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Abstracts, Notes of Contributors, Notes on Editorial Board

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Abstract

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ABSTRACTS

BÁRBARA ARIZTI

‘Never Give Up Hope: A Levinasian Reading of Janette Turner Hospital’s “Dear Amnesty”’

A double click on the ‘Take Action’ button opens up several ways of collaborating with Amnesty International that include the classic letter writing to the authorities, joining a local group, leaving a gift in your will and throwing a fundraising party, amongst others. The degree of commitment shown by Sarah, a member of the Urgent Action Network in Janette Turner Hospital’s short story, ‘Dear Amnesty’, acquires hyperbolic tinges when she manages to save Rosita — arrested and tortured for requesting better working conditions — by draining off her pain into her own body. This article engages with Turner Hospital’s short story as an extreme example of the main tenet of Levinas’s ethics of alterity: our infinite responsibility for our neighbours. Like Amnesty International, Levinas’s ethical philosophy envisages a messianic time free from political violence. Sarah’s radical openness to the other can also be analysed in the light of Gibson’s ethics of affect. Inspired by Levinas and his other-centred philosophy, Gibson elaborates an ethics that privileges sensibility, vulnerability, generosity and self-expenditure over and above self-interest and restraint.

ANGI BUETTNER

‘Mocking and Farting: Trickster Imagination and the Origins of Laughter’

This article examines the use of trickster imagination and the appropriations of trickster mythology by writers from formerly colonised countries as a rich and relevant arsenal of material for their project of cultural transformation and critique. It shows the trickster figure as an ambivalent image and discusses the functions of laughter in trickster imagination. In addition, the essay explores how trickster mythology can be read as postcolonial.

BETH CARDIER & H.T. GORANSON

‘Storymaking Across Contexts: How a Fiction Writer and a Team of Computer Scientists Came to Terms’

Colonial dynamics can exist between fields of research, and in the most problematic cases, a discipline will appropriate the knowledges of another solely on its own terms, distorting meanings in the process. Interestingly, a similar problem exists in the domain of information management, in which computers struggle to automatically transfer ‘objective’ facts between contexts that actually represent subjective abstractions of reality. In 2004, the authors of this article — a fiction writer and a systems architect — began collaborating with a team of computer scientists to design a knowledge representation system that could track changes in contextual meaning. Our task was to use insights from the arts in system design, without losing the strengths of each field’s forms. As the project grew, we discovered how much work and reward is involved in Gayatri Spivak’s suggestion regarding collaborative story-building: there is something I want to give you, which will make our shared practice flourish.

KIM CLOTHIER & DEBRA DUDEK

‘Opening the Body: Reading *Ten Canoes* with Critical Intimacy’

This article analyses the Australian film *Ten Canoes* (2006), which was co-directed by non-Indigenous director Rolf de Heer and Indigenous director Peter Djigirr. The essay foregrounds the relationship between the ‘I’ of the Indigenous narrator and the

‘you’ of a mainstream non-Indigenous audience that must read the English subtitles while viewing the visual text, which brings the viewing experience close to that of engaging with a long poem. The narrator encourages an affective response from the viewer by inviting the viewer/reader to ‘see’ the story and therefore to ‘know’ it. This combination of corporeal and mental engagement with the text brings the reading strategy close to what Gayatri Spivak calls ‘critical intimacy’, a strategy that we argue is an appropriate — and indeed ethical — way for non-Indigenous (and perhaps non-Yolgnu) viewers to respond to this film, which is the first Indigenous language film to be produced in Australia.

SUZANNE FOLEY

“I Am a Lie”: Connections between Identity and Narrative in *Tracks* and *Season of Migration to the North*

This article discusses both the transformative power of narrative and the complications of cultural hybridity that are exemplified in Louise Erdrich’s *Tracks* and Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to The North*. Two characters, Mustafa Sa’eed of *Season of Migration to the North* and Pauline/Sister Leopolda of *Tracks*, narrate themselves into fictions in order to escape a shared fate of untranslatability. One narrative is designed to illuminate the nuanced space of cultural hybridity, and the other is designed to destroy the space of cultural hybridity and name a singular culture as dominant.

