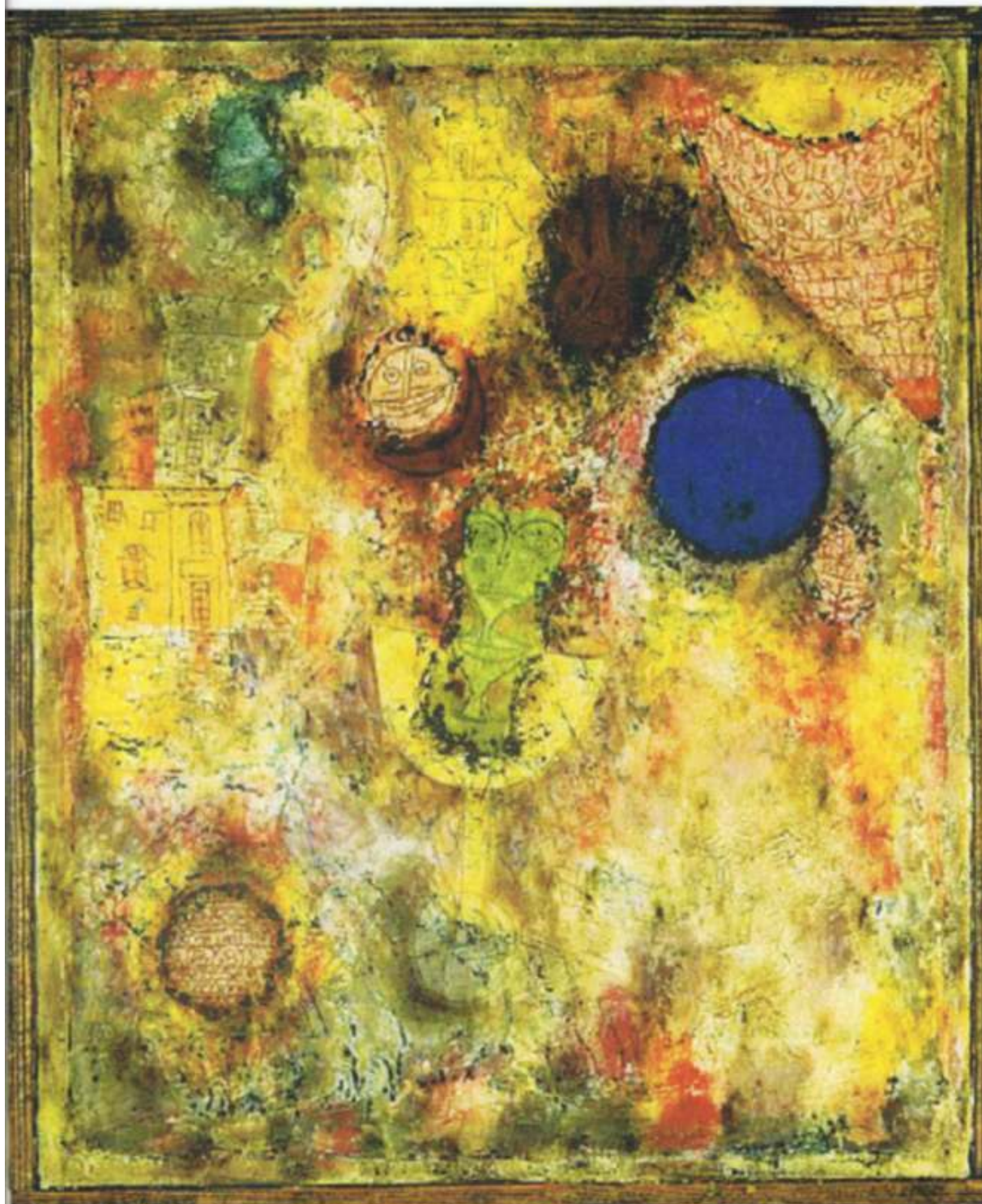


MARTIRICOS

MÁLAGA'S E.O.I. SHORT STORY JOURNAL
MAY 2007



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MARTIRICOS is an annual publication of Málaga's E.O.I. English Department. Its sole purpose is to make public the short stories which each year are shortlisted in the Concurso de Narrativa E.O.I. de Málaga, literary contest that can be entered for by all the students (any language) of all the Escuelas de Idiomas in Andalucía. In this edition, 2006-07, the first prize has been awarded to Marta García Villar (E.O.I. Fuengirola) for the story *The Moon's Tears*, which will also be published in Sur in English; the first and second finalists being Mercedes Sánchez Rivera (E.O.I. Fuengirola) and Sebastián Bascuña Serrano (E.O.I. Málaga), with the stories *In the Light of Innocence* and *The Lost Memoirs* respectively.

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Panel of judges of the VI Concurso de Narrativa en Inglés E.O.I. de Málaga

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Ana María Sepúlveda, Carmen Triviño (Málaga's E.O.I.'s English Department)
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THE MOON'S TEARS

Marta García Villar

Winner of the VI Short Story Contest in English E.O.I. Málaga 2006-07

Born in Málaga in 1988, Marta García Villar is a student of Filología Hispánicas at the UMA and a fourth course English student at Fuengirola E.O.I. Reading is what she enjoys the most, especially fiction. She loves Japanese culture, going to the movies and long walks and chats with her friends. Regarding writing as a passion, she is at the moment working on a novel. She has already been awarded several literary prizes: Colegio Salliver, Villa de Mijas and Caja Madrid. In other words: Marta is a young experienced authoress.

