar Journal of the Humanities* 42 (1): 5-22.

- Nasta, Susheila. 1988. "Introduction." In *Eldorado West One*, edited by Samuel Selvon, 4-10. Leeds: Peepal Tree.
- Phillips, Caryl. 1981. *Strange Fruit*. Ambergate: Amber Lane.
- Phillips, Caryl. 1985a. "The Wasted Years." In *Best Radio Plays of 1984*, 85-141. London: Methuen.
- Phillips, Caryl. 1985b. *Crossing the River: A Play for Radio*. *Caryl Phillips Papers*. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. MSS793, Box 15.
- Phillips, Caryl. 1986a. *The Prince of Africa. A Play for Radio*. *Caryl Phillips Papers*. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. MSS793, Box 15.
- Phillips, Caryl. 1986b. *A State of Independence*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Phillips, Caryl. 1987. "Dinner at Jimmy's." In *The European Tribe*, 39-44. London: Faber and Faber.
- Phillips, Caryl. 1989. *Higher Ground*. London: Viking. Phillips, Caryl. 1993. *Crossing the River*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Phillips, Caryl. 1994. "Crossing the River: Caryl Phillips talks to Maya Jaggi." *Wasafiri* 20: 25-29.
- Phillips, Caryl. 1997. *The Nature of Blood*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Phillips, Caryl. 2001. "Marvin Gaye." In *A New World Order: Selected Essays*, 35-59. London: Secker and Warburg.
- Phillips, Caryl. 2004a. *A Kind of Home: James Baldwin in Paris*. *Caryl Phillips Papers*. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. MSS793, Box 53.
- Phillips, Caryl. 2004b. "Something About Her." Review of *Not Without Love*, by Constance Webb. *Times Literary Supplement*, April 23: 10.
- Phillips, Caryl. 2005a. *Hotel Cristobel*. *Caryl Phillips Papers*. General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. MSS793, Box 52.
- Phillips, Caryl. 2005b. *Dancing in the Dark*. London: Secker and Warburg.
- Phillips, Caryl. 2006. "Finding Oneself at Home." *Guardian*, January 21.
- Phillips, Caryl. 2007. *Foreigners: Three English Lives*. London: Harvill Secker.
- Phillips, Caryl. 2008. *A Long Way from Home*. BBC Radio 3.
- Phillips, Caryl. 2009. *In the Falling Snow*. London: Harvill Secker.
- Phillips, Caryl. 2011a. *Dinner in the Village*. BBC Radio 4.
- Phillips, Caryl. 2011b. "James Baldwin: The Price of the Ticket (2007)." In *Colour Me English: Selected Essays*, 239-250. London: Harvill Secker.
- Phillips, Caryl. 2015. *The Lost Child*. London: Oneworld. Phillips, Caryl. 2017a. "The 70s? 'This Was a Tough Time': An Interview with Caryl Phillips (by Josiane Ranguin)." *Postcolonial Text* 12 (1): 1-15.
- Phillips, Caryl. 2017b. "Nothing Personal: James Baldwin, Richard Avedon, and the Pursuit of Celebrity." *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 48 (3-4): 13-28.
- Ranguin, Josiane. 2016. "Fonction scopique et investigation du réel anglo-caribéen dans l'oeuvre de Caryl Phillips." PhD thesis, Université Paris 13.

Scafe, Suzanne. 2015. "Home/lessness, Exile and Triangular Identities in the Drama of Caryl Phillips." In *Modern and Contemporary Black British Drama*, edited by Mary F. Brewer, Lynette Goddard and Deirdre Osborne, 62-76. London: Palgrave.

Selvon, Samuel. 1956. *The Lonely Londoners*. London: Alan Wingate.

Selvon, Samuel. 2008. *Eldorado West One*. Leeds: Peepal Tree.

Stanton, William. 2004. "The Invisible Theatre of Radio Drama." *Critical Quarterly* 46 (4): 94-107.

Su, Ping. 2013. "Words into Image: Cinematic Elements in Caryl Phillips's Fiction." PhD thesis, University of Hong Kong.