ELIZABETH LEANE

‘Eggs, Emperors and Empire in Apsley Cherry-Garrard’s “Worst Journey in the World”’

In the Natural History Museum in London, amongst a plethora of other curious objects retrieved from the far reaches of Empire, sit three emperor penguins’ eggs, now nearly one hundred years old. The collection of these eggs forms the narrative centre of Apsley Cherry-Garrard’s *The Worst Journey in the World* (1922), which chronicles the events of Robert Scott’s second Antarctic expedition. Cherry-Garrard’s title refers not to Scott’s ill-fated polar voyage but to an earlier journey to collect a scientific rather than a geographical prize: the emperor penguin’s egg, which was thought to be the key to an evolutionary puzzle. According to the *New York Review of Books*, *The Worst Journey* ‘is to travel writing what *War and Peace* is to the novel ... a masterpiece’. It is also considered a classic Antarctic exploration tale, rivalling even Scott’s famous last diary. Surprisingly, given recent interest in travel narratives, Cherry-Garrard’s book has received relatively little attention from literary critics. This article looks at the various narratives — imperial, scientific, personal and literary — that coalesce around three penguins’ eggs in Cherry-Garrard’s account of the world’s worst journey.

PAUL MAGEE

‘Poetry as a Physics of Power’

In this essay I argue that Thesis II (that ‘Man must prove the truth, i.e. the reality and power, the this-worldliness of his thinking in practice’), from Marx’s *Theses on Feuerbach*, might be read as a cogent theory of poetry, and that the ‘proof’ of a line of poetry lies in the reader’s uptake of it. In support of this claim, I give examples from the critical practice of Robert Hass as having particular resonance with the thesis; and move on to give examples of the reality and power of poetry (or its lack) through my own critical readings of poems by Emily Dickinson and Australian poets, John Kinsella and Jennifer Harrison.

PRAMOD K. NAYAR

‘The Informational Economy and Its Body in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Calcutta Chromosome*’

This article discusses the role of information in Ghosh’s *The Calcutta Chromosome*. It argues that the informational economy occurs in two specific modes in the novel. First, information acquires a material dimension: it is embodied and generates what I call the ‘informational body’. I suggest that Ghosh’s novel is about biomediated information where both the medium (the body) and the information are modified in the process of transmission. Second, the body itself becomes converted and reduced to data in a process of informatisation. This occurs through incorporation and inscription — the two modes of embodiment suggested by Katharine Hayles when speaking of the computer-linked bodies of today. With these two moves Ghosh crosses the materiality of the body with the ‘immateriality’ of information. Finally, this results in the generation of cyborg bodies which exist in the interstices of the mythic, the technological, the textual and the political where none of the bodies is unique or self-contained but has incorporated something more.

SUSMITA ROYE

“Sultana’s Dream” vs. Rokeya’s Reality: A Study of one of the “Pioneering” Feminist Science Fictions’

Long before feminist science fiction came into vogue, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain’s ‘Sultana’s Dream’ (1905) powerfully constructs a feminist utopia with women administering state affairs while men remain confined at home to manage household matters. The existence of this utopia, however, relies not so much on women’s physical prowess as on their ingenious scientific and technological innovations. In this dream(-like) world, science becomes the tool of the so-called weaker sex to wield authority. In fact, although women like Mary Shelley have previously used contemporaneous scientific discourses to shape their creative imagination, Hossain’s story is the first of its kind to employ science to communicate her feminist ideology. It becomes further charged when such a radical piece of work comes from the pen of a triply marginalised author: a woman; a Muslim woman; and a colonised Muslim woman at that. This article explores the enormous significance of Hossain’s story, when placed in its historical context and judged against the scientific discourses of her times.

PETRA TOURNAY-THEODOTOU

‘Performative Bondage or the Limits of Performing Race in Caryl Phillips’s *Dancing in the Dark*’

Taking Judith Butler’s lead that ‘identity is performatively constituted’ (*Gender Trouble*, 1999) in this article I examine how race — similar to other subject positions — is performatively constructed in Caryl Phillips’s novel *Dancing in the Dark* (2005). I trace the development of the novel’s protagonist, Bert Williams, the famous American black minstrelsy entertainer and the numerous implications and consequences of the ‘anomaly of a black person performing in blackface’ (Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests*, 1990) on a personal as well as on a larger societal and cultural level. All the while painfully attempting to preserve his personal integrity and dignity in view of his adopted role, Bert becomes the embodiment of Ralph Ellison’s “‘sacrificial’ figure’ engaged in a self-humiliating and self-effacing act. For, if in the case of the white man impersonating a black man there is a clear-cut difference between the performer and his role, this distinction is — to say the least — blurred in the case of the coloured

man in blackface. The analysis hence revolves around the multiple implications of the performative re-enactment of race and addresses issues such as the appropriation of a white form of entertainment, perpetuation of white stereotypes, knowability of the other, black male sexuality, masquerade, and group debasement among others.

