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Creators: Allwork, L. and Wilson, J. M.

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Editor's note

This edition of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* unusually combines ordinary articles with a special focus on the postcolonial detective novel, specifically the African thriller, in a section which is guest edited by Ranka Primorac. These three articles collectively emphasise the different types of invisibility that postcolonial detective novels have suffered from internationally, although they are rooted in local socio-historical and intertextual networks: their subjects are crime fictions from Francophone Africa by Togoland author, Felix Couchoro, Algerian thrillers by Yasmina Khadra (the pseudonym for M. Moulessehou), and Zambian crime writing by Henry Mtonga and his Bemba-speaking predecessor, Stephen Mpashi.

Crime and detection in these generic fictions popularise the ways that violence continues to pervade the imperial, colonial and postcolonial experience. This, broadly speaking, is the subject of the six other 'ordinary' essays in this volume: how violence structures relationships to colonial "others", dominating the configuration of postcolonial "hybrid" identities and even the spatial relationships of home and belonging. The role of force and power in considering imperial/colonial relationships and their aftermath is a central theme of John Hyland's authoritative article which re-thinks the postcolonial trope of hybridity. Praising postmodernism's, "deconstruction of colonial master narratives" but fearing its replacement with what Graham Huggan has described as a "master narrative of postcolonialism", Hyland brings into question the contemporary discourse of hybridity in the postcolonial novel. Perturbed by representations of hybrid identities which simply point to the intercultural dynamics of social, cultural, political and economic elements that constitute the assimilation or culture clash between post-imperial and post-colonial agents, Hyland objects that if comprehended within these narrow parameters the discourse of hybridity risks becoming, "a reified, apolitical category that puts under erasure – that defers and forgets – the violent and violating relations between colonizers and colonized that underwrite[s] the long history of transnational capital flows that is our present." Hyland's essay thus re-inscribes the political and ethical necessity for postcolonial literature of using the construction of hybrid identities in order to remember the colonial brutalities of the past as well as drawing attention to violent transgressions in the present. Moreover, it can be contended that, read creatively within the context of Hyland's claims, the final five articles prior to Primorac's section, often use not only the trope of hybridity but also introduce broader questions of identity, space and place in order to explore questions related to colonial and postcolonial forms of violence. These include the various authorial narrative strategies that can be employed as signifiers of traumatic response or cultural resistance to these modes of oppression.

For example, against the backdrop of violent histories of British and French colonisation in the Caribbean and post-1945 dynamics of decolonisation and heightened rates of Caribbean emigration to the former metropolises, Rachelle Okawa focuses on the representation of the newly formed diasporic or hybrid identities of two elderly ladies, Tanty Bessy and Man Ya in Sam Selvon's *The Lonely Londoners* and Gisèle Pineau's *L'Exile selon* respectively, in order

to analyse the role of humour as a form of cultural resistance and subversion. It becomes clear that the experience of violence is central to Pineau's construction of her grandmother, Man-Ya's identity as she is subject not only to the "gaze" of her former French colonisers but also to the memory of the past brutality of her husband, Asrubal, the "Torturer" of Guadeloupe. A comparatively new arrival in Paris, Man-Ya becomes silenced not only by her inability to speak the French language but also by the traumatic memory of domestic abuse experienced in her native homeland. Nonetheless, Okawa's analysis of Pineau's representation stresses that the author uses ironic humour to mock French outrage at Man-Ya having the gumption to wear a French national uniform, in particular "the absurdity of their exaggerated responses of fear and horror." By contrast, fear and horror are not exaggerated in Ryan Mowat's analysis of Michael Ondaatje's, *Anil's Ghost* (2000), a novel which takes as its setting the violent Sri Lankan conflicts of the late 1980s and 1990s. Challenging readings which simplistically critique the novel's political ambivalence, Mowat argues that Ondaatje's use of fragmented voices and deliberate narrative voids are consistent with the thinking of Levinas and Derrida, and point to the ethical necessity of locating the traces of the offense but also the perpetual impossibility of reconstructing past events in their complete pure form. It is within this context that the hybrid identity of protagonist Anil, a Sri Lankan born but western-educated forensic anthropologist, who faces the harrowing task of investigating genocide on the behalf of the UN and Geneva's Centre of Human Rights is represented. If Anil's hybrid identity does not necessarily point to the violence underlying the construction of her own sense of self, given Ondaatje's opaque and fractured narrative, she can be seen as representing both the achievements and limitations of western reason and science when faced with the traumatic and fundamentally transgressive violence and brutality that surround her.

If Anil remains a fictional paradigm of the liberal raised abroad, Shelley Bhoil's interview with Tsering Wangmo Dhompa tells a real life story of political resistance and exile in the West, in this case in relation to the plight of the Tibetan Government in Exile in relation to China. Indeed, for poet Tsering Wangmo Dhompa, daughter of Tsering Choden Dhompa, who lives and writes in America, and whose poems are "based on the realities of living in exile," all of her writing remains a subtle and emotive type of resistance to the political and cultural subjugation that Tibet has experienced because ultimately "I am writing about us and our place in the world." By contrast and bringing questions of postcolonialism, eco-criticism and violence to the fore, in her analysis of Robert Barclay's *Melal*, Teresa Shewry graphically re-inscribes how histories of colonialism can also be read as histories of violence, in this case towards the marine ecology of the US-administered Marshall Islands during the Cold War. Violating US law, the act of killing a dolphin by Barclay's Marshallese character Rujen is placed within the context of US utilization of the Northern Pacific region for a nuclear testing agenda and the subsequent exposure of the land and ocean to the contaminating effects of atomic radiation. While not advocating Rujen's actions as a desirable constituent of colonial resistance, Barclay's novel nonetheless illustrates the sharp dichotomy between the idealistic elements of western environmental law when placed in dialogue with the violence inflicted on indigenous places and spaces by the military structures of America's, "Informal Empire".

Finally, and continuing Shrewry's concerns with postcolonial representations, eco-criticism and violence, Sule E. Egya analyses the engagement with issues of ecology and the human in recent Nigerian poetry in English by Nnimmo Bassey and Ogaga Ifowodo. Responding to the damage done to fishing and farming grounds in the Niger Delta Region by the national government and global oil mining corporations since independence, these poets point to a larger political crisis over leadership. Yet, the relative invisibility of these poets on the international stage as well as their preoccupations with violence, injustice, the disrespect for life and the need for remedial action in Nigeria, means that they also approach some of the concerns articulated in relation to the thriller novel in Africa as found in the special focus of the last three essays in this volume.

Larissa Allwork and Janet Wilson