Mangogarcia Poems 2011-2016
Rima LXIX — Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer
Posted on November 16, 2011

Rima LXIX — Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer (1836-1870)

Al brillar un relámpago nacemos,
Y aun dura su fulgor cuando morimos:
¡Tan corto es el vivir!

La gloria y el amor tras que corremos,
Sombras de un sueño son que perseguimos:
¡Despertar es morir!

Rima LXIX — Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer (a translation)

In a stroke of lightning flash life births anew,
Yet before its aura fades death will ensue:
Life as brief as breath!

That glory and those loves we grasp onto
Are shadows within dreams that we pursue:
Waking is our death!
I Am A Cloud
Posted on September 26, 2012

I am a cloud over the mountain, carried on the wind.

I am the rain out of the cloud, falling to the mother.

I am the water sheeting on rocks, the kiss of sky and earth now.

I am the stream scouring the mountain, crumbled earth in a watery froth.

I am the river coursing the valley, the womb of future mountains.

I am the outpouring into the sea, the mother ready to embrace me.

I am the wide and open ocean, the one whose thoughts are clouds.

I am the thought of life ascending, exhaled from the all-embracing.

I am the wind over the ocean, watering up the sky.

I am a bubble of ice chill rising in an ocean of airy radiance.

I am a cloud over the mountain snowing onto the mother.
I am the crystalline bite of an ice cap, frozen solid with intent.

I am the rasping flow of glaciers, furrowing the breasts that nurse them.

I am the warming tears of melt, crying for joy to water the earth.

I am the water sheeting on rocks, the kiss of sky and earth now.

I am a cloud over the mountain, the still fresh memory of ocean.

I am the mountain under the cloud, a memory of oceans and fire.

I am the river of time from mountain to sea, the ephemeral stream of the eternal return.

I am the ocean, mother of mountains, called home by the clouds.

I am a cloud over the mountain carried on the wind.
Buyer Beware
Posted on April 3, 2013

Buyer Beware

If you eat what they sell
it will make you fat.

If you read what they sell
it will make you stupid.

If you watch what they sell
it will make you coarse.

If you want what they sell
it will make you poor.

If you believe what they sell
it will make you mindless.

If you are what they sell
it will make you lifeless.

If you sell what they sell
it will make you soulless.
When you realize that it is impossible to alter the course of human events in a world indifferent to you and your concerns and your interests, then the challenge becomes to fashion a life that unfolds with reasonable delight given reasonable exertion, and is experienced as fulfilling despite the knowledge that all is impermanent.

We are a species of pyramid-building apes living in a self-entangling universe. Our fantasies of self-worth and our obsessions of personal gain are homogenized into mass neuroses (and for some, psychotic cults) that we distinguish as strains of politics, and varieties of religion. We like to keep our minds focused on our wants in the here-and-now, and more narrowly so as our selfishness becomes more consuming. This blinds us to the panorama of interconnectedness we are immersed in, and that robs our brains of accurately interpreting sensory input, our minds of realizations based on fact, and our consciences of forming resolve that recognizes personal responsibility.

The left wing politics of complaint is useless, the global consensus for selfishness — whether massed in chaotic jumbles of grasping individuals or as organized units of capitalism — has a cumulative inertia that is unstoppable by the force of logic or the appeal to morality. Right-wing politics is entirely the machinations of organized greed, and all its rhetoric is merely a blustery show to distract attention from its purpose. Fundamentalist religion is the male cult of sexism and misogyny, the ultimate in self-righteousness for excusing willfully ignorant authoritarianism.

We have not evolved to the point where altruistic attitudes about social inclusion and species solidarity can outweigh our immediate selfish desires when choosing how to act, which is usually reflexively or impulsively. The rush to satisfy our constant streams of immediate wants overwhelms any concern for the exercise of social responsibility for the long term benefit of all life. As a result, we can anticipate that human extinction will be nature’s response to capitalism.
A fulfilling life is to be had by acting in ways that maintain your self-respect while also transmitting a positive — or at a minimum neutral — experience to the people you have direct contact with. Given human reality, none of us will always achieve this ideal. However, successful practitioners of such mindful living will only lapse into unkindness and hostility infrequently. The basis of “self-respect” as used here is: your truthful estimation of your moral character. This has nothing to do with affectations and acquisitions used as measures of social status.

It should be freeing for you to know that the achievement of personal fulfillment through mindful living is very rarely noticed, let alone acknowledged and celebrated. It is its own reward.
MOLOCH RULES!
 Posted on August 27, 2014

MOLOCH RULES!

Moloch rules!
Consume, conform, obey.
Don’t think.
Hurry!
Do what everybody does,
Don’t get passed,
Be happy, don’t ask questions.
Hurry!
Fatten your sleep-deprived children
for the fires of Moloch!
Hurry!
Moloch! deny the prayers of all others,
choose me to shower with your vomit of gold,
Hurry!
Lessons For Life

Learn how to fail gracefully, success is rare and failure most likely.

Do not put off what is in you to do. Do not let death overtake you, having denied yourself by submission to obligation.
The Buried Rainbow
Posted on January 25, 2015

The Buried Rainbow

His mind is a graveyard of memories of young and beautiful faces, utopian dreams, transformative art unseen in this island world of blind cyclopses bumbling into each other with hurtling ambition in the shadowed canyon bottoms.
He tosses pearls of protein, lipids and carbohydrates on the frozen ground, and they erupt as fluttering clouds of rock doves rising into the clear air to wheel about the shafts of light streaming onto the canyon walls, and carrying his gaze up into the buried rainbow of an undiscovered country, where fields of energy emanate from fingertips of generosity to unfurl a mesh of loving care that cradles a race of poets.
What I Have Learned
Posted on April 14, 2015

What I Have Learned

Thinking is freedom,
Self respect is strength,
Letting go is liberty,
Character is fulfillment.
Life is a gift,
Love is all giving.

