

PROFILE

POEMS AND STORIES

ARMANDO GARCIA-DÁVILA



McCAA BOOKS • SANTA ROSA



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PREFACE

WHAT FOLLOWS IN THIS BOOK are some revelations of my life and soul through a few poems and short stories. I have no pretensions to seek your understanding or forgiveness. I only hope you enjoy the pathos, sense of seeking, and humor in my work.

The Catholic Church and our family's Mexican roots and modest means provided the foundation of my young years. I remain indebted to my parents, older brother, twin brother, and four sisters for the core of my being. Without them, I would be but a shadow.

However, the church confused me early in life as I came to realize the fallibility of the institution. My intention in writing about it is not to offend but to simply offer its effects on me as an innocent and malleable child.

Armando Garcia-Dávila
April 2014

Poems

The Day Will Come

And the day will come when you hit the switch,
but the room will remain dark.

Computers will not hum, monitors will not glow,
and boys will have no flashing games to play.

Gas pumps will remain silent, and we will
be forced to walk.

Those who don't know how to start a fire will
be cold.

The comfortably wealthy will be greatly
inconvenienced.

And those who live under bridges will not notice
the difference.

A Free Man

Want to be a free man? It's simple. Start by shedding your clothes. They say too much about who you wish to be.

Next, to eliminate the compulsion to dominate, remove your testicles and set them on a shelf out of reach.

Lay your ego by the side of the road and in your sternest voice give the command, "Stay!" Then run like hell until you can't hear its protests.

Erase your history so that you are not a man anymore, nor Catholic, Protestant, Jew, or Muslim. You aren't Mexican, German, or Chinese.

Don't consider the future; in fact, so you won't think at all, put your brain in the freezer (thinking is overrated).

Find a clock and smash it between two stones, then feel your way through days and nights.

Forgive yourself and your children for not being enough. Forgive your ex, forgive God for not giving you the answers you think He owes you.

Now find a place in the shade, and listen to everyone, particularly children and birds. Sit quietly until you recognize the miracle of breath.

Could You Love Me?

If I loved you? If, I, loved, you.

Could you love me?

Would you be here when the morning light greets the songs of the sparrows, or would I be left with a hundred cries, and your seed swimming in my belly?

If I would lay with you in the soft, supple grasses of spring, and satisfy your carnal desires, would you be here after our nap? And would you be able to love me without touching my hair, my breasts, or so much as my hand?

If I perfumed the straw of my bed for you, and painted my lips in scarlet, and rubbed your back, and danced naked for you, would you be willing to stroll next to me at the shore on a Sunday afternoon?

If I tickled you with my tongue when God sleeps, would you dance a lazy dance with me? Would you write verses and stanzas to my name?

If I anointed myself with oil and slithered with you under satin blankets, and made you feel like the red-plumed rooster, would you be here when the morning light greets the songs of the sparrows? Or would I be left with a hundred cries and your seed swimming in my belly?

Monks of the Field

Now, cool, quiet, serene. Hills the green of Ireland.
Clear as glass, this February air.
And sun, glorious sun, against a sky so deep, so blue,
one forgets it has ever rained.

Faint sounds from the distant valley below:
a car engine on a road somewhere,
the caws of crows echo overhead.
A single engine airplane putters along an endless
horizon.

Snip, snap, clip-clip, snap, the rhythm of pruning shears
in the strong and calloused hands of field workers. A
laborer, the hood of his sweatshirt pulled over his head,
examines the dormant vine as if it is the only vine on
earth.

“Field workers,” “farm workers,” “*campesinos*,” from
Oaxaca, from Guanajuato, Michoacán, a hundred places
that one hears of. But monks they are, monks of the field,
observing an unspoken oath of silence, observing an
ancient and holy motto: “*laborare orare est*”— “to work
is to pray.”

Each man living, working in the moment, in the second,
no tomorrow for him, no yesterday, no morning, or
evening; only the ever present now.

Sixty-five acres—50,000 vines to prune over these hills and valley. Are there too many for this crew of Alejandro, Noè, Manuel, Crisando, and Gabriel? Only one vine in the here, in the now, for each silent man.

By-and-by each vine will be pruned and retied to the stake, to the galvanized wire. By-and-by all pruned branches tossed between the narrow rows will be disked and tilled into the vineyard to become soil. By-and-by each vine will be sulfured in spring, thinned in summer, its purple fruit gathered in a frantic fall harvest when the sugar content is exact.

But in this now, there is only an infinite blue heaven, and silent monks of the field, their pruning shears chattering in the silence.

