

The Younger Child: Blue Gum, Issue n.1

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The Centre for Australian Studies at the University of Barcelona has been operating for more than two decades now, inspired and led by the indefatigable energy of its founder and present co-director, Dr. Sue Ballyn, who from the very beginning counted on the valuable support of colleagues such as Dr. Elisa Morera de la Val, for long a commendable Public Relations for the Centre, and Dr. Emma Martinell, its efficient Secretary. In this long period, the Centre has become a steady hub of academic, cultural and human exchange. Several hundreds of scholars and writers have enjoyed its hospitality, be it as visiting professors, as occasional lecturers, or as delegates at any of its many conferences. And together with them, all the way through several dozens of UB students have enjoyed academic exchanges in Australia promoted by the Centre, while quite as many Australian ones have been welcomed at this end of the world in their European crossings. Other students have held assistant scholarships and worked at the Centre; and still many more have helped in the organization of conferences and actively participated in them, often producing excellent papers. Their vitality and enthusiasm were instrumental to the coming of age of the Centre, and are still an irreplaceable part of it.

Indeed, the ASC Executive Committee felt that the research and, equally importantly, the exceptional experiences of these students, both local and visiting, deserved an outlet that would do justice to their invaluable contribution. Their vitality and enthusiasm, but also their ingenuousness and their amazing intelligence deserved to be reflected. We knew that some of them enjoyed writing creatively, and did so. And many of them recorded their experiences in beautiful ways, as demonstrated in issue no. 1 of our peer-reviewed journal [Coolabah](#), which by now has proudly reached its fourteenth issue. Entitled [This Foreign Land](#), and lovingly edited by one of the contributors to the present issue and a long-standing pillar of the Centre, Dr. Caty Ribas (whose efficiency in dealing with the technological underside of lectures and presentations must surely be remembered by all of those who have participated in the ASC conferences), it compiled the experiences of several UB students who enjoyed student exchanges at either La Trobe or Southern Cross University in Australia.

Together with the very human ambition of capturing the strong emotions of student life, or put differently, of glaring youth, we believed it important to allow those students (as well as others, as has finally been the case) the possibility of publishing texts of various

kinds without the strictures of academic journals. We also believed in the usefulness of providing an outlet for initiation ventures not only in the textual, creative or academic realms, but also more generally in the visual arts. And this outlet, eventually, could be open to anybody with an interest in these matters. Why not?

A result of these concerns, and the result of a joint effort, we are happy and proud to be presenting the first issue of a new journal: **Blue Gum**. Edited by the Executive Committee of the Centre for Australian Studies at the University of Barcelona, its main aim is, then, to stimulate the creativity and the development of critical abilities of graduate students and young scholars –a category that we understand in its broadest sense– as well as the interrelation of both capacities, and as many others as possible.

As we announced in our first Call for Papers, **Blue Gum** wants to be interdisciplinary and eclectic, and is willing to accommodate a miscellaneous variety –pleonasm intended– of pieces of writing and art. These can range from Creative Writing in traditional genres such as fiction –in the form of short stories or of fragments of longer narrative pieces–, drama or poetry, to what can be variously termed as Creative Non-Fiction, Ficto-Criticism, Auto-Ethnography, Egocriticism, and/or other cross-genre innovative choices. Together with this wide-ranging possibility of cross-genres, the visual arts, again, should occupy a prominent position on its pages. But of course it will all depend on the journal's prospective contributors. Anybody from the academic community –or else– is invited to submit materials of the above-mentioned characteristics –or else. Given our scope of action, we expect texts mostly in English, but multilingual ones as well as translations to and from other languages are also welcome. And works in other languages (mostly Catalan and Spanish, but also others) will be also considered. The journal language and the thick of its contents, however, will definitely be English.

The present issue offers twelve contributions, a beautiful dozen. They have been arranged in alphabetical order of authors' surnames to emphasize **Blue Gum** –and the texts'–miscellaneous character. Seven are authored by students who were part of Australian-Catalan academic exchanges, or have variously contributed to the Centre's activities. They are those by Caty Ribas, Eva Campamà Pizarro, Pedro Fernández Dorado, Silvia Juventeny, Mila Martínez, Ruth Sancho Huerga (the last two of whom actually contributed to the inaugural issue of *Coolabah*), and Nick Taylor. They are all remarkable pieces. Of the remaining five works, one has been contributed by Dr. Noah Riseman, currently a visiting researcher at the Centre. At our request, Noah kindly offered to write a reflection on the whole matter of the 'consulta' on Catalan independence held these days, in November 2014, not to be missed. He is the only established scholar among our present contributors, and we are taking this chance to thank him most earnestly, both for accepting to participate in **Blue Gum** and for his remarkable teaching contributions while staying among us.

