

FIVE POEMS from MORTAL COIL

By Gary Beck

Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: On a clear night, if you travel far enough north, you can see all the stars in the firmament. If you go even further you are treated to the Aurora Borealis. I believe Galileo coined the phrase back in the early sixteen hundreds. (Good friend of mine but a bit of a late-sleeper.) Here is a constellation of poems that burst into blooms and plumes of colour, like a magnetic midnight. Beck's poetry is present, yet speaks to The Ages[italic]. At any rate, any critique of mine would appear obsequious and remain sycophantic—dust it off and get your own licks in. (Spacing is poet's own). HS

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Travel Plans

Another seasonal change.
Each year it gets colder.
We are running out of fuel.
The hunting is poor,
so there will be no meat,
fat, fur, to keep us warm.
Some say we should leave,
go south, where it is warm.
But vicious tribes dwell there

Gary Beck/Mortal Coil

Nothing Changes

I sit at my desk
with my iPad,
send an email
to a friend in France.
It gets there in seconds.

Across the street
at a construction site,
immigrant laborers
who can't speak English
put up a scaffold,
the same way they did
in ancient Egypt.

Down the block,
four large men
carry a heavy rug,
just the way they did
in ancient Persia.

At the corner,
two men load a truck
the exact same way
two men loaded a cart
in the middle ages.

The progress of civilization
has given us
powerful machines,
electronic devices,
yet everywhere I look
we still do things by hand.

who do not live in peace,
who'll kill us for intruding
on their hunting grounds.
My clan will stay
one more winter.
If we survive
perhaps we will go south
next year.

Gary Beck/Mortal Coil

Relocation

We lived in one room,
a roach infested,
South Bronx apartment
in a gang-infested neighborhood,
where we heard more gunfire
than laughter.

But I went to school
and got lunch
and could go outside
to escape Mom's boyfriend
and his hard fists.

But Child Services insisted
living conditions
were unsuitable for a child,
and moved us to a homeless shelter,
somewhere in Manhattan.

It was too scary
to go outside.
The new boyfriend
kicked and punched me
when I played with my toys
and made too much noise.
He hurts me all the time.

Mom says she'll get rid of me
if I tell anyone.
Who is there to tell?
I've been coughing blood
for the last week.
Mom says it better stop,
or she'll get rid of me.
Maybe it would be better
if she got rid of me.

Gary Beck/Mortal Coil

Need Versus Greed

The city wraps
strangling arms
around the poor,
squeezing them harshly
until the little they have
dwindles, disappears,
leaving them at the mercy
of those with more,
reluctant to share
with those in need,
never believing
they ever have enough.

Gary Beck/Mortal Coil

Loyal Service

My grandfather went to Korea.
My father went to Vietnam.
I went to Iraq.
My son went to Afghanistan.

Yet our country was too busy shopping
to appreciate our service.

I do not sleep much
and stay up late at night
reading history books.
I think of Roman legions
doing their duty on distant shores,
then abandoned by the Emperor.

I do not know
where my grandson will serve,
but it will be dangerous
and his sacrifice
will quickly be forgotten,
as long as our masters profit.

THE POET SPEAKS: My poetry responds to the life around me and the greater world. I have been influenced by many poets, but now use direct expression as much as possible to impact a progressively detached tv and internet audience. Poetry can be the most basic art form to reach audiences more and more removed from the spoken word, a tradition I am impelled to continue.

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 21 poetry collections, 7 novels, 3 short story collections and 1 collection of essays. Published poetry books include: *Dawn in Cities*, *Assault on Nature*, *Songs of a Clerk*, *Civilized Ways*, *Displays*, *Perceptions*, *Fault Lines*, *Tremors*, *Perturbations*, *Rude Awakenings*, *The Remission of Order* and *)Contusions* (Winter Goose Publishing, Forthcoming is *Desperate Seeker*. *Blossoms of Decay*, *Expectations*, *Blunt Force*, *Transitions* and *Mortal Coil*

Gary Beck/Mortal Coil

(Wordcatcher Publishing), forthcoming is *Temporal Dreams. Earth Links* (Cyberwit Publishing). His novels include a series 'Stand to Arms, Marines': *Call to Valor* and *Crumbling Ramparts* (Gnome on Pigs Productions), Forthcoming is the third in the series, *Raise High the Walls; Acts of Defiance* and *Flare Up* (Wordcatcher Publishing), Forthcoming is its sequel, *Still Defiant* and *Extreme Change* will be published by Winter Goose Publishing. His short story collections include: *A Glimpse of Youth* (Sweatshoppe Publications). *Now I Accuse and other stories* (Winter Goose Publishing), *Dogs Don't Send Flowers and other stories* (Wordcatcher Publishing). *The Republic of Dreams and other essays* (Gnome on Pig Productions). *The Big Match and other one act plays* will be published by Wordcatcher Publishing. Gary lives in New York City.