

Poems On Everyday MatterS

Selected poems, old and new

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Part 1: Old poems, mostly

Invitation
Butterfly Cove
Mandala Jesus
La Donna
Letter to a Forgotten Lover
Blood Rust
Loving Acceptance
The Touch of the Open
Explain Yourself
Endangered Species #6: Freedom
a sonnet
Pyramidisms
Ideate Jivation
Psychonium Plutology
Race-Weapon Bound-Free
Legacies
War Cowards
Abortion is Killing, Legalize It
The Flow of Life
Killing is Everywhere
Marry for Love
Peace
Can We Talk
Courtesy
The Beautiful People
Rules for Living
Lotus Lightbulbs
Passed Friends
Wood Waves
Stone Water
Turning

Part 2: New poems

An Expired Doctorate
You Can Marry a Poet, But You Cannot Possess Her
Performance Evaluation
Ignorance is Strength
Mazurka Beans
Waking the Dead, Redeeming the Living
Rules for Listening
Zombie Nation
Everyone Knows
A Heart that Sings
Welcome to the Village
Out to Lunch
Empty and Marvelous
Why does the Buddha smile?
The Arena
The Silver Palace
The day I learned what bourgeois means
Jellyfish
Job application
A seed like mustard
Hardboiled Half Dozen
Goatpaths
We ignore all immolations
How I know
Poet Blood
The stray thoughts of an unknown citizen
Rain in the forest

Invitation

Ah, what sweet delight
to share some hours in company with friends,
without judgment, haste, or rude distraction
sharing poems —
the murmur of heartbeats
carried on waves of fluid speech,
showering living truths on other awareness,
like cool mist through the pines
to fall gently on receptive ears
and soak into the bones
like the sunny warmth of day.

How well did Aristotle know
that poetry transcends mere history
because its truths are universal
yet so immediately unique to every living soul.
So, in the songs of all these others
I hear the range of my own life,
redeeming love and bitter failure,
I have felt these too,
ecstatic joy, meditation,
even vengeance by poetic pen.

Would you, my friend, care to spend some time
with this conspiracy of art sublime?
Please come —
consider this an invitation.

27 February 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Butterfly Cove

The sand is white, white, white,
warm and still and fine.
The tide is high as breakers roll
and sheets of foam sweep sandy slopes.
Sanderlings on quick stilt feet track the charging surge,
stitching ocean to the shore with rhythmic probing beaks.
The wind sweeps off the breakers
up the beach and overhead,
lofting rainbow spray and ribbon kites
over pine and cypress tops.
The woods enfold a bright cool shade
of breathless distant sound.
A river of air flows overhead,
a river of warmth shines down.
Clusters of butterflies shower in light
high at the airstream edge.
The laughter of children rings through the trees
and eddies on currents of mind.

22 January 1987

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Mandala Jesus

Jesus was an old man when he died.
What were his kids like?, his wife?, his girlfriends?
What kind of love and gratitude
brought Mary Magdalene to his feet?
Is there any way left of recapturing
the humanity of Jesus,
or are we stuck with the mummified wrappings
of religion, fantasy and cult?
How did it feel
to sit with Jesus drinking at night
meditating on the course of human events?
The dreams and visions of Jesus were those of a man.
Perhaps we deify him
to avoid the burdens of paradise.
"The kingdom of heaven is within you."

11 January 1983

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

La Donna

I still can feel your dawn-window eyes
as I walk through this night,
and I still can smell your long, dark hair
softly catching the light.
The sweet taste of your tender lips
I still can savor with care,
and the warming voice of your soft, soft skin
still glides upon my face.
I still can feel your dawn-window eyes
as I walk through this night,
this night though but a wisp of the past
is an ~~eternal~~ eternal *delight.*

7 October 1969

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Letter to a Forgotten Lover

Friday afternoon.
Sunlight filters through still air,
October leaves glow with Indian Summer.
Walls muffle voices in adjoining rooms,
the relentless, ocean-like pounding of distant freeways
and the ebbing wail of sky-high turbojets.
In my room — still air.
Connected by the open window
to the last full-bodied outdoor caress of the season,
I float far off
on the subtle airs of the dream of memory.
Remember?
That last weekday afternoon of preselected obligation,
those last few hours of conscious productivity
before slipping into the dream surpassing all dreaming —
a weekend celebration of being with you.
I can still smell the crisp, moisture-laden air
in the oak and maple groves, and wild lawns
along hypnotic Bring More Brook,
that fluid rippling babble of melted sparkle.
How we loved to swim in each other's eyes,
to soar through each other's hearts
on peaceful October summer days,
sipping wine and kisses by the brook.
We would run and frolic,
laugh and horse,
and spill through the meadow like a rolling stream.
Yes, and we would walk quietly through the wood,
our brimming love enfolding that endless moment.
It was only a scant lifetime of hours ago
that we had sailed through the razzle-dazzle high-jinx
of an artful Friday night.
We had seen,
we had eaten,
we had been
and we had known — together,
how many things?
Wine and cider,
smokes and film,
sidewalks and city lights,
music and motion,

talk of poems and poems of touch,
glistening eyes suspending breathless starlight.
Wake up, wake up, I want another kiss.
The dream has broken, I want another kiss.
Long palms stroke your smooth sleeping warmth.
Wake up the feeling that glides through my hands.
I want another kiss, another kiss.
I want to cover you with love.
I want to soak in that abyss.
Wake up and blend into the dream.
Wake open, mouth, and draw me in,
another kiss, another kiss.
Endless, endless, endless — where has it all gone?
It was so easy to flood with emotion
and forget all but feeling the real.
The imprint of that moment
leaves a trace, sharper today,
than these garish superficial
grown-up gainful days.
Dream in defiance or dream in regret,
dream on the loving — forget all the rest.
Dream on her sunlight, her moisture and breath,
dream on regardless, as lovers forget.
Dream on the wind streaming the leaves,
dream on your living, endless and free.
Dream on.

9 October 1983

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Blood Rust

Once I killed my love
with a thrust straight through the heart.
Now I look upon the blood-rust blade
and ponder freedom.
I hear my children playing in a summer garden,
and I think of the general's wife
violated by betrayal,
only a short-sword away from liberation.
A hummingbird buzzes past my ear,
ripples of breeze tingle the hairs on my skin,
warming sunlight soaks in.
I smile.

9 March 1988

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Loving Acceptance

It happened again.
How can I ever explain the great mystery of experience?
Yes, I crossed that thin line — once again.
My heart melted every time you looked my way,
every time your voice called mine.
A light, full voice and half-sleep eyelids
but with a sharp, penetrating wit within.
Intent on your purposes, like a black leopard in her tree,
you lounged on your bed looking down to me
with that smooth, calm level gaze of graceful intensity.
How could I help but fall —
willingly, thankfully,
for then I could finally gaze straight back into your eyes
and let you feel the full measure of my heart.
The world evaporated
and I placed my trust in that moment's bliss,
a spark of life we shared through each other —
eye-to-eye, and heart-to-heart.
Yes, life really is beautiful — it's true,
and with the slightest smile of recognition
you and I know how true.

