

BALANCE BEAM AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

Poems by Gary Marks

© 2009 Marksland

Resonance

A song can feel like a kaleidoscope when you're writing it -
Turning a phrase around, crystallizing it into something else entirely,
Until the image reflects back just right.

Sun shadows moving over the days in fractured patterns,
Stretching your spirit, melting it down,
--diamonds, snow flakes, taffy--
Shifting from one to the other with each thought, each sound.

You could think of sounds like colors in a box flying around at play.
Jangling chords strummed in a cycle
until I hear, until I see the patterns behind closed eyes -

I take a leap from the ground
Leaving the other shapes behind.
The colors have painted something beautiful in the sky.

Control and recklessness
Merge.

Never one without the other
Or there is no art.

Never one without the other.

Or we're left with the silence
Of a disconnected life.

Greetings From Across the Ocean

My children are speaking with an English accent
(which they mistakenly call, "A British accident").
They've been doing this for five straight days now –
ever since watching "The Secret Garden."

They move around the house like reckless puppies, sniffing
and sorting through every inch and corner, oblivious to the unraveled
aftermath, which I am left to pick up when they're finally asleep.

When I check in on them late at night they glow like angels.
They look only partially human in that state –
like little red-cheeked marble statues Rodan would have created.
Sweet Camille Claudels with their breathing shallow and rapid, like a bird's,
ready to sculpt dreams out of the chaos.

They are mine in the morning, before mom awakes;
before school ingests them. We have a sunrise world.
It starts off with blue couch hugs, then the unrolling of questions
while they eat their sliced apples
looking out the window watching the birds glide:
Where did God come from?
How was he born if no one was there?

Time is an illusion, I answer. There are no beginnings or endings.
You already told us that once, daddy remember?
But even illusions have to have a beginning and an ending, Annabel insists.
If time is an illusion, what isn't? Skylar interrupts.
. . . . And, daddy, if no one has ever really *seen* Santa Claus
then how does anyone really know what he looks like?
little Shawn adds, hands on hips, waiting.

Soon the blue couch is empty. They're off to school,
where talk of these kinds of things, and British accents, must be left at the gate.

They learn their "subjects," some of which I suppose will serve them well,
the reading, the math, the elementary science.
They run around the playground shouting with the others,
inoculated by the cultural serum, or venom, as we all must be.

When they come home they each have their story to tell.
They are a little hyped-up and a bit poisoned by it all.
They skip and scatter away from my desk. They are still in tact.
Back to their British accents and the invisible forests
that look to my eyes like their cluttered closets.

Living any other way, I see in their eyes,
is a waste of time, a waste of the illusion.

Teach me more, I almost say aloud . . .then I am interrupted:

-- Dad, what if the whole world was a carnival? Wouldn't that be great?
Before I can answer they glide away, jumping on each other, laughing.

I try to bridge the monumental distance between us before they disappear.
But fathers can only travel so far across that ocean.

Balance Beam at the Edge of the World

The shore break is a good place to begin.

Amorphous – moving boundaries.

Allows me to walk on the balance beam at the edge of the world,

thinking freely enough to know that everything may be true --

as perceptions shift --

 ebbing and flowing,

 vision chaotic,

 seamless,

 unlimited.

Improvisation

In a black reflection I know myself; mostly good, but with limitations at every turn.

Solid, but precariously alive; overconfident about the continuation of such a thing as being alive.

I put my hands on the keys and see a number of possible dances. I fear all the places I could fall.

Is this free within limits, or imprisoned?

The reflection in black looks back at me and says: just close your eyes and play this.

Drifting in Time

We all know where the drifting leads – trying to hold back the dawn.

Last night my eight year old daughter came to me as she often does before sleep,
And said -- Goodnight Daddy. . . .I love you more and more every day.

Her eyes seem more grown up, wiser than they were yesterday.
Her auburn hair is tied in the back with a colored band.
Soft yellow pajamas a bit too long at the bottom.

As she turns the corner to go to her room she looks back at me,
A final quick glance without breaking stride,
and I know
I will never see her again.
By morning she will be gone,
drifting away so fast from these static moments I try to create.
She will have become
someone resembling herself
but never quite the same,
after her dreams are ingested and her cells inch her body forward through time.
There is some odd movement at work in the world, set in time to a distant hum
that the living will never understand.

I want to run after her, keep her up all night so she might stay longer.
But of course I find myself wanting to do a lot of foolish things.

We must stay in step with the dance.
The music cannot be stopped.