Don’t rush,
Don't get greedy,
Don’t get angry,
Don’t expect courtesy or appreciation.
Be peaceful,
Be happy.

Life is a gift to you,
Love is your gift to others.
Life may reward your love given,
but who knows?
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-whoo 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,
recovering the noonday light
with a swirling darting weave of whistling clicks,
spinkling 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,
comprising 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
Renewal
Posted on March 27, 2016 (8 April 2012)

The cherry blossoms have been unfurled for over two weeks now, and they are beginning to flutter down like snowflakes illuminated by sunlight with each gusty wind. Two Robin males scuffled in an oak, quivering the leaves and then dropping as a roiling mass to the ground, sweeping out clouds of dust with furious wingbeats till one bird shot into flight and away, and a satisfied female Robin glided from her viewing perch to join her victorious mate. The hummingbird chicks have already fledged. Crickets and frogs sing after dusk and well into the night; and showers fall gently like velvet curtains that soon lift, unveiling a crisp brilliant world. The days are longer, the sun is warmer, the air soft and perfumed; it is spring.

Despite the crises of humanity, and despite our own urgencies and preoccupations, Nature cycles majestically on, renewing itself at every moment and in every gesture, oblivious to our preferences. The streams swollen with spring meltwater or the runoff of spring showers carry the weathered chaff of mountains down to the sea, slowly feeding the creation of future rocks from the destruction of older ones. The warming earth slowly exhales organic vapors once trapped in frozen ground or as living plant matter, even as new shoots and blossoms emerge. Nature is an entwinement of cycles in continuous change, a completely dynamic reality that has no static state nor time of pause, however calm it may momentarily seem to us. “You cannot step twice into the same river,” said Heraclitus (c. 535 – c. 475 BC), and so it is with the continuous flow of reality. The only constancies in Nature are the processes that cycle matter, energy, and life through the evolving sequence of forms manifested as the universe we perceive.

Every now and then it is good for us to break the spell of our everyday preoccupations, the “ten thousand and one things” that distract us from seeing fundamental reality, the “Māyā” as it is called in Sanskrit, and simply feel our connection to the authenticity behind all our abstractions. Despite our ephemeral externalities, like our financial situation, the amount of marriage counseling we’ve been assessed as needing, the love or indifference of our children, our degree or lack of employment, “whatever” (the epithet for understanding, these days), we embody Nature and thus the only eternity
that has actual meaning. “Man is something Nature is doing,” Alan Watts (1915-1973) said in one of his lectures, and remembering that can help you to renew your outlook and produce your own attitudinal spring to counter the psychological gravity of our very imperfect and probably terminal global civilization.

Our externalities will soon enough fade away, and even our bodies will fall apart, ultimately exhaling our consciousness back into the churning void that continuously erupts matter, energy, and life as the Nature we are immersed in and express while visibly alive. During our time as flashes of life we can make our radiance sparkle instead of fading as a monotonous glow, by renewing our minds in ways that are simple and have long been obvious. In our obsessively acquisitive and unfairly competitive political economies, we can find someone to love by being faithful and caring, we can find trusting friends by being trustworthy, we can see some improvement in social conditions by resisting participation in schemes and occupations that are parasitic, mean-spirited, and dehumanizing. We can come upon beauty to enjoy by devoting time to the crafting of thoughtful and beautiful things and motions. We can be courteous, honest, and honorable despite their competitive disadvantages.

It is impossible to live without moral compromise in our civilization since so much of gainful employment involves exploitation of people and Nature, so we must forgive ourselves of our own sins and refuse judgments and guilt cast by others, but we must also make it a matter of personal honor to see that our actions propagate as little harm as we can manage. Attitude is character, and as Novalis said in his paraphrase of Heraclitus, “character is fate.” We experience a life that reflects the attitudes we express.

