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Abstracts, Notes of Contributors, Notes on Editorial Advisors

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Abstract

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ABSTRACTS

GRAHAM BARWELL

‘Coleridge’s Albatross and the Impulse to Seabird Conservation’

Albatrosses became known to Europeans in the eighteenth century but it was Coleridge’s poem about the terrible consequences of killing an albatross that gave the bird its prominence and determined its cultural significance. Despite the influence of the poem on the imagination and language of its many readers, it had remarkably little effect on the actual treatment of albatrosses which were readily killed for sport, food or feathers. As the impulse towards seabird conservation developed in the late twentieth century, the albatross has become the exemplar of the plight of seabirds and Coleridge’s poem has been recast as conservationist work, but its real significance is in the way it provided a conception of the bird and established its profile in the Western imagination.

LUCILE DESBLACHE

‘Writers on the Wing: Birds and the (De/Ee)construction of Cultural Memory in Patrick Chamoiseau and J.M. Coetzee’s Fictional Narratives’

This article considers representations of birds in Patrick Chamoiseau’s and J.M. Coetzee’s most recent fiction. Both writers include birds as real, non-human creatures and distance their vision from the imaginary tutelage inherent in tropic representation. Yet echoes of tropes are always perceptible and are re/ or deconstructed by both novelists, consciously or unconsciously. Chamoiseau’s and Coetzee’s approaches are entirely contrasting. For the Martinican writer, birds are instrumental agents of awareness of a present reality, and as such, are essential to the revisiting of colonial history. They are also indispensable mediators between human and non-human worlds. Coetzee’s visions of winged creatures on the other hand, and as we might expect, emerge as dark, lonely figures reflecting the perverse obsession of the human species with rationality and power.

ADRIAN FRANKLIN

‘Relating to Birds in Postcolonial Australia’

Drawing on a recent national survey of human-animal relations in Australia this paper asks the question: how do we relate to birds in postcolonial Australia? Most studies of relationships to animals in contemporary Australia emphasise the continuing significance of colonial and post-colonial conditions and this is particularly true in the case of birds since they were one of the first native categories to arouse different, conserving and proto-environmentalist sentiments. In particular, historical, literary and recent survey data will be deployed to address

an apparent anomaly in the pattern of human associations with birds in Australia: despite a strong track record of concern for birds, the proportion of birdwatchers in the population is low in comparison to the USA and UK and the proportion of people who keep native birds captive (in cages or aviaries) is comparatively high.

DOROTHY JONES

‘Flying Godwits and Migrating Kiwis: *Towards Another Summer*’

Janet Frame’s novel *Towards Another Summer*, written in 1963 but published posthumously only in 2007 by the Janet Frame Literary Trust, reflects on the process of migration. Vivid memories of her New Zealand childhood are provoked in the novelist heroine, Grace Cleave, after travelling from her London flat to spend the weekend in northern England with a couple who have strong New Zealand connections. Grace becomes convinced she has undergone an overnight transformation into a migratory bird, though her metamorphosis is psychic rather than physical. The novel, which contains allusions to Charles Brasch’s poetry and Robin Hyde’s 1938 novel *The Godwits Fly*, mingles fantasy with meticulously realistic descriptions of life both in England and in New Zealand to show how migration changes perceptions of oneself and one’s country of origin.

JULIA MARTIN

**‘A Poem about a Bird Can be a Picture of the World:
Reading “Heron’s Place” by Jeremy Cronin’**

In ‘Heron’s Place’, a poem from Jeremy Cronin’s recent collection, *More than a Casual Contact*, the attentive observation of a particular bird fishing for minnows in a liminal realm at the edges of human habitation becomes an opportunity for reflection. At one level, the poem is concerned with the impact of the sugar industry in the Tongati river estuary, and with what this reveals about the manifestation of human power and culture in a specific place. At the same time, the heron who continues to dwell and fish in this ambiguous territory becomes one instance of a kind of resistance which human beings may also practice. Vigilance, tenacity, specificity ... in the absorption she brings to her ancient task, the heron embodies a quality of attention, integrity and endurance within or amidst an environment infused with the globalised networks of business, money and power. Though she may not be free of its constraints, her awareness-in-place evokes the possibility of a resilient cultural practice which survives somehow, in spite of it all. Reading the poem, my response is situated in terms of my own location as a teacher of English literature in South Africa.

