

Literary Review



FLY AWAY, FLY HIGH

Enjoy this special issue
devoted to the short fiction
created by the very
best current genre
authors, based on
the visual
interpretation
of Birkins'
hit song

EDITORIAL

Few things –if any– are as daunting to an author as a blank sheet of paper (or a blank screen, in these modern times), and the challenge it poses has as much to do with humans' ability to put our thoughts, ideas or reveries to pen, as it does with our beliefs about the creative process.

It would appear as though the first aspect mentioned is related to linguistic elements (grammar, lexis and coherence, amongst others) and the second, to the role that inspiration –that traditionally capricious being– plays in the whole thing; but, as Lacan once explained, our inability to express our thoughts or feelings has very little to do with words (or the lack thereof) and much to do with cultural and individual taboos, so both elements –linguistics- and inspiration-related- are inextricably connected.

Regarding inspiration, as Edison aptly put it, *Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety nine percent perspiration*, and perspiration is all the more effective when it comes from strategically-planned, structured practice. That implies, in this case, capturing the vagaries of the muses by *actively chasing them*, so to speak. There are no shortcuts to this chase. The will to accept whatever lurks hidden in the deepest corners of our consciousness and let it surface, granting us access to the uncharted territory of our personality, is a trait required to allow good fiction to come to life.

As for the second element, i.e., the linguistic ingredients of the recipe, the creation of compelling literature demands, first and foremost, diligence (both in reading and in writing), and then, a constant attention to how the story is presented, so that it accomplishes the desired effect, so that it truly reflects the formerly uncharted territory now charted, recognisable for others to tread, and, in so doing, feeling a little less alone in the journey that life is.

In this special issue of *Literary Review*, a number of extremely talented writers have let the video for Birkins' *Fly Away, Fly High* unlock the doors to their imagination, and they have invited us in. For that, we are grateful.

The doors are open. Please, come in. Enjoy.

TIED TO HER OWN LIFE

It was not until having heard those words pronounced by a stranger at one of her job presentations that she realized that paramount issue which had been roaring in her head for a long time.

A change in her dull life was urgently needed; nevertheless, how to begin was the controversial matter. Becca could easily show off all her achievements, she had always been in pursuit of her most desired aims: an awesome degree with top marks, an endless curriculum, an imposing and luxurious house, a reputation as one of the best writers in her country, an adorable husband...

Being tied to life is worse than being dead, that man whispered in her ear at the end of that book festival; then, he suddenly left the room. Who was he? Why was he there? Which was his purpose? Far from getting obsessed with that experience, she didn't tell anyone about it; having worked on too many novels had made her mix reality and fantasy sometimes.

Was she glad with the long hours spent on the desk writing stories to be read by others? Was she always expecting to see her husband after one of her business trips? Was her house the safest place on Earth for her? Answers became frozen drops of water on her body. Rebecca Murrors was not sure if she wanted to continue signing books that ended up happily, whereas her own story didn't belong to that section in a library.

Another ordinary day: it was 6:00 a.m., the warm breakfast was ready, her red dress was ironed on her chair, her glossy lipstick was placed next to the mirror, her high-heel shoes... Someone knocked at the door:

Good morning Miss Murrors, do you remember me?

I'm not Rebecca Murrors anymore, she answered back.

Sara Mederos Pérez

NEW YEAR

At the beginning, I felt relaxed, floating on the water, like a duckling. I was comfortably sure that nothing wrong could happen. Thus, I would improve my life. Making these tiny changes brought it home to me that it was a really good opportunity to fly away. Hence, I asked myself, how dare I?

I was on the right track, but something made me change this positive direction. What could happen? Why could I not have control of my mind? In spite of moving forward with these marvelous ideas, I felt drowned. Some ribbons were tied in my limbs and I could not escape.

Would it be the family? I thought. In that moment I had new responsibilities that I did not have to deal with before. Another issue involved was society, because of the stereotypes or expectations that it brought about.

Apart from that, life is plenty of decisions that we have to face.

Finally, I woke up and everything that had come to me turned out to be a nightmare. After celebrating New Year's Eve, I got really drunk and I felt extremely dizzy.

It was probably time to plan New Year's resolutions, but overall, for me, it was time to relax, disconnect and enjoy every moment.