Stories

Don't Fall Asleep

WE HAD JUST SEEN *THE WOLF MAN* and I was lying in the dark with my twin brother, Ferd, and our sisters, Ana, Carolyn, and Martha. We were in the living room lying on olive-green army surplus cotton-stuffed mats. Ana and Carolyn were the oldest and in high school. They had allowed Ferd and me to stay up with them, and Martha who was in sixth grade, to watch the Friday night scary movie on TV. Ferd and I had been so excited! We got to stay up late, eat popcorn, drink soda, and watch a movie that didn't even start until 9:00 o'clock.

It was terribly dark and quiet after we turned in. I looked around the room and into the kitchen. There he was. I could see the Wolf Man's silhouette, lit by the faint moonlight. He was waiting for me to fall asleep before making his move to get me. He had been attacked and bitten by a wolf and was cursed to become a Wolf Man. I saw him turn into the monster that was half wolf and half man. He didn't want to be one, but that was the curse; on a full moon, the hair on his face and arms and legs grew longer and longer, and his teeth got big and sharp. He walked through the fog and found his first victim, a poor old man happily smoking his pipe and raking leaves. The old guy didn't stand a chance against the powerful Wolf Man.

Carolyn's back was to me. I scooted closer and turned, putting my back against hers. She was hot, but I was hotter, especially with the blankets over me. Even so I kept my

back, butt, and legs up against her.

She shifted half-asleep, "Back off," she said.

"I'm scared," I whispered. "I think he's in the kitchen."

"Who?"

"The Wolf Man."

"No he's not, *cuatito*. There's no such thing, now go to sleep," she said as she reached back and patted my hip. She pulled away. I heard deep breathing coming from my other sisters. They were lucky to be sleeping. I wished I could. I peered out from under my blankets. He was still in there. And he wasn't happy about my telling on him. I wanted to say I was sorry, but it'd only make things worse for me.

I broke out in a sweat and wanted to pull off the covers, but moving around might trigger his attack all the sooner. And me being exposed, he'd be able to tear straight into my skin. At least the covers protected me a little. My only hope was to scream when he came for me, then Carolyn would yank me back from him and we'd all fight him off until Pa came running down the hall to save us. No one was stronger or braver than our Pa.

I looked toward the kitchen. *Hijo!* He had sneaked behind the door and was peeking at me through the crack between the door and hinges. I had to do something. I tapped my sister's back. "Carolyn," I whispered, "Carolyn."

"Ayyy, what do you want?"

"Can I sleep between you and Ana?"

"I don't care, just settle down!"

I sprang to my knees and rolled over her, dragging my blanket with me, and landed between the two.

"Ayyy, what are you doing?" Ana said.

"Nothing," I said softly, covering myself with the blan-

ket. I was safe at last. But it didn't take but a minute to realize that it was much hotter between my sisters. At least I couldn't see over their bodies into the kitchen. I lay quietly sweating and listening for the Wolf Man to come around from behind the door.

Somebody shuffling blankets broke the silence. Then I heard Ferd whisper, "Martha, Martha."

"Whaat?!"

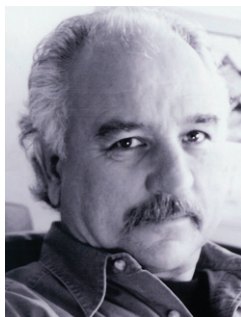
"I'm scared."

"Go to sleep! I told you, Carolyn. We shouldn't have let them see the stupid movie!"

My good luck; Ferd and Martha had drawn the Wolf Man's attention away from me.

I felt something against my cheek and put my hand to it. It was a piece of popcorn. I stealthily picked it up and sneaked it into my mouth. I didn't dare chew it. The crunching would draw the Wolf Man's attention back to me. The popcorn had salt and butter and tasted good. It slowly dissolved in my mouth, and I slowly dissolved into sleep.

About the Author



Armando Garcia-Dávila burst upon the Sonoma County literary world in the latter part of the 1990s. What started as a series of op. ed. pieces he wrote concerning the First Persian Gulf War and the memories of friends killed in the Vietnam War, turned to poetry to express wide ranging thoughts rooted in his Mexican-American/Catholic upbringing. To make clear his humble background, he called himself the “blue-collar” poet.

Newspaper columnist Ray Holley wrote at the time, “Be sure to check out Armando. . . . (while) you still have a chance to see him in an intimate setting before he becomes justly famous for his work.”

His poems have been widely published and also found their way into union newsletters and Sunday pulpits. He has read his poetry to immigrant laborers in the vineyards and prisoners in San Quentin. In 2002, he was chosen as the Healdsburg Literary Laureate.

Armando’s biggest supporters are his wife, Kathy, his two grown children, Cecilia and Emilio, and his twin brother, Fernando.