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Antonella Riem Natale

When the Time Comes

This is how Veronica Brady was, in a conversation about literature (and life) she would throw in a sentence, word, quotation, memory, idea that would start resonating inside, amplified by her buoyancy and enthusiasm, by her strength of character and determination to help, participate, teach, guide, relate, speak, tell and *storytell*, drive you around Perth in her red car that she described using the masculine pronoun, as if it were a 'mate': "my red car, he is reliable and beautiful, isn't he?"

She was like this when I first met her, in Venice, with another great doyen of Australian studies, Bernard Hickey, back in 1983. I had just finished my degree in Udine and was attending his course out of a deep desire to continue reading and working on literature. The course was on Patrick White's work and on *Voss*.

Invited by Bernard, Veronica shared her infinite knowledge on White, *Voss* and spirituality, with her unique energy, irony and ease, gently challenging us students into discussion. What a beautiful memory! I can still see her and us, sitting in Bernard's magnificent Australian library, talking, engaging, thinking about literature and (our) life, dreaming about our future.

Afterwards I met her many times, we visited her, she visited us. She sent books, articles, poems, essays, via snail mail first and then also via email. Books on women's *Theology* [*sic*] and poetry, on Aboriginal beliefs, art and world. Her books and books by others, as a sharing, a gift of the soul, source of nourishment and ever-fresh commitment. It was a conversation, a dialogic dialogue continuing from a distance ... but distance does not matter. She was one of the first great Australian critics to adhere enthusiastically to our Partnership Studies Group, which uses Riane Eisler's work on partnership to *read* literature. She was one of the first to get passionately involved with the *ALL* series and our online journal *Le Simplegadi*. Therefore, it is very apt that we are dedicating this *Le Simplegadi* number to her memory. Her involvement and spurring kept us going at all times. Still does.

I remember another occasion, in Udine, she was talking about Blake's "Tiger" with a student who was full of theories about Blake's metaphysical views, and elaborate critical interpretations. I can hear Veronica very kindly saying "Don't you think Blake is (also) describing the tiger's energy and beauty, full stop?" A different, simpler, but not simplistic, less 'canonical' point of view, stemming from her love for literature, from her constant desire to show and share the glory and power of a text and from the art of teaching literature she practised with such wisdom and fervour.

Another time, at my place, she was over seventy then, she was telling me about her morning gym routine. "We need to keep our body and mind fit, in order to enjoy every step of our life story", she told me, "then we need to let the spirit go, when the time comes".

I keep this teaching of yours safely in my heart, for when the time comes ...

Thank you, Veronica, *ad maiora*.

Antonella Riem Natale is Full Professor of English Literature and Language, Pro-Vice Chancellor International, Director of the Department of Languages and Literatures, Communication, Education and Society, President of the Italian Conference of Modern Languages and founder of the Partnership Studies Group (PSG) at the University of Udine. She is also editor in chief of the series ALL published by Forum University Press and of the online A ranked journal on World literatures *Le Simplegadi*. Among her publications: "The Spirit of the Creative Word in Patrick White's *Voss*" (Cambridge Scholars 2014), *The One Life: Coleridge and Hinduism* (Rawat 2005), and, as co-editor, the volume *The Tapestry of the Creative Word in Anglophone Literatures* (Forum 2013). For the Forum ALL series, she edited the Italian publication of Riane Eisler's *The Chalice and the Blade* (Forum 2011), *Sacred Pleasure* (Forum 2012) and *The Real Wealth of Nations* (Forum 2015). She is working on a volume on the figure of the 'Goddess' in the literatures in English, both within the 'canon' and indigenous 'minorities'. antonella.riem@uniud.it