There was once a world that had been created by two powerful Gods. The first one was the God of Light, lord of the morning sun whose reign ended every day at twilight and rose again at dawn. The second one was the God of Darkness, lord of the quiet night and father of the stars. People believed that these Gods had created everything they could imagine, and they also thought that the two Gods were kindly disposed towards those who might ask for a favour; but no one had ever proved that.

One day, just before sunrise, as the dew formed on the flowers, the young girl Lorlegrein woke up to find that her entire world had turned into hell after the death of her true love, a young man called Yazhek. After a few anxious days, she decided to go to the Sun's temple in order to pray to the God of Light for Yazhek's

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life. Her journey was long and arduous, but hope led her weak steps and there was no human or divine force that could stop her from doing what she was about to do. When she arrived at the ivory temple, the golden statue of the God of Light looked sternly at her with his cold stone eyes. Lorlegrein knelt down and started to beg him to bring her beloved back to life. Finally, after a few hours, her prayers were heard by the God, who decided to grant her her wish. The big statue began to shine and the God appeared in front of her. Unfortunately, in order to bring Yazhek back to life, she would have to accept a condition: Lorlegrein's soul would be trapped on the bright side of the moon forever. When the young girl heard these words, she fell on the stone floor and cried, but she accepted without hesitation. After that, all that she could remember was a bright light.

At that exact moment, in the village, Yazhek opened his eyes. He had lost his beloved Lorlegrein forever and he could feel her absence piercing his heart like a sword. Everyone had heard about Lorlegrein's sacrifice and they told him at once. He felt devastated when he found out what his lover had done and he decided to visit the Stars' temple, where he prayed and asked the God of Darkness to release her. One night, while he was sleeping near a cliff, Yazhek felt a cold breeze blow by his shoulders and woke up suddenly. In front of him there was a fantastic creature that resembled a woman. Her entire body was made of light, her hair shone like gold and the tears falling from her eyes were as white as snow. Yazhek realized at once that it was Lorlegrein, but he remained speechless. His beloved just pointed at the full moon and explained to him that she could appear as a spirit as long as the moon shone brightly. He tried to touch her, but she was just a

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spirit, ethereal and untouchable. She cried too when Yazhek fell to the floor beating the ground with his fists. Lorlegrein told him again that she loved him and disappeared in the sea breeze.

Yazhek could not stand the pain and he started to yell, insulting the two Gods and shouting words full of rage. His shouts were heard by the God of Darkness, who appeared in front of him. In that moment of despair, Yazhek cried, shouted, and asked the God to imprison him too so that he would be with Lorlegrein. The God accepted, but he was disappointed by the human's rage and his words full of hatred. On the other hand, he couldn't interfere with the other God's decision, so he decided to send Yazhek's soul to the dark side of the moon. He would be near Lorlegrein; however, they wouldn't be together again as the light and the dark sides of the moon can never be together. Yazhek thought that nothing could be worse than being without his true love, but, when he realized that his entire body was being covered with darkness, he understood the God's true intentions. From that moment on, the lovers' souls would live on the opposite sides of the moon forever. They would be together, but at the same time eternally separated. In the village, they all thought that Yazhek had killed himself because he could not bear the loneliness and the pain, and as time passed by he and Lorlegrein were forgotten.

As their sadness grew deeper and stronger, Lorlegrein and Yazhek cried and cried for centuries until their tears flooded both sides of the moon on a mid-summer's evening. One day, the sun was setting behind the sea and the moon had just appeared. It was twilight, one of the two moments of the day when the two

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Gods' powers encountered face to face. People raised their heads in order to see the tears that fell from the moon. It was such a sad but beautiful vision. They soon felt as sad as the sky. At that moment, the lovers' sadness and love were so strong that they broke the barrier of the moon and their souls were released. The two Gods looked at the world, wondering about the strength of love that had been able to defeat them.

Nowadays, it is widely believed that Lorlegrein and Yazhek found each other and live in everlasting happiness when the sun sets and the moon rises. It is also rumoured that Lorlegrein's soul fell into the sea and turned into waves, while Yazhek's soul turned into the cliffy rocks against which the deep blue waves eternally pound.

* * *

IN THE LIGHT OF INNOCENCE

Mercedes Sánchez Rivera

Finalist of the VI Short Story Contest in English E.O.I. Málaga 2006-07

Also a fourth course English student at Fuengirola E.O.I., Mercedes Sánchez Rivera was born in Málaga in 1986. She studies Filología Inglesa at the U.M.A while in the evenings works as a private Spanish teacher. Goal in life: becoming a teacher and writing in her spare time. She loves going to the beach and reading, which she does both in Spanish and English, her favourite authoress being Marian Keyes. "In the Light of Innocence" is not only the first story he publishes but also the first she has ever written.