This ramble is not to be taken as a sermon cataloging a list of do’s and don’ts, but as an invitation to let the conscious part of you have a renewing spring regularly, just as the unconscious part, along with all of Nature, renew themselves on so many timescales with so many cycles: the beating of your heart, daily with the cock crowing, monthly with the Moon’s cool light, yearly with Spring’s resurrection of life; or at any sudden moment when you choose to empty the mind, dispel the Māyā, and actually experience life by sensing your breath.
Perhaps it was a change in the weather
that caused things to happen.
I remember warm winds
blowing up from the south in early spring,
and yellow moons in blue glazed nights.
The melting of the cell phones was first.
Overnight,
they were just frozen puddles of plastic and metal,
nothing seen, no heat felt,
just stone-cold carbonized slag heaps
in their hundred millions.
None have been made since –
they all dissolve –
as if the very form, even the concept
had been banished by some capricious god.
Soon after, every fifth spark plug failed,
crankshafts and turbine blades
inexplicably disintegrate.
No cause can be found, no process observed,
large gasoline motors rarely run, now,
there was much fearful whispering about gremlins.
Still, we all adjusted reasonably soon,
and then the great shock arrived –
all the money disappeared.
One morning,
no account could be found with a balance,
all bills showed zero totals,
all currency had vanished.
Everyone is penniless and free of debt,
work has no pay, selling has no buyers –
no obligations, no inducements.
At first, there was chaos, riots, death,
many went insane or took their lives,
“He’s gone back to look for his money,”
we say now –
our phrase for the departed.
Yet, soon enough, most people found occupations,
either from habit, inclination,
or simply to shake off boredom,
like a group of children
picking through a pile of costumes
to take on roles in a game.
In this game, we trade
for food, for our chores, for our entertainment.
With so much use of time,
and no easy accounting,
no one can accumulate
beyond the stores for a winter.
Our leaders bemoan the fall of civilization,
and, as they are ignored,
it must be so.
Our evangelicals howl in ecstasy,
dancing naked around bonfires through the night.
The children are delighted,
now, with so many schools close by,
and always elders, and relatives in attendance
along with their teachers,
so joyous, compared to what now seems imprisonment
in the old moneyed days.
I think it is the learning joy of children everywhere
that makes one feel as if always walking in a village,
even as it stretches between the oceans.
The young easily try on any role,
experimenting with great fervor,
adding such sparkle to the daily routines,
and reminding us to keep our perspective,
for they can leave without notice
for vacations of unknown length,
to satisfy the needs of the spirit.
Yet, in this ebb and flow,
all social needs are filled,
like the hollows children dig out at the beach;
our social lives are smoothed
by the washing of tides from an unseen ocean.
While the fortunes of many have tumbled,
most have tasted liberation, by now,
and those who have lost are left to their own devices.
Shortly after the money left,
the wars erupted – somebody had to pay.
By two years the shooting sputtered to a halt,
all the bullets were turning out to be duds –
plutonium turned to salt, rockets crumbled to powder –
and so they remain.
No explanations.
Our armies are helpless, vulnerable,
unable to attack, and unassailable.
The great migrations began when the guns died,
but soon quelled
when gold was found dissolved in the oceans,
and laced through the sand underfoot.
It is so common, now, it is worthless,
though most beautiful,
and a warm metal to replace broken teeth.
And so, we live under a mysterious power
we cannot explain.
We are people with a broken history
and a continuously randomized future,
liberated from our parallel lives of isolation,
and the apprehension of survival.
Around here, we each hoe our gardens
while spending long afternoons watching clouds curl,
or walking into town to carry home a gallon of milk.
Just this afternoon,
I heard the pub switched from sports on TV to poetry –
for a change.
Maybe I’ll go down and have a few, tonight.

17 February 2003
13 American Truths
Posted on April 28, 2016

13 American Truths:

Ignorance is Strength.
War is Peace.
Freedom is Slavery.
Capitalism is Theft.
God is Murder.
Property is Racism.
Suburbia is Segregation.
Vanity is Greed.
Greed is Sacred.
Love is Weakness.
Hate is Power.
Power is Justice.
Conversation is Dead.
Queen Hillary Faces the California Primary
Posted on May 12, 2016

Queen Hillary Faces the California Primary:
Mirror, Mirror on the wall,
Who’ll be President of them all?
It must be me, I say it must!
For who but Hillary can Wall Street trust?
You must rig all those voting machines
To prevent democracy from going to extremes.
For I must guide, control and shape it
With greater wisdom than any voters’ edict.
I’ve got the spinsters all, and childless biddies,
And the scared suburban mommies with all their kiddies.
Thank God for those old trusting Blacks,
With Scarlett O’Hara’s luck, they have my back.
On their sacrifices I can always call,
So endearing seeing them on their swords fall.
It’s great to know I have my people
Ready to stay behind and raise my steeple.
For I am a Goddess and this is my Church,
To lead an American incremental rightward lurch.
Hail!, hail!, obey and revere!,
For I am Hillary and this is my year!
But that white-haired man is such a problem,
Waking up the nation to all the swag I’ve been grabbin’.
And how annoying those damned Millennials
Who can’t see past their fairness ideals,
Who think being shackled to their school debts
Gives them excuse to question Wall Street’s bets.
Why don’t they just join the military?
I’ll see they get enough comes time for them to bury.
If only they could see obeying me
Will let them share in my glorious history.
The first American woman President
Able to make privatizing Social Security permanent.
Honestly, with America I’m so disgusted
That I’m not more widely loved and trusted.
Trump’s a fool, I’ll beat him, I hope,
Or else America is really on dope.
Trump’s a sexist, but Bernie’s worse
Convincing young women pay imbalance he’ll reverse.
The majority commits Lèse-majesté
Against their natural given leader: Hillary!
Mirror, Mirror on the wall,
Who’ll be President of them all?
Tell me now and tell me quick
Or I’ll hit you with my girl-flogging Billy stick!
Tell me now and tell me right
Or my hissy fit will be a dreadful fright!
And the Mirror replied:
Oh great Queen!, on June 7 you’ll receive my answer,
Whether for America it’s bright future or disaster.
Today, on my hill, it is sunny and nearly still
warm light, cool shadows,
many birds
darting flights, unseen songs,
the canyon green.
Yesterday, all mist and fog
rolling up from the sea
over mountains
absorbing silence
drinking into leaves
and blades of grass
above dry ground,
many birds
darting flights, unseen songs,
the canyon green.
My daughter calls,
I see her cute ski-jump nose again
a wind blows from Greece
across a wine dark sea
the sun melts
under a starry blue
far beyond the Umbrian hills
where there are many birds
darting flights, unseen songs,
the canyon green.
“Bigotry is the disease of the religious.”

