

## ***A Love Journey***

*Marlene Rivero Bartolomé and Asmaa Aaouinti Haris*

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Love is a culturally shaped concept. Or something we feel. Or the most essential part of human existence. Or maybe all of that and much more. At first glance, it seems to be a very easy term to describe, but it encompasses so many nuances that it ultimately becomes such a rich topic to reflect upon. Currently, and maybe more than ever, love—and everything it entails—are discussed over and over and from a broader range of perspectives.

We chose LOVE as the topic for this issue of Blue Gum because it seems to be a universal emotion yet it is experienced at such a personal and intimate level most times that we thought it would give way to a quite diverse issue with texts that explore love from various points of view. In fact, while putting together this number of the magazine it dawned on us that love takes many more forms than we had previously predicted. This has made our editing process an even more interesting and enriching experience.

This issue includes texts that range from strictly personal to social and cultural visions of love.

In “The Unspoken Stories of LGBTQ+ Refugees: Healing personal trauma and social prejudices through storytelling and writing,” Anna Torrella Barrufet aims to shed light on LGBTQ+ refugees who represent a minority social group suffering persecution and violence in many parts of the world. She proposes storytelling as a coping mechanism for healing. The five stories presented aim to empower their voices as well as to break the silence they endure due to the lack of freedom to love and to choose.

In “Chinese New Year” Chong Seng Tong illustrates the effects that urbanization and modernization have had on the current meaning of the Chinese festive season. He portrays the tendency in times of celebration to move away from its actual significance, that is, love and family gathering. Thus, moving from the collective to the individual, and from the affective to the material.

Lorne Walker-Nolan's "The Battler's Boy" explains his journey towards an absent father who, nonetheless, never ceased to be present in his life. The text takes us onto Lorne's emotional voyage, the beginning of his search, each new discovery, and disillusionment.

In the poems by Giordano Durante, he writes about domestic love, love in quotidian moments, such as his daughter's growth, his grandmother cooking, the conquest and loss of desire, or even the love for nature and its fruits.

"La Química del amor," written by Ana San Paulino Casal offers, within the field of Psychology studies, a very interesting metaphor to illustrate the process of falling in and out of love by using the image of a canvas that has colours, symbolizing hormones, added to or removed from it.

In "Love me or leave me': An analysis of love as a polarised discourse in pop music," Josep Baró Casanovas and Mar Panyella Bonet explore how love has been a central topic in all forms of artistic expression. In their paper, they focus on pop music to illustrate the way in which songs portray the notion of love –and the loved one– as an essential part of one's existence, so much so, that it becomes a discourse of 'all or nothing.'

Marina Miguel's "Territori i territorialitat, perspectives del món a 'The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion'" employs the notion of otherness to explore another form of love which emerges from the love for one's own self. As Marina describes: "quan parlem d'amor freqüentment pensem en l'amor cap a 'l'altre,' però aquest passa per l'amor propi. Per això, proposo desdibuixar les fronteres i estendre la comprensió de l'alteritat a la que també forma part del propi 'jo'."

We are deeply grateful to both Dr. Isabel Alonso Breto and Dr. Maarten Renes for having given us the opportunity to edit this issue of Blue Gum. Compiling this issue has been such an enriching experience as well as a learning process at many levels.

**Editors:** Asmaa Aaouinti-Haris and Marlene Rivero Bartolomé

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