Felisa went on playing with her dolls. Her bedroom was dark, cold and extremely small. Mum was in the kitchen with someone else. Felisa knew exactly what they were talking about, but she did not want to listen to them. She was used to those 'conversations'. Sometimes, when they were too loud, she had to turn up the music volume.

The little girl was sitting on the floor, playing with two girl dolls and a boy doll. "Mum, dad and their little daughter", she used to say cheerfully. She brushed her little doll's hair and sat her next to her 'father'.

Now she could hear her mum's steps, she was coming straight to her bedroom. She stared at the door with her big brown eyes until her mum opened the door and made a gesture for Felisa to follow her. They went through the living room and headed toward the entrance, where Victor was. He looked angrily at her mum and then he bent down and pinched the girl's cheek and said "Oh, little girl, you look gorgeous today". His voice was loud and quivering, but at least he tried to be nice to her.

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It was a splendid day outside. The sun was shining and Felisa enjoyed feeling the sun streaming on her face. Her mum pushed on with quick, nervous strides. She went so fast that now and again she had to quickly skip to keep up with her. Her mum did not seem to notice her difficulties to go on that fast because she kept on shouting at her every time she slowed down. If Felisa stopped to watch the children playing in the park or to watch the colourful birds flying around the trees, her mum would pull her delicate arm against her.

"Daisy's Street", she read on the corner of the street. That shell-like house was her grandma's house; the one next to the big black mushroom. She entered the house calling up her grandma. Felisa looked like a little porcelain doll with her flowered dress and her nose completely red because of the cold outside. Her grandma hugged her and kissed her several times in her face so that it could get warmer. Mum had gone without saying goodbye, but nobody cared. "Go in there", said grandma. She pushed Felisa gently into a small dusky sitting-room where grandpa was watching TV. "Go on", he said, "you can have those sweets, we bought them for you". She took one, and then two. When she saw her father's picture she felt like crying, but instead she closed her eyes tightly and fell asleep.

Mum was back late as always. It was dark outside and also inside her mum's eyes. She was happy and speaking all the time with everybody in a cheerful mood. Her mum behaved strangely at nights. When she spoke to Felisa her eyes stared into the distance, although she was looking at her. Her words seemed to float inside her mouth and her tongue was an unsteady harbour where everybody got sick. She spoke and spoke without listening to anybody.

Then it was time to go home. Mum cooked some dinner for Felisa, sausages and mashed potatoes were her favourite meal. Mum wasn't hungry at nights, so she didn't

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have anything to eat, she had some beer instead. Mum seemed to be friendly with everybody but Felisa. She tried to make her laugh or play with her, but she was too busy with her mobile phone to pay any attention to her little daughter.

"Come on, you, girl. Go to bed. Time to sleep", mum kept on saying without listening to her daughter.

Felisa was not tired, but she was an obedient and responsible girl. She went to bed and stood still, looking at the ceiling. She loved being in solitude and thinking. She had a vivid imagination. But then she heard the door closing and a pretended little slam at the end. "Where is she going?", she wondered. "She'll be right back", she calmed down. But as time went by she felt more and more scared; she did not like being left all on her own for such a long time. . . She looked for her mother around the house. Nobody. She went out to the balcony. She shivered with cold. It was freezing. Her bare feet did not want to stand there any more. Felisa thought mum was in those bars around their apartment.

"Mum, mum!", she cried. But it was useless. She came in again, and went to bed crying loudly. She got in bed and fell asleep after some crying.

Daylight came into Felisa's room. She jumped out of bed and opened the window. She loved the morning breeze, and this morning was very special for her. She went to her mum's bedroom very excited.

"Come on mum, dad will arrive soon! I have to be ready". She had to push her mum again and again, because she wouldn't wake up.

"Mmmm", she murmured. "Get dressed by yourself, you can do it. You are four!", her husky voice sounded broken, torn.

Felisa obeyed; she took her nicest dress and put it on. But she could not button it up.

"Mum, mum!", she cried. "Please"

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Fifteen minutes later mum was there to help her. Soon they were having breakfast. But mum could not hold her cup of coffee, she was moving to and fro in the sofa. Felisa felt sad remembering last night. But then someone knocked on the door and a shiny smile invaded Felisa's face. A tall charming man was standing in front of the door, Felisa's father. She jumped at him and they hugged each other. He asked things to her, but she couldn't do anything but smile. She felt the happiest girl in the world, and she knew she would live with her dad for good.

Mum stood behind them, and a shy smile seemed to appear on her face.

* * *

THE LOST MEMOIRS

Sebastián Bascuña Serrano

Finalist of the VI Short Story Contest in English E.O.I. Málaga 2006-07

Born in Málaga in 1966, Sebastián Bascuña Serrano has studied Filología Hispanica, Dramatic Arts, Advertising, and languages: English (5th course at Malaga E.O.I), Italian and French. His hobbies not only include physical activities like jogging and riding bicycles but also drawing, painting and handicrafts. He enjoys both scientific readings and poetry, especially that of Antonio Machado. He is a Formula 1 fan and has had some letters to the editor published in "F-1 Racing!

[...]

I distinctly remember the day they arrived. –Who could forget such a memorable date!– The area was crowded and the media were everywhere. Thousands of us gathered to witness the event, the great, the extraordinary event. I have virtually no words.

