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Anne Collett

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Abstract

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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.

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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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European Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies

Front Cover: ‘pyro-technics’, Hal Pratt


*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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The sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky, except that the sea was slightly creased as if a cloth had wrinkles in it. Gradually as the sky whitened a dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky and the grey cloth became barred with thick strokes moving, one after another, beneath the surface, following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually.

As they neared the shore each bar rose, heaped itself, broke and swept a thin veil of white water across the sand. The wave paused, and then drew out again, sighing like a sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously. Gradually the dark bar on the horizon became clear as if the sediment in an old wine-bottle had sunk and left the glass green.


Virginia Woolf’s vision of life as flux, given literary expression in *The Waves*, has much in common with Hal Pratt’s photographic work, featured in this issue (and on the cover). I first came across Hal’s photography in the form of a wave — well, two waves. The first was a black and white photograph of a wave, framed in weather-beaten wood; and the second was an unframed plane of aqua wash — ‘a painting’ that looked as though the colour, texture and rhythm of a wave had been somehow transferred directly to paper — such was the illusion. On further inquiry I discovered that what I thought to be painting was photograph and what I thought to be ‘wave’ was something other. ‘These images,’ writes Hal, ‘are about change’:

When I began this project, photographing slipped boat hulls, I did not see abstract landscapes where a waterline might transform into a distant horizon. I saw subtle colours and contours and richly textured weathering. It was some time before the metamorphosis took place and it crept on me almost imperceptibly. (66)

Many of the contributions to this issue explore the illusory nature of ‘our world(s)’ — the deceptive nature of our perceptions and the creative and critical means by which those perceptions might be changed. As I write these words, a recent performance of Handel’s *Messiah* echoes in my head: the trumpet will sound and ‘we shall be changed’. Belief in the possibility of transformation, and the knowledge that we can and do change, is both the hope and sometimes also the fear by which we live. It is what Hal Pratt calls ‘terra fluxus’ and what Kenyan writer David Mavia, alias Jambazi Fulani, calls ‘shifting visions’ (124). ‘I’m reading about certainty,’ writes John Haynes, ‘the odd/mad sense the word “know” takes on if I say ‘I know you’re on the sofa, now’. It’s not how hard I’ve gazed at you, how carefully I’ve checked the room, but the insanity of doubting it. And then I thought of tales of Africk, eyes set in men’s pectorals. (88)

… shifting visions.

Anne Collett