LUCY WILSON

‘Illness and Insight: Virginia Woolf and Caribbean Women Writers vs. Western Medicine’

This article seeks common ground between Woolf and Caribbean women writers in an effort to overcome binary thinking through criticism as ‘healing discourse’. In novels by Caribbean women writers, illness is often a rite of passage and a metaphor that can be used to interrogate power structures and unmask injustice. By employing what Gay Wilentz calls ‘wellness narratives’ to reclaim the traditional role of women as healers of ‘cultural dis-ease’, these writers are part of a growing challenge to Western medicine. They are calling for alternative therapies that can facilitate clinical treatment by providing peace of mind and serenity in troubled, uncertain times. Eighty-five years ago, in her novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf recognised illness as a doorway to higher consciousness and thus set the stage for today’s effort to reform an institution that fails to treat the whole person.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

BÁRBARA ARIZTI is Senior lecturer in English Literature at the Department of English and German Philology (University of Zaragoza, Spain). Her current field of research is Postcolonial literature and criticism, with special emphasis on the relationship between literature and the intimate sphere. She is the author of the book *'Textuality as Striptease': The Discourses of Intimacy in David Lodge's Changing Places and Small World*, published by Peter Lang in 2002. She has also written several articles and book chapters on Lodge and other contemporary authors like Doris Lessing, Jean Rhys and Tim Winton; and co-edited the volume *On the Turn: The Ethics of Fiction in Contemporary Writing in English* (with Silvia Martínez-Falquina, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007).

ANGI BUETTNER is a Lecturer in Media Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, NZ. She researches in the areas of new media, cultural studies, and environmental studies, with a focus on media and the public sphere. She has recently published a book with Thierry Jutel, Tony Schirato, and Geoff Stahl — *Understanding Media Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

After winning the Eisner Prize for Literature at UC Berkeley, BETH CARDIER began writing a sci-fi novel that required so much research that she now delivers papers in her protagonist's field. She has published articles in conference proceedings for the *Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence*, *Symmetry: Art and Science*, and *The Mathematical Intelligensia*, as well as short fiction in *HQ* magazine, *scarp* and anthologies by Womangong Press. Beth is currently researching a PhD in the overlap between story structure and knowledge representation, examining the way causality is captured in narrative form.

KIM CLOTHIER returned to university after 10 years of teaching. She completed her BA (Hons) in Community, Culture and Environment, with her Honours thesis on the role of orality in literature. Kim is currently working on her PhD examining the figure of young adults in Contemporary Indigenous Literatures at the University of Wollongong, Australia.

ANNE COLLETT is an Associate Professor in the English Literatures Program at the University of Wollongong, Australia where she teaches courses on Romanticism, Modernism and Twentieth-Century Women Writers. She has published widely in the field of postcolonial women's writing and poetry, and is currently completing a comparative book-length study of Australian poet, Judith Wright and Canadian artist, Emily Carr (with Dorothy Jones).

ERIC DOUMERC teaches English at the University of Toulouse-Le Mirail, South-Western France. His main research interests are Caribbean poetry, oral poetry, and the Caribbean oral tradition. In 2003 Presses Universitaires du Mirail published Eric's book on *Caribbean Civilisation: The English-speaking Caribbean Since Independence*; in 2007 he co-authored a textbook with Wendy Harding entitled *An Introduction to Poetry in English* (Toulouse: P.U.M); and an anthology of poetry entitled *Celebrate Wha': Ten Black British Poets from the West Midlands* (co-edited with Roy McFarlane) will be published in August 2011 with Smokestack Books.

DEBRA DUDEK works at the University of Wollongong as a Lecturer in English Literatures, as Director of the Centre for Canadian-Australian Studies, and as President

of the Association for Canadian Studies in Australia and New Zealand. She has published internationally on Australian, Canadian, and Children's Literature.

SUZANNE FOLEY is an English Professor at Pace University in New York City and at St. Thomas Aquinas College in Sparkill, NY. She received her MA from Iona College and her PhD from Columbia. Her writing career alternates between an odd pairing of genres: academia and comedy. She has authored numerous academic articles concentrating on Modern and Postmodern American Poetry, with a few humour book collaborations with her writing partner, Christopher Barish, peppered between. Suzanne lives in Nyack, NY with her husband and her deranged Border Collie mix, Katz.

H.T. GORANSON is Chief Scientist for the private research organisation Sirius Beta, and was a Senior Scientist with the United States Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. He wrote *The Agile Virtual Enterprise* and is currently developing a Situation Theoretic formalism for context modelling, in order to enable real-time collaboration between multiple users in the VE community.

STEPHEN GRAY, a former English professor at the Rand Afrikaans University of Johannesburg, currently lives in retirement as an independent scholar. His first of several pieces contributed to *Kunapipi* was carried in Vol. 2, No. 1 (1981). He was a writer in residence at the University of Queensland in 1982, the year Dangaroo Press brought out his slim volume of poetry, *Season of Violence*. As well as seven volumes of poetry, Stephen has published short story collections, novels, literary criticism in various forms, and edited anthologies of poetry, drama and short stories. His most recent collection of poetry is *Shelley Cinema and Other Poems* (2006). In 2007 Stephen was the recipient of a South African Literary Award for Lifetime Achievement.