The Father, The Son, and the Holy Ghosts

In the book, "The Never Ending Story,"
the Nothingness is slowly enveloping the land of Fantastica.

Westbury, where I was raised, was both enveloped and developed by the
Nothingness.

There, fantasies were called lies, and colored socks
were a laughable insanity of wide-eyed youth.
To those brave few, I have dedicated my entire artistic life --
the handful of colored sock people trying to find their way out of Westbury.

My father was a black sox man. But he secretly tussled my hair
when I went against the lore of the town;

and when I had to go so far away to search for myself;
and when I returned empty handed.

He traveled for hours to work in the city each morning, with the car radio
off. Not much of a music fan. What was he thinking about?
A big new order he hoped would be in the mail?
Could they get it shipped in time?
Did he ever muse about the great world
just beyond the endless flat-lines of suburbia;
beyond the white stripes of road gulped by the speed of his wheels turning;
beyond the old dull silver skyscrapers of the city before him?

For instance, train timetables folded into green and gold paper airplanes
thrown into the wind at Jones Beach, soaring in the updrafts past gravity
and science, into timeless motion; swirling, swinging beyond the moon.

And trees breathing on the side of Southern State Parkway;
Their colliding leaves in the night; colliding with breezes, singing, humming.

Memories of red and amber -- autumn bursting free, as you drive home fighting the
traffic.

You did it for me. I know that now. Though you never came close to saying it,
I see.

I try to mirror your determination in an opposite direction.

I am determined to never let thoughts of you pass without a bow;
to never live in a land bereft of timelessness, and colliding leaves singing,
and to never let the wind float past me unnoticed
as it makes its way to the golden ripples to another shore.

The Laying of Blueberry Road

I am appalled as I am up hauled
with the spring forest,
where the rollers' grizzle and grime
butt up against the trees like male dogs in heat
and knock them over like match sticks.

The ani-metals are tearing
at me with their teeth and piling
us into garbage hills, pushing
with their broad noses.

I am rushing higher and higher
to avoid my own panicked thoughts
until I am actually trying to be
through the peak moments,
trying to transport myself in flight, but alas I'm carried
off disillusioned
by barbaric hands
with the rest of the berries.

What are those humads trying to do?
First they rip us apart, then they try to rip star light apart
Thinking there's some sort of truth up there
That will give meaning to their lives down here.
Where's the logic?
They reach out
to discover the entire
unimirth, but they, off course,
still never find happiness,
and can never
gain control over the underground,
which controls everything of their world.
(Plus stars lie.)

Someday we will have our own ground
breaking ceremony. When the earth awakes,
when all the angry centersoil fights
back with the power of gravity --
times roots squared
off against their wills
and windows,
and against their roads which will quickly
crack and smoke to dust,
and their yellow metal rollers, crippled by
skulking stones --

Let go of me, you loveless
armored dupe. The hand that manipulates
you has a hand that manipulates him, and so on.

You were born to be used
and you will die a ragged maimed beast,
and you will lie in a pile of metallic death
far uglier than the one you create here.

And I am mad and scared, we have been
marred and bare the scars of your caryard gardens
and black train track irrigation systems,
and silver air fields with those
huge dumb birds going back and forth
going back and forth
to nowhere
-- while you hope
beyond hope
that they can take you someday
to your sacred core. . . .

Search and search as you may,
oh, but there was never nothin' but blueberries
down Blueberry Road.

Sunday

A Sunday of parenting.
No outward motion happening.
Making Christmas ornaments out of green felt, beads and thread.
All of sitting amongst the scattered elements.
The six year old boy needs to be spoken to
about patience. He fights the restlessness.
Lesson learned, he finishes his stocking
and we make a mad dash to the winter beach
To watch the sun set. A tight orange ball falling.
Silhouettes as darkness hits.
We chase them out of the water.
Back home for a simple dinner.
Music arises after the dishes are done.
Bed time – night questions –
Is there?
Will we?
Is it possible we could live forever, daddy?
I just look into his eyes.
A last kiss.
Days like this give a parent hope
that humankind may survive long enough to find out.

A New Sound

No looking back this time.
For all the good it does
equal harm.

History does not repeat itself --
Only mistakes repeat.
Mistakes
that come from looking back
with old rules. . . .

Break free
to a game where
you find no ghosts.
No past.
Simply what is, defined as a far off ringing in the ear,

Unfathomable. . . .
Something alive in the air.

When you find that new sound—

sing and step forward!