

Introduction: Wor(l)ds from Home and Beyond

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A few words from home

Isabel Alonso-Breto

At *Blue Gum*, this somewhat eccentric electronic annual, highly cherished by the CEAT team and hopefully also by its friends and readers, we are including two dossiers this year. In one of them we are delighted to welcome again the contributions of the MaPS students in Udine, as we did last year. The essays, shortly introduced below by fellow scholar and co-editor Mattia Mantellato, speak by themselves. They take us to dimensions often forgotten in the crazy compulsions of neoliberal times. Thank you indeed, also to Professors Antonella Riem and Anselmo Paolone, and of course to the authors, for sharing with us these pearls of solace and reflective wit. We travel with them outbound from literature and back onto literature, and on the way, within the circle, they help us envisage better worlds.

Together with these evocative texts, we are proud to open this year's issue with a colourful fanzine produced by UB students. They are members of the group who took part in the 2022-2023 edition of the undergraduate course "El món postcolonial anglòfon" ("The Anglophone Postcolonial World"). The group would meet twice a week in one of the old rooms at our "Pati de Lletres" in the late evenings, at those hours when the university is unusually silent and welcoming in a quasi-preternatural way. The students were invited to create some kind of collective fanzine, a challenge that they took on with remarkable enthusiasm –though not without reticence in some cases, as it would be expected. The challenge included as well as the responsibility of self-organization, that is, of taking forward the project without any teacherly inference or specific instructions that might curtail their creativity. Hence, accepted these premises, they would regularly use brief time slots in the classes for their private meetings, where they autonomously appointed editing roles, distributed tasks and set schedules. Later on, they shared their productions with one another, revised them, and put them all into a colourful and informative fanzine. They also shared presentations about process and purpose. I believe we had an altogether good time –I did at least, witnessing the process–, and that relevant skills were acquired, or genuinely improved, on the way.

What you are presented with here is a brief sampler of that initial fanzine. Unfortunately, much work has been left out. In some cases, it was impossible to reach the students at this point for them to grant permission for publication; in others, even if every contribution had undeniable interest, there was one issue or another. In any event, we trust you will enjoy the pages composing *The Postcolonial*. I would like to congratulate Berenice P. Fernández, both for the wonderful photo-reportage on the Sundarbans and her piece on the Hijra communities in India, and for the other sections she has put together. Also, most especially, for her conscientious edition work. Thank you also to Teresa Berkhout, who also contributed to editing this shortened version of the fanzine, and who writes a

relevant piece on Indigenous Peoples' and collaborative climate activism in the Canadian Northwest. And certainly to the other students: Chaymae Mouziane, who fills us here on Ahmed's reflections on the figure of the stranger, and to the rest of you, for your spirit and openmindedness.

As always, a word of thanks to Mercedes Padiàl for bringing it all to you on the website, to Martin Renes, current CEAT director, and to its founder and emeritus director, dear Dr. Susan Ballyn. Enjoy the reading!

A few words from Udine

Mattia Mantellato

It is with very great pleasure that, as co-editor of this new issue of *Blue Gum* 2023, I welcome here the reflections and papers of a group of seven students who attended, in the academic year 2022-2023, the Master specialisation course in *Partnership Studies and Native Traditions* at the University of Udine (Italy),¹ founded and coordinated by Professor Antonella Riem, and directed this year by Professor Anselmo Paolone. We want to thank the journal editor, Isabel Alonso-Breto, for this great opportunity because, since she joined the PSG (the Partnership Studies research group),² she has supported our work with great enthusiasm, thus spreading the premises and methodologies of *partnership* with passion and generosity amongst scholars, students, and esteemed colleagues in Spain and abroad.

Our Master specialisation is a special and innovative programme that links together the *partnership* lens propounded by the social-thinker, activist and renowned scholar Riane Eisler,³ together with different sacred traditions coming from native and shamanic cultures around the world. Indeed, our Master gathers in Udine more than thirty distinguished experts on anthropology, sociology, psychology, pedagogy, literatures and the arts who discuss and interrelate with more than eight shamans coming from different ancestral wisdoms of the world. The aim of MaPS, acronym of the Master, is to reconnect people with their spiritual and more-than-human dimensions, in order to 1) comprehend and apply other systems of experiencing, understanding and interacting amongst nations and communities, 2) recover the fundamental bond with Mother-Nature-Earth and 3) reflect on our past, our roots, as meaningful traces or passages to better understand ourselves, those around us, and the world.