So many ages wondering if we were alone... And, if not, would “they” be intelligent? If intelligent, would they be friendly. If friendly, would they find us or we find them? What would they be like? Would they be our shape, or similar?, or they would have bizarre and funny bodies?... Those had been, who doubts, questions long time asked. And now they had an answer at last. I almost could not believe it, none of us could...

The forests had been explored, the jungles, the mountains, the deserts, throughout our not very long history. It all was presently discovered all over the

planet; the lands and the seas. Unfortunately –or not–, all those fabulous beings, living in remote zones, recorded in our stories, tales and myths did not exist any more. All that romantic lore had vanished... No other intelligent species with us, (apart from those few ones which anyone considers as “intelligent”, of course).

And suddenly, there they were. “*Fallen from the skies*” –like some witty member of the media had coined–. The name they gave their own species proved to be unpronounceable in our tongue, so we just ended up calling them *The Hews*.

In the beginning it all had been exciting, but now... Well, now we were in trouble.

Eventually, everything, after this long time, comes to my mind: The discovery of their ship beyond the last planet in the system; the first broadcasts between them and us; their approaching across the orbits of the planets, the last few hundreds of thousands kilometres... And, in the meantime, the whole population on the surface of the planet had been terribly agitated, I remember, from the moment the aliens had been discovered in the outer space till the day they ultimately landed... The first news, the first reactions, the first arrangements, I remember... And the welcome committee! Leaders from everywhere had been holding meetings to decide the best way of interacting with *the visitors*, and where to meet them. It was agreed it would be on dry land. Suitable for both, them and us...

We all had been dreaming of “*the beings from another world*” –another precious speech jewel by that same individual–, for it was quite long from the moment we first took acknowledge of them, far away in space, and the moment

our *guests* lastly put their feet on the ground... Let's say that we had had enough time to concern with the matter, to speculate about, to discuss it... Nowhere could you go that the topic were no other than *The Hews*: '*The Hews* this, *The Hews* that... *The Hews* must be green, *The Hews* must be grey... Must be tall, must be short...' Neither the younger nor the elders stopped commenting the matter. Not to blame! Not always two species make contact!

Finally the great day came. It was hot, red and bright, I remember. Everyone, eyes wide open, gazing at the ship. The hatch opened with a bang and those beings emerged from the inside. There were three of them in their strange shapes full of extremities and in their strange white suits. One of them took off a sort of helmet and so did the others (they were two females and one male as later we learned). The reaction of the masses was simultaneous: generalized amazement. The creatures under the space suits were terribly disgusting, but, at least, peaceful (if widely do we consider *peacefulness*, so to say). After a while we got used to their appearance, though. –We must be as revolting to them as they were to us– .

Their language was partly decoded, a lot of meetings were held and, eventually, *The Great Treaty* was agreed between both species.

[...]

Now very few of us are left. Forty times has the planet gone around its orbit since they first landed, and, at the moment, it all has become a mess. Those first three ones happened to be a party of scouts and now more visitors have arrived hailing from their planet, (which has a paradoxical name if it is true what they say

of it...). Precisely that had consisted *The Great Treaty* in: they needed somewhere to continue their existence because their planet was dying. Nowadays there are more than 700,000 *Hews* all over the globe, almost a quarter of us.

I look back and think of the diseases they brought, the plagues from their animals and parasites with them... We were not able to resist. Besides, our world has turned into a dump and its climatology has been fatally damaged. Arrogantly proud of their utterly advanced technology, *The Hews* have filled our little planet with gadgets, devices, machines and factories that have ruined its natural beauty. They have as well, started to take some of us into their factory sites to virtually serve as slaves. Today I pretty realize –we realize– those beings are cruel and unmerciful... Too late!

Their former planet has been used up, destroyed, terminated... Because that is what they always do. Now it is our planet's turn.

[... I can hardly keep on putting all this down any longer because I feel terribly miserable and believe everything is already meaningless...

With their four thin bony extremities, their hideous round heads, their two only eyes, their menacing huge mouths and their evil brains...

...*The Hew-man-s* are here!

Dear reader, I have done my best in trying to retrieve this data from the weird device in which I found them. This is the most accurate translation I was able to do in order to preserve the idea and spirit within.

DESTINY

Marina Cobos Ordóñez

Finalist of the VI Short Story Contest in English E.O.I. Málaga 2006-07

Born in Málaga in 1986, Marina Cobos Ordóñez is at present doing English 5 at Malaga's E.O.I. She is a student of Economics although she likes philosophy and literature. She enjoys listening to music, all kind of music, and reading, especially novels. She can also boast of the publication of her story "A different Christmas Tale".

Susan was pensive as she walked in a nice district in the suburbs. She was thinking about the dream she had had the night before. It was a strange dream that had been repeating time and time again during the last week. In the dream she was posing for a picture. She was able to see the back of the canvas and the painter's hands, but not his face or body. She was also able to hear his voice that asked her to be still and calm. It was a nice, soft, low voice. In the dream an old Mediterranean-style house also appeared with a coat of arms with two olive trees on the facade. She was intrigued with this dream because she couldn't understand why it was repeated every night.

