Kunapipi 30 (2) 2008, Contents, Editorial

Anne Collett

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All correspondence (manuscripts, inquiries, subscriptions) should be sent to:
Dr. Anne Collett
Editor — KUNAPIPI
English Literatures Program
University of Wollongong
Wollongong NSW 2522
Australia

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Front Cover:
‘Wall hanging of black velour showing a map of the island of St. Vincent’, from ‘The “West Indian” Front Room’ exhibition by Michael McMillan (Geffrye Museum 2005–06). Photo © Dave Lewis.

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

Although this special issue began with the idea of exploring the diaspora of African popular culture, it shifted over the extended period of its compilation to include work on African diaspora and/or African popular culture. The end result is an eclectic range of essays, fiction, poetry and installation work on Africa in the Caribbean, Canada, Britain, the US and Australia. It includes discussion of religion, philosophy, theatre, dub poetry, ‘market literature’, drumming, and home decoration. It features work on writer/performers J.M. Coetzee, Pamela Mordecai, Mukoma wa Ngugi, Moqapi Selassie, Sistren; and Kunapipi’s second ‘poetry retrospective’ that highlights the work of Caribbean storyteller, Olive Senior. I say, Caribbean, but she spends much of her life in Canada; yet when I tried to replace Caribbean with Canadian-Caribbean or Caribbean-Canadian, it did not seem right — perhaps because her poetry is situated so firmly in the rhythms of the Caribbean — its voices, its language, its stories and songs, its people and its history. ‘So far from the sea,’ she writes, ‘I find myself/ worldless. (Oh, leave it alone, but I meant/ to write “wordless.”)’. It’s hard to imagine the Olive I know from her poetry and story ‘short of a word’, but in sympathy I give her the last word of this brief introduction and celebration of thirty years good sailing:

… sometimes, like

   tonight, I feel a hemispheric sadness: the
   New World as tired as the rest. And there’s
   a waterlogged moon getting ready to burst

   like the gourd that spilled an ocean when
   the seeker, like myself, disobeyed, took it
   down from where it hung by a thread,

   dropped and broke it. So who were we
   to know that from it seas would stream
   forth, bringing three ships with our eclipse:

   the Black Sun? Yet how but by disobedience
   can we change the world order? So what if
   all we are left with is a sieve to carry water?

   We can use it to fish up a poem or two
   to sail from our flagpoles.¹

Anne Collett

NOTES

¹ Founded in 1979 by Anna Rutherford, this is Kunapipi’s 30th year of production. The lines are from ‘The Song That it Sings’, published in Olive Senior’s latest volume of poetry, Shell (Toronto, Insomniac Press, 2007, p. 28). The poem is reproduced in full on p. 191 of this issue.