2 August 1988

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

The Touch of the Open

Will this love last?

I would like it to, but I can't know.

I stand outside and look west into an August evening.

Warm light and cool breeze flow up from the bay
warming my heart and refreshing my spirit.

Sunset — that endless moment of exquisite living —
will I see another? Probably, who knows.

Treat it like love —

enjoy it peacefully now, hope calmly for more,
and try to forgo a nighttime of gloomy foreboding.

Sunsets — like butterflies — are lost in the grasping.

I sat daydreaming by sun-drenched flowers one afternoon
and had a butterfly alight on my hand.

What a magically graceful experience that was.

How much like true love this must be:

alighting out of the blue,
radiantly alive if left free,
eternal —

if accepted with an open heart capable of saying goodbye.

Will this love last?

I hope so, I really hope so.

I have memories for a lifetime out of just days of experience
and I hope for a lifetime of such daily experience.

Yet, to be fresh love must be fleeting —

like a butterfly in your palm —
always on the point of departure.

Thus, I must have a tranquil, open heart
capable of parting graciously in an instant
with the woman my life is focused on.

The sun tracks off over the hill of ocean to the west
as daytime air cools down and night expands.

I'm sure I'll see another evening sun,
and another day of love? Yes, certainly.

But how long can it last?

I don't really know.

My only chance is in acceptance
to the course of its inevitable unfolding.

16 August 1988

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Explain Yourself

Who does my breathing and what does it mean?

It is not possible to explain yourself.
You would have to be two people simultaneously,
the one being explained and the one doing the explaining.
Only planned action and deliberate speech can be explained.
As one lives in the suddenness of the moment,
there are no plans, deliberations or explanations.
Whatever happens represents itself,
it cannot be interpreted as "explaining" anything.

I am my breathing: nothing enclosing infinity.

26 July 1980

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Endangered Species #6: Freedom

Freedom —
nakedness in the wind.
Stand out in the night
and feel the squeeze of cold, clear, velvety darkness.
Watch the shadows play upon the light
as darkness devours obscurity.

See beyond enlightenment:
we are all happy — nirvana,
I am alone — samsara.
When I need purpose I look to my children,
it never fails till they leave.
The only surviving then is the enjoyment of effort,
the only worthwhile effort — the effort of seeing,
the only gain to vision — freedom,
nakedness in the wind, like the lilies of the field.

A wider vision unfolds,
a deeper fear emerges.

22 March 1985

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Before I die, will I figure it out,
The meaning or futility of life?
Would that I could shed all unneeded strife,
Releasing mind from its confining doubt.
No simplistic faith can bring this about
And mere philosophy fails to midwife
New awareness; one needs a sharper knife
To rend the psychic veil and put to rout
All illusions sapping experience,
Evaporating them in the warm breath
Of this very moment — all life's presence —
Eternal, unborn, unfixed, beyond death.
It must be clear that life in its essence
Erupts at each instant from endless depth.

2 December 2000

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Pyramidisms

"Capitalism is the exploitation of man by man,
Communism is just the opposite" —
street joke, Czechoslovakia, 1981.

In America, we know communism to be a system
in which the many work for the few.
Ronald Reagan is an ardent Communist.
The Reagan-Andropov sales pitches vary as follows:

Andropov: "Anyone can work for the few,"
meaning: "Everybody better work for the few."

Reagan: "Anyone can become one of the few,"
meaning: "To join, bring money."

(Dollar bills even have pyramids printed on them.)

Nobody wants to be an Andropov Communist,
many have to.
Everybody wants to be a Reagan Communist,
few can.

And the people gathered in the streets
and cried out as one voice:
"Rulers, become hungry with us!"

19 January 1983

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Ideate Jivation

Herbicide, Fungicide, Pesticide, Genocide;
Preservative Conservative;
Conscription Prescription.

Segregate, Denigrate, Violate, Irradiate.
Annihilate, Exterminate, Contaminate, Liberate.

24 November 1982

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Psychonium Plutology

Nuclear bombs work.
The purpose of nuclear bombs is to deter war
and avenge the loss of security.
Producing bombs channels aggression
and using them is self-destruction.
Nuclear bombs work.

We do not want a national defense,
that would require an assessment of our weaknesses.
Physics allows us to materialize our hostility
to the projected shadow of our psyche.

We embrace the illusion of being evil-free
(that most exquisite of psychological luxuries),
no Viking bloodlust, witchburner or enslaver in us.
Denying the shadow we free him to roam.
Seeing him as elsewhere and other
we imagine we can destroy him and survive.

The first and second worlds share illusions
and exchange demons.
The solitary, interior dance of light and shadow
is transformed into the carnival of war.
War molded as bombmaking becomes the peacekeeper.
War poured through bombing becomes the shadow's revenge.

If nuclear weapons represent any failure at all,
it is the failure to accept our complete selves.
Denial of our true nature is stored as nuclear bombs
and exported as nuclear war.

4 January 1983

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Race-Weapon Bound-Free

The nuclear bomb is fearsome
because it is the weapon of race warfare.

When Mongols tried to erase Mesopotamian and Persian cities,
individual had to hack individual.

When Euro-Americans tried to eradicate redmen,
individuals had to shoot individuals.

When Nazis tried to clarify the Europeans,
teams had to operate death's assembly lines.

Hiroshima-Nagasaki and Dresden —
overnight race-war revenge.

Nuclear weapons offer instant fulfillment
of monolithic, mass-minded race hatred.

Our problem is not that our weapons are nuclear,
but that our technology is weapon.

The alpha-5 Virgonians
built high-intensity love-ray amplifiers.

These tapped the natural, magnetic love-attractions within all beings,
and amplified them to all-enveloping manic-flood levels.

The alpha-5 Virgonians immobilized planets
into writhing balls of mass-minded love-compulsions,
then moved in to take over.

Freedom is a gift and responsibility.
Our duty of self-defense
is a challenge to rise above race-mindedness to stay free.

How can we rise
and expect to ignite enlightenment in the hearts of our adversaries?
I don't think we really can
if we expect to see the results in our lifetimes.
Better to plow our lives into an effort spanning generations.
Our acts and thoughts should merge as one regenerative flow —
the yoga of living.
Only after our kind has turned over many such lives
can we expect to see the ingredients of freedom
everywhere

9 June 1983

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Legacies

Nuclear war is not a reality
robbing us of future,
but a conception
robbing us of present.