“No matter how many ways you try, you cannot find a boundary to consciousness, so deep in every direction does it extend.” – Herakleitos, ~500 BC

If God exists, is It Christian?
Is God an intolerant monotheist, who only believes in Its one inflexible form?, the Jerusalem God of sheep herders and camel drivers, the choosy God, the insecure imperialist demanding conformity, stingy with pleasure – dour – frightened of women?
Or, would God be an atheist?, a great unconscious source-point, manifesting Itself as a natural universe unfolding endlessly without embedded reason, without cohesive purpose, a Godhead of Alzheimer’s vacuity – pure unaware existence.
(And so, can we have aware nonexistence? – a cognizant void – of necessity by sheer conceivability?)
Or, perhaps our God is the Zen God, the Buddhist God of inexplicability, a weave of awareness and unawareness folded and braided onto Itself, with an unending array of parallel self-consciousness, a confluence of parallels, of flickering perceptibility.
And then, perhaps God is simply a concept, a characteristic resonance of neural circuitry, a mental projection easily cast as language construct, simply a part of the psychic hum of human machinery – bio-electro-chemical static – an inconsequential artifact of chance reality. And then, again, perhaps not. Certainly, each proclaimed form of God has it uses, as comfort to its faithful, or their cudgel against infidels. But, no true God is created by the uses we impose, the true God is only to be known, and only by the true person.

16 December 2002
An Island In The Stream
Posted on June 21, 2016

An Island In The Stream

I remember when I was young and full of testosterone, ravishing my lovers with passionate poems. “I will love you forever” they all said, and I meant every word, even now. But all those forevers curled and branched and eddied off like whorls in clouds drifting beyond sight, and swirls in streams cascading down a tumble of time’s boulders, out of many nows into the unknowable void of other futures.

And here we are, we two, like shipwrecked survivors tossed up from love’s pitiless ocean onto an island of companionship, and peace.

And, what kind of peace?
Tolerance with humor for the intransigent imperfections we each insist on maintaining.

And what kind of love?
Gratitude for the acceptance we receive, for I think we each know how impossible it would be for any other to appreciate the genius of each of us.
And now, as we get older, we’re dead set on getting worse, from everyone else’s point of view. So, I guess we’ll be clinking glasses of champagne together in our own private party as we tumble along in the stream carrying us through this lost world. What I am finally learning is to stop trying to explain anything: the ignorant are uncomprehending, the stupid are omniscient, my memory is long and my time is short. That someone understands something of another without so many words is a gift. It frees one from the dreary confinement of social acceptance, from hypocritical politeness, from all of them. We are outside the mainstream, beyond the pale, increasingly forgotten castaways, but together. And that’s nice.
A meditation on Cassandra
Posted on June 30, 2016

A meditation on Cassandra,
inspired by the poems of C. P. Cavafy

She looks out west
from up high on the cyclopean stones walls of the city,
past the dusty plain of Ilium,
littered with cracked helmets, broken spears,
dogs sniffing through the debris of battle
to crack marrow out of bones.
She looks beyond the thousand cooking fires of the Achaeans
stretching in a long broken line
fringing the ragged edge of the plain at the sea,
and down below, the dazzling white beach
she had last seen nine years ago
is now blackened by a row of ships, hauled out, hull to hull,
the standards of the tribes snapping in the wind at mast tops.
Beyond is the Aegean,
wine-dark in the light of the dying sun,
and beyond that lay the strange land of the invaders,
of brutal, energetic men
bent on the glory of power
and the power of possession.
Many had already poured their blood
and sunk their bones into the dusty plain,
in sacrifice to their ambition,
having lunged beyond their vision,
stepping out from the light of day into the eternal shade.
And in this was the only bond developed between them,
Trojans and Achaeans,
for both here in Ilium and in the land of the Hellenes
nearly a decade of widowhood had been grown;
there were no spoils and glory for the children of the dead.
Whom the gods would destroy
they first make mad,
and whom they would madden
they fill with a proud ambition.
Death alone is not a tragedy – sorrowful as it may be –
but death at the end of the destruction of all hope.
Then, it is a merciful release, and in that is the tragedy.
Cassandra looked west, out past the wine-dark sea,
past the unseen lands of the Achaeans,
and past the tragedy of her death.
How else could one continue?
Phoebus, the jealous god,
had robbed her gift of prophesy of any credibility
because she refused to give herself to him,
remaining steadfast in her purity
in devotion to religion.
Oh, how cruel these jealous gods, bitten in their vanity,
for spite they wither our gifts into afflictions,
useless now her power of vision, her great beauty and allure.
For none believed in her prophesies,
none listened to her speech,
all were captivated by her beauty
and fixed on her their desires;
she was insane
with the unrelieved frustration of mute clairvoyance.
She walked in from the parapet,
took off her gold thread pearl earrings,
handing them to a servant,
and also her golden webbed necklace,
unclasped her belt of gold chains
with studs of amber and lapis lazuli,
and dropped her tunic.
She gathered her raven’s hair, coiled it high on her head,
pinning it with a turtle-shell comb and golden needle.
She walked into the scented pool,
strewn with the petals of flowers,
and stroked virgin oil across her honeyed virgin skin.
The flute girl played a slow sweet song of evening,
and a servant rubbed warm oil
with slow deep strokes into her back.
Cassandra thought of all who wanted her body,
from the stable-boys and captains of Ilium,
to the guardian women of the king’s harem,
and even to the Sun-god himself;
and she thought of the man who would rape her
at the foot of the altar of Athena,
after killing her father,
as if seeking to yank the flower and cut the root
of the House of Priam
in one fit of hubris on that terrible night
when the slaughter of Ilium’s manhood
would pour out of the belly of a wooden horse –
false gift of treachery and delusion.
Out of her defilement would come the seed of their destruction,
for a multitude would perish – even their chief, Agamemnon.
Athena’s wrath demanded expiation,
to cleanse insult from the sanctity of her temples.
But Cassandra was already dead,
for she knew that her hopes were doomed –
one does not escape the wrath of the gods.
As Cassandra caressed her exquisite body
that servant girls spoke of amongst themselves
and Ilium’s men dreamed of as they took their wives,
she thought of that hot, sweaty, bearded, bloody Little Ajax
who was destined to rip her tunic off
and force her to the ground,
and she wondered what Phoebus thought
of being put off the prize
in favor of this heartless, dirty, little brute.
It was the god’s will that she should suffer so,
and for that she refined her breathless beauty
and timeless grace
so that even in his godly aloofness
Phoebus would feel the sting of his own spite,
the bitter taste of jealousy’s vengeance.
They all thought her mad, none would listen,
it was best not to repeat the coming story,
it only made them frightened, wild, resentful.
No, she had to see the truth and swallow it,
so as not to add misery to the lives of doomed people
during the little time remaining to them.
She drew the scented bath along her arm,
across her breasts,
up her neck and along the line of her jaw,
holding her head back, closing her eyes,
smiling, luxuriating in sensation,
as the flute song hung in the air
and floated with the slightest breeze
out over the walls into the night sky.
She would be taken as a prize for Agamemnon himself,
in the division of the spoils,
and Little Ajax would be swallowed by Poseidon’s waves.
Among the Trojan women – destined for slavery –
there would begin dawning an inkling of Cassandra’s plight,
but there could be little comfort from hearts
so overwhelmed by sorrow, so devastated by loss,
exhausted of love, broken.
For the mad ageless priestess child
who had loved them and suffered for them
in contained delirious transparent isolation,
it would be a small comfort,
this brief, sad time together at the ruins of Troy,
bonded by grief, with sisters and mothers,
before being dispersed to lives of slavery
across the wine-dark sea.
And for Cassandra, at journey’s end,
the bittersweet vengeance – and terror –
of seeing the end of Agamemnon – sacker of Troy –
cut down by his wife Clytemnestra,
mad with grief for the loss of Iphigenia, her daughter
sacrificed by Agamemnon to secure his command
and gain the gods’ favor of fair winds to Troy.
And at this moment Cassandra, too, will meet her end,
an orphan, a dead king’s child-trophy, cut down
by a vengeance forged over a decade from a mother’s grief.
“My bones will be cast out for the dogs”
Cassandra whispers with a smile.
The flute girl and bath attendant meet glances without pause,
“Mad Cassandra,” they nod to each other,
as Cassandra lays back, eyes closed,
bathed in moonlight and music,
humming softly,
so beautiful, so beautiful,
maintaining her grace,
thinking of her release.

