Adams and Olmsted Reply: Wang [1] makes the following points about our Letter [2]: (1) He infers that, “contrary to its title, shear banding [in 2] emerged from monotonic curves only if there was a stress gradient”, and he points out that nonquiescent relaxation was found (experimentally) after step strain in geometries without a stress gradient [3]. (2) He disagrees with the values of the parameters we used. (3) In some recent experiments the flow was homogeneous after cessation of step strain, and only subsequently developed nonquiescent macroscopic motion [3]. We only showed step strains that developed an inhomogeneity before cessation of flow, as in [4].

(1) As our title stated [2], we showed that a fluid with a monotonic constitutive curve based on Doi-Edwards (DE) theory can have signatures similar to shear banding. These signatures arise from a stress gradient (e.g. the bowed steady state velocity profile obtained in the stress gradient of a cone and plate rheometer [5] or transient banding-like profiles during startup). Flat geometries can have transient banding-like signatures: e.g. two clearly defined bands of shear rates during large amplitude oscillatory shear (LAOS) [6, 7], or inhomogeneous banding-like transients during startup flows in presence of inhomogeneous spatial fluctuations (noise) (Fig. 1) [2].

(2) Our parameters were matched to experiment, for a nonlinear model in which the parameters $\tau_a$ and $\tau_R$ roughly correspond to their rigorously defined counterparts in linear rheology. Because we use (the best available) crude nonlinear theory, the parameters do not correspond precisely. We used $\epsilon = \eta/(G\tau_d) \approx 10^{-5}$ based on a plateau modulus $G \approx 3$ kPa, reptation time $\tau_d \approx 20$ s, and solvent viscosity $\eta \approx 1$ Pa s [8]. Although $\tau_d/\tau_R \approx 10^5$ implies too many entanglements, it fits the experimental nonlinear rheology well [9]. This inconsistency is an unsatisfactory feature of current theory.

(3) The step strain results in [2] should be compared with [6]-(Fig. 5), where the velocity profile became inhomogeneous before cessation. Fig. 4 shows a calculation in which inhomogeneities develop only after cessation of flow, during a strong recoil. This is for startup in a flat geometry, with noisy initial conditions, and resembles [9]-(Fig. 3) if there were no experimental wall slip.

Wang’s newest experiments show dramatic rupture and internal fracture, despite a homogeneous velocity before cessation [9] (similar fracture planes could be interpreted in [8]-Fig. 3f), but in a cone-and-plate geometry; moreover, those data are also consistent with wall slip and simple recoil. Our calculations (Fig. 2) go some way towards modelling this phenomenon, but do not capture this rupture, and have not yet been adequately modified to incorporate slip. It remains a strong challenge to distinguish which experimental features are captured by tube models, and which (e.g. rupture) require new physical insight. One suggestion is the “elastic yielding” in [1] which may be similar to modifying the DE model to incorporate the instability of the spatial distribution of entanglements [9]. In fact, the instability in the DE model occurs when the shear rate greatly exceeds the reptation time, which is one criterion for elastic yielding postulated in [1].

J. M. Adams$^1$ and P. D. Olmsted$^2$

$^1$Department of Physics, University of Surrey, Guildford, GU2 7XH, United Kingdom
$^2$School of Physics & Astronomy, University of Leeds, LS2 9JT, United Kingdom

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