Lao Tsu says changing perceptions
is a futile illusion,
yet doing so to others
is life's greatest challenge
and the cause of all our problems.
People kill
over the failure to alter illusions.
The mundane fact this happens routinely
is much more the threat to our future.
It is the killing we are doing to ourselves now
that we have to stop.

23 December 1983

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

War Cowards

I think we would rather face a nuclear war
than the reality
of our individual and collective behavior
toward women and children.
All too often in public
I see people behaving so badly toward their children
that I feel embarrassed and ashamed.
What I read — is terrifying.
It seems that all the pent-up shit,
the low, stinking, vicious, fucked-up and corrosive
is unloaded on humanity's softest spot.
If only we used the energy to admit this
that we use to pursue it,
peace-on-earth would be obvious.
Like I said,
I think we would rather face a nuclear war.

9 April 1984

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Abortion is Killing, Legalize It

Abortion is killing and should be legal.

Face the facts:

- 1 humans kill their own kind,
- 2 laws contrary to human behavior do not work.

Let us face ourselves realistically and structure our legalities to minimize human suffering. Children are orphaned by illegal abortions. Unwanted children are abused, neglected and abandoned, often growing up trying to commit social suicide. Let us admit that we kill, and that we kill fetus humans, often for selfish reasons of "lifestyle." But let us not make matters worse by mental and legal repressions. Once our aborting is in the open, we can observe, learn, self-improve and attempt to evolve to a higher plane of social behavior.

The real basis upon which to judge a society is in the treatment and position of mothers and children. The mother-and-child is an organism, not a separable duo. Even experiments with monkeys show that without a mother's love a baby does not become a completed individual. Only complete individuals can form an integral society. Today, our society is being mired and choked by throngs of neglected, incomplete human discards. No amount of law, prison or proselytizing can correct for denied emotional growth stimulus. Our values and institutions clearly discriminate against mothers and children. Any woman who has tried to carry and nurse her baby to a job (if she gets to keep it), on a bus, in a restaurant, or almost anywhere in our "advanced" Western civilization can attest to that. Paternity leave is considered a joke and a disgrace to a man's "career." From our suburban Taras we look down upon Chinese and African women in rice paddies and fields with suckling infants strapped on. Yet, these children are ready for life at five years old, never having been more than a heartbeat away from the milk of human kindness. Brats and wimps are not born of affection, reassurance and contact.

Instead of passing laws institutionalizing the denial of our behavior, let us admit to our character and work to improve our actions. Instead of legislating our repression of guilt, and shame, and our fantasies of self-image, let us raise our social morality by action, so that the need and desire for abortion disappears. This higher vision of human behavior, eloquently described by Pope John Paul II, is possible but requires that we restructure the very culture we live in. We must recast our fundamental assumptions about humans-in-universe, and express our morality as behavior.

The reason we have abortion is the same reason we have nuclear bombs, guns, class and conflict. What is required is not some carefully crafted legal peace treaty "solving" an isolated "abortion problem," but a general waking up of our society, each and every one of us, to the interconnectedness of our ideas, our behavior and ourselves.

18 January 1983

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

The Flow of Life

Life is a flow,
a wave,
an endless rhythm
beating alternately fast and slow.
There is never an end to life,
just as there is never a beginning.
That is why abortion is killing,
all the way down to contraception.
Eggs and sperm are alive.
We can interfere with the wavetrain of life,
scattering, absorbing and modulating it,
but life itself continues to flow.
Contraception, abortion and murder
are the various forms of killing
during the different phases of life.
If we were to nuke ourselves tonight,
we and many brother species
would vanish:
incompatible with the new environment.
Life itself would still exist,
in equal amount though altered form.
Perhaps we could disperse ourselves
into that thinnest, rarest cloud:
the animate life of empty space.
We cannot add or subtract life from the universe.
All we can do during our turn at the wheel
is to spin it faster or slower.

The more people we put in hell,
the greater the cry for oblivion.
Develop a sense of paradise
and share it with your friends
so we can all coast into eternity.

23 January 1983

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Killing is Everywhere

If we really hold life to be sacred
then everything we do,
individually and socially,
should genuflect before the passage of its flow.

Look at our world.
Do you see the reverence for life
in the way we treat our mothers?,
our children?,
our families?,
ourselves?

Nothing is as pure
as the love between a baby and its mother.
It makes them one.

Anything,
no matter how trivial or institutionalized,
that drives a wedge between them
is a degree of killing.

We people kill:
openly individually,
collectively repressively,
through our actions, mindset and institutions,
with guns, law, commercial exploitation,
misrule, sexism and prejudice.

If we truly revered the flow of life
then everything in our world would be different .

Think about it.

23 January 1983

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Marry for Love

Money can't buy you love
but it can sure let you do a lot of shopping.

Love is a feeling
and feelings change,
but only the changing lives
and love is living.
I know the feeling very well,
I've had it many times
and it's been true every one.
It's hard to stop loving someone
who shared your past,
something always stays.

What I love in a woman
is warmth you can completely relax with.

Love is a moment, not a monument.
You really enjoy love once you stop counting it.

Talk is more often a reflection than a transmission.
People can be so dumb:
they actually become sad
when they find they speak less
after knowing each other for some time.
They should be pleased
that they can rely on deeper, faster
and less symbolic co-experiencing.

Beauty ages — it does not decay.

The best meat's next to the bone.

Mine eyes have seen it all
and want to see it all again.

My prayers were answered,
only I needed an interpreter.

Advice to husbands: love her before payday.

Summer Solstice 1980 — Vernal Equinox 1981

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Peace

O. K.! I'm guilty!

Now shut up.

3 August 1984

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Can We Talk

Whenever you get therapy, I gotta change.
You went and did your thing
and now you're looking for your payoff.
Believe me honey it's true, I'm just as anxious as you,
I'm praying everyday to see that change you say is due.
In the meantime, while we're waiting,
if you can't leave me alone,
the least you could try and do sometime
is pretend you got friends at home.

1 August 1984

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Courtesy

Courtesy is an expression of perception,
manners are recipes for simulation.

In eras

when people obliged themselves to be well thought of
manners were taught and practiced.

Today

we are unpretentious
and unperceptive.

Freedom dissolves in liberty.

2 August 1984

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

The Beautiful People

It's not the other way around:
our behavior defines our values.

In a culture of dominance and submission
death is the ultimate threat and greatest fear.
Where once witches burned
today the dying are persecuted.

"Kill the children, for youth is ours."
"Kill the dying, for death is theirs."

30 November 1983

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Rules for Living

1

Strive to realize your full human potential.

Develop all your skills for insight and creative activity.

Do this out of a sense of enjoyment.

Life is a gift.