29 April 2002
Night Sail
Posted on July 19, 2016

Night Sail

Soft wind gently through shore grass waving,
Alone by the tall mast sailing at night.
Fields of stars stretch far beyond seeing,
The great river flow is quavering moonlight.

All my writing is born for oblivion,
Myself, aged past thought by people today.
Heaven, Earth and I are sounding the One
Out of sand-gull wings fluttering away. <>

<<<><><><><><><><><><><><><><><><>

MG,Jr. version of Tu Fu’s poem Nocturnal Reflections While Travelling.
This paraphrasing was spurred by reading (and appreciating) Robert Okaji’s example.
Day Comes
Posted on July 28, 2016

Day Comes

I am first impressions
fossilized in the minds of strangers called friends.
I walk out in the quiet morning light
and draw a line in the sand.
I breathe in four atoms of Archimedes
as horizons vanish like dewdrops in the sun.

Birdsong.
Spider silk glints against distant forest shadows.
Cool air floats into thoughtless light.
The illusions are still asleep.
Parent Graduation
Posted on August 6, 2016

Parent Graduation

There come times in children’s lives when they stop listening to parents, and when they mature. A parent is lucky if maturation happens first, but there are no guarantees. I can now state with confidence: all my children are unmoored from my credibility. For me, parenting is done, it’s just patient listening now.
Two Martial Arts Poems
Posted on August 6, 2016

A Martial Artist Circles

Wind — the moving,
stone — a resting,
fluid — when shifting,
light — the seeing.
Mastery, a
channel, a
presence —
awareness alive.
Eternity sparking,
instant everlasting —
you in mind
envisioning all.

All envisioning
mind in you —
everlasting instant,
sparking eternity.
Alive awareness —
presence,
a channel,
a mastery.
Seeing — the light,
shifting — when fluid,
resting — a stone,
moving — the wind.

19 October 2002
A Diffusion of Trajectory

I am petrified in wonder —
the unfathomable depth,
the limitless scope —
this moment.
Light bleeds from pores in air,
evaporating to heat.
Mindless one-pointed arrows
flying through space,
racing against time,
one, in the desiring instant,
with goals fixed, focused, mere points.
A hail of arrows, uncountable, cross each other
coring a vanishing fraction of now,
burying their points in pain, success, obscurity,
oblivious of the sun in stone, the soul of space —
themselves.

Themselves —
oblivious of the sun in stone, the soul of space,
burying their points in pain, success, obscurity,
coring a vanishing fraction of now,
a hail of arrows, uncountable, cross each other.
With goals fixed, focused, mere points,
one, in the desiring instant,
racing against time,
 flying through space,
 mindless one-pointed arrows.
Evaporating to heat,
light bleeds from pores in air.
This moment —
the limitless scope,
the unfathomable depth —
I am petrified in wonder.

