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Kunapipi 34 (2) 2012, Contents, Editorial

Anne Collett

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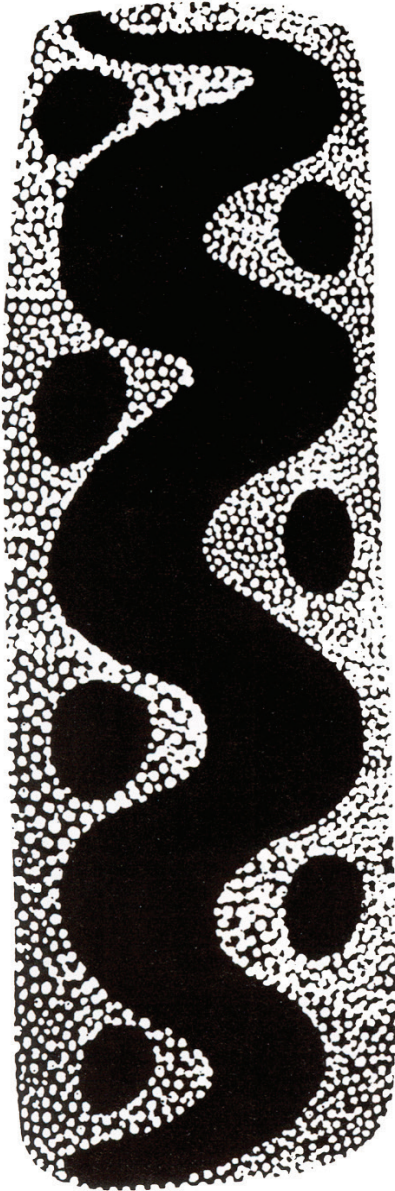
Kunapipi 34 (2) 2012, Contents, Editorial

Abstract

Kunapipi 34 (2) 2012, Contents, Editorial

KUNAPIPI

Journal of Postcolonial Writing & Culture



VOLUME XXXIV NUMBER 2
2012

Kunapipi is a biannual 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. The editorial board does not necessarily endorse any political views expressed by its contributors. Manuscripts should be double-spaced with notes gathered at the end, and should conform to the Harvard (author-date) system. Submissions should be in the form of a Word or Rich Text Format file sent by email attachment to acollett@uow.edu.au. Image files should be high resolution tif format and submitted on compact disc if larger than 1mb. Please include a short biography, address and email contact.

Kunapipi is an internationally refereed journal of postcolonial literature formally acknowledged by the Australian National Library. All articles are double-blind peer reviewed. Work published in *Kunapipi* is cited in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature's Annual Bibliography* (UK), *The Year's Work in English Studies* (UK), *The Grahamstown Information Journal* (SA), *Australian Literary Studies*, *The Indian Association for Commonwealth Studies* (India), *The New Straits Times* (Malaysia), *The Australian Public Affairs Information Service* (produced by the National Library of Australia) and the *MLA*.

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Kunapipi

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European Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies

Front Cover: Painting by Helen Tiffin.

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

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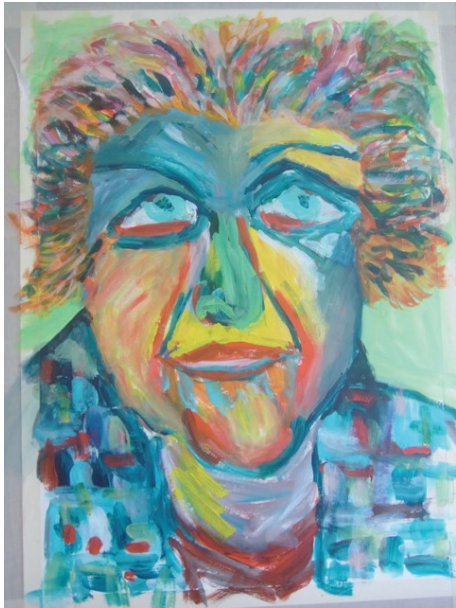
EDITORIAL

This special, and last, issue of *Kunapipi* is a celebration of Helen Tiffin's contribution to the field of postcolonial studies. 'Contribution' is perhaps not the most appropriate word, as she has shaped and reshaped what that field is, how close or how far flung, how fenced or connected, how productive, how influential. Her most recognised and most quoted publication is the book she wrote with Bill Ashcroft and Gareth Griffiths, *The Empire Writes Back: Post-colonial Literatures, Theory and Practice* (Routledge 1989). The book was reprinted 3 times, a



new edition issued in 1994, a revised edition in 2002, and it has been translated into Japanese, Korean, Chinese and Arabic. Most recently, she has published a book on *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (Routledge 2010) with Graham Huggan, and *The Wild Man from Borneo: A Cultural History of the Orangutan* is forthcoming this year from the University of Hawaii, co-authored with Helen Gilbert and Robert Cribb. What is evident already, and in contradistinction to the 70-plus articles and book chapters she has published solo on a huge range of postcolonial authors and topics, is the degree to which Helen works collaboratively, and the impact she has upon her fellow researchers — whether colleagues or students. In recognition of her contribution to and eminence in the field, Helen was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 2009.