2

Project your best in face-to-face human contact.

Your best will vary with conditions,
and you must often fail.

Persevere.

Intentions are illusions, actions are felt.

3

Provide a protected environment for your family's development.

They are your direct contribution to humanity,
and primary social responsibility.

Morality is family survival.

4

Live by the real.

Do not allow any idea
to replace or obscure your living experience.

Do not edit and diminish others
by acting on projected idealizations and generalizations.

Neither surrender nor enslave to mass-mindedness.

Freedom is individually self-made.

5

Life is irrational.

Do not obstruct it
with attempts to reconcile and guide actions
by rational analysis.

Water flows without regret.

Be what you are.

4 April 1983

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Lotus Lightbulbs

Divinity is within —
make contact.

Religion, analysis, drugs —
once you discover these
you want everyone to buy in.
Listen — don't tell.
After all,
isn't that why you converted?

7 July 1984

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Passed Friends

One thing I've learned,
no matter how many or few friends you have,
you're always sailing alone.
If we have to part, I'll be sad,
but I know that is one of the things that happen in life.
At least we can part
leaving each other relatively comfortable in our lives.
But destinations eventually drive us all apart.
I've enjoyed looking at the map with you,
we share very pleasant memories,
goodbye.

2 September 1983

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Stone Water

Water running out of rocks,
Yosemite in spring.

Spray plunges into morning air,
quiet, cool and wild.
Sunlight, clear and fluid,
captured as rock
is pure and still.

Water drains through a bed of stones,
granite-froth porosity.
Elliptic glistening bubbles
sun-soak dry
to petrified sponges:
a frozen sunlight tumble.

10 June 1983

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Turning

A flashing glow of fire glides across the sky:
a red-tail hawk circles above my roof
alighting high in a poplar to scan the bayside plain.
Stretching out on currents of air
she drifts up circling to the clouds,
joining others like her — turning and turning —
waiting for the southbound rivers of sky.

Red and green metallic glints dart swirling within a dappled shade:
a jousting hummingbird quartet encircles my hanging nectar feeder.
Power for cool nights and heartbeats on the wing.

The midday sun is ripe,
the leaves fall yellow and crisp.
I begin to remember the smell of coming rain in afternoon breezes.

14 October 1987

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

An Expired Doctorate

Riding down the hillside along this lovely tree-lined street,
early evening liquid sun
oozing through the dancing cracks in the mosaic vista of the distant bay,
a luminous weave darting through a trembling fabric of leafy green
masking the immense face of the ripened sky behind its rippling veil,
and filling sight,
as susurrus of rushing air fill sound,
and reflections of lost promise fill mind.

How marvelous to be alive, to be aware, to feel the light,
to ride my breath through this eternal now.
How fortunate to have such balm to soothe the sting of failure.
Not a major failure to be sure,
only that of work and ego to achieve any useful end or recognition,
to see the raw promise of youthful ambition,
distilled by fine education to a potent extract,
now become a weak vinegar — sour and watered —
and a passionate vocation reduced to hireling occupation,
the reductionism of mind to mere calculator.

So I find myself
engrossed in the minutiae of a superfluous part
in an unnecessary weapon
within the excessive arsenal
of an insensate empire.
While I speak this poem — or you read it —
about fifty children in our world
will die from easily preventable disease,
and one hundred women will die or suffer disability
in pregnancy or childbirth
for lack of simple remedies and care.
To overcome such tragedy only requires
one quarter of the military costs of the third world,
or ten percent that of the United States.
Imagine,
so few less bullets, so much more life.
I look into my little daughter's eyes
and think of those mothers and those fathers suffering such loss.
I look into my little daughter's joyful dancing eyes
and draw purpose in each day of pointless employment,
as a trivial cog in the sprawling machinery of blind empire,

a Cyclops gone mad with lack of vision,
ravening the world with unquenching power.

I work among a swarm of aphid zombies,
each focused on his own proboscis
oblivious by intent, trained through rigorous education,
to even the agony of one beside being chewed alive
in mandibles of political expediency
by preying mantises invoking greater imperial glories,
the whole an infestation withering the vine of life.
I marvel at such voluntary unanimity in the degradation of human soul,
at such profound denaturing of awareness,
at such complete filtration of compassion from human hearts —
are they even still human?
Can it be true that so many accede to such enslavement?,
emptying themselves of their spiritual birthright
solely to tremble in fear as hollow vessels of mindless desiring
for things metered out by owners of a vampire economy?
Those quick of mind, well educated, articulate,
mouth such perfidy and platitudes to curry favor, to move up-class —
parasites in a parasite empire —
with no moral anchor
to drag along the course of their ambition.
How well did Yeats write:
“The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.”

Could I somehow liberate myself
to do some greater good — however minor —
yet still support my family?
How many others feel like me?,
engaged in our pangs of conscience
being rich enough to support such luxury,
and too weak to live on principle alone.
How much simpler the logic of life without such impediment,
yet what an opulence of poverty.

One in ten, surely not that many,
one bullet out of ten,
one French fry out of ten in a soldier's mess,
one warplane out of ten,
one general out of ten.
Surely we would never notice,

surely we could train that marvelous capacity for unseeing
to shield consciousness from any perception
of such a trifling reduction of opulence.
Yet, wouldn't even these willfully unseeing
feel the smile of grace for a transformed world
from the face of every child?

To open your mind and heart to this world is to go insane —
certainly if alone —
to survive one needs refuge in community.
Like a Christian in the Roman legions nineteen centuries ago,
I, too, will rejoice with the fall of empire.
How can I not pray for revolution,
even knowing how fearful a thing that can be?
My demeanor is resigned, my soul is in rebellion.

3 May 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

You Can Marry a Poet, But You Cannot Possess Her

Love is lost in the grasping,
like breath
it must be free to rush in and ease away,
to inspire and expire,
to flood and to drain, like the waters of the Nile,
to overwhelm our senses with its graceful rapture
and diffuse into memories of quiet warmth;
a miracle requiring only our acceptance,
and stifled by imprisonment when netted by control.
To love is to grant freedom,
to dance with surprise,
to accept the unknown,
to be grateful.

A pure, true love is like the circling of hawks
weaving spirals centered on each other,
or the kiss of sunlight on flowers that surely cools to night,
a cyclic constancy of spontaneous eruption,
an intimacy through distance,
a knowing and unknowing beyond understanding,
beyond all possession;
like the echo of a birdsong through the forested hills
that fills you with tears on a warm spring day,
like the smile of another poet nodding with closed eyes
as she hears you speak your prescient verse.
I have known love like this,
possibly deeper and keener than between others as husbands and wives.

