Worldly Localisms
David James (QMUL)
Brick Lane

Monica Ali

Open City

Teju Cole

This Is How You Lose Her

Junot Díaz
[Whereas] Pynchon and DeLillo emphasized the unseen networks of government agents and advertising executives that limited our everyday lives, the new group [have] tried to map out more local, more empowering connections: to mine the present for those rare, fragile moments of contact.
A breed of lyrical realism has had the freedom of the highway for some time now, with most other exits blocked.

(Zadie Smith, ‘Two Paths for the Novel’ [2008])

[M]ore and more of what we call American literature looks outward ... feeling not that American subjects have been exhausted but that there is both challenge and possibility in turning to other countries as setting and subject of ‘American’ novels.

(Patrick Flanery, Interview with Christopher Holmes, Contemporary Literature [Winter 2013])
Smith, *NW* (2012)
Most lyrical realism blithely continues on its merry road, with not a metaphysical care in the world ... [it] wants always to comfort us, to assure us of our beautiful plenitude.

(Smith, ‘Two Paths for the Novel’)

[Here and there in Willesden the past lingers on. We’re glad that it does. Which is not to say that we are overly nostalgic about architecture (look at the library!) but we find it pleasant to remember that we have as much right to a local history as anyone, even if many of us arrived here only recently and from every corner of the globe.

Whenever I write a novel I’m reminded of the essential hubris of criticism. When I write criticism I’m in such a protected position: here are my arguments, here are my blessed opinions, here is my textual evidence, here my rhetorical flourish. One feels very pleased with oneself. Fiction has none of these defences.