The papers presented in this section are captivating and insightful analysis of literary texts that speak of *other* options, voices, directions, cultures, id-entities. They are critical interpretations of classical and postcolonial texts, namely works that recount of different possibilities and opportunities for the world to come, through *partnership*, care and love. Some of these papers are intimate reflections that students derived from the readings proposed during the course, others are personal research on topics and authors that they felt to bring into dialogue during our literary exchanges.

¹ <https://www.uniud.it/it/didattica/formazione-post-laurea/master/alta-formazione/Area-umanistica-comunicazione-formazione/partnership-sciamanesimo> (consulted on 18/12/2023).

² <https://partnershipstudiesgroup.uniud.it/> (consulted on 18/12/2023).

³ Eisler's *partnership (gylanic)* approach calls for a "cultural transformation" at the heart of societies, a new way of "relating to others" that is more equitable and caring. For Eisler this is a direction to dismantle *dominator* (patriarchal) views in which rigid hierarchies, authoritarianism and violence tend to prevail. Moving from this partnership/dominator *continuum*, the Partnership Studies Group (PSG) has developed important multi- and interdisciplinary research, investigating the presence and meaning of partnership/dominator configurations within World Literatures in English, Language, Education and the Arts. If you wish to know more on the *partnership model*: Eisler (1988). *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future*. San Francisco: HarperOne.

Through their voices and writings, students have substantiated the role of literature and literary studies in general, which are disciplines, practices and arts that create bridges amongst “Others”, and that allow ‘to read’ critically what is happening around us. Papers are written both in Italian and in English, because we are delighted to share *Blue Gum*’s widening approach towards “other” languages and cultures.

Linda Angeli presents a short and insightful discussion on the role of women in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, proposing an interesting reading of the many episodes associated to act of knitting (and thus “connecting”) in the novel.

Maria Concetta Cariello focuses on Emily Dickinson’s poetry, thus offering precise references for the depiction of Emily as a “shaman-woman” or “medicine-woman” of/for life. Maria Concetta follows the intricate labyrinths of Dickinson’s mind and writes a brilliant essay that puts to the fore the poetess’ love for melody and rhythm, which are extremely important features in the processes of composition and “healing” during Dickinson’s life adventures and misfortunes.

Patrizia Giustarini takes her readers to the enchanted world of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum. Patrizia retraces Dorothy’s voyage, a perilous and yet *partnership* journey that will allow the girl to better understand herself and also, and more importantly, the Other.

Camilla Gusso focuses on Sally Morgan’s *My Place*, one of the masterpieces of Australian Aboriginal literature, a story of re-connection with one’s roots, ancestors and (individual and communal) history. Only at the end of the paper we realise why Camilla chose this text, supposedly being herself part of an ancient native community from Latin America.

Antonella Mizzaro’s paper deals with the joyful and magical world of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry *The Little Prince*, a fantastic and symbolic fable that takes readers back to their childhood. Antonella reads the prince’s story through Eisler’s *partnership* approach, thus defining him as a “gylanic boy”, recognising in his actions the attentive values of people who advocate for caring and loving attitudes or ways of being.

Jovana Nikic presents a short and yet interesting reading of William Blake’s *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, thus showing how the Romantic poet was able to brilliantly depict vertical and horizontal visions of possibilities to interact with life.

Finally, Maria Chiara Ricci turns to William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, a fundamental play in the Bard’s production. Maria Chiara presents a clear reading of the play, focusing in particular on the relationship between Prospero and Caliban, which she interprets as a veiled critique on power and domination over the “Other”.

I want to thank all students who agreed to participate in this short publication. Their voices, thoughts and writings are powerful demonstrations on the necessity of literature and literary critique as important means to interpret and transform reality. Apart from these seven students, I want to thank also all other members of the *clan of the wolf*, the name that has been chosen for this year’s group by one of the shamans who met us in Udine. Thanks also to Anna Saudin and Costanzo Allione, the founders of *Where the Eagles Fly*, the major partner of the project, constant guides through the shamanic world.

And finally, to the reader: may these short reflections or papers open your heart or a new direction to your path. May you discover partnership and care. And who knows? Maybe one day, we hope to see you here, in Udine, at our Master!

Barcelona and Udine, December 2023.