The four remaining pieces are authored by former or current University of Barcelona postgraduate students: Carmen G. Aragón, alias Jean Murdock, Yolanda Pérez Cantón, Saima Rafique and Edgar Tello. Also these texts are outstanding for different reasons, as you will soon confirm. Here is a brief taste as presentation:

In "Nettie Palmer and her Daughter Aileen Palmer, Two Australian Women and One Aim: 'Aidez L'Espagne'," Eva Campamà Pizarro takes us on a journey from Australia

to Spain with the biographies of Nettie Palmer, well-known Australian poet, literary critic and writer, and her daughter Aileen Palmer, who were both actively engaged with Republican Spain against fascism during and after the Spanish Civil war of 1936-1939. In a well-documented essay, Campamà traces how both women's involvement in the Spanish Civil War would profoundly change their political thinking, engagement with literature and their lives.

In "An achievement of the Round-Robin Approach: Temps Obert v 11.1 Reaches the One-year Milestone," Pedro Fernández reflects on his experimentation with collaborative narrative techniques during his present stay at the University College of Cork, Ireland, set off by an interdisciplinary agenda that promotes a turn to qualitative research through the use of new internet technology.

In "De los naufragos sin isla a los monstruos que son y no son" Carmen G. Aragón, alias Jean Murdock, weaves a provocative network of literary references around the figure of the castaway to remind us about matters such as inescapable otherness, loneliness, communication, and the lack of it. Her compact text invokes a maelstrom of emotions of which only Coleridge's flower could save us... perhaps.

In "An Elastic Feeling of Space, Images and Imaginings," Silvia Juventeny poetically addresses her first incursion into Australian territory as an emotional and intellectual journey that shuttles back and forth between the private and the communal and the theoretical and experiential, to make sense of the spirituality, locatedness and disorientation she has experienced in the continent.

In "An Ongoing Romance: Literature and Emerging Technologies," a short reflection on her recent research, Mila Martínez Giner looks at past and contemporary connections between literature and technology, and how the two areas are, in fact, have always been tightly interwoven and mutually inspiring. Spurred by the possibilities of using 3D printers in textual treatment, she foresees a bright future for the "romance between literature and technology."

On her turn, in "That Time When My Skin Changed Color: A Spaniard in the USA," Yolanda Pérez Cantón, shares with us her upsetting yet revelatory experiences in the USA, when she learned that, in spite of her immaculately white skin (we've seen her!), she was considered to be non-white by mainstream Americans. Such was the impact of these experiences that she has undertaken a PhD research on the matter, which intends to contribute to improving the apprehension of the matter of stereotyping and cultural prejudice in the US but also in human societies at large.

Saima Rafique arrived in Europe from Pakistan some time ago, and she writes for this issue about her idea of "Home." The term seems to have gained unusual depth for Saima, as she offers to us a finely tuned poem which delves on the multiple nuances and vertexes of this prized, reverberating term, as well as on the complex feelings and affects thereby evoked.

In "Memorabilia", Caty Ribas gives a personal account of her travels to China as part of her doctoral interest in Chinese-Australian literature. She does this under an invented name and using a third-person singular narrative perspective so as to create a more

fictional mode and distance that allows her to run her inner, emotional journey parallel to her factual, physical one.

As already advanced, Noah Risemann's "Observations of Catalan Independence" will be appealing to anybody interested not only in political processes of secession, but also on the relevance of some accompanying cultural and social niceties, with which Noah has become acquainted through living the experience of the Catalan Consulta of 2014 close-by. His perspective as an informed outsider is highly valuable, notwithstanding the fact that it might dispirit some sympathiser of Catalan independence, in his unadorned account of the practical difficulties that, according to Noah, such a process of secession would need to meet.

"Nothingness," "Looking for the Sublime" and "Hunter" are three poems Ruth Sancho Huerga wrote on one of her journeys in Pacific lands, and they render faithful homage to their evocative landscapes and the powerful emotions that they raise in the sensitive visitor. Her poems are full of an energy and might which succeed in inspiring the reader.

In "The Walls of Barcelona", Nick Taylor provides an analysis of the world of street art, and graffiti in particular, during his research stay in Barcelona. He takes us into hidden downtown alleyways and long avoided parts of the centre that now team with new forms of urban life and subculture. His observations on the racial, gendered and class-informed aspects of this artistic means of expression are always well documented and informed, as well as sensitive to the irony and sarcasm it is often imbued with.

Finally, for his present piece, also Edgar Tello draws on ideas from his PhD doctoral dissertation, a compelling exploration of the figure of the Other in the fiction of South African novelist J.M.Coetzee. Indeed, in "And What About Kannemeyer? On Coetzee's *Tjuringa*," Tello puts into play the self/other relationship only to undermine it, creating a text where these two categories seem to confound each other while paying memorable homage to the writer he admires. Philosophical and poetical speculation, bicycles, *tjuringas* and songlines come in his aid. His pretty daughter, to whom he dedicates his story, was born on December 9th, when this introduction was being completed. Congratulations, Edgar, and welcome Laia!

We want to thank all of them for entrusting to us their cherished pieces of writing. We have done our best to make them justice.

And last but not least, we would like to thank Baden Offord, long-standing friend of the Centre, for both his generous introduction to this issue and for his constant support.

Blue Gum is the Centre for Australian Studies at the University of Barcelona's younger child. We now entrust it to you. May its life be long and prosperous.

The *Blue Gum* General Editors

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