



WOUNDED AMERICA + 4

By

Gary Beck

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes...*

I confess, I probably prefer to read poetry than hear it performed. To be honest, slam poetry frightens me. I would rather be in a contemplative, tranquil state immersed in the artists thoughts. But Gary Beck's words, I know I would be inspired, if not entranced, to receive aloud. His works are truly beautifully written. I say, best read in their entirety--hand over heart on sleeve. (Spacing is poet's own.)

Threads of Dissolution

Across my divided land
people revert to archetypes
as social norms evolve
and we're not longer allowed
to behave like our fathers
dominating women,
although in reality
many strong women
dominated men

Then we put on a face,
a protective persona
so no one will penetrate
the mask we wear to conceal
fears of inadequacy,
inferiority,
jealousy of others,
painful self punishment
for lack of accomplishment.

Our growing isolation
makes us vulnerable
to external pressures
to accommodate neighbors,
some of whom are well-meaning
in the struggle for survival.
Some have dangerous agendas,
have forgotten the need
for vital unity.

Once, fellow Americans,
not that long ago
as history goes,
we conquered the world
with guns and butter,
richer, more powerful
than earlier empires.
So when we walked on the moon
it seemed we'd lead the way
to colonize the stars.

Instead we swelter at home
in an Earth grown smaller,
shrunk by fast jet travel,

Gary Beck/Molecular Distortion

instant internet access
that takes us anywhere
for games, entertainment,
on-line education,
daily on-line shopping,
from our caves of convenience.

In a benevolent world
we'd be snug and cozy
in tranquilizing comfort,
all goods and services
at our fingertips,
our biggest discussion
where to order dinner,
what movie to stream,
when to close our tablets.

Just one hundred years ago
most families lived on farms,
or in rural areas.
Then the great migration
brought eager folk
to alluring cities
promising fulfillment,
abandoning the fields,
deserting small towns.

Then what we found
in enticing cities
as we left the land
for well-paying jobs,
exciting night life,
as many were lured
to the factories
for good wages, benefits
for strenuous labor.

Then for a short while
the proud blue-collar class
felt they were one nation,
answering the call
of the military
to defend their country
from foreign enemies,
never realizing
the worst enemies were at home.

Gary Beck/Molecular Distortion

As American men
were fighting, bleeding, dying
in a far off Asian land,
the factory owners
couldn't make enough profit
paying wages and benefits
to the large workforce
protected by unions
who wouldn't work for less.

Instead of settling
for only one yacht,
the owners closed the steel mills,
took their industry abroad
where they paid local workers
a few dollars a day,
without benefits,
and no longer paid taxes
to the good old U.S.A.

Neither our elected
nor appointed officials
stopped the desertions
of money hungry owners
who left a rust belt behind,
started a stampede
of other industries
that abandoned the land
that made them wealthy.

Yet those abusers
of the public trust
still considered themselves
loyal Americans,
despite their betrayal
of the people, the nation,
and used their great riches
to control the government
the media, our destiny.

Oppression

The school system allows
mindless bullies
to blight the lives
of the smart, weak,
vulnerable
or others
who does not fit in
to the shallow mold
of facility,
a knack for school sports.
The woeful list goes on
of so many reduced
from aspirations
to hesitations,
doubting themselves
which will inhibit
the risk of trying
for fear of failure,
the best teacher
for proper learning.

Wounded America

So many problems
that cannot be resolved
due to differences
that will not be reconciled.
If we examine
divisive issues
they may seem extreme,
but some of us suspect
ulterior motives,
even conspiracy
by the rich and powerful
to keep us divided
as they accumulate
more wealth and influence
to manipulate events
and control the people.

Pandemic Time

The waiting room is crowded.
There's no place to sit.
I stand in the corner
as far away from others
as I possibly can.
People move too close to me,
so I move somewhere else.
Everyone waits and waits
and it's harder to distance.
At least they're wearing masks.
No one comes for a patient,
so we wait and wait.
People keep coming in
and some stand next to me.
I'm getting nervous,
but there's no place to go.
Now I'm worrying
about other diseases.
This is a hospital
and people come here
for more than a vaccine shot.
What if I catch something?
Now it's decision time.
Do I stay or go?
I don't want to get Covid,
so I'll wait a little longer,
and try to remain calm.

THE POET SPEAKS: *The poems from Molecular Distortion were inspired by various issues and conditions occurring in my country. Our growing isolation makes us vulnerable to exploitation by the rich. Bullying in the schools blights young lives. The inadequacy of our health system affects millions. The breakdown of our political structure threatens the continuation of democracy.*

My stylistic influences are many. Long ago I started with the British Romantics, Byron, Keats, Shelly, then lots of Brits. Grey, Yeats, Marvel, Donne, the Transcendentalists. Many. The French Symbolists – Nerval to Valery. Lots of Americans, Eliot, Cummings, Corso, so many. But I've evolved to my own style that some editors and readers have recognized.

AUTHOR BIO: Gary Beck has spent most of his adult life as a theater director and worked as an art dealer when he couldn't earn a living in the theater. He has also been a tennis pro, a ditch digger and a salvage diver. His original plays and translations of Moliere, Aristophanes and Sophocles have been produced Off Broadway. His poetry, fiction and essays have appeared in hundreds of literary magazines and his published books include 38 poetry collections, 14 novels, 4 short story collections, 1 collection of essays and 7 books of plays. Gary lives in New York City.