TRAVIS V. MASON

**‘West-Coast Birding as Postcolonial Strategy:
Literary Criticism in the Field’**

This essay comprises three literary ecotones. Each one recounts the experiences of a fictional student, the Birder-Critic, as he considers the intersection of postcolonial and ecocritical reading strategies and struggles to enact the theoretical process of stepping out of the office and into the field. Appropriately, the ecotones are titled Field Marks, Field Guides, and Field Notes. They trace the Birder-Critic’s challenges in identifying/naming birds in the field, learning how to read/use field guides, and developing the discipline and skills to write field notes, respectively.

PENNY OLSEN

**‘Raper’s Bountiful Birds: A First Fleeter’s Impressions of
Australia’s Avifauna’**

The First Fleet was dispatched to establish a British colony in New South Wales at a high point of interest in natural history, yet there were no naturalists or artists in the company. The task fell to the naval officers, trained draughtsmen and chart makers, whose drawings have both historical and zoological value. The most able and imaginative was young midshipman George Raper. His work provides a record of the bird life at the time of settlement and of species subsequently lost. It also hints at a different motivation for his brief, bright engagement with birds.

JAMES TAR TSAAIOR

**‘The Significance of Avian Metaphors in
Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo’s *Children of the Eagle*’**

This essay argues that avian metaphors in Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo’s novel, *Children of the Eagle* are representative of specific gender politics and ideologies of patriarchal Igbo society in south-eastern Nigeria. In the novel, women radically contest male power through their creative mobilisation and appropriation of particular avian metaphors — previously an exclusive phallic preserve — to re-constitute the patterns of socio-political and cultural relations in Igbo and the wider Nigerian society. The eagle for example is appropriated to represent the renewed energy of female principle in order to subvert or undermine patriarchy. The author submits that the avian metaphors in the novel valorise a revolutionary temperament which is capable of re-defining the structures of Igbo and Nigerian society and is aimed at the re-configuration of gender relations in a manner that rehabilitates women, giving them a prominent, if not leading, role in fashioning the society of the future.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

GRAHAM BARWELL teaches English, Media and Cultural Studies at the University of Wollongong. He has a long-standing interest in birds, particularly in their place and role in human cultures. He nurtures his fondness for albatrosses by frequent participation in the pelagic trips run out of Wollongong by the Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association.

CHRIS WALLACE CRABBE'S recent books have included a 'postmodern epic', *The Universe Looks Down* (Brandl & Schlesinger), and the Dante translation, *The Flowery Meadow*. He is Professor Emeritus in The Australian Centre, University of Melbourne. In prose, his latest volume is *Read It Again* (Salt). A new collection of poems, *Telling a Hawk from a Handsaw*, will appear from Carcanet in 2008.

Born in South Africa in 1949, JEREMY CRONIN studied at the University of Cape Town and the Sorbonne in Paris. He served a 7-year prison term as a political prisoner during the apartheid period. Jeremy is currently an African National Congress Member of Parliament and deputy general secretary of the South African Communist Party. His publications include three collections of poetry.

LUCILE DESBLACHE is a Reader in French and Translation Studies at Roehampton University, London. Her research is focused on animal representation in contemporary literature. She is the author of *Bestiaire du roman contemporain d'expression française* (Editions Blaise Pascal 2002). Lucile currently writes on imaginary visions of nature in contemporary fiction in English and French and is working on a book to be published by the Editions Beauchesne (Paris) in 2008: *L'Animal Romanesque: figures et traces animales dans l'imaginaire littéraire aujourd'hui*.

ADRIAN FRANKLIN is currently Professor of Sociology at The University of Tasmania, Australia. Trained as an anthropologist in the UK, he has held Professorial positions at the University of Bristol, UK and the University of Oslo (Norway). He is best known for his work on the relationships between humans and the natural world, especially with animals. His books include *City Life; Animal Nation: The True Story of Animals and Australia; Animals and Modern Cultures; Nature and Social Theory* and *Tourism*. He is currently working on *A Culture of Fire: Eucalypts, Australians, Fire*. He is Co-Editor of *Tourist Studies* (with Mike Crang). Current projects include work on the social life of bush fires, acclimatisation landscapes, the anthropology of the effervescent city and the relationship between individualism, freedom and loneliness.

A former English professor at the University of Johannesburg, STEPHEN GRAY (born in Cape Town in 1941), 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 a University of Queensland in 1982, the year the Dangaroo Press brought out his slim volume, *Season of Violence*. His most recent collection is *Shelley Cinema and Other Poems* (2006).