She was looking for a house for sale in the area where she was walking in. It was her job. She had to find houses in the district with the characteristics her clients wanted. And if there seemed not to be a house for sale, she used to ask a neighbour if he knew of anyone who could be interested in selling his house. This seemed to be the case on this occasion. She had been walking for an hour and she still hadn't found a single sale sign. But she knew who to turn to. In each place there is always someone special who knows everything about everybody. Susan

had already found this person and it took only two minutes for her to get the information she needed.

Apparently there *was* a house whose owner had been abroad for more than half a year. Perhaps he would be interested in selling it. According to her information the cleaning lady must be in the house that day.

Susan went to the house and rang the doorbell. After a moment, a middle-aged woman opened the door. When she saw Susan, she turned pale.

“You...,” said the cleaning lady in a low whisper.

“Good morning. I’m Susan Toller. I’m looking for a house for sale in this area and I’d like to know if the owner of this one would be interested in selling it.”

“But you.... you are the woman.”

“What? I’m sorry but I don’t understand you.”

“Oh... excuse me. I’m a little confused. I’m Mrs. Carter, the cleaning lady. I don’t know if Mr. Olin is interested in selling his house, but perhaps, you want to see it. I think you’re going to like it.

“Well! That would be fine. Thank you.”

Susan went into the house. It was very well decorated and she liked the layout a lot. It was the perfect house for her client.

Mrs. Carter took her to the living room. When she went in, she couldn’t believe what she saw. Facing her was a fireplace and over the fireplace a picture. Surprisingly the woman in the picture was her. And what was more, in the background there was a house whose façade was the same as the one she had dreamed of.

“What’s this? I mean, I know this is a picture, but, how is that I’m in the picture? Is this a joke? Because it isn’t funny at all.”

“No, of course it’s not a joke. I know that it’s strange, uncanny. But there is something more for you to see.

Mrs. Carter asked Susan to follow her up to the attic. There, there were a lot of pictures covered with white cloths. Susan asked for permission to uncover them. To her surprise, they were all pictures of her.

“Where’s Mr. Olin? I have to talk to him. He has to explain all this to me.”

I’m afraid there’s no explanation. As you can see, he is a painter. All the pictures you have seen in the house were painted by him. But lately, he couldn’t paint anything else but you. He was obsessed. He didn’t know where your image came from, well, your image and the house which is behind you in the picture. He said that they simply appeared in his mind. And as he couldn’t get you out of his head, he went to look for you.”

“To look for me? How? Where? This is crazy.”

“Well... He couldn’t possibly know whether you were real or not, but he tried to find the house.”

“And did he find it?”

I don’t know. The only thing I know is that now he is in Italy.”

Susan couldn’t understand anything. She remembered her dream. It fitted in with what she was experiencing and she needed to find an explanation.

When she arrived home she started to think about how she could find this house. She thought about the coat of arms with the two olive trees. It could be Italian. She looked it up in a web page and she found the corresponding surname: Borgolozzi. She looked up houses with this name too, and after a while searching she found it in the web page of a firm specialised in the location of charming houses in Tuscany.

It was decided –she would go to Tuscany to meet this man.

The weather was warm. She could feel the sunshine over her body and the wind, with a nice country smell, passing through her hair. It was a pleasant sensation. The landscape was also lovely, and the house was the most beautiful she had ever seen. She was looking at it from a distance. She got nearer. Now she was able to see the yard. In the middle, there was a big canvas on an easel. Behind it, was the painter who had to be painting the landscape. As in the dream, she could only see his hands. He was singing a song. It was the same nice, soft, low voice. It was exactly like her dream. At this moment she knew without any doubt that it was destiny that had brought her there. And then he saw her.

AROA

Laura Lema Varea

Finalist of the VI Short Story Contest in English E.O.I. Málaga 2006-07

Laura Lema was born in Santiago de Compostela, where she graduated in Biology. At present she is working at the Centro Oceanográfico de Málaga del Instituto Español de Oceanografía and also studying Translation and interpretation at Malaga's University. A student of English (5th course) at Málaga's E.O.I., she confesses a voracious reader.

It was not until my father's death that I decided to share our finding with the scientific community. The document had been in the family library since my great-great-grandfather bought a dusty lot of documents from the archive of the monastery near our manor house, after Mendizábal's 19th century Ecclesiastical Confiscation.

Now I suspect he bought the whole lot, which comprised all kind of documents dated from the times of the monastery foundation in the 10th century, most of them unimportant, just because he had already seen the file.

The file consists of seven wooden tablets carved with runic characters and its apparent transcription into Latin. The parchments, where the Latin version is written with dozens of notes from different ages on the margins, are damaged and illegible in some parts. The damages seem to have been caused by the vicissitudes of the monastery archive and some fragments seem to have been subsequently censored.

These tablets could have operated as the new Rosetta Stone for Viking writing language if it had been an authentic transcription. The fact is that the novice monk who wrote it in a definitely awful Latin could certainly not read runic script. In the first pages of the manuscript he explains how an elderly noblewoman in her deathbed in the monastery dictated the story to him.