14 October 2002
A Secret Rendez-Vous
Posted on August 16, 2016

A Secret Rendez-Vous

He was unfaithful again.
He’d run off secretly to the café
for a cappuccino and a short sojourn
watching the light sparkle off passing cars,
and frame the bouncing bobs of laughing girls
flittering along in their bubbles of mirth,
or in serious self-absorption
like the men marching determinedly,
plowing their self-importance forward
into the vast indifferent world.
But, fortunately, there was the light
and the freshness of mid-morning
to add effulgence to the cappuccino foam.
Ah, but all too soon the time came
to trudge back to the family job
of husband and father,
leading his loved ones to their food
and away from their fears,
absorbing their complaints
and appreciating their dreams.
He would be careful to keep his mistress secret,
if he could,
for poetry was really too elegant for him anyway,
even though he did enjoy her company
in secret rendez-vous on fair mid-mornings
of drifting along a lazy river of thoughts,
with cappuccino.
Two Love Poems
Posted on August 21, 2016

Love at Dawn

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 delight.

7 October 1969

<<<<<<<>>>>>
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 others eyes,
to soar through each others 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
Religion is a thinking disorder, a brain disease.

Capitalism is a sociopathic disorder, a soul disease.

The World Crisis is simultaneous epidemics of religion and capitalism.

Evolution has brought humanity to the point of being intelligent enough to realize it is the cause of climate change, but not intelligent enough to change its behavior to prevent it.

There are only two ways to make money as an artist: establish a personality cult so your productions have a reliable paying audience, or be a decorator who panders to popular tastes.

An entertainer is a decorator of time who distracts an audience from its normal boredom.

Most people are self-limiting, and they resent help that criticizes those limits. Most people are self-limiting, and crave co-dependents comforting them in self-defeat.

Acquaintances value you to the extent you contribute to their entertainment or ambitions. Friends value you for who you are.

As time goes on: you recognize more of your friends as acquaintances, and fewer of your acquaintances as friends. An old grouch can be a person conserving their energy and contentment by driving off all acquaintances, and holding onto one, maybe two, true friends who sometimes are people.
Survivor’s Luck
Posted on August 31, 2016

When I was a baby I had my mama,
and she was sweet and loves me still.
When I was a boy I had my toys
and I played with them till all were gone.
When I was a lad I had my dreams
of sleek cars and voluptuous girls.
When I was a young man
I worked to make the lad’s dreams real,
and though the cars were pudgy
and the women complicated,
moments of dreaming did become true.
When I was a working man I had pride in success
and fulfillment in shouldering society.
When I was a thinking man I knew
my only real successes were those nobody saw,
and that society is a boneyard of illusions
and an anthill of acquisition.
When I was a redundant man
I had irrelevant wisdom
and near perfect invisibility,
and, boy, was I ever stupid!
I was filled with memories
and occupied nearly none.
When they told me I was an old man:
I still felt like a working man
who wanted to save the world;
I still felt like a lad
who could delight in adventure and romance,
though now such dreams are only nostalgia
instead of heated anticipation;
I still felt like a boy
who wanted to play with intriguing toys;
And I have the luck of a baby
whose sweet mother loves him still.
Karma Is Good For Everyone
Posted on September 8, 2016

Karma Is Good For Everyone

“Character is fate,”
we are as we do:
juggling karma: a comic gambler
dance with karma: an artist at living
wrestle with karma: an ordinary worker
fight with karma: an ignorant schemer
seduce karma: a clever schemer
abuse karma: a parasite
pimp karma: a heartless criminal
betray karma: amorally lucky
submit to karma: a broken spirit
love and hate karma: childishly immature
ignore karma: a proud fool
escape karma: a delusional mediocrity
embrace karma: an adventurer
transcend karma: hibernation of a recluse mind
contemplate karma: a poet.
Check-Up
Posted on September 14, 2016

Check-Up

My hearing’s good.
My listening isn’t as good as it used to be,
but my hearing’s good.
The doctor says I’ll live,
but I have to jump up and down more,
and stop sugaring my coffee,
so my numbers turn out good.
Otherwise, someday I’m gonna’ die.
Woe-ah! That’s heavy news.
We just don’t want it to happen
because of the way I live.
That’ll be a trick to pull off.
I’m going to have to have
a brown sugar cappuccino
with a cheeseburger and french fries
to think about that one.
The election is a class war against the terror of democracy. The people are the enemy of the state, and corporate power is the state. Hillary is the Joan-of-Arc of American parasites (and foreign ones). Trump is America’s response to being force-fed Hillary. The American people are: redundant labor, a low-yield investment, an inadequate market, an impediment to economic efficiency. It is true at least half of them are deplorable basket cases of ignorance and bigotry, while much of the other half are deplorable basket cases of smugly hypocritical dishonesty and selfishness. But, there it is, the Janus faces of the American union. The democratic socialist dreamers can fantasize about truth and justice being the American way, but there’s no money in that so too few believe in it. No, ours is an empire of stale bread crumbs and grotesquely hokey circuses, and every poor barely-working stiff is monkey-in-the-middle as well as a jeering lout in the encircling rabble, shrieking in a delighted rage, thumbing down on others in a delusion of self-importance no one else ever notices. Kill ‘em! Whoever they are. Hail Caesar! Whoever you are. You can’t make a silk purse out of a sow’s ear.
A Love Supreme
Posted on September 23, 2016
John William Coltrane (23 September 1926 - 17 July 1967)

A Love Supreme

Coltrane is the angel God called upon
to blow the universe down its swingingest groove.
Music is the resonance of eternity in the transience of the moment.
But, to feel the living pulse of that essence —
holding all —
you have to hear the heart music —
the breath of God itself —
like Bach, or Mozart, or Beethoven,
and yes, yes,
that earnest, pregnant resonance of living air —
Coltrane.
He is like a pool with a buried sun —
on diving deeper its clarity expands.
Explanation is deviation,
the embodiment is acceptance, experience, devotion,
mystical wonder,
an unknowing, humbling sainthood of art.
Man is the instrument of God,
and Coltrane is God’s dream of love for us
blown through a tenor sax.

