

# Editors' Foreword

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It is with great pleasure that we are writing these few introductory lines for issue 43 of *Alizés: Revue angliciste de La Réunion*, the peer-reviewed academic journal of English Studies published by the University of Reunion Island. This issue marks a turning point in the history of the journal which was launched by Professor Alain Geoffroy in 1991. As of now, it will only be published online by the recently founded Presses Universitaires Indianocéniques (PUI). We wish to address our special thanks to the members of the new international advisory board, to the peer-reviewers and to the proofreaders for this issue, as well as to the PUI team and its Director, Dr. Valérie Magdelaine-Andrianjafitrimo, for their involvement and their invaluable support.

The theme chosen for issue 43 derives from a seminar organised in March 2022 for our Master's students in English studies at the University of Reunion Island's Institute of Education (INSPE). In line with a topic taken from the exam syllabus of the national selective examination for English teachers (CAPES) that year, the general question addressed was that of "cultural encounters in English-speaking societies." Our call for papers for *Alizés* 43, launched in July 2022, reoriented the topic towards a postcolonial approach to the study of cultural encounters and the (de)construction of Otherness. While this change allowed us to narrow the scope of the general question of the original seminar, it also signalled our wish to appeal to scholars specialising in postcolonial studies and to consider not only the notion of colonial encounters, but also the very nature of the relations of power at play between dominant and dominated groups of people in the English-speaking world, from the colonial period to the twenty-first century.

Accounts of intercultural contacts abound in colonialist writing, the idea of the pristine encounter, of a "first encounter" with the non-Western Other having inspired a whole section of British and American narrative discourse: Robinson Crusoe meeting Friday, Ilke and Yarico, etc. (Hulme). The theme of savagery, of encountering the "uncivilised native" is characteristic of colonial discourse with the discovery of cultural differences serving a specific function in colonial ideology and cultural hegemony. By instigating racial and social hierarchies between Europeans and non-Europeans, colonial societies further asserted their vision of what was seen as a "natural balance" between East and West, North and South, "Them" and "Us" (Lahiri 110). Colonial life was consequently imbued with the idea of Otherness, leading to misconceptions and fraught perceptions of the "subaltern natives" (Bhabha; Spivak). As demonstrated by post-colonial academics such as Edward Said, Stuart Hall and Gayatri Spivak, representations and images of the non-Europeans, of the culture of the Other lead to generalised and preconceived racial and cultural assumptions, becoming essentially a tool for control and restriction, a way of maintaining and justifying the coloniser's hegemony.

With the rise of postcolonial theory and the analysis of colonial discourse, the ramifications and continuing legacy of colonial encounters have led theorists and critics towards highlighting the links between ideology, culture and empire (Said). Their reinterpretations of cultural encounters, Otherness and Othering also consider the intersecting race and gender biases that underlie the fluid social construction of identity and difference. As theorised by Bhabha, (post)colonial encounters have led to the emergence of a “Third Space,” a dialogic “in-betweenness” that blurs dichotomies, incorporating cultural diversity and hybridity, and generating cross-fertilisation.

The central questions of porous borders and crossings also play a pivotal role when considering colonial encounters and their ensuing effects on culture and language, such as hybridisation (Hall, 1990) and creolisation (Glissant). The encounter with the Other will always and has always entailed tensions and negotiations within social “contact zones” (Pratt), forcing both the colonising and the colonised/subaltern Other(s) to constantly redefine and reposition themselves. While hierarchies inherited from colonisation still persist, notably with the geopolitics of North-South relations, debates on postcolonialism, creolisation, and globalisation have encouraged new approaches, examining South-South, “latitudinal connections” (Bose 23), through both a local and a global lens. Consequently, contemporary decolonial thinkers call for a non-Western critique of Eurocentrism and modernity, a revision of history, using “subalternized” and “silenced” knowledges (Mignolo 183, 213) in order to challenge traditional hegemonic narratives based on outdated colonial binaries.

The 7 articles selected for this relaunch issue are authored by international scholars from France, Taiwan and the United States. Some have a historical and sociocultural approach to our topic, others focus on literary productions that can be seen as sites of “performative encounters” (Rosello) in the sense that they are creative expressions of problematic cross-cultural interactions, of permanent (re)negotiations that lead to the production of new ways of being-in-the-world, connected to and (re)connecting with the Other.