He seems to be also the first author to annotate the manuscript years after in an improved Latin, and in the extended abbey. The noblewoman donated her gold jewellery to the convent as a reward for the care she received. There is no description of the treasure in any of the other documents of the file but at the time the books of the monastery show important incomes probably from the sale of the melted jewels.

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Every detail of this file is extraordinary and the fact that the whole story seems more a plot of a fantastic historical novel than a scientific finding did not help to motivate my ancestors to publish it.

Next, I render my own English translation from the Latin text, without including the notes. We have marked the two main gaps in the parchments with two ellipsis in the English text. As you will appreciate, the style is quite peculiar for an ancient text, but I have tried to preserve what I think it was the original style and intention.

“She has been having a strange feeling all day. Something was going to happen. She knew it, even if nothing around her seems to have changed. The grey morning was warm, there was a soft breeze but the sea was calm.

It has been the perfect day of a late summer. It was on a day like this, thirteen years before, that she was found on the beach, playing with the sand, nude; she was not able to walk then.

The chief of the hamlet decided to give her to the healer, since she was the only woman in the small village that did not have children and seemed to have enough resources to take care of the child. He also chose a name for her: Aroa. (...)

Anyway, it would have been difficult, for any family in the tiny village, to accept as a new member such a different ash-blond young girl that had fast grown to become the tallest of the hamlet girls and whose eyes had remained in the indefinite colour between grey and blue that just newborn babies have.

Her adoptive mother was a tall woman with fair hair and blue eyes, but she was herself an exception in the village.

Some women, down in the village, explained to Aroa that the healer’s mother had been raped by a Viking pirate 30 years before and had died just after giving birth. (...)

It was that evening that she, the woman that had always treated Aroa as a daughter, revealed to her who Aroa’s mother was. While she was dressing the girl in her best clothes and packing blankets and cloaks in a bundle, she told the girl to be prepared. At night a vessel would fetch them both and take Aroa to the far country where she belongs.

The long crossing gave her time to ponder and to prepare her soul for what was to come.”

EPILOGUE

Forewords for the twelfth edition

This new edition of the classical work of Bendaña that revealed the Aroa tablets to the public brings together a selection of the main subsequent research papers on the

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issue. The recently published work of the Danish researcher Emma Knutson has identified Aroa as the mother of Canute the Great, the Danish king that ruled England, Denmark and Norway at the beginning of the 11th century.

Once more, we want to highlight the fact that it was not an easy decision at the time for a not-very-well-known Spanish author to put at risk his credibility by publishing this kind of finding. Nowadays, more evidences about Viking expeditions, even throughout the Mediterranean Sea, have been brought to light and the recent fashion of women in history studies make this character more attractive for historians.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to decipher the tablets yet, even if their authenticity is beyond reasonable doubt and they have been recently dated with a new method that has confirmed that they were carved at the time of the Viking attack on Santiago.

* * *

THE TEST OF FATE

María Isabel Zayas

Finalist of the VI Short Story Contest in English E.O.I. Málaga 2006-07

Born in Málaga on September 15th 1982, María Isabel Zayas is a graduate in Journalism from the U.M.A.. At present she works as an English teacher and is studying "oposiciones" to become a High School English teacher. She loves both music and literature. "La Tregua", by Mario Benedetti, is the last novel she has read. Although she enjoys writing she has never published.

"Every time I tell this story I feel a shiver down my spine... Listen carefully, my dear, to what happened to me and how it changed my life forever...

In those days I was in my early thirties and I used to live immersed in a whirl of files, meetings, schedules and deadlines. I worked under a ceaseless pressure and stress, pushing up to finish projects on time... At the weekends I used to work as a barman in a pub. I couldn't have any rests. I had to take advantage of my youth to work hard and earn as much money as I could. Money to buy things: a house, a new car that would replace my old piece of junk, and of course, money to ensure the stability and success of my life, go on holidays, have fun, and rest. I was sure that money was absolutely indispensable to be happy... And I wanted to be really happy.

One morning, I didn't go to the office as usual, as I had to go to the doctor instead. For a few days, I had been feeling quite bad, but I never thought it would be serious. Unfortunately, it was. After many medical tests, the doctors, with all their euphemisms and apologies, told me that a cancer was pushing me into an early grave. In fact, they calculated I had only about six more months of life left. No effective treatment possible. You can't imagine how awfully I felt. I was shattered, devastated... undone, so much, that I didn't even go out. I stayed at home, in bed, in the sofa, just smoking, drinking... thinking that everything I had done in search of a stable and happy future had been in vain because I wasn't going to have any.

After almost a month of seclusion, I went out to breathe some fresh air. It was pouring with rain and down the street there were some people catching a bus. One of them, a young lady, dropped her wallet before she got on it. I tried to warn her but the

bus had already left, so I picked the little leather wallet. I realised by her papers that she didn't live very far from home and, I don't know why, I decided to hand it to her.

It was a really nice house. I rang the bell and a young woman in a dressing gown, her hair wrapped in a towel, opened the door.

'Good morning,' she said.

'Ehm, good morning. I just wanted to give you your wallet back'

'Oh, thank you so much! I've been looking for it!'

'You dropped it while getting on the bus'

'How could I reward you! Please come in and have a cup of coffee...'

