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.

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Gordon Bennett, *Metaphysical Landscape II*, 1990
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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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This issue brings together essays on writers and artists from New Zealand, the Caribbean, Australia, India, South Africa, Angola, Morocco, Zanzibar, Canada, the UK, China, Cuba and Malaysia. It is eclectic and yet many of the essays interrogate and reflect upon a similar subject: the self transported, transformed, translated. To translate, as Salman Rushdie points out in ‘Imaginary Homelands’, is to ‘bear across’ — to cross borders, or even, some essayists in this issue would suggest, ‘to bear a cross’. The act of translation is often an act of sacrifice, suffering and loss — the loss of self as constituted by country of birth, land, language, religion, food, literature, art, music, custom and culture. Personal histories and geographies of the familial and the familiar are disrupted, disoriented even disappeared by a crossing that is forced or chosen (whether freely or under duress).

Ouyang Yu remarks that ‘After China, it seems, the original integrity of my soul could no longer hold together but must break into pieces of self at fissures of intense cross-cultural conflicts’ (99). But Rushdie claims, on behalf of ‘the translated man’ that, ‘[i]t is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained;’ and that the writer who has been ‘forced by cultural displacement to accept the provisional nature of all truths, all certainties’ is released to describe the modern world ‘in the way in which all of us, whether writers or not, perceive it from day to day.’ (12–13) This ‘provisional nature’ of the modern world to some degree equates with Brenda Cooper’s notion of ‘shape-shifting fluid boundaries’ within which nothing is pure (94) and Tony Simoes da Silva’s ‘fluid modernity’ (60); but Simoes da Silva insists that the particularity of this (post)modern world that creates the condition of displacement and thus the need for self translation, be recognised and acknowledged for what it is. He claims that ‘the subject position of the refugee has shifted from being temporally-limited and geographically determined … to a subject position now intrinsic to power distribution, world economies and wealth management.’ (59)

In quite different circumstance, but one in which he too might be understood to be caught ‘on shifting ground’ (Rushdie 15) between the worlds of Maori and Pakeha, the poet Hone Tuwhare requests in ‘Wry Song’ that:

… the texture
and fissured lines in
stone temper my life-style
to another self, enduring:
less faceless.

For in the tumult of my
separate hells, pummelled
I have been beyond shine or
recognition.
This tumult of separate hells may have nothing to do with nation, and everything to do with the personal and the poetic; but whatever its source, this issue pays tribute to the shine of Hone Tuwhare who died in January of this year. His was no reflected light, but the sun, ‘who lavish spread his gold around’. Unfortunately Tuwhare was right, Time is a limiting, inhibitive, sponsor man of greed, hunger, one-eyed telescope and key-hole peeping — armed with a foreclosure on your life but Time’s foreclosure on poetry is less sure: Tuwhare’s words overflow his life, like the boisterous and tender energy of the sea of which he writes with such fond knowing:

There let the waves lave
pleasuring the body’s senses,
and the sun’s feet
shall twinkle and flex
to the sea-egg’s needling
and the paua’s stout kiss
shall drain a rock’s heart
to the sandbar’s booming.

The sandbar’s booming recalls Tennyson’s ‘Crossing the Bar’ and the poet’s wish for ‘such a tide as moving seems asleep/ Too full for sound and foam/ When that which drew from out the boundless deep/ Turns again home’. This issue also marks Hena Maes-Jelinek’s crossing. Hena (who died in July this year) was a founding member of the European Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies; a rigorous, imaginative and generous scholar; and a woman of warmth, vibrancy and grace.

Anne Collett

NOTES


5 ‘Sea Call’, Mihi, p. 166.