Mercedes Romero Pérez



THE ANCHOR

A woman was floating peacefully at sea. The water was cool but appealing, the sun shone above her disheveled hair and clothes. In her relaxation, she had closed her eyes and, nearly asleep, she was sinking, unaware, inch by inch. Her senses were numbed by the enveloping water; she could only feel the coldness of the sea clinging on to her skin. She tried to reach the top again, yet something held her back –a creature.

It was grabbing her foot and pulling softly and repeatedly, like a child. They both looked at each other for a moment, guessing the other's intentions, or at least trying. Then the creature circled her playfully and producing bubbles, which convinced her to linger a bit longer with it, whatever it were, there, underwater. They explored and played, using rocks and seaweed as hiding spots. Both were having a marvelous time, witnessing underwater life, but she remembered: she did not belong in the sea –she was a human being.

Her time was running out, as the air in her lungs. It had already lasted a strangely long while. She then swam back to the surface, towards light and air. As soon as the creature noticed this, it chased her and grabbed her feet again. The difference this time was that she was being pulled down harshly and painfully. She fought back with all her might; each time it drew her further, faster. Her will, however, refused to submit, so she kicked, and twisted her body, managing to free herself at last. She hastened up, up, to the light, towards life.

Carlota Bordón Muñoz



A TIED WOMAN UNDER THE WATER

The story begins in black and white. She is alone floating over the water, feeling the quiet solitude that the ocean gives. The ribbons around her wrists and her feet are illuminated by the sun piercing the transparent water and showing figures around her wooden body.

All seems to be dead and surprisingly peaceful, and when the music becomes rhythmic, she moves into the deep black sea, dancing like a siren, moving around the surface and touching the stones of the bottom with her fingers. At the same time, another angelical siren appears in the scene; there are four or five of them. They are dancing around our protagonist, imitating her melodic dance. The calm is here again. It comes to stay no longer than a short time because, suddenly, the group of sirens starts to disturb our main siren, the original one. She is being attacked. Why? She doesn't understand what is happening under the water, where the calm is for ever. Her thoughts are all rushing in her head trying to understand the situation. The music starts to be terrifying while the images, one to another, pass through the screen, stressing the spectator. She tries to quit moving herself faster than her opponents and she wins. She is a winner. Well done! She says to herself, and leaving the surface, she continues swimming, reaching her freedom and thinking about how you can be in the deepest inferno, needing some people to rescue you, and in the end you can survive by yourself without any help.

Adela Medina Hernández





ALANA

Alana was confused. She didn't know what to do. Until that moment, her life seemed to be perfect: she had what she had always wanted. Little did she know that an insignificant mistake would change her life completely. Upside down.

She was stuck in the airport due to the blizzard. Four hours earlier she felt stressed and was hysteric, but after smoking twenty cigarettes and drinking four mocha-latte coffees she felt like a human being again. She had accepted the facts: it was just going to be impossible to be at home on time to celebrate their anniversary. Anthony would be furious.

Two months prior she had to cancel their St. Valentine's date because she had to go to New York to solve a problem in the company. It wasn't the first cancellation, but it was the first time that Anthony told her he couldn't handle the situation any longer. She promised to follow a schedule, not to cancel more dates and spend quality time with the family. But the weather had its own plans.

An announcement let her know that her flight was boarding. She would be at home in four hours: would her marriage survive? She tried to call Anthony again; of course, he didn't answer.

The house was dark and quiet, extremely quiet. Alana started to sweat a lot and her heart was beating so fast that she thought she was suffering a stroke. She turned on the lights and saw the note: Anthony had left her. He asked for the divorce. Alana was unable to move while the tears run down her face. *What should I do*, she whispered. *What should I do?*

Tatiana Ramos Perera

ANDREA

Andrea had lived in Las Palmas all her life, at least, all that she was able to remember. She felt all in her environment was correct. Luis ad Malena, her parents, had treated her really kindly, her group of friends was marvelous and since Paul crossed paths with Andrea, she thought she could not ask for anything else.

On the one hand, she enjoyed all about her existence, her whole story made her proud and glad of letting people know about it. On the other, when she analyzed what her life was, she noticed a feeling of emptiness inside her. And the automatic answer of her mind: *Do not be selfish, Andrea, be grateful for what you have.* This sentence, these words were inside her brain, printed as a mantra, as a guide for her.