I have had that kind of connection —
eye-to-eye —
that stopped thinking, arrested time, cleared the mind, and centered being.
Marry me, I said, this must happen again,
and so it has,
pouncing on me catlike unexpectedly,
in knowing glances darting from young children's faces,
in moments of recognition when all else disappears,
when each one knows with no thought;
a life woven from scattered moments along the stream of time,
like a string of pearls.

And so it goes.
The poet circles in and out of my life,
sometimes a woman, always a mother, sometimes a fury, always the other,
a presence, an illusion, an invasion, an enigma, a grace,
hijacking my DNA for a new generation,
free as a bird in a summer garden,
beyond my control, that is quite certain.
But love is like that,
it lives on enticement and rewards with renewal.
I must offer nectar to the wind like a flower to a hummingbird
for how else can I coax that spontaneous miracle?
Oh, and I do love to hear her sweet clear voice nearby.

5 May 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Performance Evaluation

Without fail it arrives every summer like fleas,
a shell game of lying with patronage to please.
There is no escape and all must pay heed
as to getting a raise why you have no need.
Each one will receive a unique explanation
for the management robbery of remuneration.
Instead of the cash you get a fine memo
as useful to me as a brand to a cow,
or a number tattoo
to a Holocaust Jew.
So don't be so foolish to think it makes sense,
you see, it has nothing to do with performance.
Pay is all based on just who is who
and nothing at all on whatever you do.

8 May 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Ignorance is Strength

If ignorance is bliss
then America is paradise.
When you narrow the scope of thought
you inflate the appearance of competence,
this is why computers we exalt
and Republicans rule the earth.

13 May 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Mazurka Beans

I looked down into a pot of beans, shaking oregano,
sunlight shines through the trees and fills the house,
the music of Chopin Mazurkas fills the air,
spilling out the open door diffusing into the streams of light.

I look down into a pot of beans — black beans —
the food of Cuba, of Puerto Rico,
the dish I loved my mother to make.
Below the carpet of basil, oregano, paprika, cumin, salt and pepper,
the black beans soak, their skins browned in garlic olive oil,
mingling with chopped ham and onions,
caressed by diced stewed tomatoes,
all blending into a nectar of the earth,
a nourishment, a celebration, an essence of a culture —
sabor.

I look down into that textured herbal blanket
waiting to see the eruption of bubbles signaling a boil,
a brown boil with blood red flashes rending the herbal shroud
and issuing billows of aromatic steam,
the taste of the south like the spirit of its people —
rising, rising —
to overwhelm with luxuriant sensuality
the thin dryness of a pallid north.

I look down into that pot of black beans in this perfect moment
and I see the entire world radiating out —
the entire interpenetrating web
created and unfurled beyond the edges of infinity —
like the eightfold rays of Buddha truth,
flung from the vortex-eye of a Tibetan sand mandala.
Time evaporates, mind is one, "I am who am."

Outside, I hear my little girl,
babbling and toddling like a little sparrow sifting through the leaves,
as purple florets of lantana sway in the mazurka breeze — music,
the kiss that transcends time,
the breath that transcends death —
and little Ella's arrow gaze and impish smile
are my eternal rebellion's salute to a narrow sleeping world.

I am the pepper in your pot of beans,
the heat rising from below,
the browned garlic olive skin rubbing up against you,
the nectar blended from many fine extracts and cultivations,
heir of an ancient and unending impetus,
the innocence and adventure of eternal experience —
an enticement, a flood —
the love-child of revolution and sustenance —
sabor.

19 May 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Waking the Dead, Redeeming the Living

"They make a wasteland, and call it peace."

— Cornelius Tacitus

"Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just,
that His justice will not sleep forever."

— Thomas Jefferson

Noam Chomsky,
Christopher Hitchens,
Robert Bly,
Thich Nhat Hanh.

From the exact to the sublime,
the timely to the timeless,
the perceptive to the transcendent,
my mind begins to awaken to the magnitude of the crime,
my mind begins to open to my complicity in the evil —
Vietnam...

The Black Wall in Washington
is not a monument to dead soldiers,
it is a continuous dirge to a nation's lost honor,
an innocence lost over and over again,
a loss of soul.
Nothing can ever be right until we expiate that crime,
a crime that continues
by the willful ignorance, the convenient unknowing
of we who enjoy the bounty of this American life.

Oh, dear God, don't call us to accounts for a thousand years!
for it would take at least that long — even if we tried —
to compensate for the enormity we have created;
and yet,
how sad to think our gods could be so cold,
our universe could be so empty and soulless,
that retribution for such evil could not possibly arrive —
even tomorrow.

What other comfort can the peasantry of the world have
as they shiver under the lengthening shadow
of our remorseless empire?

Monsoon soaked ground bubbles up mines like a deranged apocalypse —
playthings for children —
and rivulets of poison trickle out of air-dropped wastelands
to seep into the veins of a new generation
and wither its fruit in the womb;
and here, in Jefferson's land of the "ignorant and free,
in a state of civilization" that "never was and never will be,"
reflection on a withering career bubbles up memories,
fresh, gnawing, immune to time's erosion,
buoyant against convenient forgetting,
stinging in their rebuke against my compliance to the course of evil.
Yes, even us little nobodies are faced with moral challenges,
inconveniently, unfairly, when we are young, when we are fragile.
We survive, we connive, we comply,
we feed our children and make our way,
but dare not hold out a cupped hand of water
to Jesus on his way to Golgotha.
My god, think what it would do to your career —
your future.
So we let others stretch out their hands
and we survive, quietly, into this future —
are we proud of it?
Now,
what great truth and what measure of courage
do you pass onto your children setting off on their own?
"Do you remember the Vietnam War, dad?"

We tell our children nothing about this,
we lie, we deny,
we glorify garbage myths for commercial exploitation,
we honor our greatest living war criminals
with prizes, bank presidencies, book contracts, speaking fees,
and we honor our greatest dead war criminals
by naming airports for them, by entombing them in televised temples.

Yes, I remember the Vietnam War.

I was not brave,

I did not challenge evil,

I looked out for myself,

and I am here.

All I can offer you is the truth,

and hope in that to find some redemption for my moral weakness,

and some grace in awakening you to greater good,

to deeper meaning,

to honest judgment that unfolds in your actions.

I want to cleanse my children's country,

I want to cleanse my soul — in this world;

let the trials begin.

25 June 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Rules for Listening

Breath slowly, evenly, with eyes closed.

If looking, look far away, defocus.

No eating, drinking, chewing, fidgeting.

Silence.

No questions.

Accept the presence of the words.

Accept their significance for the author.

Judge slowly.

Answer honestly.

Appreciate the willingness to share.

Reciprocate.