DOROTHY JONES is an expatriate New Zealander who has experienced the transforming effects of migration through spending most of her adult life as an academic teaching literature in Australian university English Departments. Currently an honorary fellow in the English Literatures Program at the University of Wollongong, Dorothy has published widely in the area of postcolonial women's writing, with papers on several New Zealand writers — Janet Frame, Keri Hulme and Patricia Grace among them.

JULIA MARTIN lives in Muizenberg and teaches English and Creative Writing at the University of the Western Cape. She has published widely in the field of literature and ecology, including a collection of three narrative essays, *Writing Home* (2002). Her forthcoming book, *A Millimetre of Dust* (2008), is an extended reflection on a visit to archaeological sites in the Northern Cape.

TRAVIS V. MASON teaches Canadian and world literatures at the University of British Columbia, where he completed his PhD, 'Ornithology of Desire: Birding in the Ecotone and the Poetry of Don McKay'. His articles appear, or are forthcoming, in *Mosaic*, *Canadian Literature*, *ISLE*, and *Studies in Canadian Literature*. Current projects include a collaborative book about non-native species in the Pacific Northwest and a comparative study of postcolonial ecologies in Canadian and South African writing. He has recently been awarded an Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship to research the latter project at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa.

SEAN MURRAY is a graduate of the University of Nebraska and University of Nebraska College of Law. In 2006–2007 he was a Fulbright Fellow at ISM University of Management and Economics in Lithuania. He currently works as an international education consultant, and lives in Lincoln, Nebraska, USA.

PENNY OLSEN is a Research Fellow in the School of Botany and Zoology at The Australian National University. After many years as a field based research scientist, she is Managing Editor of the Birds Australia magazine *Wingspan*, consults for government and writes. Her latest book is *Glimpses of Paradise: The Quest for the Beautiful Parakeet* (National Library of Australia, 2007).

LIBBY ROBIN is an historian of science at the Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University and the Centre for Historical Research, National Museum of Australia. Her research interests include Australian and comparative environmental history, especially the history of the environmental sciences. 'Living with Lyrebirds' is extracted from her book *The Flight of the Emu: A History of Australian Ornithology 1901–2001* (Melbourne University Press, 2001), which in 2003 won the inaugural Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Science Writing. Her latest book is a history of national identity and understandings of environment in Australia entitled *How a Continent Created a Nation* (UNSW Press 2007). It won the NSW Premier's Prize for Australian History.

NINA SHEVCHUK-MURRAY was born and raised in the Western Ukrainian city of L'viv. She now lives in Lincoln, Nebraska, where she writes poetry, fiction, and book reviews, and translates from Russian and Ukrainian languages. She is the co-editor, with Ladette Randolph, of *The Big Empty: An Anthology of Nebraska Non-Fiction*.

LOU SMITH grew up in Newcastle and is now based in Melbourne. Her poetry has appeared in *Overland*, *Wasafiri*, *Kunapipi*, *antiTHESIS*, *Strange* and various other publications. Lou has recently co-founded the small publishing company Breakdown Press.

RABINDRA K SWAIN'S poetry has been published in *The Kenyon Review*, *Shenandoah*, *New Letters*, *Verses* (US), *Critical Quarterly*, *Contemporary Review*, *Wasafiri* (UK), *Ariel* and *The Toronto Review of Contemporary Writing Abroad* (Canada). Published books include three volumes of poetry, the latest being *Severed Cord*, a work of literary criticism on the poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra and *Dear Jester*, a translation of Oriya short stories. *Susurrus in the Skull* is her latest collection of poems.

HELEN TIFFIN is Professor of English at the University of Tasmania. Her publications include (with Bill Ashcroft & 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 cover of *ALS* 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. His honours include the Calibre Essay Prize (2008), The Newcastle Poetry Prize (2007), the Wildcare Nature Writing Prize (2005), and the Gwen Harwood Poetry Prize (2005); his writing has appeared in many journals and anthologies. Mark's books include *The Little Red Writing Book* (to be published in the US as *Writing Well: The Essential Guide* in 2008), *The Land's Wild Music*, *A Place on Earth*, and the forthcoming landscape memoir, *The Blue Plateau*, from which his prose selections in this issue of *Kunapipi* are drawn. For many years Mark lived in the Blue Mountains, west of Sydney. After a stint in the city, Mark now lives with his family in the southern highlands.

JAMES TAR TSAAIOR holds a PhD in English from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and he now lectures in Ibadan. His research interests include Afro-Diasporic Literatures, Folklore, Gender and Cultural Studies as well as Literary Theory and Criticism. James has published in these areas in local and international journals. A collection of his poetry, *Moments and Monuments*, was published in 2005.

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