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## Kunapipi 26 (1) 2004, Contents, Editorial

Anne Collett

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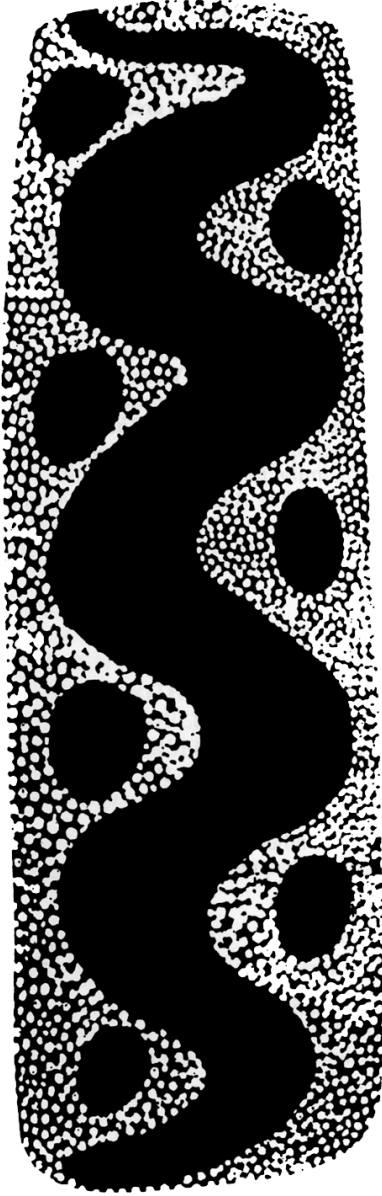
## Kunapipi 26 (1) 2004, Contents, Editorial

### Abstract

Kunapipi 26 (1) 2004, Contents, Editorial

# KUNAPIPI

Journal of Postcolonial Writing



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*Kunapipi* is a bi-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. 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. Wherever possible the submission should be on disc (soft-ware preferably Microsoft Word) and should be accompanied by a hard copy. Please include a short biography, address and email contact if available.

*Kunapipi* is an internationally refereed journal of postcolonial literature formally acknowledged by the Australian National Library. 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 American Journal of African Studies* (USA), *The Grahamstown Information Journal* (SA), *Australian Literary Studies*, *The Indian Association for Commonwealth Studies* (India), *The New Straits Times* (Indonesia), *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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VOLUME XXVI NUMBER 1

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Benjamin Zephaniah's poetry is reprinted from *Too Black, Too Strong* (Bloodaxe Books, Tarsset, Northumberland, 2001) with Benjamin Zephaniah's permission.

Front Cover: Agnes Hewitt (1857–1957), a Jamaican brown-skin gal.  
(Photograph courtesy of Beverley Noakes.)

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

But today I recapture the islands'  
 bright beaches: blue mist from the ocean  
 rolling into the fishermen's houses.  
 By these shores I was born: sound of the sea  
 Came in at my window, life heaved and breathed in me then  
 With the strength of that turbulent soil

...

We who are born of the ocean can never seek solace  
 in rivers: their flowing runs on like our longing<sup>1</sup>

Although born inland in Australia's national capital, I spent a large part of my childhood sleeping and waking to the sound of the sea. The road to the coast from Canberra to Bateman's Bay, Merry Beach, Bawley Point and Ulladulla, was traversed every weekend and at the beginning and end of summer holidays in a state of dreaming — in anticipation and longing for that turbulent soil. Perhaps it was this sense of affinity with ocean that drew me to the language and rhythms of Edward Kamau Brathwaite's poetry. Here was the familiar made exotic — the Caribbean never seen, but vividly imagined through the knowledge of the other shore. I encountered Caribbean literature in the second year of my undergraduate degree at the University of Queensland — George Lamming's *Castle of My Skin*, Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, V.S. Naipaul's *House for Mr. Biswas*, the poetry of Derek Walcott, Mervyn Morris and of course, once 'Eddie' now 'Kamau' Brathwaite.

I grew up with a love of English literature that described scenes never encountered in Australia; the emerald green in my box of Derwent pencils that might colour willow tree and verdant English pasture had no correspondence to the yellow, olive and silver greens of drought and gum tree. I also grew up with the poetry of Judith Wright. This was a poetry that spoke to my geography — the 'lean, clean, hungry country' of tree-cleared undulating hills silvered in the blaze of summer heat. I understood as an Australian what Brathwaite meant when he said, 'The hurricane does not roar in pentameters'<sup>2</sup> — this was not an understanding gained through knowledge of hurricane, but knowledge of englishes, and a recognition of the imperative that a language speak its geography. Hurricanes however were experienced only vicariously. They feature in Olive Senior's poetic remembrance of 'Hurricane Story' in *Gardening in the Tropics*:

Thatch blew about and whipped our faces,  
 Water seeped in, but on grandfather's bed  
 We rode above it, everything holding  
 together. For my grandfather had learnt  
 from his father and his father before him  
 all the ways of orchestrating disaster.<sup>3</sup>

It is with some sense of the surreal that this special issue on the Caribbean goes to press: while the images of hurricane Ivan's devastating path filled our television screens in Wollongong, the sub-editor formatted Elizabeth Walcott Hackshaw's essay on 'Cyclone Culture and the Paysage Pineaulien' and my request for the black and white sketches of Frank Collymore's 'Collybeasts' went unanswered as the Caribbean rode out the storm only to be confronted by another.

For the purposes of this special issue, 'the Caribbean' is understood to encompass English, French and Spanish Caribbean as well as the diasporic Caribbean — essays draw on the literature and culture of Jamaica, Barbados, Antigua, Dominica, Guadeloupe, St. Lucia, Cuba, Colombia, Britain, Canada. Significantly, many speak to that sometimes silenced or denied history of the body and sexuality identified by Barry Higman in his review essay of Olive Senior's *Encyclopedia of Jamaican Heritage* as playing a central role in Caribbean culture, the inheritance of the body being 'the most basic of all concepts of heritage'. (244) But to speak of the body - its signs and enactments of desire — can place a writer in the destructive and malevolent path of a hurricane. Such is the recent history of Sharon Leach's story 'Lapdance', published in this issue. The story is written in a vernacular that is handled with an admirable competence — it is confronting but integrity lies in its authenticity; the theme of the story is neither unusual nor particularly confronting — at least that was my naïve assessment — until I was appraised of the context out of and into which the story was placed. A few days after accepting 'Lapdance' for publication I came across an article in the *Guardian Weekly* [Aug 13–19, 2004], captioned 'If you're gay in Jamaica, you're dead'. The piece begins with a reference to the murder of gay activist Brian Williamson in June of this year, and claims that, according to international human rights organisations, Jamaica is 'one of the most homophobic places in the world' in which gay relationships are necessarily largely conducted in secret for fear of abuse, torture and vigilante action. If, as Wole Soyinka claims, the man who remains silent in the face of tyranny dies, and to speak is also to die, then a safe place must be found in which man or woman can speak of the body and its desires without fear of reprisal. Ways of orchestrating disaster, ways of surviving and even celebrating are available to us — they lie with our willingness to tell our stories and to listen to the stories of others with sympathy.

Anne Collett

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Kamau Brathwaite, 'South', *Rights of Passage [The Arrivants]*, OUP, London, 1973, p. 57.
- <sup>2</sup> Kamau Brathwaite, *History of the Voice*, New Beacon Books, London, 1984, p. 10.
- <sup>3</sup> Olive Senior, *Gardening in the Tropics*, McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 1994, p. 20.