ELIZABETH (ELLE) LEANE is a lecturer in the School of English, Journalism and European Languages at the University of Tasmania. In 2004, she was awarded an Antarctic Arts Fellowship, which enabled her to travel south on an expedition ship. Her first book, *Reading Popular Physics: Disciplinary Skirmishes and Textual Strategies*, was published by Ashgate in 2007. She is currently working on a second book, entitled *Fictions of the Far South: Imagining Antarctica* — a project supported by an ARC Discovery Grant. She lectures in the University of Tasmania's new Bachelor of Antarctic Studies as well as in the English programme.

PAUL MAGEE is the author of *From Here to Tierra del Fuego* (University of Illinois Press: 2000) and *Cube Root of Book* (John Leonard Press: 2006). He is working on a monograph entitled Poetry and Knowledge. Paul is an Associate Professor of Poetry at the University of Canberra, where he teaches philosophy, composition and criticism.

PRAMOD K. NAYAR teaches in the Department of English at the University of Hyderabad, India. His most recent publications include *States of Sentiment: Exploring the Cultures of Emotion* (Orient BlackSwan 2011), *Postcolonialism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Continuum 2010), *An Introduction to New Media and Cybercultures* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), *Packaging Life: Cultures of the Everyday* (SAGE 2009), *English Writing and India, 1600–1920: Colonizing Aesthetics* (Routledge, 2008). He is currently working on a book on Frantz Fanon, a book on human rights and narrative and a book on colonial discourse. His other interests include cultural studies and superhero comic books.

SUSMITA ROYE teaches in the Department of English and Foreign Languages at Delaware State University, USA. She completed her doctoral research at University of Bristol, UK. Susmita has published in *English Studies*, *Callaloo* and *South Asian Research* and has contributed to numerous volumes of essays including *Emerging Voices: Essays and Interviews of South Asian Women Writers* (forthcoming); *Subaltern Vision: A Study in Postcolonial Indian English Novel* (forthcoming); *Postcolonial Indian Fiction in English and Masculinity* (2009); and a critical anthology on Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (2011). Her co-edited volume, *The Male Empire under the Female Gaze: White Women and British India*, is forthcoming from Cambria Press.

PETRA TOURNAY-THEODOTOU is an Associate Professor of English at the European University of Cyprus, where she teaches Postcolonial, British, African-American and World literature. She obtained both her Masters and PhD in English and Spanish language and literature from the RWTH Aachen, Germany. Her publications include essays and book chapters on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spanish (Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, Manuel Rivas), Latin-American (Carlos Fuentes, Jorge Luis Borges) and British literature (John Banville, Lawrence Durrell, Zadie Smith, Caryl Phillips, Leone Ross, Bernardine Evaristo, Eve Makis, Monica Ali) and a monograph on the Spanish poet Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer.

HELEN TIFFIN is an Adjunct Professor at the University of New England, Australia. Her publications include (with Bill Ashcroft and Gareth Griffiths) *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989, revised edition 2002), *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (1998, revised edition 2007) and *Post-Colonial Literatures: General, Theoretical and Comparative 1970–1993* (1997, with Alan Lawson et al). Her photographs have appeared on the covers of ALS, Kunapi and Rodopi publications.

MARK TREDINNICK is an Australian poet, essayist and writing teacher. With Kate Rigby, Mark was the cofounder of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment – ANZ. He has received the Queensland Premier's Literary Award (2010), the Calibre Essay Prize (2008), the Newcastle Poetry Prize (2007), the Wildcare Nature Writing Prize (2005) and the Gwen Harwood Poetry Prize (2005). Mark's books include *The Little Red Writing Book* (2006) (also published in the US as *Writing Well: The Essential Guide* [2008]), *The Land's Wild Music* (2005), *A Place on Earth* (2003), *The Blue Plateau: A Landscape Memoir* (2010) and *Fire Diary* (2010).

LUCY WILSON, Professor of English at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, received her Ph.D. from Temple University and teaches twentieth-century British and Caribbean literature, as well as an advanced essay writing course. Her essays have appeared in several journals and anthologies, including *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Literature and Exile* (Rodopi), *Journal of Caribbean Studies*, *Review of Contemporary Literature*, *Callaloo*, and *Wasafiri*. Her book, *In Due Season: Essays on Novels of Development by Caribbean Women Writers*, was published by University Press of America in 2008.

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