Acknowledged as the 'most respected teacher' in the English Department of the University of Queensland in 1987, and a recipient of a University-wide Award for Excellence in Postgraduate teaching in 2000 and 2001, Helen *is* the best of teachers. By this I mean that her academic achievements are never an endpoint in themselves, nor a barrier to learning from others. A BA(Hons) awarded by the University of Queensland, Australia, in 1968, followed by an MA and PhD from Queen's University, Canada, in the 1970s, has been supplemented and indeed complemented with a BSc as recently as 1990 (again from the University of Queensland). For this achievement, among others, I am a little jealous for I began study at the University of Queensland in Science and Arts but chose the sole study of English Literature over Biology at the end of First Year. I am just one of many scholars who have contributed to this issue who was taught by Helen. It was Helen who introduced me to the intellectual excitement of postcolonial literatures in the



Portrait of Helen by Heather Thompson.

second year of my degree. She opened my eyes to the politics of poetics; and it was Helen who examined my MA thesis on Caribbean poet and historian, Kamau Brathwaite, and thus set me on the road of academia and the study of Caribbean literature, and poetry in particular — a pursuit (and a livelihood) that continues to give me great pleasure.

Ah poetry... Many are the conferences in which Helen and I have bemoaned yet another pedantic paper on Derek Walcott, and yet, at least on one occasion, I recall a paper on Walcott that made us sit up in our seats and engage in excited discussion. Helen is well-known for sticking-points, opinions that seem unshakeable, and yet, they can be shaken if given sufficient stimulus

— you just have to prove yourself a valiant (and determined) opponent, with something worth saying, said well! To be with Helen in a seminar room is always to be rewarded with the razor-sharp question that goes to the heart of things. Memories of stimulating conversations, a good laugh and good times with Helen are set against picture-postcard backgrounds (most recently of Malta, Venice, Istanbul, Nicosia) and a cast of characters — good friends from the Caribbean, Denmark, Canada, Belgium, UK, Spain, South Africa, Australia. There are too many friends, countries, occasions to mention, but clearly we have been the lucky generation to have such freedom of the world in which to meet and mingle. I hope to see Helen at the next Association for Commonwealth Literature and Languages Studies conference — this year in St. Lucia; I am sure papers on Walcott will be much in evidence, and of course, the poetry readings will be *de rigueur*.

I don't know what it was that nudged me toward a celebration of Helen's work in *Kunapipi*, but it is most fitting, particularly given this issue of *Kunapipi* will be the last. Founded by Anna Rutherford in 1979, and edited by her until her death in 2001, *Kunapipi* began life in close association with EACLALS (the European branch of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Languages Studies). In 2002 Helen was invited to deliver the first Anna Rutherford Memorial Lecture at the triennial EACLALS conference in Copenhagen. It is sad to bring *Kunapipi* to a close, but times have changed — production of a print journal, particularly one renowned for its beautiful covers and sometimes lavish illustration between the covers, has become enormously expensive, as is the postage from Australia to

everywhere in the world. It seems to me too that the field of postcolonial studies has shifted quite substantially, away from something relatively discrete and focussed (despite its enormous geographical spread) to something diverse, and if not fractured, then certainly multiple. I could embrace a Whitman approach ('I am large, I contain multitudes'¹) but I feel the time has come to bow out with dignity and grace, leaving the field open to new ideas and younger generations, to new forms of publication and dissemination.

The contributors to this volume are a who's who in the field of postcolonial literatures, from its pioneering days through its various shifts and its most recent forays into eco-criticism and animal rights. Many of the contributors have been previously published in *Kunapipi*. Helen not only appears as an author in *Kunapipi*, her photographic work has also featured on two covers (the special issue on Birds and the Focus on Science issue), so it seems fitting that the last issue of *Kunapipi*, one dedicated to her scholarship, should also feature her visual work on the cover — this time a painting of a parrot, a flurry of brilliance. This work is particularly apt given Helen's parrot qualities (captured in the portrait of Helen, painted by Heather Thompson, a fellow artist in the Lord Howe Island painting group to which Helen belongs). A participant in and commentator on (post)colonial affairs, the parrot is a native of sub/tropical is/lands. The parrot is clever, convivial, colourful, and capable of giving you a good sharp peck. She will sit on your shoulder and offer witty asides; a comrade of pirates she might be, but no pet. So I will close this editorial with a parrot poem for Helen:

Mother Parrot's Advice to her Children²

Never get up till the sun gets up,
 Or the mists will give you a cold,
 And a parrot whose lungs have once been touched
 Will never live to be old.
 Never eat plums that are not quite ripe,
 For perhaps they will give you a pain:
 And never dispute what the hornbill says,
 Or you'll never dispute again.
 Never despise the power of speech:
 Learn every word as it comes,
 For this is the pride of the parrot race,
 That it speaks in a thousand tongues.
 Never stay up when the sun goes down,
 But sleep in your own home bed,
 And if you've been good, as a parrot should,
 You will dream that your tail is red.

NOTES

- ¹ Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*, verse 51, line 8, online, <http://www.daypoems.net/plainpoems/1900.html>.
- ² The poem can be found all over the web but authorship is nowhere attributed. It is most often labelled, 'from Ganda, Angola; translated by A.K. Nyabongo'.