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The Ice Room: Poetry in the Time of Pandemic

Rita M. Magdaleno Ms
University of Arizona

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Cover Page Footnote

none

The Ice Room

Poetry by Rita Maria Magdaleno

May 2020

The Dance

Poem to Maureen in quarantine nearly two months in Spain

I want to call you in Madrid, sing you
a sonnet to say, “Meet me in Mallorca”
when Covid-19 is an older song,
a meteor shower that was brilliant
& destructive, that was piercing
in a way that a thousand tattoo shops
could not compete, the refrain,

“Meet me in Mallorca”
where the sea breeze conjures up a dreaming,
a storybook that contained its own brilliance:

There, a fleet of ships with the news of silk
and spices, the ballooned sail waving brightly
with its own message: *Eat, drink*, take the most-
ripe-melon and call it good, call it a dance,
an invitation to pack your suitcase,
to not be afraid anymore.

**Poem Written on the First Sunday of April
During the Corona Pandemic**

A blossoming magnolia, the table to which I will come—
This marbling of tiled garden wall, this Botanical
Garden mute in late afternoon light.

Here, the bright applause of wings folding,
Unfolding in the Butterfly Pavilion, oh!
What would I give for a kiss?

Name the color—the one you've been saving
Since your shy friend died— Doug, who loved
His care-taking work in the succulent cacti garden.

This evening with its violet smolder. On the balcony
There is music; someone sings an aria and
Someone dies every 12 minutes in New York City.

How do you go on? Without a proper facemask,
A test and the answer to that test?

An old notebook reveals this invocation:
Bow your head,
Cross your arms; say
Blessed is this history.

The Kiss

Poem written on a March morning during the Coronavirus Pandemic

“una cosa es una cosa”

1.

See that: a string of golden light altered
on the hood of a white-refrigerated truck,
receptive at the back door of a NY City hospital
to receive & store the dead, 253 since day-before-
yesterday which was Sunday & warm, a singer
at the window, aria of grief, a gold tooth;

2.

Like the one my father had, warm as honey,
his boy-grin & the unabashed way he hugged
my mother on a dimly lit street in Augsburg
near the Sheridan Army kaserne & it was
a Spring eve after WWII, chestnut trees
lining Koenig Strasse, King Street with its
direct street-car line to the heart of the city,
my father kissing my mother for the first
time when she was sixteen;

(MORE)

3.

And there were blossoms out of chestnut trees scattering pale pink & white down the chilly sidewalk until all the other stuff of life, of death & war did not seem so very urgent—no eye for an eye, no ordinary tooth, no single thread, one barrel of water shining at the back door of my mother's home on the Brunnenlechgasschen, the sound of water and love.

ICE ROOMS

Spain 2020

In Madrid, the old Spanish
Cemetaries feel the pressure—an
Exponential growth –

Rate of Covid-19 cases;

Over whelmed—

Over Passover, death – rate

Mounting, limbs & little faces

Stacked in the ice rooms.

GOOD BYE JOE

Hospice of the Valley

Dust & rain

The rattling noise

Of lungs & bones,

Sheer pain

Of a soul trying

To tear away from it all.

It was my father's groaning;

My own imaging of the dark

Without end, swish of wings,

Archangel in a corner of the room.

It was afternoon, the season

Of final hours. The immense dust storm

Gathered force until I was convinced

I heard the slow flap of wings & my father,

A silence that was finally broken

(MORE)

By my father's sister, *Pepita*,
Her dark eyes eearching the white
Ceiling: *There he goes, 'bye Chepo*

All of us in that room—
Daughters & sisters, nephews
& grandchildren crying, waving
We'll miss you, Joe
The weight of it all releasing.

And we were waving toward
What we could not see, so much
We wanted to believe, we were waving

Even as a hard rain blew in
And the wet smell of dust

Filled the air.

Poems by Rita Maria Magdaleno

May 2020

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