27 June 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Zombie Nation

Lying is woven through the fabric of our lives —
dyed into its very threads —
like a web of mold, a staining mildew,
for how are we to live without it?
Truth is hard — and cold.
If we admit truth
then we are left with the naked reality of having to respond.
We could be faced with serious responsibility,
with unpleasant work,
with unprofitable consequences,
with a need for strong character.
No — deny — evade — protect our zombie nation.
Rather than suffer the shame of shirking life's call,
it is so much easier to deny reality —
enshrouding it in a gauze of lies —
and thus, buffered by blissful unknowing,
to choose from the convenient options remaining in view.
We support each other in a community of lying,
a fungal cooperative,
a congregational conspiracy of comforting ignorance.
We need our lies,
we are all agreed to forget their falsity —
zombie nation solidarity —
and
we toss the keys of insight into an ocean of denial.
And so, secure, barricaded in our gated mental enclaves,
shielded from the searing eye of our innate consciousness,
we are detached from all awareness — our most godlike quality,
our all seeing I.

Now it is possible —
to be a vampire and make the sign of the cross.

5 July 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Everyone Knows

Everybody knows everything
nobody cares what you think,
you thrill to your pondering
we dismiss with a blink.

A poet, you say, deserving distinction,
or the usual triteness, in your own edition?

How can you know,
why should you care?

If you speak for its merit
and not to gain fare,
your treasures stay virtuous
like currents of air.

What profited Jesus by sowing his words?

What gained Buddha's children, but the flight of the birds?

29 August 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

A Heart that Sings

Making poetry is joy,
even in the midst of desolation,
for poetry is the outpouring of the heart
at its most vibrant,
when it resonates
on its own sensation of living,
its own awareness of being;
for awareness in its purity is the flame of life,
as rapture is its radiance
and joy its warmth.
A heart that sings the songs of its soul,
even when overwhelmed by a tide of grief,
is rooted to a vast, elemental ecstasy.
Like dawn through mist, poetry evaporates to clarity.

9 September 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Welcome to the Village

"My lands are where my dead lie buried." — Crazy Horse

Yes, we have all had death rain down from the skies,
for our world is now that way, as you know —
welcome —
welcome to the village.

Our young men leave to claim their conclusions,
they marry their death and sire our doom.
We who remain are the chaff of the land,
the children, the mothers, the old, and the weak,
crushed between millstones and blown in the wind,
to die by degrees between burning rains.
Those born to death learn to live for revenge,
for vengeance gives power when all hope is dead.
It forges our young men to hard smoldering nails
hammered to shut the coffin of peace.
Yes, welcome, welcome, please, share our bread;
we comfort each other as well as we can
between storms of hate we rain down on our heads,
for under the weight of a most righteous greed
chaff bleeds into stone and seasons the wheat,
and we are all drawn in together, you see — refugees all,
outliving peace.

Welcome to the village.

15 September 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Out to Lunch

God turned to His Wife and asked Her quite meekly,
“Honey, did You make Me a lunch for today?”
Annoyed, She complained with Her usual affection
“It’s ready to go, don’t You see it before You?,
honestly, why don’t You ever just look?”
“Oh thank You, Sweetie, I’m glad You’re so thoughtful,
I was hoping You’d make something for Me today.”
“Really,” She said, “You’re just so darn helpless.”
“I love when You treat Me all nice,” He cajoled.
“So what is it this time,” She scowled as She asked Him.
“Oh, everyone’s whining at once,” He began,
“begging I bless all their most-wanted killings,
and naturally, arguing all the time too,
over who gets to kill whom first, worst, and most,
and who gets to grab and keep more than the others —
a million plus meetings I’m scheduled today,
and all are so boring and petty and trite,
I can’t even imagine how I’ll stay awake.”
She just shook Her head in disgust, and then asked Him
“Why do you keep working at such a place,
You’re wasting Your time and wasting Your grace,
leave those fools now and find something new,
where they want You, and talents like Yours are respected.”
“Well, Honey, it’s just not that easy to change,
but I guess time has come to start looking around.
Nobody there ever listens to Me,
nothing I say makes them change, or to see,
and after they get things all tangled up
they come whining and moaning so I’ll save their day.
Crying they ask I rob others for them,
whatever they each couldn’t steal on their own;
sobbing, they beg Me to guard what they’ve gotten,
looted from everyone weaker than them.
The more they possess, the more they expect:
ignorance makes them arrogant —
arrogance makes them hypocrites —
hypocrisy makes them fearful —
and fear keeps them ignorant.
Seek knowledge, I tell them, and gain some humility,
humility leads you onward to peace,
and peace in its turn will become your great strength.

But no, they seek power to cover their ignorance,
and that is all I am ever to them:
a shield to preserve their stubborn stupidity,
a club to pummel themselves through each other,
a longed-for miraculous weapon of wonder,
a fortuitous working of chance to their ends,
the god of crusades, of bloodlust and war prayers,
and the fatuous claims of the patriot rants.”
God stopped — hesitated — dreading this workday,
and His Wife asked Him softly while He stood in silence
“Well then My Love, whose side will You take now?”
and then God reflected on what He would do.
“Honey, You’re right, it’s time for a change,
I’m just going to leave them all on their own,
I’m going to move onto something quite new,
something peaceful, and interesting, and beautiful too.”
“Well, I’m certainly glad,” She beamed Her approval,
“But what will You do when they call You again?”
His face brightened into a small roguish smile,
“Well, I’ll leave them a message, just hang up a sign,
saying, due to a change in the nature of things,
God is away — I’m out to lunch.

16 September 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Poems On Everyday MatterS

Selected poems, old and new

(continued and concluded)

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

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Empty and Marvelous

It is the silence
that can hold any sound
and so is the mother of all music,
of all speech,
all noise,
all thunder,
all terror,
all peace.
In its emptiness
it holds infinity.
A few moments of silence
can punctuate a life,
suspend you
in an instant of your history,
open a door
to a conscious eternity.
Empty and marvelous,
it draws all to it
than pops like a bubble —
an instant glint of sunlight —
reincarnating the world,
and you.

25 October 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Why does the Buddha smile?

Autumn light falls on the leaves
and makes them luminous against the blue,
it falls upon a woman's form
and chisels breath to beauty —
even desire.

Breeze percolates through the light,
quivering leaves;
life is sweet.

Like a lotus, radiant, blooming
above the fetid pond it roots in,
so the luminous beauty and joy of life
flower in every corner of time and place.
Whether we find ourselves in war or peace,
satisfied or desolated,
the honeyed light
dims not its warming grace
to match the hue of our anxiety.

Somewhere in this world,
at this moment
for some individual
there is no personal God,
there is only loss, abandonment, despair.
We each will have this moment.
Yet, the light falls,
the lotus blooms,
the grace is there
amidst the wreckage we feel entangled by.
Tranquil beauty and stark terror are all one in this world.
The lotus blooms over the stench of death,
but it blooms — daily.
And so, the Buddha smiles.