23 September 2002
Enjoy Life, Old Guy!
Posted on September 29, 2016

Don’t waste your time on self-pity, go out and enjoy life. Nobody cares you exist beyond you paying them. This is the way of the world. Don’t waste time complaining about it, don’t waste energy getting angry at all your so-called friends, and so-called family, for being other than typical self-absorbed human monkeys focused on what they want to grab next. Get in that little red sports car of yours and go for a joy ride! Fuck global warming, nobody cares about it anyway and never will, even as Paradise dries out and burns up, and the cinders of Hell freeze over. Enjoy your wine and booze. Your mind will love you for it and never notice how hard your heart pumps or your liver strains, but it would surely detest cowering in a dark cave of fear. Dying is inevitable and death is not a tragedy, but dying with regrets is. And let’s be clear about love: for most love is pure possession, it is about being happy to have and to get.
Your legacy is zero,
don’t waste energy thinking about it.
Whatever money not siphoned off
to pay for your American-style death
will be squandered
by your grateful loving family.
All those fine books and precious papers
that you put such stock in
will be tossed out in a dumpster.
All that thoughtful advice
that you lavished on your children
will have long since been forgotten.
After all, they don’t pay attention to it now,
so why expect them to remember it
after you’re gone?
You were an envelope to genetic messages
that got sent and received long ago;
you’re done.
Face it,
everyone is so wrapped up in their lives
they can’t think of anything outside them.
At best,
mothers obsess about their children,
and for them people orbit that obsession,
from tight close orbits of manipulable utility,
to distant cometary ellipses of uselessness.
All you have now is consciousness,
a fascinating gift of temporary duration
which can be so exquisitely delightful;
and you have your self-respect,
entirely in your power to maintain.
What you do not have,
despite illusions to the contrary,
is any right to being appreciated,
to being respected,
to being noticed.
Do you wonder why suicide bombers volunteer?
Love you may get,
there are so many possessive monkeys
grabbing onto theirs
that two wanting possessives
may draw each other
mirrored as attractions.
But, don’t be a sucker
falling for the delusion of self-importance.
The cat will love you just as much
for the bits of grilled chicken tossed in its bowl,
as your family will
for the roof you hold over their heads
and the gold
you carpet the paths of their dreams with.
Console yourself to reality,
then, bypassing disappointment and anger,
move on to contentment
for the remainder of your indefinite term
in Paradise: the here and now.
APPED moi, rien.
I Am Not Here  
Posted on October 10, 2016

I Am Not Here

Poetry is the first hideout of a romantic,  
and the last refuge of a socialist.  
In between  
is a lifetime of discovery and disillusion.  
Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose.  
The Sunday afternoon sunlight  
of a San Francisco Bay Indian Summer  
illuminating the honeyed ruby sweetness  
of a glass of port  
in a near-empty bistro relaxing  
with honeyed saxophone sounds  
is the dynamic stillpoint of the All,  
consciousness of which is entirely mine  
in all of humanity.

With each passing day  
I am increasingly cloud-hidden  
on the upper slopes of the unseen mountain  
at the threshold of the Western Desert.  
The berries up here are sweet,  
ripened with age,  
except for the bitter young ones,  
plump and green.  
I am eye-to-eye with eternity  
even as I am of vanishing consequence.  
On descent into the daylight below the mists,  
into the hurly-burly of the human ferment,  
I am enveloped by a protective invisibility  
because ignorance is fragile,  
and like the first sprouts of a seedling  
needs protective shade against the withering sun.
Soon enough the port is drunk,
dusk has passed,
and in the foggy night chill
I set off once again up the mountain
to catch the dawn rays above the mists,
in solitude,
cloud-hidden, whereabouts unknown.
Sometimes
Sometimes, it is the greatest joy to be included, appreciated, and celebrated by a throng bonded by shared ideals, who immerse you in their mass joy of identity.

And sometimes, it is the bitterest of disappointments to realize nobody has any interest in who you are, what you think, and what you say, that you are simply disappeared from all human fellowship.

And then sometimes, it can be the most amazing revelation to find that what seemed like a solitary confinement within socially unanimous rejection was actually the purest freedom anyone had ever known, the most profound experience of affirmation the universe could ever bestow on an individual.
Of all existence I am the noon
My supernova awareness explodes – kaboom!
Extinguishing that ugly psychic goon
Desperation to extinction must caroom
Illuminated by night’s all-stellar platoon
Changing black to light with relativistic voom
I shine out as the Void’s most blinding moon
My soul unto The All becomes the groom
Liberating joy like a typhoon
From the Hades depths of a psychic tomb
The infinite hopes of a mind-gone loon
Is Nirvana’s salvation that will exhume
The Om-like drones that to genes does croon
The fathomless mind of the unknowable Whom
Echoing timelessly its mysterious rune
For which even the Universe has insufficient room
A volcanic earth-shaking Olympian tune
Unravelling space-time like Penelope’s loom
Exploding air like a basso octoroon
With such a splendiferous sonic boom
Propelling me like Zeus’s harpoon
That from this danger I may zoom
My hopes float upward like a balloon
To thwart this fate that would consume
Be like a clever crafty raccoon
To shield me from titanic gloom
I am left to find my boon
What salvation can I assume?
I am left a hapless maroon
For re-ingestion by Nature’s womb
To be ejected to Earth’s spittoon?
Resisting this I must presume
With insane gibber like a baboon
However I in anger fume
My fate seems like a cruel lampoon
Before my living can resume
My very soul Earth will dragoon
So Earth my body can inhume
Nature’s spell will make me swoon
With salty air as the perfume
Wandering on a windswept dune
With precious visions of Tulum
On a sunny day in June
I shall come to see my doom
I fear it now, but all too soon.