I couldn't refuse her invitation and I went in. After she had got dressed, we had coffee and chatted for almost an hour, and I must confess that I even forgot about my disease. She was a very interesting woman, weird but beautiful, shy and hospitable, smart and candid... To our surprise, when I was going to leave the house, it was raining so much that I had to stay for a while. We heard on TV that they were warning everybody not to leave their houses as there was a high risk of floods. She suggested that I should spend the night there for crossing the neighbourhood could be dangerous. We talked all through the night and we fell so in love with each other that I didn't stay for a night but for the following five months. Of course, that first night, I told her about the cancer, but she still wanted to stay with me.

She taught me how to do the best of every single second ticking by, to enjoy the little and simple things of life. We travelled to many different places. I wanted to see a beach again, and we were witnesses of the most beautiful dusk on the warm sand. I told her I'd like to enjoy the beauty of a green valley for the last time, and we felt the fresh, dewy grass under our bare feet. We slept until midday and woke up with the sun on our heads. Never before had I been so happy.

My happiness was interrupted one foggy night. I woke up suddenly but I wasn't in my room any longer. I was in a dark, damp room, only illuminated by the moonlight through the window. Something inside told me that the moment had come. Then I heard a low voice saying:

'You are right, it is time for you to leave'

I don't want to die. Now that I've learnt how to live, now that I've found love for the first time, now that I'm feeling so good with myself and with everything around me. I don't want to die. But if I have to go I'll face my destiny and I'll be alright, because I know that I've lived much more in five months than anyone in seventy years. The only thing that

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torments me is that I'll never thank her for having opened my eyes, and that I'll never say goodbye to her.'

I thought that I was pronouncing my last words, but then, something unbelievable happened and the voice said:

'Your fate put you into a test. You were working hard to live better afterwards but you did not realise that you were wasting your life instead. Now you must find the balance between making the most of every minute and ensuring your future.'

The next morning I woke up with a terrible headache, I looked at Monica and smiled. That was the first day of my new life.

Sixty years later I tell you, my dear grandson, this story so you never make the mistake I made and enjoy a happy life from the very beginning."

* * *

TWINS

Beatriz Córdoba González

Finalist of the VI Short Story Contest in English E.O.I. Málaga 2006-07

Beatriz Córdoba González was born in Madrid on June 23rd 1976. She has graduated in Psychology from the University of Málaga and so works as Orientadora Escolar. She is a student of English (5th course) at Malaga's E.O.I. Her hobbies are travelling and swimming.

Andrés was a 33 year old professor of History who neither had a permanent address, nor friends, nor fiancées... Every year he moved house, he changed the people he would spend his free time with, and every year he met interesting women he would fall in love with to leave them at the end of the school year. Every year Andrés had the possibility to change his job and to choose a different Secondary School. Nevertheless, Andrés had something permanent in his life. At the beginning of each school year Andrés did the same thing: he looked for a flat with not too many neighbours (he did not like the noise) and he gave a delicious dinner to his new colleagues. He was a charming host, who did not talk about his personal life but he always made clear that he did not have a girlfriend. This behaviour assured him a school year without any problems with his colleagues.

That year, Andrés chose a very small village in Andalusia, (the year before he had lived in a big city and this time he wanted to have a quieter course). The first thing he did was looking for a flat where he could enjoy tranquillity. He was really lucky to find a lovely apartment with views to the sea, and the best thing of all was that there were no neighbours in the building! It was a building of new construction and it was only busy in summer, so Andrés would not see any of his neighbours through the year... this seemed to be wonderful for him, so he decided to rent it.

On the second school day, Andrés already knew the names of all his colleagues and the following day he started to organize the dinner party as he had done every year. Almost all of his colleagues thought that it was an excellent idea, and they promised him to come to the supper.

That afternoon Andrés went to the closest supermarket in town to get the necessary ingredients to prepare his fantastic supper! When he was coming back from the supermarket, it was getting late, and he turned on the lights of his car. He illuminated

another car that came in opposite direction. Andrés nearly had a heart attack: he saw the driver's face. That man seemed to stare at him... and looked exactly like himself, Andrés! "Pedro!" he exclaimed. Pedro was his twin brother, with whom he had never had a very good relationship and whom he had not seen for more than 10 years. "This is not possible, It must have been some sort of hallucination," he thought.

The following day Andrés had already forgotten about the incident the day before and he began to prepare the supper. He had told his colleagues to come along at about 9.30 p.m. When there was still half an hour left for the supper, the bell door rang. Andrés looked at his watch and thought that perhaps some of his colleagues were coming a little bit earlier to give him a hand with the supper. When he opened the door, he saw a man that was very familiar to him. That man looked so much like him; actually he looked exactly like him!

He remained paralyzed... The man began to speak.

"Hello Andrés, don't you want to give your brother a hug?"

Andrés reacted, and tried to close the door, but Pedro pushed it and entered the flat.

"This is not a way to receive your brother, Andrés."

"What do you want Pedro? I do not want to speak with you. I have my own life and I have forgotten everything about you, so please go."