27 October 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

The Arena

In the old days
the emperors threw Christians to the lions
to distract the people
from the predation by the rulers.
Today —
they bomb Afghanistan.

A vast ocean of anger and envy
rises all around us,
is our ignorance thick enough
to wall off that tide?
When empire collapses
it crushes its base.

The sands of time
are swept clean by the tides of history —
waves lost to memory —
left flat, smooth, indistinguishable;
waiting, perhaps,
for the tread of lions.

7 November 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

The Silver Palace

A vodka martini with a lemon twist,
a liquid tropical desert — chilled.
Amazing Grace
played on a bamboo flute
while golden Buddhas
sit serenely in a glassed-in niche,
warming under a cone of light.
A crowd cheers as a point is scored
inside the telescreen up in the corner.
A man hunches closer, trying to kiss
a woman's giggling mouth
hiding in a goblet of pink confusion.
The aroma of garlic, sesame, lemon,
the taste of rice, the satori of sizzle;
teacups tinkle, children run by.
The barmaid smiles with such knowing sweetness,
like my own daughter, wise to my game,
"another?," who can resist?
The fish in their tank gape wide-eyed to see
the shimmering rainbow weave of the human phantasmagoria,
strange fish indeed, in a kaleidoscopic airy sea.
We are each that universal one
pretending to forget,
playing hide-and-seek with ourself as the many,
creating the circle of motion
about the stillpoint of knowing.
We have all been here before,
peek-a-boo!
The Buddhas, too, are amused,
they are all smiling.
My fortune cookie said
"You will have many friends."

7 November 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

The day I learned what bourgeois means

I set out to be a poet,
to look deeply at the wonder and mystery of life,
the joy of love,
the essence of being,
the connection between my soul
and a universe beyond mere thought and imagination.
I set out to be an artist,
true to my vision,
diligent in my craft,
honest in my expression,
and humble in my expectation
that any would find captivating uniqueness in my work.
I flattered myself to think
I could add beauty to our times,
like the fragrance of a flower
or the song of a bird,
by sending word out for poets to gather,
to offer our verses in the coffeehouse and tavern.
It was in this way that I came to learn the meaning of the word
bourgeois.

Here and there I found friendly proprietors,
people who worked in shops that they owned,
and willing to offer a corner or room
I was free to try filling with flush thirsty customers.
We artists are grateful for patrons like these
for giving us space to perform and display.
For we can make art
alone, in our caves, in our garrets,
or lost in cloud-hidden woods.
But to show and perform by nature is dialog,
and the artist needs space with an audience to engage.
Hail to our patrons, and in gratitude for the art
buy another drink — so we can repeat this.

I drew up my flyers and took them to town,
asking the merchants to post in their windows:
"Poetry reading, open to all,
art in your neighborhood, join in, it's free."
Well, wouldn't you know, not all were that keen
to advertise freely another's pet scheme:
"This doesn't bring customers into my shop,
I don't advertise business for others."
But aren't you all in the same association?
Mightn't our customers also shop in your store?
How can our poetry up at the coffeehouse
cut into trade in hoes, shovels or pills?,
why would a gathering after you close
slow down a trade in lipstick or books?
and do you mean you actually imagine
a Legion of Decency will boycott your shop,
for a notice that art is invading the tavern?

The day of the reading finally arrived,
excited, I sat with my books and I waited
for people intrigued and people to read,
for the chance passers-by,
and the nuts with their raves.
I sat, and I waited,
and I waited some more,
I drank and I waited, and then after four
I'd had my fill and waited no more.
Had I sought psychic vacuum
I'd now have achieved perfection.

Later I went about exploring
to see where the minds of these people might be.

First, I found signs:

"Open house," "Open house," many like these,
"garage sale," "big garage sale," "estate sale" — inheritance, more class,
"zero percent financing available now,"
"financial consultant,"
"portfolio management,"
"tax consultant,"
"invest,"
"yield."

And then the messenger arrived.

Four wheel drive Dodge Durango, gleaming new,
nearly flattens me in the crosswalk,
skinny blondie see-how-rich-I-am jewelry in big heat
to get that parking spot at the red zone,
dash in for a low-fat decaf latté,
cell phone to ear — redecorating the bathroom, I think —
so significant that skyscrapers in New York
are deflated to pump enough oil out of Arabia
to rocket her wall-climbing global-warming prom-queen float
over nearly level, silky-smooth paved streets;
a family of four in Somalia living for a month
on what she blows off in ten minutes.

The message was clear,
so simple, so mindless, so all-consuming, so boring, so selfish, so trite:
bourgeois.

I set out to be a poet
and found I was a socialist.

10 November 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Jellyfish

They're hollow,
transparently ignorant,
spineless,
poison their prey,
flexible, drift with the current,
no principle impedes their motion.
Now I understand office politics.

13 November 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Job application

I would be good
at watching the quality of morning sun in fall
shift from crystalline horizontal incisiveness
to a near invisibility of diffused blue,
the texture of reality softening
from a pointillist granularity of color and shadow —
razor sharp in its purity —
to a shaded weave of fluid color, lit from within,
alive with the fullness of the universe,
autumn leaves tumbling like petals of amber
dancing across the luminescent blue,
carried by the eddying sighs of a living earth.

I would be good
at watching wispy white feathers of icy cloud
curl in slow vortical whorls,
sailing with majestic grace across the cupola of atmosphere;
and I would be good at telling you
how the rays of evening sun
glance off the salty foam of wavecrests in the Pacific
to warm the pink bellies of creamy pendulous clouds,
an amorous sky rolling its effulgent Rubenesque abundance
over the sprawling darkening body of the earth.

I would be good
at telling you how the droplets of mist
hang in the air between pine boughs and leaves of eucalyptus
in the quiet of the morning
before the rising sun crests the canyon rim
flooding the humid silence with light,
and how the silent swoop of a hawk low in the forest canopy
cores vortices of clarity as its wake,
a clarity that diffuses into misty white opaqueness,
an opacity that evaporates in the light;
and I could tell you about evening's blanketing fog
pulled westward over the rim of the canyon
dissolving the panorama of clarity
into a hushed proximate blankness of unlit white
punctuated by the resonant whoo-whoop of a pair of owls
flapping noiseless wings to reach invisible perches
in the heavy coolness of descending night.

I would be good
at telling you how the hummingbirds pair,
drilling the noonday light
with a swirling darting weave of whistling clicks,
sprinkling glints of blazing color
as if sparking the very air with a furious friction;
and I could tell you of opalescent clouds,
rim-lit on passing across the sun,
trailing sweeping purple arcs of evaporating rain
that disappear into the clear blue,
only a shadow reaching the ground.

