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Kunapipi 12 (3) 1990, Contents, Editorial

Anna Rutherford

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Kunapipi 12 (3) 1990, Contents, Editorial

Abstract

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KUNAPIPI



KUNAPIPI

VOLUME XII NUMBER 3
1990

Kunapipi is a tri-annual arts magazine with special but not exclusive emphasis on the new literatures written in English. It aims to fulfil the requirements T.S. Eliot believed a journal should have: to introduce the work of new or little known writers of talent, to provide critical evaluation of the work of living authors, both famous and unknown, and to be truly international. It publishes creative material and criticism. Articles and reviews on related historical and sociological topics plus film will also be included as well as graphics and photographs.

The editor invites creative and scholarly contributions. Manuscripts should be double-spaced with footnotes gathered at the end, should conform to the MHRA (Modern Humanities Research Association) Style Sheet, and should be accompanied by a return envelope.

All correspondence - manuscripts, books for review, inquiries - should be sent to:

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Kunapipi

VOLUME XII NUMBER 3, 1990

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We would like to thank the Newcastle Region Public Library for permission to reprint from their collection of photographs, and also the owners of the Fred Gregory and Jack Sullivan collections for permission to reprint from them.

We wish to thank Allan Rich and Russell McDougall who both did so much to make this Newcastle issue possible.

Cover: Nobbys Lighthouse and Beach, Newcastle, Australia.
Artist: Rae S. Richards

Kunapipi refers to the Australian Aboriginal myth of the Rainbow Serpent which is the symbol both of creativity and regeneration. The journal's emblem is to be found on an Aboriginal shield from the Roper River area of the Northern Territory in Australia.

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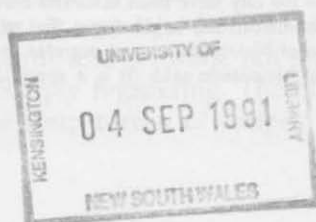
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Editorial

First I'll tell the readers in Newcastle about *Kunapipi*, and then I'll tell the readers of *Kunapipi* about Newcastle. *Kunapipi* was founded in 1979 with the special purpose of dealing with the literature, art and culture of the post-colonial world, of all those countries that were once painted red on the map of the world, an indication that they were 'owned' by Britain. From time to time we publish special issues where we feature certain countries, themes or writers. The last special issue was on the African novelist, Chinua Achebe. Others have been on West Indian literature, Aboriginal Culture Today, and Colonial and Post-Colonial Women's Writing. This time I have decided to feature a city, the city of Newcastle, Australia. Why Newcastle, you ask? First of all, one could say, for selfish reasons. It was the town where I was born, grew up, and return to whenever possible, and though I have not lived there for over twenty-five years I still regard it as home. But there were other reasons for choosing Newcastle. It is a town which, I believe, fits perfectly into the colonial, post-colonial syndrome. It is approximately 150 kms from Sydney and is built, like Sydney, on the edge of the Pacific Ocean. The city lies at the mouth of the Hunter River and was founded as a penal settlement in 1797. The convicts were transported to Newcastle to mine the coal that was found there, and along with Norfolk Island it came to be one of the most brutal penal settlements in the colony. For some years coal was to remain its main industry with free immigrants coming essentially from the coal-mining towns of England and Wales. They were soon to learn that whatever help they needed they must provide themselves - what interested management was profit, not people. These early settlers started a pattern of self-help that has remained one of the characteristics of Newcastle, exemplified in such institutions as trade unions, Friendly Societies, Sick and Accident Benefits, and co-operative stores.

In 1912 the Government sold Crown land which, ironically enough, they had set aside in 1869 for a botanical reserve to the Broken Hill Propriety Limited to build a steelworks. Other heavy industry followed, and Newcastle became an industrial city. Growing up in Newcastle we were taught to be proud of the fact that we lived in 'the largest industrial city in the Southern Hemisphere'. We were unaware at the time that the rest of Australia regarded it as a dirty, ugly industrial city inhabited by a lot of 'bolshis' who'd go on strike at the drop of a hat. In one respect they were right. The pollution was horrendous but it was a pollution which at that time we accepted as necessary - coal trucks trundling by and black smoke belching forth over the city meant employment. Management was not concerned with the social or human cost for, like the absentee landlords in the Caribbean in the earlier centuries, they didn't live there.

The history of Newcastle is a history of exploitation. It has from the beginning been a working-class city and it remains so. Its workers have contributed greatly to the economic wealth of Australia but little of this wealth has been returned to the city. As J.C. Docherty remarked in his book on Newcastle, 'Outsiders, both public and private have treated Newcastle like a colonial possession': absentee ownership, poor infrastructure, no security for the work force, destruction of landscape, and plain poverty - all these are well-known features of exploitation but so too is the image of the exploited group. It therefore comes as no surprise that the image of a person from Newcastle is one of an aggressive, uncultured person addicted to pubs and poker machines.

This issue is to help dispel this image. The quality of the creative writing speaks for itself, and the scenes from 'The Newcastle Quilt' exhibit the skills of the artist and celebrate the charm of the city as well as the beauty of the beaches which even two centuries of industry have not managed to destroy. The restoration of much of the natural beauty and the creation of a cultural life in the city have been achieved essentially through the same process that has been with Newcastle from the beginning - that of self-help.

I agree with one of Newcastle's most popular mayors, Joy Cummings, who in defiance of outside hostility to Newcastle said: 'It is a special town, a special warm town.'