

*Introduction: Partnership Encounters in Literature(s), Poetry and  
Voices from Other Worlds*

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As it has occurred every month of December for the past nine years, we are pleased to present a new issue of the Centre of Australian and Transnational Studies at the University of Barcelona's yearly electronic journal *Blue Gum*. Once again, we are particularly proud of this achievement and its contents. Indeed, as you will see, this is a truly inspirational and special edition/compilation.

Guest-edited by Mattia Mantellato, from the Partnership Studies Group at the University of Udine in Italy, and Isabel Alonso-Breto, from the Centre for Australian and Transnational Studies at the University of Barcelona in Spain and general editor of *Blue Gum*, the chosen title for this year's issue is *Partnership Encounters in Literature(s), Poetry and Voices from Other Worlds*. It comprises essays and texts written by students from the first and second edition of the Master specialisation in Partnership Studies and Native Traditions offered at the University of Udine, steered by the PSG founder and director, Professor Antonella Riem. Together with these suggestive articles, the Miscellanea section carries our yearly dose of excellent poetry. But first things first.

Faithful to its multilingual and heterodox vocation, the academic bulk of this year's *Blue Gum* contains texts in both English and Italian. Indeed, out of fourteen articles, seven are in Italian and seven in English. They all scrutinise and illuminate a diversity of relevant literary works under the lens of the biocultural partnership-domination theory. As you will read throughout the issue, this approach was firstly propounded by the Austro-American anthropologist Riane Eisler in her pioneering volume *The Chalice and the Blade* (published in 1987), and later developed in other eminent works, as she has kept updating her pathbreaking research with valuable scholarly contributions that you will find along the articles.

The literary texts under scrutiny in this issue range from the ancient to the contemporary, from 'canon' to post-decolonial literature, in a joyful variety of interrelated recurrences, connections and encounters. William Shakespeare, Walter Scott, Doris Lessing, Ursula Le Guin, Bram Stoker, David Malouf and Jean Rhys are just few of the many writers tackled by our invited authors. They all share powerful concerns, perspectives and opinions. Article titles like "The Power of The Blade in *A Thousand Ships*", "The True Quest: In Search of Gilany", "The Chalice and the Blade in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*" or "*Il Grande Mare dei Sargassi* come Spazio-Simbolo tra Dominio e Partnership" and "Il *Macbeth* di William Shakespeare tra Partnership e Dominio" give us an idea of how central the partnership approach and biocultural theory of Riane Eisler features in the collection.

Other titles, like "William Blake: una Visione del Mondo Sciamanica" and "*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland: a Journey into the Unconscious, a Shamanic Journey*", show the shamanic-oriented approach to the texts in question, while also speaking of journeys of self-discovery and illumination - just like "*The Wonderful Wizard of Oz: A Journey of Self-Discovery through Partnership*". Still others, such as "La Donna Vampiro in *Christabel* di Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Carmilla* di Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu e *Dracula* di Bram Stoker" and "L'incontro tra Priamo e Achille in Malouf e in Omero", suggest the relevance of the politics of gender in the written words and the depicted societies, an issue which is central to Eisler's biocultural theory and lens. This is also evident in "*The Whale Rider: Women's Empowerment and Environmental Protection in the Contemporary Age*", which adds a crucial concern with the environment to gender preoccupation, pretty much like "I Racconti di *Terramare* di Ursula K. Le Guin" and "Exploring a New Mythology in Doris Lessing's *The Cleft*", where speculative fiction and its projections of possible, alternative worlds meet partnership. "*Una Vita Immaginaria* di David Malouf: il Riscatto della Cura e l'Importanza del Caregiver in un'Ottica di Partnership", in conclusion, makes it obvious that matters of care, of oneself, of others and of the planet, are also among these authors' paramount concerns.

The Miscellanea section carries works by three poet-scholars. To begin with, Ruchini Abayakoon, who is a doctoral candidate and teaching assistant at MacMaster University in Canada, contributes with some pieces from her collection *Dartboard Photographs*, nominated for the Gratiaen Prize 2019 in her natal Sri Lanka. Postcolonial Studies scholar from the University of Malaya in Malaysia, Dr. Carol Leon, has been kind enough to share with us three delicate poems. Finally, we are also honoured to conclude the section, and the volume, with the poetic words of Professor Anselmo Paolone, a specialist in Pedagogy from the University of Udine, who significantly contributes poems both in Italian and English, honouring the afore-mentioned multilingual penchant of our journal.

As editors, we would like to sincerely thank all the contributors for their generosity and patience: Milena Anzani, Tatiana Azzola, Roberto Baldini, Angelica Bergamini, Ivan Buttazzoni, Francesca Corrias, Silvia Dell'Oste, Francesca De Blasi, Angela Faranda, Roberta Pibiri, Pamela Pielich, Federica Tommasini, Veronica Riva and Valentina Visini, and with them also Ruchini Abayakoon, Carol Leon and Anselmo Paolone. They have all made it possible that this year's *Blue Gum* may hopefully surprise and challenge its readers, as we said at the beginning, once again.

Thank you, dear Italian students and dear poets, for your contributions. Thank you, dear readers, for your fidelity.

Also, thanks are due to Mercedes Padial, Secretary of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures and of English Studies at the University of Barcelona, and a member of CEAT, for the technological expertise.

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