

Margaret Duda – Two Poems

I Come From Immigrants

I come from Hungarians who left almost everything behind
to insure their children had chances they only dreamt of
as they boarded immigrant ships from Bremen to New York.

I come from a blizzard the night I was born in the city,
as my mother pushed, and my father prayed in the chapel,
because a young doctor warned him that we might not live.

I come from white leather shoes bronzed for eternity
on a base that would eventually hold my wedding photo
but first held the photo of a Hungarian-American family.

I come from riding my tricycle in circles as my mother
churned butter, sang Hungarian ditties, and gathered eggs
to trade for necessities at the general store during the war.

I come from a home where only Hungarian was spoken
until I was five when English was needed for school
and cousins were no longer the only ones I understood.

I come from Shirley Temple curls, made with strips of rags,
then unwound and brushed into ringlets on my mother's finger,
and held in place with huge bows on clips in my long, dark hair.

I come from dancing the csardas with my father, feet flying,
at Hungarian weddings, or racing my father in the ocean,
my mother watching from shore, ready to call a lifeguard.

I come from picnics where men twirled slabs of bacon on sticks
over fires dripping grease onto thick bread covered with pieces of
tomatoes, onions, and green peppers topped with chunks of bacon.

I come from a house with white siding, filled with the fragrant odors
of my mother's cooking, hiding me stomping barefoot on white grapes
which my father turned into Tokay wine, as his family did in Hungary.

I come from numerous moves to improve our circumstances,
but angels always followed us and trimmed our tree on Xmas eve,
with Hungarian ornaments and cookies, and then lit the candles.

I come from immigrant parents who found the courage to leave Hungary,
and generations of ancestors all the way back to the African exodus,
all of whom travel with me still as I dance the csardas, feet flying with joy.

Time Travel

I've never known how
to explain how I felt
the first time I saw him
in that lecture hall.

His friend, who I just met,
and I walked in together,
both late, neither knowing
the site had been changed.

He stood up from his seat
and started toward us with
his dark wavy hair and cleft chin.
I gasped, stifling my recognition.

Sixty years later, I still recall
feeling I knew him from
another life in another time,
a feeling I never understood.

A Slavic-Rusyn, his forefathers
roamed Carpathian forests
as his tribe interacted with
the Magyars, my ancestors.

I learned the two cultures
socialized and intermarried
in the Middle Ages, mixing
blood and DNA for all time.

I didn't know all this that night.
I simply felt I would marry
this stranger and rejoin our love
in another country, centuries later.

Margaret Duda has had numerous short stories published in literary journals such as the *Kansas Quarterly*, *the University Review*, *the Michigan Quarterly Review*, *the South Carolina Review*, *the Green River Review* and others. One of the stories made the Distinctive list of Best American Short Stories. She has also had numerous poems

published in the *Silver Birch Press, THE POET* (England), an anthology entitled "Around the World, Landscapes and Cityscapes" and others. She is now working on the final draft of a novel set in a steel mill town between 1910 and 1920.