The University degree she had decided to study was very hard, too many cannon codes, laws and civil actions to be memorized. That was the reason for her doubts, or she preferred to believe that until that Saturday night. She wanted to understand the differences between assassination and homicide properly.

When she opened the code, a small, dirty and strange card fell onto her hands. She was petrified, her eyes were widely opened, fixed, full of tears. She did not want to read, but she did: *Do not be selfish, Andrea.* The same mantra she had in her thoughts was not a matter of education, but a psychologist's recommendation. Dr. Mengele, Jr. had instructed her parents how to convince Andrea, how to annihilate any curiosity she could have about her origin. They were not her real parents.

She had a terrible issue to deal with and a huge amount of questions awaiting a reply but, for the first time in her life, at least the life she was able to remember, she felt sure about herself. Ironically, after this discovery, she was able to sleep deeply, she was relaxed.

Hipólito García Ruiz Cátedra

LADY ANNA

Lady Anna was the youngest daughter of Lord Luthor, a stern, ill-humoured man who held the honour of being the Earl of Yorkshire. Her sister, Lady Mary, was married to a wealthy American businessman who claimed to have bonds with another noble family, and that was the only reason why he allowed the marriage, for he would never have let his lovely daughter to be married to *a simple upper middle-class moron*, as he called him, no matter how rich.

Now Lady Anna was about to meet the man who would be her future husband, as long as she could give him a good impression. *He's a bit out of age, but he's still handsome enough*, had said her mother, a snobbish woman with a permanent expression of disgust on her face.



It was 6 p.m. when the guests started arriving on their fancy cars, driven by chauffeurs in elegant uniforms. All of a sudden, the estate was full of people she had never seen, and there he was. *A bit out of age* was a downright understatement. He was presumably twice her age, with grizzled hair and some wrinkles. How could she get rid of him? Her father would never mind her opinion in this matter and her mother was not going to support her.

Then she had an idea. She could be forced to get married, but he would not, and most important, he didn't know her, which gave her the chance to give him the worst first impression ever, and so she did.

By the end of the party, Lady Anna's suitor was so shocked, that he left the house slamming the door and yelling that he had been insulted. Lord Luthor was red with rage and her mother was quiet as a tomb, but it didn't matter, for now Anna had the opportunity to live her life. She almost felt a bit sorry for her father. Almost.

Adrián Machín Cebolla

THE HIGH COST OF BEING THE BEST

She usually felt the pressure of being the best, at home, at work, as a mother, wife or daughter. Sometimes even to be perfect was not enough, she had fought all her life, but now she was empty, discouraged, and she felt alone.

A change had to be made, but what could a woman in her fifties do when she had been working all her life without a rest to have a successful career with a powerful position where she had worked for the last twenty years. She had been hanging around for months, without taking any action because she was paralyzed by all the decisions she had made over the years. At some point during this time she had forgotten what she really wanted, the things that made her happy.

Obviously, she loved her family, it was unthinkable to leave them because she knew she would not live a single day without them. I suppose however, she needed her husband in her life because she made her laugh like no one else in this world.

Despite being completely unhappy at work every day she was not capable of blaming it for her increasing sadness. Every day she spent long hours alone in her office looking at the city, watching people walking on the streets until one of those days she abandoned the office to never come back.

The decision was made, the following year she opened her own restaurant, a tiny, picturesque place where she was happy as never before running the kitchen.

In a few years she was the owner of one of the most remarkable restaurants in the city. But to achieve this she had to cut off the ribbons.

Rosana Arencibia Arencibia



THE STRANGE LADYWATER

Once upon a time, a little girl, who lived in a faraway Kingdom, was playing with her mother on a beach. It was an amazing summer day and the girl felt safe. Everything seemed perfect, but suddenly, while she was in the water alone, an enormous wave hit her and consequently she disappeared from her mother's sight. Her mother couldn't do anything to rescue her, and despite trying to request help from a man who was there, it was impossible.



Many years passed without news about the little girl, until one cold day, a young boy, who was surfing on the same beach, saw a woman floating in the water. At the beginning, he was frightened because he believed that she was dead. Just when he had decided to go near her, she went down into the water. He could see how she was alive and she seemed to dance with sea animals that were dancing around her. Just in that instant, she looked at him and he fell in love with her. Unfortunately, she decided to go away and she left him with a goofy face.

Víctor González Sánchez