The Art Divas

Blog of novelist Rabih Alameddine

<http://www.theartdivas.com/2016/11/el-florida-room-by-richard-blanco.html>

“El Florida Room,” by Richard Blanco

Not a study or a den, but *El Florida*

as my mother called it, a pretty name

for the room with the prettiest view

of the lipstick-red hibiscus puckered up

against the windows, the tepid breeze

laden with the brown-sugar scent

of loquats drifting in from the yard.

Not a sunroom, but where the sun

both rose and set, all day the shadows

of banana trees fan-dancing across

the floor, and if it rained, it rained

the loudest, like marbles plunking

across the roof under constant threat

of coconuts ready to fall from the sky.

Not a sitting room, but *El Florida* where

I sat alone for hours with butterflies

frozen on the polyester curtains

and faces of Lladró figurines: sad angels,

clowns, and princesses with eyes glazed

blue and gray, gazing from behind

the glass doors of the wall cabinet.

Not a TV room, but where I watched

*Creature Feature* as a boy, clinging

to my brother, safe from vampires

in the same sofa where I fell in love

with Clint Eastwood and my Abuelo

watching westerns, or pitying women

crying in telenovelas with my Abuela.

Not a family room, but the room where

my father twirled his hair while listening

to 8-tracks of Elvis, and read Nietzsche

and Kant a few months before he died,

where my mother learned to dance alone

as she swept, and I learned Salsa pressed

against my Tía Julia’s enormous breasts.

At the edge of the city, in the company

of crickets, beside the empty clothesline,

telephone wires and the moon, tonight

my life is an old friend sitting with me

not in the living room, but in the light

of *El Florida*, as quiet and necessary

as any star shining above it.