I fear it now, but all too soon
I shall come to see my doom
On a sunny day in June
With precious visions of Tulum
Wandering on a windswept dune
With salty air as the perfume
Nature’s spell will make me swoon
So Earth my body can inhume
My very soul Earth will dragoon
Before my living can resume
My fate seems like a cruel lampoon
However I in anger fume
With insane gibber like a baboon
Resisting this I must presume
To be ejected to Earth’s spittoon?
For re-ingestion by Nature’s womb
I am left a hapless maroon
What salvation can I assume?
I am left to find my boon
To shield me from titanic gloom
Be like a clever crafty raccoon
To thwart this fate that would consume
My hopes float upward like a balloon
That from this danger I may zoom
Propelling me like Zeus’s harpoon
With such a splendiferous sonic boom
Exploding air like a basso octoroon
Unravelling space-time like Penelope’s loom
A volcanic earth-shaking Olympian tune
For which even the Universe has insufficient room
Echoing timelessly its mysterious rune
The fathomless mind of the unknowable Whom
The Om-like drones that to genes does croon
Is Nirvana’s salvation that will exhume
The infinite hopes of a mind-gone loon
From the Hades depths of a psychic tomb
Liberating joy like a typhoon
My soul unto The All becomes the groom
I shine out as the Void’s most blinding moon
Changing black to light with relativistic voom
Illuminated by night’s all-stellar platoon
Desperation to extinction must caroom
Extinguishing that ugly psychic goon
My supernova awareness explodes – kaboom!
Of all existence I am the noon.
An Old Cur Gnaws Through
Posted on October 21, 2016

An Old Cur Gnaws Through

People would rather fall off their own cliffs than have their illusions interrupted. Our people prefer to perish in a nuclear war than submit to hanging their wash in the sun. It’s a matter of principle.

Why give in to happiness when you can insist on getting what you want? Success is not about gaining happiness, but an obedient world bowing to your demands. It’s a matter of principle.

Women don’t want husbands, they want dogs. Their ideal husbands would be their dogs with a steady income. There’s no bestiality, they don’t want sex, they just put up with sex to have their children. It’s all evolutionary programming to pass on genes. Love is entirely psychological anesthesia. The doggie on the leash, with its balls cut off, wagging its tail and waiting patiently, is the woman’s dearest lover.

The old cur gnaws through its tether and wanders off. It’s a matter of principle.
The Elephant’s Morning
Posted on November 10, 2016

The raging rogue elephant trumpeting fury charged up the golden hill, scattering a pack of hypocritical jackasses braying, and claimed the radiant glory of the sunrise for his bedraggled, starving herd below. Baboons howled in wonder and dismay hunkering beneath the dustfall’s silence. The wind blew the crack in time away, and chilled hearts warmed by light of day.

Thunder in the valley wind upon the hill, hunters in the shadows panting for a kill. Stillness in the treetops quaking at the roots, coolness at the river swallowing the mute.
Flickers of urgency yellowing into dry curls release themselves into a scattering wind drifting to inevitability. None notice, no matter.
Pre-Traumatic Stress Syndrome
Posted on November 30, 2016

The college boy babbles excitedly, testosterone jitters and beer foam greased, leans towards the busty co-ed, with high hopes. The card in his wallet says “One-A,” the Tet Offensive rages an ocean away.

The bridegroom fumbles knotting his tie, it takes five tries.

The wife wakes him up, talks about his damaged aura, gasping and hacking to the emergency room 3 AM. Doctor tells him “Croup.” “Maybe you should get her a psychiatric evaluation.” Eight months pregnant.

Career hopes rest on his next mission, but she and the children have to vacation at grandma’s. He watches their plane disappear up into the blue, tight throat, heavy heart. A letter waits for him at home, “We are not coming back until…”

The kids have been played, fed, bathed; asleep. She’s gone again the weekend: transactional therapist college retreat. Heavy rain, flooded basement, house creaks. In the dank dark his flashlight shows twenty feet of rolled foundation. How much will that cost? Upstairs, Saturday’s mail unopened: bank statement, savings, zero balance, joint account.
The kids are busy, know everything, 
no time for the old man. 
That’s okay, everything’s stable, 
accounts are paid for, 
the oldest likes college. 
A union organizer now, meeting at noon. 
Secretary puts a letter in his mailbox: 
layoff.

She’s a consolation for life in the downslope years. 
“Women don’t need men,” she tells him, 
“men need women.” 
That’s what you think, sweetheart: silent smile. 
Next summer at the beach: “I want a baby.”
“Of course.” You always knew, 
nature must have its way. 
No restoring the sports car now, 
keep your zen, 
maybe she’ll still love you in twenty years.

Mother calls, father’s had a heart attack. 
He leaves for the long drive in the rain. 
The wipers break, scratch the windshield at eye level, 
electrics are spotty. 
How will I take care of her now?

Doctor gives him the news, 
prescriptions, change your life, 
worry to maximize, 
and it costs. 
But dependents have all their demands. 
You can’t be an artist and have a family. 
At least now I know it doesn’t really matter. 
So, relax and enjoy. 
You can’t make time, you can only savor it, 
or lose it. 
Life belongs to the alert, 
peace belongs to the knowing.
Mangogarcia poems written before November 2011 are collected here (PDF): 

Everything here © by Manuel García, Jr.