**Bennett Yu-Hsiang Fu**’s article “Creolization, Theatricality, and Parodization in Derek Walcott’s *Pantomime*” analyses the playwright’s subversive art of *métissage* and code-switching. This study demonstrates that linguistic creolisation and theatricality operate synergistically in Walcott’s play, a “polyphonic” parody of Crusoe and Friday’s encounter, so as to revise Eurocentric perceptions of race and power relationships in a (post)colonial context. Bennett Yu-Hsiang Fu shows that the playwright’s appropriation and revision of European canons combine and assert multiple differences. He exposes how Walcott’s heterogeneous *mélange* of Englishes and theatrical genres aims at a cultural and linguistic “de-colonisation” of the Caribbean.

In “Mapping Reverse Colonialism: Notes on the Many Lives of a Post-Colonial Trope,” **P. S. Polanah and Sitinga Kachipande** investigate the post-colonial constructs of “reverse colonialism,” an expression which has come to the fore in recent years, being used in scholarly as well as in popular circles to describe, denounce or even celebrate situations in which colonial relationships are perceived as being “reversed.” P.S. Polanah and S. Kachipande strive to establish a more palpable, or even “standardised” approach to what they describe as a “post-colonial trope” and its multiple and often conflicting meanings.

**Ijeoma D. Odoh**’s article, “The Peripheral Other and the Construction of New Social Relations in Andrea Levy’s *Small Island*,” focuses more specifically on the Windrush Generation and the social consequences of “colonisation in reverse” fictionalised by British writer Andrea Levy. Using the polysemic notion of the social, creative, and biological “rhizomatic womb-space,” Ijeoma D. Odoh aims to demonstrate that, for Levy, encounters between white Britons and Caribbean immigrants have led to complicated but inevitable identity repositionings and the

hybridisation of multiethnic post-war England, symbolised in her novel by the birth of a biracial child.

In her article entitled “Reappropriating the Colonisers’ Language to Contest Racist and Sexist Stereotyping Processes in Kiwi Asian Poetry Written by Women,” **Marine Berthiot** draws a comparative analysis of six poems recently published by three Kiwi Asian women writers: Nina Mingya Powles, Lily Ng, and Vanessa Mei Crofskey. She explores to what extent these women poets use their art to challenge the silencing of their community’s history. In an attempt to break away from Western research methodologies, Marine Berthiot approaches her corpus of texts following Māori methodologies and focuses on the poets’ decolonial approach to their own cultural trauma resulting from a long history of discrimination. She also demonstrates how artistic creativity helps them build their own multilingual and multicultural “safe space.”

The three following articles are revised extended versions of works presented during the original 2022 seminar for our Master’s students in English studies. In “The Commonwealth Games: A Sporting Encounter Just for the Sport of it?” **Guilène Révauger** focuses on the history of the Commonwealth Games and also scrutinises the 2022 edition. The author questions the political and diplomatic role played by this sporting encounter and discusses its direct involvement in conflicts requiring non-governmental tracks of diplomacy within changing (post-)colonial contexts. Guilène Révauger’s article also examines the “multifaceted event” as a soft power resource and raises questions about the political relevance of the Games today.

**Maroua Mannai**’s article entitled “Breaking the Canons of Legal Discourse in Marlene NourbeSe Philip’s *Zong!* (2008)” investigates the Trinidadian-Canadian writer’s experimental book-length poem as a textual deconstruction of the infamous 1781 *Zong* massacre murder case. After a brief overview of the historic case, Maroua Mannai considers the modalities which surround Philip’s creation of an alternative discourse using archival documents, and examines the visual and textual techniques used by the poet. Ultimately, the article is an attempt to explore the connections between literary production, legal texts and historical events, revisiting history and reconsidering the fate and memory of the neglected enslaved “Other.”

In “Not-So-Close Encounters: Empire and Emotional Atrophy in W. Somerset Maugham’s ‘P. & O.’ and ‘Masterson,’” **Xavier P. Lachazette** examines conjointly two of Maugham’s short stories, originally published in *The Gentleman in the Parlour* (1930). Presenting Maugham’s work as that of an “avid globetrotter,” Xavier P. Lachazette focuses on the question of “emotional atrophy” by analysing the central figure of the white male settler in quandary, the characters’ anxieties, their colonial desire for otherness, and their failing sexual encounters with native women.

We very much hope you enjoy reading this issue and find food for thought. We invite scholars to contact us with ideas and contributions for the following issues of *Alizés*.

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