"I am sorry but I am here because I want your life, brother. I know everything you have done in the last ten years, and to be honest, you have been doing much better than I have, which seems very unfair to me. I am very angry Andrés. Both of us grew up in the same family, with the same possibilities, with the same physique but... you always got the best things; you were better than me at school, you had the nicest friends, you got the most beautiful girlfriends... Our parents always loved you more than me. This is not fair Andrés. I have tried to be like you, Andrés. I tried to be better than you, but you always won. I want your life, Andrés. It will be very easy... In this village nobody knows you, so who will notice the difference between you and I, if we are so much alike? Besides, I went to your school this afternoon and I pretended to be you. Nobody noticed the difference. I have already met several of your colleagues, and all of them thought that I was you, Andrés".

While talking to Andrés, Pedro got closer to him, and then shot him right in his heart. Andrés fell down onto the floor, dead. Nobody lived in the building, so nobody had heard the conversation; nobody had heard the shot.

Pedro took the corpse and put it in a closet. Later on, Pedro dressed up for the dinner and waited for his guests. The doorbell rang: the guests were there.

"You're all welcome to *my* house!" he said as he opened the door with a smile.

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AMANDA'S FRIDAY

Elisa Villalón Castaño

Finalist of the VI Short Story Contest in English E.O.I. Málaga 2006-07

Elisa Villalón Castaño, who was born in Ronda on June 18th 1987, is both a first course student of Tourism at Málaga's University and a second course student of Arabic at Málaga's E.O.I. She graduated in English from this school in 2006. At weekends she works as a shop assistant. She enjoys listening to music and reading books such as Follet's "The Pillars of the Earth".

It all began when I went to Stanley's house. We have known each other for a long time, to be precise: since we were at University. We were classmates but at the beginning I paid no attention to him, until we had to do the final project of Physics. It was then that I realized I had fallen in love with him. Now, five years after, we were still together but we were still having the same stupid arguments we had when we started going out. That is why I was going to his house. It was Friday evening and we had an appointment at nine o'clock, but unfortunately I got stuck in a traffic jam so I arrived late. Taking into account that once the traffic jam was finished I had to park the car, which is not that easy in that area, I was able to be at the entrance to his building at a quarter to ten. I rang the street bell but I got no answer. I knew I was late but I also knew Stanley was waiting for me and I had warned him I was to be late, and, what is even more important, we had things to talk about. I was sure that he had to be at home, unless something had happened. I rang the bell again but again I got no answer so I decided to go up. When I arrived, his front door was opened. It was very weird. I knocked several times but it seemed as if he was not there. Although I was terrified, I could not help trying to find out what was happening inside so I pushed the door open and went in.

At first everything was as usual, as if no one had been there. I started to call Stanley's name, but I heard nothing, not even the neighbours.

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Suddenly I noticed somebody standing just behind me. I screamed out of control, my heart went pounding and my words didn't come out of my mouth. It was a medium height man, stout, with black hair and a penetrating dark gaze. He tried to put his hands on my shoulders to calm me down, but I was so confused that I moved his hands away from me. He moved back, maybe quite confused as well, and told me he was Carl, a neighbour of Stanley's. He had heard me calling and come down to see if anything was wrong.

I apologized for my behaviour and I also introduced myself. I told him I had an appointment with Stanley and asked him if he knew something about him. He told me that he had not seen him but a well-dressed man had asked him about Stanley not so long ago. I did not want to look as a gossip but I needed to know as many details as possible, and he was the only person who had news about Stanley. So I kept on asking him. He did not tell me much more but he described the other man: "All I remember is he was quite tall not fat with green eyes and brown hair". That description was familiar to me.

Carl went back home and I was alone again in the middle of the dining room... when I saw the answering machine! Maybe that man had left a message. As I imagined he *had* done so. It said: "Hey Stanley, Amanda has just come out, hurry up, I will pick you up on my motorbike"

I could not believe what I heard! It was my brother's voice and he also had an appointment with Stanley; it was the only message left in the answering machine.

I took my coat, left the house and slammed the door. Now I did not know neither what to do nor where to go so I decided to go back home, my brother could still be there.

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While I was going down the stairs I realized I had left my car keys on the dining-room table. My damn head, I am so stupid! I do not have Stanley's house's keys. Alright I could not be sillier, now I had to go back home and all I could do was to take a taxi.

Once in the street I felt relieved: there were thousand of taxis were so I was able to take the first one. I finally arrived home at half past ten. I took the keys out of my bag and I opened the door. And there he was, lying on the sofa watching *Friends*. I rushed toward him shouting "Where's Stanley? Have you seen him?" He, not only astonished but also confused, told me he didn't know anything about him.

Damn coward! He was lying! I slapped him; Stanley's life could be in danger! Or maybe I was just going mad. At that moment my brother started laughing at my face; he took me by the arm and led me to the kitchen. It was then and there that I saw all my family....and STANLEY! Hanging from the kitchen ceiling was a placard which said: "MARRY ME AMANDA"

They all had smiles on their faces except me: I still had an astonished face. I broke down and cried both for the emotion and the awful day I had had. Stanley came towards me, hugged me and asked me: "So? What do you say?"

I could have said many things, and I must admit I could not help feeling so stupid so I did the silliest thing of my life... which was ;marry him!

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