I would be good at all that.
Surely, many would want to hear
how the day's light progressed,
being shut away in their self-contained preoccupations —
unconnected.
I could remind them,
my words would reach out
like a mother's arms to a frightened baby,
encompassing it in warming comfort —
connection to the mother.
Surely, in today's world
there must be a job like this,
the need is so great.
Think of me as the weatherman of the soul.

16 November 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

A seed like mustard

It is so hard to write of love and beauty
as my countrymen rain war
upon the hapless crazed impoverished,
abandoned in starving wastelands,
trapped by heartless fates.
Yet, what else can I really do?
At least my ragged unimportant verse
can bring a smile or two upon another face,
a happy pause in some other life,
than might otherwise have been the case
had I just gone unreflecting,
eating my suppers and doing my work
like so many sleeping millions.
How few are the minds our ideas reach to touch,
how fleeting the impact our lives may impress.
Still, maybe this is actually my role,
to bring out one or two more flashing dimples —
smiles — amused heads shaking unseen by me.
Perhaps my entire experience is to be fruited in a single phrase
eliciting a few effervescent sparkles of joy —
instants in another's life —
and this will be my impact to history,
my accent in the greater karma.

I cannot stop the war,
I cannot stop the foreclosure on freedom and dignity in my country,
I cannot influence the people I live and work amongst
to see what is happening,
to see that we walk knee-deep in blood
to luxuriate so thoughtlessly in riches we enjoy so inequitably.
But, at times, I can write
of love, and beauty, and grace,
and in this way my wandering thoughts may kiss another soul.
This has some value, doesn't it?

27 November 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Hardboiled Half Dozen

Polishing the egg
her unwavering focus.
Best stay out, rooster.

"I me carry you,"
Ella big-eyed reaches up,
I stoop to obey.

Mommy has her charms,
but none give rides like papa.
Ella has it made.

She stole the wife's man
by stealing the man's woman.
Child conquers marriage.

Sex has a purpose:
your child consumes you, leaving
love as memory.

Limp battered old cock,
testy clucking old layer —
what's left after chicks.

1 December 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Goatpaths

Truth is a narrow road
and rarely lets a friend along
because its razor thinness slices through
even the thickness of blood.
To many, this will seem too hard,
and truth condemned as loneliness not worth the insight —
a summit of no descent,
like a frozen climber on a Himalayan slope —
and so most stay with warmer comforts,
within the company of broad illusion.
Who can say which comes to death more satisfied,
those immersed in the teeming dramas of their minds,
or the lonely outcasts at the ends of goatpaths,
staring at incommunicable panoramas of sublimity.

4 December 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

We ignore all immolations

A Buddhist nun immolates herself on a Saigon street
to shock callous calculating minds
into a consciousness with peace as possibility.
A Palestinian explodes himself in Israel
to insert punctuation into the long, grim sentence passed on his tribe.
Final Solutions are dealt out by those with enough guns
to force in new settlements;
internal colonies grow to merge into a smothering occupation
rimmed in the blood of the vanquished.
Little empires curry favor with greater ones,
playing the role of Sparta-for-hire.
And everywhere:
the eyes are blind, the ears are deaf, the minds are sealed.
We ignore all immolations.
We can only drive ourselves along the scent trails laid down for us
by the masters of our destiny.

10 December 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

How I know

I remember the smile that you gave me today.
Thinking about it
makes everything right in this world,
not that I would have you believe Utopia has arrived.
No, our miserable world is still its same miserable self.
But your smile, today,
lingers in my mind like the silkiest of wines,
a reassurance
that yes, yes, in these days the things are arranged just so
that I can hold you close
and have your smile beam its grace into my life —
and know that I am fulfilled.

17 December 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

Poet Blood

"The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation."

— Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

"We be of one blood, ye and I." — Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book*

It is said one lives longer
if part of some community.
Does this mean outcasts
are slowly being murdered by society?,
and hermits are invisible suicides?
Both might see
a deadzone of spirit and intuition
in the congenial orthodoxies
and mindless homogeneities of social convention.
If so, then what does it mean to 'live longer,'
and who, indeed, has really 'lived?'
And for our loners,
driven by the unrelenting power of their visions of truth,
do their solitary paths
weave into some tenuous fabric of kinship?,
like castaways
trading messages in bottles across an indifferent sea?;
or cougars
spraying their pungent declarations on distant outcrops?
Some of them, I know,
distill experience down to its essence, its nuggets, its salts,
and throw these back as poems into an unsensing world,
knowing there are others like them
also casting,
also, occasionally, breathing in the sting
of newly found insight:
"We be of one blood, ye and I."

30 December 2001

Manuel Garcia, Jr.

The stray thoughts of an unknown citizen

The great secret to power
is that most people never learn
that they are so disdainfully manipulated,
and that most of those who do,
do nothing about it.

Those rare times when popular consciousness awakens
and flows into action against power
are called anarchy,
as in: Paris 1789,
St. Louis 1877,
Spain 1936,
Mexico, Russia, China, India,
and so many twentieth century places.

Rare?

Perhaps 'rare' is an artifact of the dominant social programming,
a wishful ubiquity, like styrofoam in the oceans
or strontium 90 in the bones.

For none of us are any longer pure,
untainted, unimprinted;
however dilute, the tincture of control has been instilled in us all.

Those with big spirits
see through the deception and work for greater good.

Perhaps they are not so rare,
but, most likely, they are neither plentiful:
prophets are stoned, flatterers are knighted.

Most of the rest with any wit find gullibility shameful
and avoid the embarrassment by denial,
furtively playing their roles as directed;
the witless glide along in a serene sincerity of belief.

The great secret to success
is to serve the needs of power,
the reward is wealth,
the cost is loss of character:
you can climb as far as you are willing
to trade your self-respect for accumulation.

No need to name names,
simply look at what deeds it took
for the exalted to achieve their positions
(these will be little mentioned, to avoid the embarrassment).

And so, in making your way in this world, consider:
the outcome of your life
and your accounting of gain and loss
will depend as much on circumstances
as on the nature of weights that tip your scales.

Rain in the forest

Rain

falling through the eucalyptus leaves,
pattering on the roof in the dark of night,
stirring the air in the forest
into the sound of a sustained exhalation,
as if the woods and mountains were one great lung
holding the breath of the earth
focused in yogic meditation —

za-zen —

and I was just one corpuscle of the earth's blood
surrounded in the rush of life —
the great tides of inspiration and expiration —
cooled, washed, oxidized,
surrounded by an endless breath
that also reverberates within me.
I am alive in the sound of rain.
Tonight, it has no terrors or discomforts,
just an absence of silence
and a timeless presence beyond place.
I am alive in the sound of rain,
listen.

1 January 2002

Manuel Garcia, Jr.